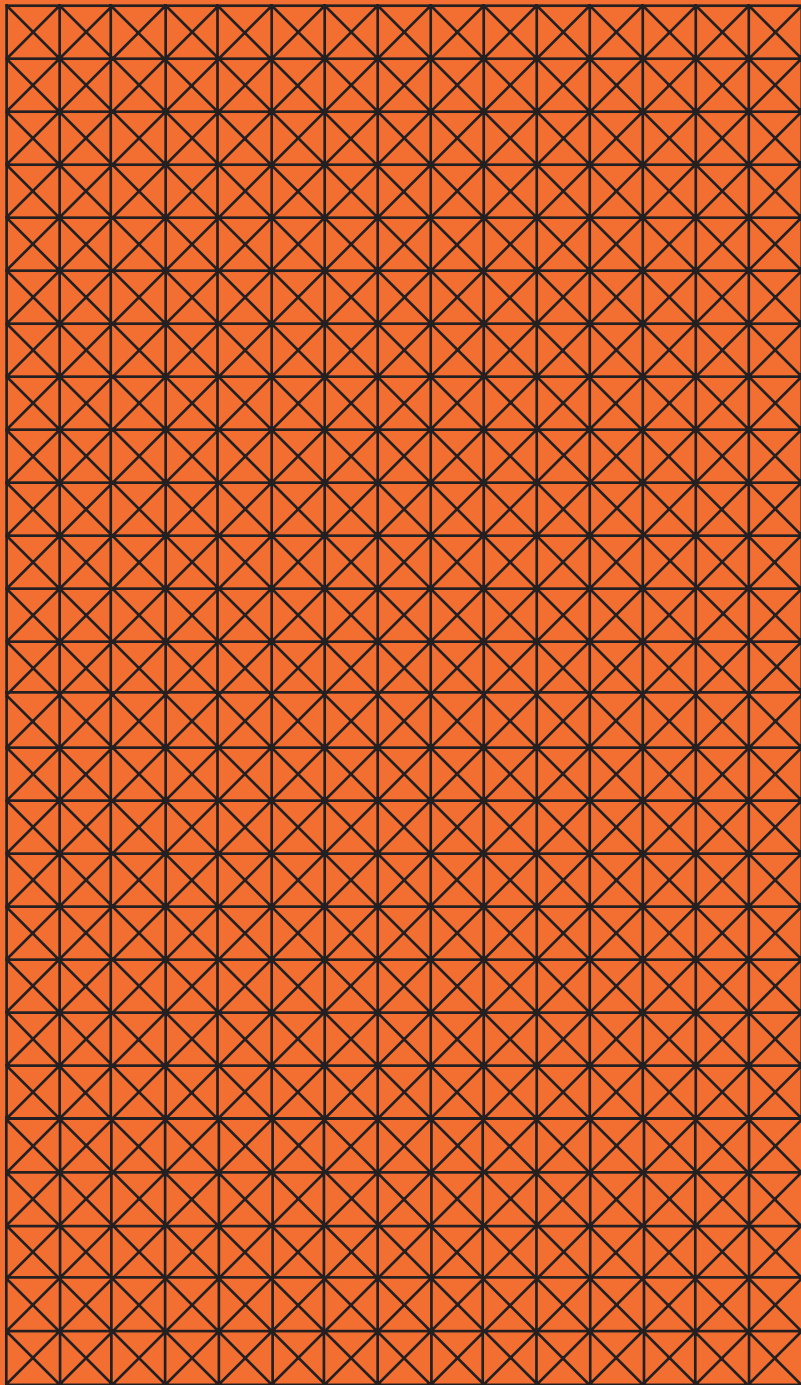


25–27 November 2015,
Singapore

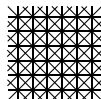
5th Asian National
Museums Association
Meeting and Conference

ANMA 5



5TH ASIAN NATIONAL MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION
MEETING AND CONFERENCE

25–27 November 2015, Singapore



ANMA
Asian National
Museums Association

ABOUT ANMA

The Asian National Museums Association (ANMA) was established as a network to promote exchange and co-operation among national museums in Asia. Initiated by the National Museum of China, Tokyo National Museum and the National Museum of Korea in 2007, its membership covers major national museums in Asia or their agencies.

ABOUT THE ANMA LOGO

The predominant feature of the ANMA logo is a lattice pattern, which has modern and traditional connotations. A traditional design in most Asian cultures linked to weaving traditions and window frames, the lattice pattern also represents the multi-dimensional and networked connections that underline the knowledge exchange that define the work of the Asian National Museums Association. As a grid, it defines the coordinated work of the association which aspires to lay the foundation for the growing international influence of Asian National Museums regionally and globally.

NOTES

This e-publication is a second consolidated and updated edition of the print publication that accompanied the fifth meeting and conference of the Asian National Museums Association that was held in Singapore from the 25th to 27th November at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

The positions and affiliations of the authors of the papers are as of November 2015. As such, the views and positions expressed in this publication are those of the authors only and not those of the organisers, publisher or editors.

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FOREWORD

Dr. Alan Chong
Chairman of the Asian National Museums Association, 2013–2015
Director of Asian Civilisations Museum

THE MULTIPLE ROLES OF NATIONAL MUSEUMS

The theme for this year's meeting and conference of the Asian National Museums Association (ANMA) is *Balancing Political History, Ethnography, and Art: The Role of a National Museum*. This publication contains papers presented at the meeting in Singapore on 26 November 2015. These papers are country reports that reflect on the various cultural roles played by the national museums that form ANMA.

Museums can preserve the collective memory of a nation and carve a place in global history for the peoples and communities of those states. At the same time, national museums often need to consider cultures that cross national borders, and sometimes form networks over considerable distances. These themes are more challenging to present simply because of their hybrid nature, and because, to many visitors, they do not represent the "core culture" of a perceived national identity. Equally challenging is the balance of materials that have been traditionally categorized into archaeological, ethnographic, fine art, and contemporary prac-

tice. Many of our institutions have creatively mixed these categories to fashion a rich and varied narrative. Rather than craft a single national narrative, many of our members have emphasized diversity and multiplicity. If identity itself is fluid, museums may need to respond nimbly to changes in society.

This 5th meeting of ANMA is an opportunity to share our practices and challenges on this theme, as well as on a wide array of concerns. It is a great pleasure to welcome delegates to Singapore at a time when many of our museums have new galleries or indeed entire new buildings to unveil.

For their support of this conference, we thank all the ANMA members, in particular the National Museum of Japan and the National Museum of Korea. I am grateful for the support of the Culture Academy Singapore, the National Museum of Singapore, the National Gallery Singapore, the Singapore Art Museum and the Indian Heritage Centre.



Dr. Alan Chong
November 2015

EDITOR'S NOTE

Ms. Thangamma Karthigesu
Director of Culture Academy, Singapore

It was a privilege for us to work together with the authors on their papers. It was indeed an enriching experience for all of us and we hope that this publication will enrich its readers just as it has benefited our perspectives of national museums in Asia.


The theme of the conference, *Balancing Political History, Ethnography and Art: The Role of a National Museum*, is the foundation of this publication and the prompt placed to our contributors who work within different political contexts and with the complexity of intermingled and evolving histories. It can be difficult to provide a balanced and inclusive representation of such histories, especially given the diverse local, regional and international communities that may have a stake in such histories and cultures. As such, the different insights from our contributors provide a sense of how Asian national museums navigate such complex socio-political terrain to present an unbiased story as much as possible within these constraints.

The contributions in this physical publication, provided by prominent museum officials and scholars from their respective cultural scenes in Asia, have been included with only

minimal copyediting. As we wanted to highlight the authenticity and true voice of the authors, the editorial team took the utmost care in editing the texts to ensure that no compromise or change in meaning of the commentary occurred. Every effort was also made to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate at the time of publication. As such, the views and positions expressed in this publication are those of the authors only and not those of the organisers, publisher or editors.

The included contributions are limited to members of the Asian National Museum Association (ANMA) who provided their contributions before the conference. A more complete publication will be made available online at www.cultureacademy.sg at a later date.

It has been a privilege for the Culture Academy to work on this publication. We hope that it gives you a new perspective on Asia's national museums, and that this publication will open new doors for ANMA members to showcase the great work they do in their respective organisations to their counterparts regionally and globally.



Ms. Thangamma Karthigesu
November 2015

List of Countries that are represented in ANMA

*Kingdom of Cambodia
People's Republic of China
Republic of India
Republic of Indonesia
State of Japan
Republic of Korea
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Malaysia
Mongolia
Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
Republic of Singapore
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Kingdom of Thailand
Socialist Republic of Vietnam*

and their representative institutions as of 2015:

*National Museum of Cambodia
National Museum of China
National Museum, New Delhi
National Museum of Indonesia (Museum Nasional)
Tokyo National Museum
National Museum of Korea
Lao National Museum
Department of Museums Malaysia
National Museum of Mongolian History
National Museum of Nepal
Asian Civilisations Museum
Department of National Museums Sri Lanka
The Office of National Museums Thailand
The Vietnam National Museum of History*

PROGRAMME FOR THE 5TH ANMA MEETING AND CONFERENCE
25–27 NOVEMBER 2015
SINGAPORE

Day 1: Wednesday, 25 November 2015

- 0900–1500 Arrival of 5th ANMA Delegates
- 1600 - 1630 Registration of delegates
- 1630 - 1730 Guided Tour of revamped galleries of National Museum of Singapore (NMS)
- 1830 - 2130 Welcome Dinner at National Museum of Singapore

Day 2: Thursday, 26 November 2015

- 0900 - 1300 **The 5th ANMA Executive Committee Meeting**
Venue: Discovery Room, Basement, Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)
- 0900 - 0915 Welcome by Chairman, ANMA 5 Dr Alan Chong, Director, Asian Civilisations Museum and Introduction of new Members
- 0915 - 0930 Confirmation of the Minutes of the 4th ANMA Executive Committee Meeting held in Vietnam on October 8th 2013 and Matters Arising from the 4th ANMA Executive Committee Meeting
- 0930 - 1000 Presentation of New Initiatives for ANMA by ANMA 5 Secretariat
- 1000 - 1210 Country Presentations by ANMA members on what new initiatives they have undertaken since 2013
- 1215 - 1220 Any other business
- 1220 - 1300 Signing of Memorandum of Understanding and appointment of Chairman for ANMA 6 and dates for the congress of ANMA 6
- 1300 End of 5th ANMA Executive Committee Meeting

1300 - 1400 **Lunch**

1400 - 1800 **ANMA 2015 Conference**

1400 - 1410 Opening Address

1410 - 1430 Keynote Speech by Prof Tan Tai Yong, Executive Vice-President, Yale-NUS College

1430 - 1500 Presentations by
Dr Alan Chong, Director, Asian Civilisations Museum and Dean, Culture Academy
Ms Angelita Teo, Director, National Museum of Singapore
Dr Eugene Tan, Director, National Gallery Singapore

1500 - 1600 Round Table Session with ANMA Heads of Delegation and Singapore museum directors on the theme of the conference: *Balancing political history, ethnography, and art: The role of a national museum*

Moderated by keynote speaker Prof Tan Tai Yong.

1600 - 1630 Public Question and Answer Session

1630 - 1645 Concluding remarks by Dr Alan Chong, Director, Asian Civilisations Museum and Dean, Culture Academy

1645 End of Conference

1830 - 2100 **Farewell Dinner**

Day 3: Friday, 27 November 2015

0930 - 1700 **Cultural Excursions of the National Gallery Singapore, Singapore Art Museum and Indian Heritage Centre**

BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY, AND ART: THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL MUSEUM THE CASE OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CAMBODIA

Mr. Kong Vireak
Director, National Museum of Cambodia

INTRODUCTION

For its modest definition, museums are a major expression of cultural identity in every society. The role of national museums in defining and shaping a nation's identity has been a much discussed topic of late. In introducing, perhaps, the most stimulating collection of essays on the subject, Darryl McIntyre and Kirsten Wehner in the introduction to their co-edited publication, *National Museums: Negotiating Histories - Conference proceedings* (2001), drew attention to the difficulties contemporary national museums face in trying to “negotiate and present competing interpretations of national histories and national identities.”¹ How national museums seek to represent competing histories, contested certainties and cultural difference through their structures, spatial arrangements, collection policies and exhibition strategies has been analyzed by many scholars and practitioners, generating an extensive literature on the subject.

The 5th Asian National Museums Association (ANMA) focuses on the competing and difficult mandates that national museums address. The Asian Civilisations Museum of Singapore is the chair of this conference and defines the central theme of the conference as *Balancing Political History, Ethnography and Art: The Role of a National Museum* so as to encourage public discussion among the Asian National Museum practitioners.

It is not without difficulty that one can discuss and debate the role of the Cambodian National Museum within this theme. In its context of having been part of a French Protectorate, the National Museum of Cambodia was created with a mandate to cover archaeology and art history but also to balance the colonial history with the great past Cambodian civilization. Since it opened till the present day, the National Museum of Cambodia's core collections and displays center on archaeological and art objects, which include exclusively the statues of Indian Gods of Hinduism and Buddhism, with the exception of a small number of pre-historic and ethnographic objects, which complement the art collections.

What is the role in balancing political history, ethnography and art that the National Museum of Cambodia plays? This may become the turning point for a new mandate for a Cambodian National Museum to challenge.

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WERE ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE ARTS

Needless to say, Cambodia is among the richest country in terms of its cultural materials. However, until the late 19th Century, Cambodia was lesser known to the West. Influenced by publications such as the journal, *World Tour*, (1863), travel accounts by the explorer Henri



The Exterior of the National Museum of Cambodia
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Cambodia

Mouhot (1826–1861), such as *Travels in the Central Parts of Indo-China* (published in 1863) and perhaps even more so from engravings of Mouhot's drawings, the image of Angkor, became emblematic of the most spectacular form constructed for the International Colonial Exposition in 1931, which captured the French imagination. The International Colonial Exhibition attempted to display the diverse cultures and immense resources of France's colonies. It was the pinnacle of a number of exhibitions that reconstructed the colonies in 1878, 1889 and 1900, in Paris, and in 1906 and 1922, in Marseille.

Cambodian archaeological work was, and essentially remains, focused on its great monuments. The temples, by their number, their grandeur and beauty, almost ineluctably monopolise the attention of the few concerned institutions

and researchers. The discovery of Khmer sites resulted in a true scientific and museological expansion that raised the question of the role of archeology in 'cultural colonisation'. In the case of Cambodia, this question should be noted within a context of ruins and heritage objects being taken possession while being 'processed' for archaeological purposes. After the French naturalist and explorer, Mouhot, the first agent of such processing was the lieutenant Ernest Doudart de Lagrée, who took advantage of a reconnaissance to Angkor, before he became the leader of the French Mekong Expedition of 1866–1868, a major scientific expedition of the 19th century. If archaeological deposits, in the form of Khmer sculptures, define the cultural identity of Indochina, it is significant that the first move to conserve them was part of their appropriation and exportation to France. The other prominent

1. Daniel McIntyre, and Kirsten Wehner. In *National Museums: Negotiating Histories: Conference Proceedings*, (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2001), xiv.

2 The Mekong Expedition was the first systematic exploration of the Mekong River. Led by Ernest Doudard de Lagrée and Francis Garnier, the expedition ascended the river from its mouth to Yunnan between 1866 to 1868. Delaporte was a young naval officer and chosen to accompany the expedition because of his talent in drawing.

figure in this process was Louis Delaporte, a lieutenant and member of the Mekong Expedition of 1866-1868.² He would later describe his initial emotion: "I could contemplate these monuments of art ignored for too long without feeling a strong desire to make them known to Europe and enrich our museums (with) a collection of Khmer antiquities whose place was all marked next those of Egypt and Assyria." With the creation of the Trocadero Indo-Chinese Museum in 1880, Louis Delaporte introduced the Khmer civilization to the pantheon of universal arts.

In Indochina, the essential scientific institution of archaeological investigation is *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO), the French School of the Far East. Established in 1898 by the Governor General Paul Doumer (1857-1932), it was first named the "archaeological mission" in spite of its objects of study being very broad. It is not limited to the study of extinct societies, since it includes philology and ethnology. EFEO was created under the aegis of the Institut de France, Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres. When officials of the EFEO have to reaffirm the school's authority, such as its scientific control of museums in Indochina, they still prevail in garnering this legitimacy at the highest national scientific bodies. Another notable point is the issue of preservation of ancient monuments in Indochina. This was discussed at the International Congress of Orientalists in 1897 and laid the foundations for the formation of the EFEO. In 1900, the law on historical monuments was established by the publication of a decree "on the conservation of monuments and objects of historic or artistic interest." In 1901, the first ranked list of conserved monuments was developed. The Khmer monuments were highlighted in this document. The following year in Paris a so-called foundation for conservation of ancient monuments in Indochina (*Société d'Angkor pour la conservation des monuments anciens d'Indochine*) was created. With it, the first restoration work

began and a new phenomenon arose: tourism. From October to December 1907, two hundred visitors visited the Angkor site. Tourism also brought with it a competition with other colonial powers, such as the British and Dutch, who sought archaeological treasures. For immediate solutions, many of the statues and architectural elements at Angkor were transported to the then newly created *Dépôt de Conservation d'Angkor*, Angkor Conservation Depot in Siemreap. As the number of objects increased in this depot, a museum was needed.

**FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL
RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION
OF MONUMENTS TO THE MUSEUM:
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CAMBODIA**

In Phnom Penh, two museums with a mandate to cover archaeology and art history were established. The first was established by decree on August 17, 1905 under the authority of the higher Resident of Cambodia and the scientific control of the EFEO. The museum was built in 1908 by a Kuhn-Cambodian architect who graduated from the Central School of Paris. It was located in the grounds of the royal palace and was funded by the royal treasury. This fact gives an indication of the interest of the Khmer sovereignty in this type of conservation. However, in 1917, it was replaced by a second museum dedicated to Albert Sarraut (1872-1962), the then governor general. This museum is inseparable from the personality of George Groslier (1887-1943), its creator and curator. Groslier was the son of a director of the civil service. He became the first French born in Cambodia in 1887. Trained at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, he returned to Phnom Penh and was dedicated to promoting the culture of this country. He established the School of Cambodian Arts in 1917, an institution located next to the museum. The museum provided objects as models for the

latter's study in jewellery, sculpture and weaving.

His museum was not conceived simply as a place to conserve and display collections. From the beginning, it was integrally linked to the School of Cambodian Arts (*École des Arts Cambodgiens*), whose mission was to train artisans in diverse skills. Such was the vision of its founder, George Groslier who intended that objects from antiquity provide a source of inspiration for modern art. He considered modern art somewhat sluggish after a long sleep. Yet, he thought modern art was potentially powerful. For this reason, 19th and 20th Century objects of everyday life are presented as being of artistic value in the museum. As such, apprentices in jewellery, metal-casting, drawing, sculpting and weaving of the time worked in a most propitious atmosphere. It must also be said that antiquities had already begun to disappear from sites. They were making their way to various foreign collections. Legal controls for their protection were not well-established. To mitigate cultural losses, a museum was clearly ever more indispensable.

In 1917, the first stone was solemnly laid; thus launching the project of building a museum. Construction was completed in 1920. This was followed by the inauguration of the museum, then called The Albert Sarraut Museum. Regardless of its first collections, the building itself was already perceived as a work of great distinction. This opinion was unanimous. In 1951, the responsibility for managing patrimony was transferred by the French Protectorate to Khmer authorities. It was then that the museum's name was changed to The National Museum of Cambodia. The museum was directed by a succession of French directors until 1966, before the first Cambodian was put in charge. It goes without saying that from the very beginning the archaeological and ethnographic collections (of stone, wood, metal and ceramic objects) have been continuously enriched.

A number of guides as well as various catalogues and publications relevant to the collections are already known to the public.

**BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY,
ETHNOGRAPHY AND ART: SPECIAL
EXHIBITION AND THEIR ROLE
IN BALANCING NATIONAL AND
REGIONAL IDENTITIES**

As the number of visitors to the National Museum of Cambodia has increased, there is a need to shape the public's understanding of their country's history. The National Museum of Cambodia has arrived at a the turning point in its development. Instead of its traditional role of collecting, preserving and sharing its rich collections, it now finds that it plays an expanding role in supporting the development of communities and major economic activities. In performing such important duties, the National Museum of Cambodia needs to consider the role of cultures and communities which cross national borders and cultural objects that have been retooled and contextualized over different historical periods.

From 2010, the National Museum of Cambodia has promoted special and temporary exhibitions for different stakeholders. With support, it is hoped that the National Museum will continue to develop exhibitions that promote Cambodian art, explore aspects of Cambodian art history and showcase the extensive and extraordinary national collection. Such a special exhibition would encourage the participation of individual artists and the private sectors to cooperate with the National Museum to show their works of art as well as to advocate for representations of their community's identity. Some special exhibitions also lead to regional cooperation.

In 2010, the National Museum of Cambodia presented a special exhibition of ethnography of the Mekong entitled *Stories of the Mekong - Challenges and Dreams*. This exhibition lasted 3 months from July 28 – October 30, 2010. The Mekong River has been the home of cultures as old as time and a continuous source of life and legend. It gathers people with different ways of life, but who have shared challenges and dreams. This exhibition brings to life the rich cultural heritage of the river through different voices in this crossroad between old and new.

This exhibition was followed by a special exhibition entitled *Our Common Heritage: Exploring World Heritage Sites of Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam* that was inaugurated on 19 February 2013. It was a result of the UNESCO-Japan Fund in Trust project called *Revitalizing World Heritage Sites and Museums in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam*. The project was launched on July 2011 and followed by two regional workshops, the first in Hanoi (in 2011) and the second in Siem Reap (in 2012). It included participants from the nine museums: National Museum of Cambodia, Preah Norodom Sihanouk Angkor Museum, Angkor National Museum, Preah Vihear Eco Global Museum from Cambodia, Thang Long Imperial

Citadel site museum, My Son Interpretation Center, Da Nang Cham Sculpture Museum, Ho Citadel site Museum from Vietnam, and Wat Phu Museum from Laos. In addition to the exhibition, the National Museum of Cambodia, as well as other eight participating museums in this project ran an education programme with school children until the end of June 2013. The aim of this exhibition was to provide visitors with new narratives by shedding light on the historical interconnections between various World Heritage sites and related populations of the sub-region.

CONCLUSION

With the need for reform to cope with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) integration by 2015, the National Museum of Cambodia has started to address its role in defining and shaping the public's understanding of history and in balancing such histories with regional political histories and identities. The National Museum of Cambodia has found their way out of a traditional context of arts and archaeology by promoting special exhibitions in socio-history and ethnography.

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A SPEECH ON BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY AND ART: THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL MUSEUM

Mr. Huang Zhen Chun
Deputy Director of National Museum of China

This conference is themed on the role of a national museum, namely, the role and function of the museum in modern society. As is known to all, the museum is an important public institution delivering cultural services. It displays human civilization, promotes cultural exchanges, and enriches the visitors' spiritual and cultural world.

In general, the museum's functions are reflected in the following four aspects: Firstly, the museum solicits and preserves collections, which constitute the basis for the museum business; secondly, it holds exhibitions which represent the main channels through which the museum serves the public; thirdly, it contributes to pub-

licity and education and thus delivers cultural services; and fourthly, it carries out academic research. The museum should base all its major business upon scientific research.

Since the inauguration of the National Museum of China (NMC) with the merging of two museums in 2003, the foremost issue it has faced is addressing the scope of its role and function. Thereupon the NMC has set itself the goal of becoming a leading museum in China and a first-class museum in the world, showcasing history and art. Moreover, the NMC emphasises talent, collections, academics and services as key factors in running the museum. Thus, the NMC attaches equal importance to both



*The Exterior of the National Museum of China
Image courtesy of the National Museum of China*



*The West Entrance Hall in the National Museum of China
Image courtesy of the National Museum of China*

history and art and integrates its collection, exhibition, research, archaeology, public education and cultural exchanges into its displays and programmes. All of which carry salient Chinese characteristics.

These roles and functions also greatly influence the development of the NMC. Since its reopening in March 2011 and with efforts to build the world's top-notch comprehensive museum, the NMC has prioritised building its own exhibition system based on its collections. This consists of two permanent exhibitions on history and special exhibitions on more than 10 categories of art.

We also host international exchange exhibitions mainly from prestigious overseas museums. Lastly, our temporary exhibitions at home and abroad carry evident features of the time and represent distinctive art styles. Through the years, this exhibition system continues to expand and improve.

Over the past four years since the museum's reopening, we have held more than 200 exhibitions, receiving nearly 30 million visitors from China and abroad. We have established and improved the people's foremost public cultural service system, and developed a safe and efficient operation system, which has won the museum accolades around the world. According to the 2014 *Theme Index and Museum Index: The Global Attractions Attendance Report* released by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions on June 4, 2015, the NMC ranked as the second most popular museum in the world. It continues to be one of the most visited and popular museums in the world.

In recent years, the NMC has made headway in delivering public services. Still, we must be aware of the challenges, opportunities and historical missions facing the museum. The 2015 International Museum Day is themed "Museums for a Sustainable Society", which emphasises the significance of the museum as a cultural medium and educator. The role

and related work of the museum necessitates it being a guardian of cultural heritage and an entity pushing for better society. Therefore, the museum should continuously strengthen and improve its collections, exhibitions, public services and management.

As we know, due to historical reasons, many Asian museums including the NMC cannot compare with some of the international prestigious museums in terms of the size of their collections. They keep inadequate cultural heritage and artwork of different cultural periods. These museums have yet to establish an inseparable link with the public. Many of them have a long way to go to improve their management.

The Asian National Museums Association was formed for this very reason. Its aim is to improve the management and services of the Asian museums and promote cultural exchanges and development among Asian museums. I believe that through the association Asian national museums will enjoy even smoother communication, more frequent contact and increased cooperation. The NMC will use the

platform to vigorously carry out communication and cooperation with its counterparts in other Asian countries.

In 2016, the NMC will host the “China-Japan-Korea National Museum Directors Conference” and hold the “China-Japan-Korea National Museums Joint Exhibition.” Additionally, the following year will be the “China-Qatar Culture Year”, for which we plan to stage joint exhibitions with the National Museum of Qatar.

I sincerely hope the fifth conference of the Asian National Museums Association will yield rich fruits in promoting museum personnel exchanges, exhibitions, public cultural education services, academic research and publishing.

Finally, I wish the fifth conference of the Asian National Museums Association a complete success.

Thank you!

November 2015

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SHIFTING PRIORITIES OF A NATIONAL MUSEUM – THE JOURNEY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM NEW DELHI

Joyoti Roy, Outreach Consultant
Dr. R.K Tewari, Deputy Curator, Numismatics,
National Museum New Delhi

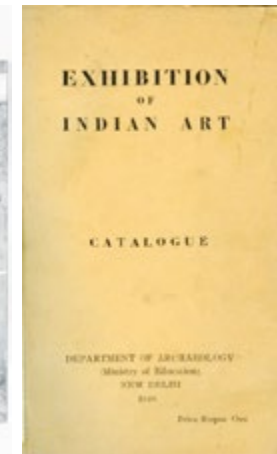
Museums in India have undergone important changes in the last decade. These changes are reflected in the priority placed upon collections, display, representations and public engagement. By virtue of being a National Museum, the Museum in New Delhi has historically taken on a complex role, which needs revision from time to time. In today's environment, the balancing of political history, ethnography and art is precarious and sensitive. It calls for deep introspection. Through a discussion of the journey of the National Museum in Delhi, this paper recounts the story of a national museum in-making, addressing the expectations it is faced with today and how it deals with them. While many matters remain unresolved, the role of the museum is determined by the people. The people's needs guide the way in which the museum defines its function.

1. NATIONAL MUSEUM – BEGINNINGS

The blueprint for establishing the National Museum in Delhi was prepared by the Maurice Gwyer Committee in May 1946. An exhibition of Indian Art, consisting of selected artefacts from various museums of India was organised by the Royal Academy, London in cooperation with the governments of India and Britain. The exhibition went on display in the galleries of Burlington House, London during the winter months of 1947-48. Upon its return, it was decided that the same collection should be on display in Delhi. As a result, an exhibition along the same lines was organized in *Rashtrapati Bhawan* (President's residence) in 1949. This seeded the idea for the creation of a National Museum of India.

The foundation of the present building located in the heart of Delhi city on Janpath was laid by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, on May 12, 1955. The first phase of building was formally inaugurated by Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the Vice President of India, on December 18, 1960. The second phase of building was completed in 1989. Today, it remains as it was upon completion.

Established in 1814 by the British in their colonial capital of Kolkata, the Indian Museum was a much larger museum that predated the National Museum in Delhi – so, why did they build a new museum rather than make the Indian Museum a national museum? The Indian Museum is the oldest museum not just in India but in the entire Asia-Pacific region. However, India needed a National Museum at the heart of its independent capital city in New Delhi. The genesis of the National Museum at Delhi emerged from an exhibition that took place very close to its independence, when the need to assert the national nature of our collections was crucial. Before this, collections were located regionally and were owned by local people, museums and royal treasuries. India was ready to build herself into a nation and it was important to show the World and its own people that this country that had struggled for over 3 centuries for independence, now stood united. With all of India's cultural accoutrements pooled together, there must be a space and place that could hold this valuable representation of 'being one nation' under one roof - only a National Museum could embody this sentiment.



*The Exhibition at Rashtrapati Bhavan after return from London and the first catalogue
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi*

The 1948 Burlington House Exhibition showcased collections from Indian Princely States, Archaeological Site Museums and private donors. When the idea of a National Museum was mooted, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had to personally write letters to each of the donors asking them to donate their collections permanently to the new National Museum. This was not an easy task. While some donors agreed generously, others found it difficult to part with their prized possessions permanently. This call for donations was in the name of building a national asset that would remind the people of India for generations to come how rich their histories were. The National Museum finally had a large enough core collection to open in 1949.

While the Museum continued to grow its collection through gifts that were sought painstakingly, artefacts were also collected through its Arts Purchase Committee in the 1980s and 90s. The Museum presently holds approximately 200,000 objects of diverse natures, including objects of Indian as well as foreign origin. It's holdings cover more than five thousand years of Indian cultural heritage.

While the National Museum was established to serve a national agenda, in the decades following its establishment, the motivations and the relevance of its national function underwent

great change. Like the Indian Museum, the National Museum was first meant to address the foreign visitor. They were both capsules of Indian history and culture, which would help orient the outsider to what laid within India.

2. EARLY DAYS: ENCYCLOPAEDIC COLLECTIONS, DYNASTIC HISTORIES AND AN ABSENCE OF THE LOCAL

The Archaeological Survey of India, which was established in 1861, nearly a hundred years before the National Museum, New Delhi, has carried out numerous excavations since its inception. By the time the National Museum, New Delhi, was established, it had already established many site museums; the first was at Sarnath (near present day Varanasi). Each of these site museums housed collections from nearby finds or excavations. Site museums were established by the British in pre-independence India and were visual store-houses of a large number of objects that could be studied and correlated with the site they came from.

When collections from these site museums were brought to Delhi for the core collection of the National Museum, their context and function changed. They now carried on their shoulders the responsibility of representing a national history. If one visits the Sarnath



Early Sculpture Gallery at the National Museum
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi

museum today, one will realise that its remarkable masterpieces are still displayed like a 'list', with minimum explanation and a narrative that only engages the scholar, who already has knowledge of the site and its history. For the common visitor, there is little to engage with. A similar manner of display was seen in the early galleries of the National Museum which has 3 floors and over 27 galleries.

The first few galleries of the National Museum are chronologically arranged (starting with the Indus Civilisation collections of 2500 BC to the Late Medieval Sculpture of the 14th to the 15th Century). This has remained intact for many years and reflects the understanding of Indian histories through dynasties. This is a historiography that needs urgent updating. Occasionally and within these galleries, sculptures are organised by religious subjects, whether Buddhist, Jain or Hindu. Later, in the mid-1960s,

a Buddhist Art Gallery was added to this mix to celebrate the large collection of Buddhist artefacts in the possession of National Museum.

The sculpture galleries are followed by a section on Indian Miniature paintings – a rich and diverse tradition of India. The gallery is essentially divided into various schools of miniature paintings – Pahari, Rajasthani, Decani, Central Indian and Mughal. Further on is the Decorative Arts Gallery. The Decorative Arts is a genre which emerged in the British vocabulary to refer to crafts and utilitarian objects of daily use that had very high craftsmanship and aesthetic value. The period and provenance of such objects is usually from the late 18th to the 19th century and represent a period of collecting craft items by Indian royalty and later by colonial connoisseurs. An extension of the Decorative Arts Gallery is the jewellery collection which was recently re-curated. The galleries on the

first floor include a gallery on Indian Coinage and Numismatics and the Central Asian Antiquities. The third and final level in the Museum has a Textile Gallery, a Wood Carving Gallery, Arms and Armour Gallery, The Pre-Columbian and Western Arts Gallery, Musical Instruments Gallery and a gallery titled *North-East Lifestyle*.

This arrangement of galleries closely reflects the Indian Museum in Kolkata. The curatorial plan of the Indian Museum reflects how the British wished to understand Indian history. Archaeology, anthropology and the study of natural sciences were all important academic fields which the British established in India. To begin with, in the early 19th century, these were tools for surveillance but gradually they were strengthened with technologies such as photography and print-making. Many British Officers pursued these independent fields of study. Therefore, objects utilised by Archaeology, art, anthropology, zoology and botany had to be under one roof. The museum 'conflated' every aspect of India (then a British Colony) into one capsule so that India's history and geography could be understood as a simple linear story without any complexities. Chronology and classification of objects based on the material and technique (stone, wood, paintings, textiles) was at the centre of this curatorial logic.

A growing friendship between the British and princely states also helped in funding conservation and excavation at various sites; for example, the conservation of the Sanchi Stupa was sponsored by the Begum of Bhopal in early 20th Century and Sir John Marshall, the first Director General of ASI worked on it. The Sanchi Museum, is one of the earliest site museums of India and showcases finds from the site of Sanchi. Such trends ensured that historiography was carefully structured. The piecing together of the story of India through these sites was ultimately mirrored in our museums; first at the Indian Museum and later in the National

Museum in New Delhi. This was in spite of the National Museum in Delhi being established with the great impetus of representing the 'national'.

For over 5 decades, the National Museum in New Delhi has perpetuated this narrative without questioning it. There are advantages and disadvantages in this kind of story-telling which interfere with the real meaning of the 'national' and must be probed today.

In brief, the collecting practices in the first few decades of the National Museum's establishment were encyclopaedic. They were neatly assembled and packed into a linear chronological history, where possible, and at other instances they were either put into the Decorative Arts or into material and technique specific galleries. This trend has to be broken for the museum to remain relevant to its public.

3. DEALING WITH ANTHROPOLOGY- A COMPLEX PLOT

Initially developed as a science and thought to be guided by logic alone, the field of Anthropology has undergone many interpretations. Today, Cultural Studies probably describes its ambit best. A shift of priorities from tangible heritage to intangible heritage in the last 2 decades has propelled the understanding of Indian history and culture that manifests in its languages and dialects, culinary traditions, lifestyle, creation myths, literature and the everyday arts. These forms of culture reflect people and practices that are difficult to represent in a museum. The discussion, debate and sharing of which is essential to the process of museum-making.

And all these dwell strongly on the people and their practices which are difficult to capture in a museum. Yet, nevertheless, must be part of mainstream museum-making. The Anthropology-

gy Collection of the National Museum has met a similar fate.

This collection at the National Museum consists of about 8,000 objects. It was built over the years through purchases, gifts by various private donors and collected through the surveys conducted by officials of the department in tribal belts and rural areas. The collection was further enriched by the acquisition of significant objects by Dr. Verrier Elwin (1902–1964), an eminent British anthropologist. These artefacts reflect the rituals and customs related to life cycles, economic pursuits and traditions of various Indian communities. The collection comprises of artefacts in a variety of materials and mediums such as terracotta, textile, basketry, bone wood, metal, paper, leather etc. The seven states in the North East of India, colloquially known as ‘The Seven Sisters’ have an extensive variety of customs, lifestyles and traditions. The display highlights the regional similarity in cultural traits. The traditional apparel, jewellery, basketry, wood carvings and personal adornments of some of the groups, mirror the life and culture of the different people in the region. The glimpse of everyday life of the Monpa, Sherdukpen, Khowa, Apatani, Mishmi, Adi, Nocte, Wancho, Singhpho and Khampti of Arunachal Pradesh, the Karbi and Bodo of Assam, the Thangkul and Kuki of Manipur,

the Mizos of Mizoram, the Ao, Angami, Sema, Lotha and Konyak of Nagaland, and the Riang from Tripura are on view in this gallery.

While the North-East Lifestyle Gallery depicts the composite culture of this region, the Tradition, Art and Continuity Gallery was established and opened only in February 2014 with a completely different approach, which is discussed in the next section.

4. NEW GALLERIES AT NATIONAL MUSEUM –TANJORE AND MYSORE PAINTINGS, TRADITION, ART AND CONTINUITY AND THE JEWELLERY GALLERY.

Between 2013 and 2015, the National Museum established three important galleries – the Tanjore and Mysore Paintings Gallery, Tradition, Art and Continuity Gallery and the Jewellery Gallery.

The Tanjore and Mysore Paintings Gallery was opened in 2013. It was a pleasant departure from the chronology, material and medium based gallery classification. It is based on a local South Indian style of painting, a tradition derived from domestic practices. Tanjore and Mysore paintings, rich and beautiful as they



Tanjore and Mysore Paintings Gallery
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi



Tradition, Art and Continuity Gallery
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi

are, are actually from the home shrines of the Vaishnav and Shaivite devotees from the temple town of Tanjore (in present day Tamil Nadu) and Mysore in Karnataka. While on the one hand, this gallery showcased arts practices of a particular community, it is clearly a reflection of local styles of South India that are very difficult to fit into any linear narrative of a history of India. Tanjore and Mysore paintings are somewhere between high religious art and folk expressions. They are continuously influenced by local contemporary trends. While the National Museum constructed and put on display this public gallery because it had a sizeable collection of Tanjore and Mysore paintings, the gallery actually enriched the overall narrative of the Museum representing the national. This is because local, folk and contemporary traditions of art making are as national as the classical sculptures.

The second new gallery that opened in February 2014 was the Tradition, Art and Continuity Gallery. This gallery must be seen in comparison to the approach of the North-East-

ern Lifestyle Gallery which tries to address the large and complex region of the North-east by placing textile and tribal objects quite randomly. The Tradition, Art and Continuity Gallery, on the other hand tackled the people’s art in a different manner. It clusters various kinds of people’s crafts – basketry, metal sculptures, masks, ritual objects, jewellery, narrative paintings etc. This was a clever curation of similarly used objects from across India, including the North-East, Central India, North India, East India and South India. More importantly, it was titled *Tradition, Art and Continuity*. It captures the spirit with which Indian communities create, use and destroy art. This too was a renewed approach to representational issues that was not bound by region, period or dynasty. It acknowledged the craftsmen and their skills.

The Jewellery Gallery which opened recently is also a new exciting beginning. The jewellery pieces on display have been arranged in two sections: On one side, they are displayed according to which part of the body they are

worn on: head and hair ornaments, neck pieces, bangles, waist belts and anklets. On the other side, and more importantly, they are organised by type: Temple jewellery, marriage jewellery, dance jewellery and ritual jewellery. There is an emphasised focus on the technique and influences from one part of India on others and so on. This classification allows the visitor to engage with the pieces in a universal manner. In other words, earrings from Kashmir (in the north) to Bengal (in the East) to Kerala (in the South) are all put in one cabinet and allow visitors to see in a short span the wonder that was India in the modern day.

These galleries take a pleasant detour from chronological and dynastic storytelling and represent the local flavour and fabric of India that matter to a larger cross-section of Indian people. The galleries employ a language that is understood by all and looks familiar and more inviting.

This shift of curatorial practice, enriched

by design and display, are the new emerging face of the National Museum – more accessible to its own people, jargon free and soul enriching.

5. BALANCING IT WITH EXHIBITIONS

The trends in the new galleries, however, do not mean that all the old methodologies are denounced and that no chronology should be told. Within the last 2 years, the museum has organized over 15 exhibitions, some large and some small but essentially, it has become a hub for public expression.

Curators who do not work in the National Museum are now closely working with its collections to make exhibitions. In this regard, there are three examples that must be mentioned:

In early 2014, the Museum hosted one of largest exhibitions in its history called the *Body in Indian Art*. The exhibition showcased over 300 objects from over 44 lenders across India. The exhibition was curated by an external curator, Dr. Naman Ahuja. The exhibition was



Jewellery Gallery
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi



The Body in Indian Art Exhibition
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi



Objects in the Deccan Art Exhibition
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi

originally mounted for the Belgian Festival of India and was shown at the National Museum upon its return. While the exhibition included the best classical masterpieces of Indian art, it began with a wooden tribal sculpture of a Naga warrior. This was a conscious decision on the part of the curator who chose to begin with an object that came from one of the most unknown North-eastern states of India. This was an important national statement for the exhibition and for the museum. The exhibition had put classical sculptures and tribal ethnographic

sculptures on the same platform.

In January 2015 the museum collaborated with the Aesthetics Project to host an exhibition titled *Nauras: The Many Arts of Deccan*. The exhibition showcased objects from the Deccani period of Indian history which was an extremely cosmopolitan era. The Pre-Mughal Deccani period has often been overshadowed by Mughal history. Representing the many histories of India so as to allow pluralistic narratives to be told is also the responsibility of a national museum.



*Blind children being shown the Cadence and Counterpart Exhibition
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi*

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*National Museum, New Delhi
Image courtesy of the National Museum New Delhi*

BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY, AND ART: THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IMPLEMENTATION AT MUSEUM NASIONAL INDONESIA

Mrs. Intan Mardiana
Director, Museum Nasional Indonesia

THE HISTORY OF MUSEUM NASIONAL

The mid-18th century in Europe was a period known as the “Age of Enlightenment” when people began questioning traditional beliefs and setting up societies to discuss scientific reasoning and development.

In accordance with their times, European settlers in Indonesia were also motivated to follow suit. On 24th of April 1778, the Governor-General of the VOC or *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (the United East Indies Company), Dr Reinier de Klerk (1710 – 1780), gave his permission to establish *Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (The Batavian Society for the Arts and Sciences). This was the first society of its kind in Asia. It aimed to analyse many cultural aspects of the people of the East Indies (now Indonesia) through scientific research. The motto of the Society was *Ten Nutte van het Algemeeni*, indicating that it would work “for the good of the general public”. De Klerk was appointed as Managing Director while several other council members became directors. One of them, Jacobus Cornelis Mattheus (JCM) Radermacher (1741 – 1783), who was married to the Governor General’s stepdaughter, became the society’s executive director.

JCM Radermacher made the greatest contribution. In 1779, he donated his house in Kali Besar, Jakarta Kota, the trading district in the old part of the city, to the Society. He also donated a number of scientific instruments, for example, musical instruments, coins, manuscripts, books and other curios. The building and

other contributions became the initial collection of the museum and the library of the Society.

In 1813, two years after the British had ousted the Dutch from the East Indies, Thomas Stamford Raffles became the Lieutenant Governor of Java and President of the Society on April 24, 1813. He was very keen to acquire knowledge about the history, culture and arts of the East Indies and he stimulated a great deal of new interest in the institution. Due to the building in Kali Besar becoming too small for the growing number of collections, Raffles ordered the construction of a new building to be used as a museum and meeting hall for the “Literary Society”, as the institution was renamed during that period. This building was located at Jalan Majapahit 3. Today, this location hosts the building of the State Secretariat, near the President’s Palace.

The Society’s collection steadily increased, until the museum on Jalan Majapahit 3 became too small. In 1862, the Dutch government decided to build a new museum building. This edifice, today’s Museum Nasional on Jalan Merdeka Barat 12, was opened in 1868. An east-facing rectangle, the museum was built in Doric style, with its white Neo-classical façade and Doric columns. Since then, the building has undergone several alterations and extensions.

The museum is well-known among the Indonesian people, especially among the inhabitants of Jakarta. They call it *Gedung Gajah* (Elephant Building), because of the large bronze statue of an elephant standing in the front yard.

This statue was donated by King Chulalongkorn of Siam (now Thailand), when he paid a state visit to Jakarta from March 27 to April 21, 1871.

In 1931, the museum’s collections were shown at a world cultural exhibition in Paris. Unfortunately, a fire in the exhibition hall demolished Indonesia’s exhibition pavilion and destroyed most of the objects. The museum received some insurance money as compensation and in the following year, these funds were used to build the old Ceramic Room, the Bronze Room and both Treasure Rooms on the second floor.

Because of the service rendered by the Society in the field of science and in government projects, in 1933, the Dutch government added the title *Koninklijk* (Royal) to its name. The museum flourished and was very fortunate to be spared from any damage during the dangerous years of World War II (1942-1945) and Indonesian National Revolution.

On January 26, 1950, the society’s name was altered from *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* to *Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia* (Institute of Indonesian Culture). This change was in line with the times, as seen in the motto of The National Museum of Indonesia, “The existence of the National Museum as a source of information and tourism, which can develop people’s minds and lives, develop civilization and pride in national culture, as well as strengthen unity and friendship among nations.”¹

Mindful of the importance of the museum for the people of Indonesia, the LKI or Institute of Indonesian Culture presented the museum to the government of Indonesia on September 17, 1962, and the museum became *Museum Pusat* (Central Museum). The museum was managed by the Indonesian government under the Department of Education and

Culture. By decree of the Minister of Education and Culture on May 28, 1979, it was renamed the *Museum Nasional*.

In 1994, upon the initiative of the Minister of Education and Culture, Wardiman Djonegoro, the expansion of the Museum began. Adjacent to the existing building (Building A) and in the same architectural style, the new building (Building B) was inaugurated in June 20, 2007.

From the year 2000 till 2011, Museum Nasional was under the purview of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the building of the new museum still continues. At the end of 2011, Museum Nasional was returned to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

THE ROLE OF MUSEUM NASIONAL INDONESIA IN THE PRESERVATION AND PRESENTATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Due to its long history, Museum Nasional Indonesia has now become the oldest and largest museum in Indonesia. Various programmes related to developing museum technical aspects such as preservation and presentation of the collection have been undertaken. Although there has been no significant increase in terms of collection development since the era of Indonesia’s independence (1945), there was however a historic event in 1978.

1978 was a blissful and exciting time for Indonesia. Masterpieces from the classical era and the Islamic developing era were handed over by the Dutch government to Museum Nasional Indonesia (MNI). The collection included the Prajñāparamita statue, Nagarakertagama text, and the gold pieces from Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Previously, these collections were managed by *Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde Leiden* – Netherlands.

¹ Dedah Rufacdah Sri Handari, *Museum Nasional 1778-2008*, (Jakarta: Museum Nasional, 2008.)

Museum Nasional Indonesia and the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden (RMV) were both built in the 18th century when the Dutch were in power in Indonesia. The collections of both museums were similar since they were derived from the same sites or collectors.

At that time, collection building throughout Indonesia was conducted by scientific expeditions, military expeditions, government officials and officers on missions. Based on prevailing policies at that time, all cultural heritage objects gathered by the collectors were transferred to Bataviaasch Genootschap in Batavia. The collection was then divided into two, one part was left in Batavia (Jakarta), the other was sent to the Netherlands, mainly to Leiden. The exporting of the collection to the Netherlands occurred from the mid-19th century till the time before Independence in 1945. As a result, most of the collections of Indonesian cultural heritage objects stored in RMV had never been seen by the Indonesian people themselves.

To address this issue, a joint exhibition organised by MNI and RMV entitled *Shared Cultural Heritage* (SCH) was held in 2003 through the auspices of a cooperation agreement. The exhibition was held twice: at the National Museum of Indonesia in August - November 2005, then at the De Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam in December 2005 - April 2006.

The exhibition was a highly anticipated event for the Indonesian public, because the Rijks Museum voor Volkenkunde collection on display originated from the same period and site, namely Borobudur, Muteran, Singosari, Lombok, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, etc. Up to that point, only Indonesians who had been to the Netherlands had been able to enjoy these priceless artefacts. With the SCH exhibition, the Indonesian public was finally able to enjoy the beauty of the collec-

tions of the Museum Nasional Indonesia and the Rijks Museum voor Volkenkunde in one place. The *Shared Cultural Heritage* exhibition held from 2005-2006 was complimented with an international seminar, *Singhasari Masterpieces and Other Collections*.

The SCH cooperation was not limited to the implementation of an exhibition and seminar only, but also encouraged more comprehensive cooperation between the MNI and the RMV in areas such as collection research, collections management, library management, and others. MNI and RMV human resources were involved in an exchange programme to assist and enhance professionalism in such aspects.

The partnership between MNI and RMV continued from July 2007 to 2009. One of the programmes that was held as part of this partnership was the provision of consultancy services in the rearrangement and renovation of the permanent exhibitions of MNI's ethnographic collection. The RMV provided specialised human resources for this task. The renovation was carried out in two phases. The first phase was implemented in the fiscal year of 2007 and included the areas of Sumatra and Java. The second phase was conducted in 2008 and included the areas of Bali, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara and Papua.

In addition, the *The Glamour of Minangkabau Traditional Cloth*, held from April 7 to 30 2008, invited active participation from the RMV curators. The exhibition was organised as a first step to a major SCH exhibition in 2009 under the theme of *Sumatera*. In terms of human resource development, the CollAsia programme conducted in October 2008 discussed the use of old buildings (Heritage Buildings) for collection management in terms of either being used as exhibition spaces or for storage. Museum Nasional

Indonesia was chosen as the venue for its ancient and modern architecture. It was also an apt case study. The training also involved active participation of one RMV conservator.

The culmination of the SCH programme from 2007 - 2009 was the *Sumatra* exhibition from July - November 2009. The exhibition was also held at the Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore in 2010. The partnership between MNI and RMV, which has now been renamed as the National Museum of World Cultures, is still harmoniously tied. In 2014, when Museum Nasional Indonesia held the Singhasari seminar within the framework of the International Museum Day Festival and the 236 Years of Museum Nasional Indonesia, the curators of RMV were also invited to speak. Before this, we also built the Singosari mobile application. These projects represents the harmonious cooperation between both museums.

In 2016, the National Museum of Indonesia will enter the development of the third building (Building C) and will finish in 2018. With regards to the future presentation of our collections in our permanent exhibitions, we have a new storyline developed from focus group discussions in 2014, where we invited people from all walks of life to provide their input. These included members of the public, academic practitioners, professional organisations, the media, public figures, and museum practitioners. The most important thing we learnt from those sessions, which we also share and which we continue to apply, is a shared commitment to continue preserving our cultural heritage together.

THE ROLES OF NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN JAPANESE SOCIETY

Mr. Masami Zeniya, Executive Director,
Tokyo National Museum

INTRODUCTION

National museums in Japan can be divided into three main categories based on their management: those managed directly by the government, Independent Administrative Institutions, and Inter-University Research Institute Corporations. The first category includes, for example, the Agency for Cultural Affairs' National Archives of Modern Architecture, the Imperial Household Agency's Museum of the Imperial Collections, and museums at bases of the Japan Self-Defense Forces under the Ministry of Defense. Institutions belonging to the second category were operated directly by the government. However, with the introduction of the Independent Administrative Institution in 2001, three such institutions were established: National Museums (National Institutes for Cultural Heritage from 2007), National Museums of Art, and National Museum of Nature and Science.¹ The National Museum of Japanese History and the National Museum of Ethnology fall into the third category. They were managed directly by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), but became Inter-University Research Institute Corporations as part of the National Institutes for the Humanities when national universities became independent of the government in 2004.

Japanese national museums were thus established in a number of diverse forms through various processes. As discussed, below, however,

the four museums of the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage are usually considered the epitome of national museums in Japan because of their long histories and the circumstances of their creation. In this paper, I will discuss the role of these museums and that of the Tokyo National Museum in particular.

1. NATIONAL MUSEUMS AS INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS

Museums are considered institutions for social education under the Museum Act in Japan (1951). They are expected to carry out systematic educational activities while maintaining political and religious neutrality. However, because they were originally established by the government, national museums are exempt from this act. This does not deny their roles as educational institutions. They are exempt because they were expected to carry out the nation's educational and cultural policies as specialized institutions belonging to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (later MEXT, and the Agency for Cultural Affairs).

The Tokyo National Museum was established in 1872 as a "Museum of the Ministry of Education." Authority over the museum was later transferred to the Ministry of the Interior, and later to the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, the Imperial Household Ministry, and other ministries and agencies. Likewise, the museum's role also changed accordingly, from, for example, the promotion of education and

¹ Independent Administrative Institutions are legal bodies that were established to take over operation of organizations the government did not need to be directly responsible for. The aim of which was to increase efficiency.



Tokyo National Museum
Image courtesy of Tokyo National Museum



Exhibit of Ainu Culture, Tokyo National Museum
Image courtesy of Tokyo National Museum

culture, to the promotion of industry, and to the management of the Imperial Household's properties. The establishment of the National Museum of Nature and Science in addition to National Museums of Art during this long process allowed for different fields to develop independently.

From 2001, national museums, which had been based on the laws of the Ministry of Education and Science Establishment Act (2001), became Independent Administrative Institutions. These museums included three National Museums (four since 2005), four Na-

tional Museums of Art (five since 2007), and one National Museum of Nature and Science. Each Independent Administrative Institution came to be operated under a different law of establishment. Despite handling different fields, these institutions share common roles as museums, as specified by, for example, The International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Museum Act in Japan. These roles include acquiring and preserving objects, making these objects available for public viewing, and conducting research and educational activities. Due to these common roles, the idea to merge these three Independent Administrative Institutions was

brought up during the process of administrative reform. However, after National Museums were integrated with National Research Institutes for Cultural Properties to become the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage in 2007, there has been no further integration or restructuring.

2. NATIONAL MUSEUMS AS NATIONAL CENTRES

Although Independent Administrative Institutions such as National Museums and National Museums of Art are not bound by the Museum Act, they are expected to serve as “National Centres,” or as models for museums across the nation. This is, of course, due to them having the largest collections and outstanding staff. In the mid-term goal for the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage, which MEXT sets every five years, it clearly states that these institutions are “National Centres, the mission of which is to acquire, conserve, manage, exhibit, and pass on to the next generation tangible cultural properties, foremost of which are numerous National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties, to conduct research on these properties, and to communicate the history and traditional culture of our nation within and outside of Japan, all for the purpose of conserving and utilizing these cultural properties, which are the valued property of the nation.”² The same passage is also used for National Museums of Art in addition to the National Museum of Nature and Science, and indeed, these are their roles.

In the last fiscal year, the four national museums belonging to the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage offered assistance and advice to public and private museums on 264 occasions, and lent a total of 1,962 objects (including those on long-term loans) on 274 occasions. 95 objects were also lent overseas on 13 separate

occasions, which is an outstanding number in Japan.

National Museums also serve as the “Face of Japan,” often holding exhibitions abroad as anniversary events upon the requests of governments and embassies. In fact, most of the foreign exhibitions organized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs are co-organized by the Tokyo National Museum. Loans from other institutions, temples, shrines, and individuals are possible because of the trust arising from these institutions being national museums.

3. BALANCE WITH POLITICAL HISTORY

As mentioned before, although national museums in Japan are exempt from the Museum Act, fundamentally they are institutions for social education and are expected to maintain political and religious neutrality. National Museums of the National Institutes of Cultural Heritage rarely deal with political history because they primarily handle cultural properties that are artworks. However, there are times when organizers must be careful with the names (such as the names of regions) used in special exhibitions that deal with areas that were colonised or involved in territorial disputes. In such cases, names are chosen based on international standards (regulations and treaties) or schoolbooks, which are based on the Courses of Study (government curriculum guidelines). Moreover, although historical periods are usually based on political history, divisions based on cultural or art history are also used at museums in Japan. For example, from July to September of this year (2015) the exhibition *Hakuho, The First Full Flowering of Buddhist Art in Japan* was held at the Nara National Museum. The names of periods such as “Hakuho” and “Tempyo” are derived from categories used in art history.

Political history is more likely to become a concern when an exhibition deals with modern history. At the National Museum of Japanese History there are constant debates regarding modern history exhibitions, most often about the wording and expressions used in the explanations for these exhibitions.

Even during times of political and diplomatic tension in the Asia-Pacific region, we actively engage in cultural exchange, such as through exhibitions, between national museums of different countries, and believe that these exchanges should continue into the future. At the Tokyo National Museum we therefore regard the existence of ANMA as having great significance.

4. BALANCE WITH ETHNOLOGY

There are exhibitions at the Tokyo National Museums about Ainu and Ryūkyū cultures in addition to those of other Asian ethnic groups. The focus, however, is on artworks and historical records, not ethnology. Similarly, there are exhibitions about these ethnic groups at the Museum of Nature and Science but they focus on anthropology and botany, while the National

Museum of Ethnology conducts research and holds exhibitions pertaining to ethnology and cultural anthropology. Each museum thus has clearly assigned roles.

The activities of these museums, however, are not overly narrow in focus. The National Museum of Nature and Science, for example, has held special exhibitions concerning fields such as archaeology, history, and ethnology. These include *The Inka Empire Revealed: Century After the Machu Picchu “Discovery”* in 2012 and *Mummy: The Inside Story* in 2006. Additionally, *The Power of Images*, an exhibition held last year that consisted of objects from the National Museum of Ethnology, was co-organized with the National Art Centre, Tokyo. Rather than categorizing images based on regions or historical periods, it focused on similarities in form, effect, and function. It was a revolutionary exhibition that questioned the preconceptions we have about objects created by humans. In recent years, special exhibitions that cross over different fields have been increasing in number, and it is believed that national museums of different Independent Administrative Institutions should collaborate further to hold diverse exhibitions and programs.



Room 18 (Modern Art), Tokyo National Museum
Image courtesy of Tokyo National Museum

2. National Institutes of Cultural Heritage (Japan), ed. *Dokuritsu Gyōsei Hōjin Kokuritsu Bankazai Kikō No Chūki Mokuyō (The Mid-term Goal for the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage)*. Report. April 1, 2011. <http://www.nich.go.jp/data/hyoka/index.html>.

Preparations are also being made for the 2020 opening of the National Museum of Ainu Culture in Hokkaido although its management body is still undecided. This museum will conduct research and hold exhibitions that cover different academic fields on the Ainu, who are an ethnic group indigenous to Japan.

5. BALANCE WITH ART

National Museums of the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage primarily handle cultural properties that are artworks, but not those by contemporary artists. In other words, such artworks fall within art history and the value of which have been more or less established. However, this designation was only clarified in recent years.

The National Museum of Modern Art was established in 1952. (It became the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo in 1967.) Through a mutual agreement regarding the management of objects based on historical periods, the Tokyo National Museum was to manage works from 1906 and earlier, the National Museum of Modern Art, those from 1924 and later, while works created between 1907 and 1923 were to be managed as they had been for the time being. 1907 was the year when the government began an annual exhibition, the Bunten Exhibition, which was sponsored by the Ministry of Education and when the ministry started to purchase artworks. The National Institutes for Cultural Heritage almost never handle contemporary art, which ranges over a wide variety of genres such as comics (*manga*), animation, digital art, and illustration. However, in recent years, there has been progress in designating certain works of modern art as Important Cultural Properties. Additionally, the transfer of artworks by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage, and National Museums of Art has become more difficult since the introduction

of the Independent Administration Institution in 2001. Cooperation and joint research among these institutions, with regards to conservation, is becoming increasingly necessary. It is possible that certain contemporary artworks will be designated Important Cultural Properties in 50 or 100 years. These artworks will be recognized for their historical and cultural significance in addition to their artistic value, and may come under the management of the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage.

6. NEW ROLES OF NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN JAPAN

During the previous fiscal year, the National Task Force for the Japanese Cultural Heritage Disaster Risk Mitigation Network was established at the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage based on the experience gained from activities such as the “rescue” of cultural properties after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. This task force is planning to establish a nationwide system for disaster prevention and the rescue of cultural properties. Preventing the destruction of cultural properties is an important role that the Tokyo National Museum must fulfil given its standing as a National Centre. From now on, it will actively pursue this objective.



Logo for ICOM General Conference in Kyoto
Image courtesy of Tokyo National Museum

The ICOM General Conference will be held in Kyoto in 2019, just a year before the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. With national museums at the centre of this endeavor, it is essential to use this occasion as an opportunity to promote international exchanges and communication at Japanese museums. In partic-



Buddhist Sculpture at The Gallery of Horyuji Treasures, Tokyo National Museum
Photo by Sato Akira. Image courtesy of Tokyo National Museum

ular, the Tokyo National Museum is expected to be at the centre of planning cultural programs for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the Kyoto National Museum, to act as a leader among the 200 museums in its city. We hope to contribute to the development of Asian museums as a whole with the cooperation of Korea and China, both of which have hosted the General Conference in the past.

In recent years, the function of museums in MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Conferences/Conventions, Exhibitions/Events) has been recognised and their use as “unique venues” is also increasing. These developments will contribute to the invigoration of fundraising and museum marketing. Tokyo National Museum is taking the initiative in these developments as part of its cultural and tourism planning. It will continue its active engagement while giving proper consideration, as a National Centre, to conservation, and crime and disaster prevention.

CONCLUSION

The establishment and development of national museums varies by country and region. Their roles, therefore, cannot be discussed in broad, sweeping terms. One similarity, however, is that all national museums receive national funds, and, whether they like it or not, are subject to the policies of their respective countries. Such governmental influence often comes from financial considerations rather than cultural policies. We have experienced significant changes in the establishment and management of national museums resulting from changes of government. However, our foundation does not consist of short-term objectives, but the perpetual mission of determining how we can protect and pass down the invaluable cultural properties of the nation to future generations. Gaining the understanding of various stakeholders such as the political and business sectors in addition to individuals of academic standing is essential for this purpose. We wish to exchange information with other members of ANMA while striving for the development of national museums in Asia and maintaining a balance between history, ethology, and art.

BALANCING RESEARCH ON ANCIENT KOREAN CULTURES

Dr. Kim Youngna
Director, National Museum of Korea

INTRODUCTION

For various reasons, some cultures of the past never seem to receive the proper evaluation that they deserve, often because of the political or economic climate in the present. However, at the same time, with changes to the social environment and context, cultures that were once almost forgotten can be revived, reexamined, and newly appreciated. The national museums of every country have a mission and responsibility to properly introduce and evaluate the entire history and culture of their respective nations. Through proactive research and diverse exhibitions, museums seek to uncover and re-evaluate the hidden and concealed aspects of history and culture, and the national museums of Korea have engaged in several such projects over the years. Among these, I would like to discuss one of the most recent examples, which is the renewed interest in restoring the culture of Baekje.

HISTORY OF THE BAEKJE

In ancient times, three kingdoms competed for control of the Korean peninsula, such that the era from around the first century BCE to the seventh century CE is now known as the Three Kingdoms period. The three kingdoms were Goguryeo (37 BCE-668 CE), which occupied the northern region of the peninsula; Baekje (18 BCE-660 CE), in the southwest; and Silla (57 BCE-935 CE), in the southeast (Fig.1). In the beginning, Goguryeo and Baekje were the two strongest, but it was Silla that eventually prevailed and unified the territories. After forming an alliance with China's Tang Dynasty (618-907

CE), Silla conquered Baekje in 660 CE, followed by Goguryeo in 668 CE. Silla then fought to expel the Tang, their former allies. They succeeded in doing so in 676 CE. Silla subsequently ruled over the entire Korean peninsula until 935 CE.

Today, Silla is widely considered to be the representative culture of ancient Korea, being reverently acclaimed as "Korea's Golden Kingdom" and the "Kingdom of a Thousand Years." In accordance, the two most important Buddhist landmarks of Silla (the Seokguram Grotto and Bulguksa Temple) were designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites in 1995 and thus, have received much international attention and recognition. In 2000, the city of Gyeongju, former capital of Silla, was also designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

THE LACK OF RESEARCH ON BAEKJE KINGDOM

It is true that Silla persisted for almost a thousand years, developing a rich culture that incorporated elements from the Tang Dynasty and after unification, from West Asia. Given its prolonged duration, it is not surprising that there are more extant artefacts from Silla than from the conquered nations of Goguryeo and Baekje (Fig.2). However, Baekje had a thriving and advanced culture of its own, nourished in part by increased international trade and communication with both China and Japan. Therefore, contemporary researchers of the Three Kingdoms period have regularly asserted that Baekje culture has been somewhat overlooked in comparison to the Silla. As for Goguryeo, their territory was primarily located in the

region that is now North Korea, making it nearly impossible to examine relevant artefacts and resources. Thus, in this presentation, I will focus only on Baekje and Silla.

The general neglect of Baekje culture can be at least partially explained by the overall lack of extant records and artefacts related to Baekje. On the surface, this situation would not seem to be politically or economically based, but upon closer scrutiny, we can see how political and economic factors have in fact contributed to this paucity.

First, let's consider the lack of written records. The most significant source of histori-

cal records about the Three Kingdoms period is *Samguk Sagi* (三國史記, *History of the Three Kingdoms*), a primary text for the study of ancient Korean history and the oldest extant history book of Korea. Published in 1145, *Samguk Sagi* was compiled by order of King Injong (r. 1122-1146) of the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392 CE), which had immediately succeeded Silla. The publication, which was led by Kim Busik, the representative scholar and politician of the time, clearly prioritized the history and culture of Silla over that of Goguryeo and Baekje.

The publishers were motivated to focus on Silla for various political reasons, not least of which was the fact that Kim Busik himself



Fig.1. Korean peninsula, mid-5th century
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Korea



Fig.2. Silla tombs and gold crown
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Korea

was a descendent of the Silla royal family, and had a strong political base in Gyeongju, the former capital of Silla. However the decision to emphasise Silla went beyond an individual's bias. In its early stages, Goryeo leaders affirmed the dynasty's links to Goguryeo, rather than to Silla but by the time that *Samguk Sagi* was published, Goryeo's historical rhetoric had begun to focus more on Silla, reflecting the increasing influence of Buddhism and Confucianism.

Moreover, the Goryeo Dynasty had only been established after brutal warfare with Hui-cha (i.e., Later Baekje, 900-936 CE), the proclaimed successors of Baekje. As such, Goryeo society still harbored deep animosity towards Baekje, which was reflected in the prioritization of Silla in the history of the Three Kingdoms.

As a result, in *Samguk Sagi*, the history of Silla receives about three times as much textual space as that of Baekje. Furthermore, much of the text dedicated to Baekje focuses on astronomical phenomena, weather anomalies, or natural disasters, so that the quality of the records is just as insufficient as the quantity. Given that *Samguk Sagi* was the most important historical record published by the government after the disintegration of the Three Kingdoms, the brevity and inadequacy of the Baekje historical records in that volume had a major impact on later studies of the period. Subsequent research on Baekje was quite limited, leading to distortions in the public understanding of the kingdom. In the early twentieth century, most research of ancient Korean history concentrated on Silla or Goguryeo, with research on Baekje tending to focus solely on the kingdom's cultural exchange with Japan.

There are also several hidden political and economic factors that have contributed to the lack of artefacts and material resources related to Baekje. It has been noted that Silla tombs generally have a more solid and protective

structure than Baekje tombs, making the latter more vulnerable to plunder. But this factor alone is not enough to explain the imbalance between the number of extant artefacts of Silla and Baekje. Ancient artefacts are usually discovered through excavations, and in Korea, the majority of excavations were conducted in the twentieth century, during the period of the nation's rapid industrialization. In particular, much of the industrial development of the 1970s and 1980s was concentrated in the southeast region of the country, which offered obvious geographical advantages for trade with two of Korea's most important commercial partners of the time, Japan and the United States. Notably, the southeast also happens to be the former territory of Silla. In brief, the increased industrial development in the southeast led to more excavations in that region, which naturally led to the discovery of more Silla artefacts.

A NEW DAWN FOR BAEKJE

Hence, for many decades, Baekje culture was largely overshadowed by that of Silla. The situation finally began to change in 1971, with the discovery and excavation of the tomb of King Muryeong (501-523CE) in Gongju, the second capital of Baekje (Fig.3). After being accidentally discovered during maintenance of a neighboring tomb, the tomb of King Muryeong was excavated by the National Museum of Korea. This excavation proved to be of enormous significance, because the tomb was found to contain two epitaph tablets that conveyed a wealth of crucial information, including the identity of the deceased (King Muryeong, Baekje's twenty-fifth king, and his queen) and details of their deaths and funerary processes. Furthermore, the tomb had never been plundered, and thus yielded numerous superb artefacts related to both the king and queen, including gold crowns and other jewellery (Fig.4). Indeed, the excavation of King Muryeong's tomb clearly demonstrated that Baekje's material culture was



Fig.3. Excavation of the Baekje tomb of King Muryeong (1971, Gongju, South Chungcheong Province)
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Korea



Fig.4. Uprights of gold crowns excavated from the Baekje tomb of King Muryeong
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Korea

every bit as advanced and resplendent as that of Silla.

Even so, further research and examination of Baekje culture was slow to progress. The situation only began to improve in 1999, when the National Museum of Korea held a special exhibition entitled *Baekje*, with the purpose of rectifying the relative neglect of Baekje history and culture through an in-depth examination.

As the first attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of Baekje, this exhibition featured about 700 archaeological artefacts and artworks, organised by chronology, theme,

and region. This exhibition, which was shown in the three cities of Seoul, Buyeo, and Daegu, markedly contributed to establishing a better understanding of Baekje's proper status in Korea's ancient history, to creating a new image of Baekje in the minds of the people, and to encouraging further research (Fig.5).

In addition, over the last thirty years or so, more excavations have been carried out in the southwest region of the Korean peninsula—the former territory of Baekje—leading to a greater accumulation of Baekje-related materials. Of course, as was the case with the earlier excavations in the former territory of Silla, the more



Fig.5. Gallery of Gongju National Museum (Items excavated from the tomb of King Muryeong)
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Korea

recent excavations in the southwest can also be linked to various political and economic factors. To be specific, since the 1990s, there has been an emphasis on economic and industrial development in western Korea for various reasons, including the increase of economic transactions with China and the decision to establish the city of Sejong as the de facto administrative capital of the nation. Just as significantly, the two consecutive presidential administrations that held office from 1998 to 2008 were each politically based in the western region, as opposed to previous governments that were based primarily in the southeast.

The recent period has also seen significant research projects and exhibitions on Baekje, particularly at Gongju National Museum and Buyeo National Museum, both of which are located in former capitals of Baekje. Both of these museums have continuously conducted research on Baekje culture, and each year, they have organised a special exhibition presenting the results of that research on specific themes, such as Baekje clothing, letters, measurements, metalcrafts, roof tiles, Buddhist temples, and

foreign exchange. The two museums have also carried out in-depth research on the items excavated from the tomb of King Muryeong, and have joined with museums in both China and Japan to organise international exhibitions about Baekje's exchange with those countries. Through such efforts, these national museums have led the advancement of research on Baekje, despite the insufficient number of researchers who are focusing on Baekje.

Furthermore, excavations of important Baekje remains have been conducted in Gongju, Buyeo, and Iksan. In particular, domestic and international interest in Baekje has been stirred by the discovery of the Baekje gilt-bronze incense burner at a Buddhist temple site in Neungsan-ri and of sarira reliquaries from stone pagodas at the temple sites of Wangheungsa and Mireuksa (Fig.6). Meanwhile, relevant research has been continuously conducted on the vital Baekje culture of the Yeongsan River valley, located in the southwest. As a result, in 2013, the National Museum of Korea opened its newest branch in Naju, also located in the former territory of Baekje.



Fig.6. Baekje gilt-bronze incense burner (Buyeo, South Chungcheong Province)
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Korea

Due in large part to the excellent and diligent work of these national museums, Baekje culture is finally beginning to receive its due attention, such that it has attained a status almost equal to that of Silla. As the culmination of these long-term efforts, in early 2015, the former Baekje capitals of Gongju, Buyeo, and Iksan, collectively recognised as “Baekje Historic Areas,” were officially designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites. And work is now underway to construct the next branch of the National Museum of Korea in Iksan, another major Baekje city.

CONCLUSION

In this discussion, I have tried to explain the crucial role that the national museums of Korea have played in shedding new light on the ancient kingdom of Baekje, which was long overdue for a thorough cultural and historical evaluation.

I hope that this case study can help demonstrate how contemporary notions about ancient cultures can be distorted by political and economic circumstances, and more importantly, how such distortions can be addressed and overcome.

With this in mind, I wish to conclude by stressing that our current understanding of Baekje culture could not have been achieved without collaborative research and exhibitions of related materials that are housed in museums of China and Japan. I hope that my sharing of these experiences can benefit other member museums that are now confronting similar problems.

BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY AND ART: THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL MUSEUM

Mrs. Phetmalayvanh Keobounma
General Director of Lao National Museum

INTRODUCTION

This essay describes our museum as it is today and the development of our new Museum facility which opens next year. Using our experience with building and developing the new Museum, I will discuss how we have presented a balanced view concerning political history, ethnography and art.

PAST AND PRESENT VIEW OF THE LAO NATIONAL MUSEUM: FAILURES AND REALISATIONS

On the whole, we at the Lao National Museum struggle to meet a sound standard of display and presentation of our country and its history. One of our greatest problems is, of course, resources.



Lao National Museum
Images courtesy of Lao National Museum

During the early French Colonial Period (1893–1954), within Indochina (Lao, Vietnam and Cambodia), Lao was the only country not to be provided with a purpose-built museum. Myanmar's museum was established by the British. Perhaps it is fair to say that Laos was the only country in Southeast Asia, apart from Timor and a few other small states, to have not benefitted from a museum culture as such.

Wat Ho Phra Keo, a temple in Vientiane is the only exception. It was restored in the late 1960s and established as a museum to house a large collection of Buddhist images. Before the end of the American-Vietnam war in 1975, a myriad of temples throughout the country that exemplified and maintained traditional Lao arts and architecture existed. During the 1980s a number of Museums of the Revolution were set up in the provinces. The main Museum of the Revolution was set up and located in Vientiane, capital of the Lao PDR.

With tourism in the 1990s, the Royal Palace in Luang Phrabang was instated as the museum to display the royal collection. Other Museums have also been opened such as the Kaysone Memorial Museum, the Souphanouvong Museum and the Museum of Public Security, among a few others. Since the late 1970s, a number of Provincial Museums have been instated. However, it is the Lao National Museum that sees continued visitation from tourists and scholars.

As previously mentioned, in 1985 the Museum was dedicated to the people by the government. Before the current regime took power, the building was the last royal Prime Minister's office, housing till recently some of his private collections, political manifestos and other miscellaneous documents.

The Museum of the Revolution as it was originally known, first opened its doors to the public in 1985. Its chronological theme and

format was exactly the same as other soviet museums across the globe. The soviet formula of museum display is quite stringent and very specific. As such, all soviet museums from our provincial museums to museums in other soviet countries are similar in character.

The soviet formula for exhibitions is a progression, chronologically through time; from ancient history, struggles to power, to recent technological achievements to advancement towards the future. Colour schemes and methods of representation were strictly adhered to. Only red and/or colours of the country's national flag would be used to enhance displays and backboards. In the early days of our Museum's representation this formula was easily implemented.

In the year 2000, the Lao Museum of the Revolution became the Lao National Museum and was allowed greater freedom to take a more liberal approach in developing its content and display.

THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS

Today, The Lao National Museum is a scientific research centre and public institution which is dedicated to the study, preservation and promotion of the country's culture and history. The museum, which houses over 28,000 artefacts, wishes to attract more visitors and enhance its role in society. We want this to result in the development of educational programmes and provide visitors with the most accurate and up to date information possible about the objects in our collection in an engaging and attractive way.

However, due to the lack of infrastructure and technology in the Lao PDR, the museum's various efforts in attracting local and international visitors to learn more about its own cultural heritage faces difficulties. One of the biggest obstacles we confront is the lack of an



New Lao National Museum
Images courtesy of Lao National Museum

official website. Not having an official website to introduce the museum and its collection directly to audiences limits the range of activities the museum can programme. This causes inefficiencies in promoting Lao history and culture to her people, and international audiences.

We aim to attract about 2.8 million tourists annually and increase the number of hotels to 350 and restaurants to 850. We also aim to discover and expand historical sites, and attempt to inscribe at least 2 more UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the country.

Yet the development of our National Museum is very under-resourced and we struggle to escape the old restrictions of the past. For instance, we still cling to the formal chronological and thematic style of exhibition design and presentation. In some cases, this causes imbal-

ance in terms of the correct representation of historical facts and in general, creates confusion.

Let me give you a case in point: A problem was caused by the placement of several exhibitions donated by foreign entities. These exhibitions could not be placed in the Museum properly. Instead, they were relegated to stairway landings and small annexes of existing exhibition galleries. All in all, the dated but reasonably simplistic chronological order of display has become fragmented and confusing. For instance, the tour of the Lao National Museum begins with “the dawn of time”, dinosaurs and fossilised remains. One then proceeds through Neolithic displays and onward to the introduction of the Buddhist religion and the birth of the nation in the 13th Century. After the advancements of the nation, there are displays devoted to the Lane Xang Period or 13th

Century history in Lao. After which, a continuity of Lao’s history is lost. Neolithic habitation sites are re-introduced in the stairwell on the ground floor. This exhibition was produced by the University of Pennsylvania. The only space for this exhibit was in that stairwell. Proceeding up the stairs, one finds an exhibition of ethnic clothing following which, one is suddenly back in 13th century Lao (when Lao first became a nation-state). Owing to a number of additional sponsored exhibitions, the chronological formula has become convoluted and has made the storyline confusing.

In terms of politics, our Museum attempts to portray our turbulent and complex history - its political strengths and weaknesses - in the most balanced way possible.

We believe we portray a balanced view, particularly in comparison with some other countries that tend to present a biased view based on the country’s current power base or government.

Although, perhaps, we give too much space to our more recent, modern political past, it is a section of the Museum that visitors comment on more so than all our other displays. We have attempted to condense the space to just cover modern history. However, the recorded comments in our Visitors’ book attests to there being little knowledge about Lao in the pre-modern Lao history period and that tourists desire to know more.

FUTURE PLANS AND DEVELOPMENT

(A)

Providing a more balanced narrative of Lao History and Heritage

The building next to our new building is Kaysone Museum which focuses on the last hundred years of our political history. As such, we see no need to replicate their excellent representation of this complex and politically turbulent time. Therefore, we at the Lao National Museum plan to downsize the space we have given to represent this history in favour of other historically important periods in Lao history.

(B)

Focusing on Lao’s Golden Age to raise awareness of Lao’s rich history and heritage

The main focus or centre piece of the new Lao National Museum will be dedicated to the Lane Xang Period (1353–1707) which is considered to be Laos’ Golden Age. There has been very little representation of this fascinating period of Laos’ historical past. It is a period in Laos’ history that birthed a nation. It was a time of intense commercial activity and development. Trade and building developments flourished. The architectural style of the period was highly refined. A true Lao vernacular was born in this time. Cultural activity was also abundant during this time.

New Lao National Museum
Images courtesy of Lao National Museum



(C)

*Providing an equal and common space
for all ethnic groups in Laos*

It is vital, particularly in terms of national security, that all ethnic groups are represented equally and in a fair way. Lao has more than 100 different ethnic groups and it is difficult to fairly represent all in a balanced way. This is mainly due to the lack of historic and contemporary textiles and artefacts that pertain to each ethnic minority. Many textiles and artefacts have become quite expensive and we have no funds to acquire them.

Traditional arts and crafts, such as weaving, would be well-represented within an ethnic textiles exhibition. Such an exhibition would lend to a better understanding of how these historic and traditional forms have influenced contemporary Lao arts and crafts.

(D)

Protecting and Preserving Our Natural History

Natural history also requires representation as a matter of urgency. Due to rapid development, we are now facing the loss of much of our flora and fauna. In terms of education, representation of our native flora and fauna (particularly those on the brink of extinction) will be a crucial component of our new museum.

CONCLUSION

We believe it is still possible to work within the chronological formula to deliver a balanced and cohesive theme for museum exhibitions. We are building a new museum which we anticipate will be ready next year. We imagine that this is a fresh start for us in representing Laos' history in a wider and more balanced manner. We are planning our new exhibitions now and working with our new spaces. Research and development of each display component is now being undertaken in earnest.

We are confident that the new museum will be one that will engage and enrich the knowledge and appreciation of locals and tourists, presenting the rich history of Lao to the world.

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BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY, AND ART: THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL MUSEUM IN MALAYSIA

Mr. Mohd Azmi Bin Mohd Yusof, Deputy Director-General (Museology), Department of Museums Malaysia
Ms. Miti Fateema Sherzeella Mohd Yusoff, Senior Curator, Department of Museums Malaysia
Ms. Noraini Binti Basri, Senior Curator, Department of Museums Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has been blessed with cultural diversity because of its multi-ethnic composition and its diverse range of religions practised. Its diversity is reflected in the existence of various materials culture on its land. Archeological finds show the way of life of a number of ethnic groups. To create awareness and build a harmonious society with a high standard, the Department of Museums Malaysia has taken serious measures to preserve, conserve and disseminate knowledge about the country's historical, cultural and natural heritage through its museums.

Museums have existed in Malaysia since 1883 with the establishment of Muzium Perak. Before World War II, the museum's work focused on research, documentation and the collecting of material culture with respect to material relevant to history, material culture and natural history.

After the separation from the Antiquities Division (which was established as a new department), the Department of Museums Malaysia focused on keeping and protecting material culture within museums. Exhibitions and museum education programmes are among the tools used in disseminating knowledge to the public while maintaining ongoing research on the collections. The Education Unit was established in the Department of Museums Malaysia in 2013 with the aim of educating the public, specifically the younger generation. The department is tasked with enhancing the younger generation's understanding of the museum as a place

for safeguarding cultural heritage as well as fostering a sense of ownership for one's heritage.

Realising the importance of public education especially for youth in safeguarding cultural heritage for the future, the department has taken measures such as continuous and consistent research on the collections, developing public programmes to accommodate each level of society, publishing research in a variety of forms such as in books, journals, audiovisual and digital media etc. The department collaborates with appropriate government/non-governmental bodies to do this.

The latest collaboration is a programme with the Ministry of Education Malaysia. It addresses students from the age of 9 to 17 years and aspiring teachers by using material culture (objects, artefacts and so on) to help them get a clearer and better picture of the legacy of their ancestors. This also enhances their understanding of the history syllabus outlined by the Ministry of Education. This programme will be carried out across the nation involving museums and schools from all around Malaysia in 2016.

THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MALAYSIA

In 1953, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj (1903-1990), the first Prime Minister of Malaysia suggested establishing a functioning National Museum as a repository for national heritage. Subsequently, the construction of the National Museum, which was built on the site of the former Selangor Museum (1906-1945) was

initiated in 1959 and completed in August 1963. It was officially declared open by His Majesty, the Third Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Putra Al-Haj ibni Almarhum Syed Hassan Jamalullail (1920-2000).

At the time of its first establishment, the National Museum focused on Malaysia's history, natural diversity and the uniqueness of Malaysian society. However, after a refurbishment that was completed in 2008, its exhibitions have employed interesting and interactive ways to encourage its visitors to explore the history of Malaysia, from the prehistoric era to the present achievements of Malaysia. The National Museum, which was declared a National Heritage Site in 2015 under the National Heritage Act 2008 (Act 645) strengthened its role as a one-stop-entertainment centre for the history, ethnography and art of Malaysia. The new presentation style, comprehensive facilities, authentic sources of knowledge in line with the changing political developments make the museum a centre for the dissemination of accurate information and a relevant repository for the historical and cultural heritage of the country.

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

The history of education in Malaysia began before to the Colonial period (1400-1874) during which the education system was based on an informal and formal basis which emphasised religious subjects. Such education was based on a process of learning that produced individuals who were skilled and competent in technical and practical aspects of work. During the British colonial era, significant changes began to occur in the education system. This lent to an opportunity for vernacular curriculum finding its niche in Malaysian society. This was prior to the arrival of Chinese and Indians immigrants, which were later brought over by the British.

The British did not provide a unified school system. Instead they allowed a multi-stream education system structured by languages namely English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. These language-based schools were known as vernacular schools. The aim was to meet the needs of specific sectors of the economy of the time. There were deficiencies in the education system organised by the British. A number of reports aimed at improving British education system, such as the *Fenn-Wu Report* (1951), the *Education Ordinance* (1952), the *Razak Report* (1956) and *Rahman Talib Report* (1960).

After independence, the country's education system began to gradually reform. In the First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) to the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000), education was a priority. The government looked for new ways to ensure that educational institutions produced individuals who were able to contribute productively to national development. Preschool Education, Curriculum for Primary Schools (series), Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (ICSS), higher education, teacher education, technical and vocational education and private education were reviewed. The development of the education system continued to grow providing world-class and high-quality education that developed an individual's potential and fulfilled their aspirations.

NATIONAL BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY (NBOS): BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF MUSEUMS MALAYSIA AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The Department of Museums Malaysia and the Ministry of Education were never part of the same Ministry. This separation between the two departments made efforts of nation-building and cultivating a sense of belonging to the country more difficult and drawn out. The two departments complimented each other's work. The Department of Education provides a younger generation with a theoretical

foundation, while the Department of Museums Malaysia, through the National Museum, showcases evidences that supports the theory taught by teachers in schools.

Thus, in realising the value that both departments can provide, a series of discussions were carried out, after it was announced that it was compulsory for students to pass history as a subject during their main examination in their formal education years.

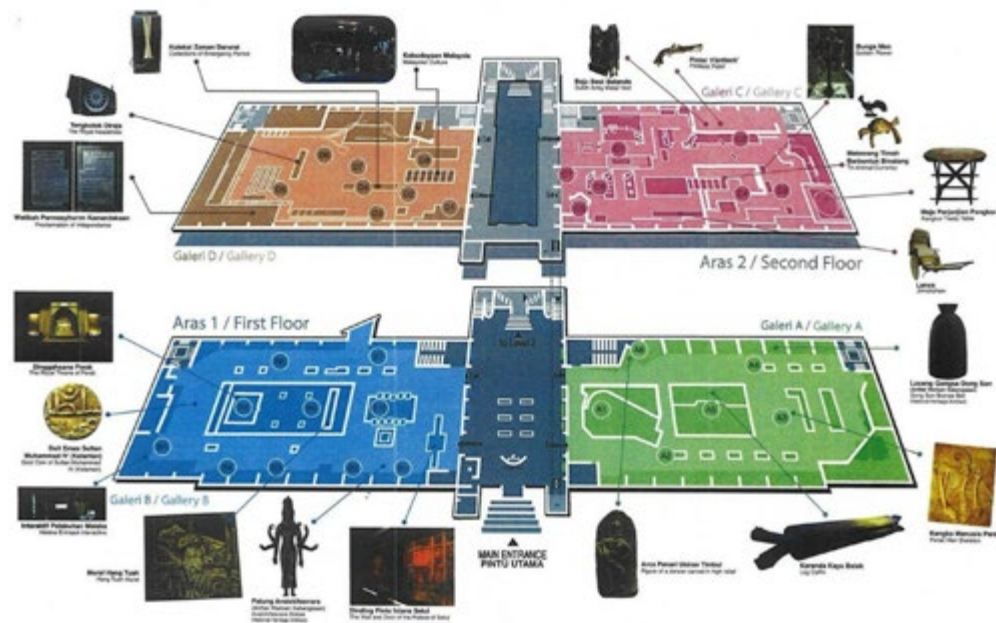
The main objectives of the collaboration between the two departments are:

1. To instill love for the country;
2. To nurture a spirit of togetherness among a multi-racial society;
3. To instill love and interest in heritage among students and teachers through museum education;

4. To establish museums as a support system for formal education through “Teaching and Learning”;
5. To balance academic requirements and hands-on experience in engaging students and teachers; and
6. To instill and nurture good moral values and discipline, and build awareness of the uniqueness of Malaysia’s cultural diversity.

The planned programme is to be carried out all over Malaysia with active participants from Malaysia’s museums. The first step towards realizing the programme before its launch at a national level was to convene a committee consisting of experts from the Department of Museums and the Ministry of Education to run a pilot test.

The National Museum had the honour of being the first institution to execute this



Collections Mapping on Curriculum-Based Activities: Blueprint of the National Museum
Image courtesy of the Department of Museums Malaysia



“Teaching and Learning”
Image courtesy of the Department of Museums Malaysia

project. The National Museum was seen as the most suitable place since it is considered a one-stop centre for visitors to get a glimpse of the political history and socio-cultural development of Malaysia. Thus, the blueprint of this museum is closely related to the curriculum of history textbooks for students from 9-17 years old.

PILOT TEST

The pilot test took place through the month of May 2015. It involved 10 schools; 5 of which were primary schools and 5 were secondary schools from the Klang Valley area. A teacher training institute also took part in the pilot test.

The purpose of the pilot test was to study the effectiveness of the functions and role played by museums in helping students comprehend the country’s history. The pilot test and its effects on teaching history theoretically and

through using material culture evidence in the museum was monitored closely by the Department of Museums Malaysia and the Ministry of Education Malaysia. For this pilot test, history as a subject has been chosen to be the subject matter.

There were four (4) main segments during the execution namely, Teaching and Learning, In-Gallery Activity, Strengthening Activity and Reflection. All these segments served a specific purpose throughout the process.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Students were organised in a classroom setting. Their teacher would start a lesson based on the lesson plan prepared by the teacher prior to the museum trip. Students would be taught by their teacher following the textbook syllabus set up by the Ministry of Education.



Activity in Gallery 1
Image courtesy of the Department of Museums Malaysia

IN-GALLERY ACTIVITY

Students were divided into a few groups and handled by two (2) facilitators from the Department of Museums Malaysia. In this segment, the students were given a formal tour of the specific gallery related to the topic in the syllabus they learnt from earlier. This is to provide continuity with the lesson taught in the classroom setting. The facilitators showed students the evidence of the material cultures related to their topic of study. Thus, students are provided with a vivid picture of the sequence of historical events that occurred.

STRENGTHENING ACTIVITY

This segment was created to encourage students to develop an understanding of and develop opinions on what they learnt and gained from the other two segments. Students were given tasks and worked in groups for problem-solving and hands-on activities related to the topic they had learnt. For future groups of teachers, this segment will focus on the brainstorming activities. This will address the challenge museum professionals and school teachers

face in teaching history. In this way, teachers will be exposed to the benefits of museums and its collections as teaching tools.

REFLECTION

The reflection segment emphasised the experiences gained by students from the programme. Students were asked to share their thoughts and experiences. Students were tested with spontaneous questions on both topics from the content presented in the classroom and museum. During this segment, facilitators took notes on issues discussed or shared by students in order to get a clearer understanding of whether the programme was a success.

FINDINGS

After a month of pilot testing the programme, the test delivered very interesting findings. Feedback from teachers who teach history found that the understanding of the students towards the subject increased. Moreover, the time it took teaching certain topics and sub-topics, which used to take about 8 to 10 weeks, could be accomplished in several hours



Strengthening Activities
Image courtesy of the Department of Museums Malaysia



Reflection
Image courtesy of the Department of Museums Malaysia

in the museum. This development was very encouraging as students were more engaged with the lessons taught in the classroom after their trip to the museum.

Other findings also showed that teachers were more aware of the effectiveness of material culture as a teaching tool. Teachers were also made aware of how museums can accommodate their teaching purposes.

Findings from the survey and the reflection segment showed that students were more aware of the role of the National Museum

in instilling a spirit of togetherness, an understanding of cultural diversity and a love for the country as one nation.

CONCLUSION

The pilot project has been presented a few times to significant stakeholders throughout the country. In conclusion, it was clear that the role of the National Museum for this project achieved its goals in balancing political history, ethnography and art by collaborating with the Ministry of Education, schools and teachers.

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BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY AND ART: THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL MUSEUM

Ms. Mandakini Shrestha
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INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a landlocked country between two big countries in Asia: India and China. It is known throughout the world as the home to the world's highest peak, Mt. Everest, and as the birthplace of the light of Asia, Lord Buddha. This country is rectangular in shape and is surrounded by India to its East, West and South, and by China to its North. From North to South, it descends gradually and, as such, is regarded as a paradise for the ecologist who specializes in various branches. Its total area is 1,47,181 sq. km. It is five hundred miles long from East to West and one hundred to one hundred and forty miles wide in breadth. Geographically, it is divided into three parts, including the Himalayan region, Mountain region and Plain (Terai) region. Along with the diversity in the geographical structure, it is also rich in bio-cultural diversity. Nepal is known world-wide for its tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The Himalayas and mountains, valleys and gorgeous geographical scene make Nepal an "ornament of nature".

Over the centuries, Nepal has provided a haven for people from the North and South, such that the present racial makeup of the country is a mixture of various Asian elements, lending to Nepal being called the "ethnic turntable of Asia." With the rich heritage of culture and wealth of diversity in religious and ethnic variation, Nepal has been greatly enriched by valuable arts and antiquities of historical and archaeological significance. Even the process of

globalization in modern times could not erode the glory of these cultures and civilizations. The National Museum of Nepal is a leading institution invested in protecting cultural assets.

After revolutionary change in 2008, Nepal was declared as a federal republic and religiously secular country.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NEPAL

Opened in 1938, the National Museum was the first public museum of Nepal. However, it was initially not open to the general public. It was an arsenal museum, a repository of weapons. It was also home to the private collection of the Royal family and Rana Prime Ministers.¹ It was established in 1938 with the name *Chhauni Silkhana* and opened to the public. It was renamed "Nepal Museum" in 1942 and renamed again, "National Museum" (*Rastriya Sangrahalaya*) in 1967.

Since its inception, the museum has collected thousands of pre-historical, archaeological, historical and culturally important objects. Thus, it occupies a very prominent position as a repository of ancient Nepalese art and culture, including sculpture and painting etc.

The National Museum has three exhibition buildings in its complex: the Historical building, Juddha Jatiya art gallery and the Buddhist art gallery. Its collections are of political history, diverse ethnic groups of Nepal and art objects represented in a multidisciplinary way.



Showcase of the various ethnic groups of Nepal
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Nepal

Therefore, the National Museum is popular among researchers and the common people.

HISTORICAL BUILDING

The building that hosts the historical gallery was built in 1829 by Bhimsen Thapa, the first Prime Minister of Nepal. During this time, the building was used as a barrack to house weapons kept. The architecture is inspired by French architecture. The museum's galleries are made up of many sections. They are as follows:

NATURAL HISTORY GALLERY

This gallery is extremely important and rare objects such as various taxidermied animals are displayed in a lifelike style. Mandibular bones of whales and a Moon rock stone are part of the collection of this gallery.

ETHNOGRAPHY SECTION

This section of the gallery showcases the lifestyle and attire of different people of the world. The main objective is to show their ethno-cultural background.

PRE-HISTORIC STONE TOOLS

This section of the gallery provides information on human existence in Nepal in the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods. The gallery uses fossilised bones of cow, buffaloes and elephants to illustrate the lifestyle of these periods. Different stone tools and artefacts are also part of the collection and displayed in this section.

WEAPONS AND ARMS GALLERY

This gallery includes the weapons and guns used by Kings, Prime Ministers, nobles and brave warriors. They date from the 15th century CE.

Nepal's history has also been narrated and presented in the gallery. Napoleon III's sword presented as a gift to Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana (1851) is one of the key pieces in the gallery's collection. This object proves the influence of Nepalese diplomacy in international relations at the time. The gallery includes a leather canon seized in the war of Nepal-Tibet (1855-1856) and a machine gun (*Bir Gun* in Nepali) invented by Nepalese scientist Gahendra Shumsher Rana (1896-1897), which add grandeur to the collection.

¹ Rana Prime Ministers were powerful Prime Ministers who ruled Nepal for 103 years from 1847 to 1950.



Portrait of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Nepal



Statue of King Jaya Burma dated 185 CE as inscribed
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Nepal

PORTRAIT GALLERY

The colourful paintings of Malla and Shah kings, Kaji, Bhardars and Rana Prime Ministers along with the portrait of international personalities like Queen Victoria and Prince Albert reflect the sheer talent and genius of Nepali artists of the period.

ILLICIT TRAFFICKING GALLERY

The art works and masterpieces of Nepalese history which have been illicitly trafficked and have been successfully retrieved are displayed in this gallery.

JUDDHAJATIYA GALLERY

The next building in the museum complex is the first structure ever built for museum purposes. Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher Rana (1932-1945) constructed it in 1944, with

his personal funds. Decorative wood, bronze, stone, scroll paintings, decorative art forms, terracotta etc. are displayed in this gallery. The items in this gallery date back to 3rd century BC.

BUDDHIST ART GALLERY

The third gallery in the museum building was inaugurated in 1997. The artefacts related to Buddhism are displayed in this gallery. There are three sections in this gallery based on geographical areas. One of them is related to the Southwest part of Nepal where Lord Buddha was born and lived. Another area contains the objects from Kathmandu Valley, the supposed centre of Buddhist philosophy and art. The third area relates to Himalayan cultures.

From the description above, it can be seen that the museum's collections and how they are displayed illustrate how the National Museum of Nepal maintains a balance between how the

various people of Nepal are showcased and an unbiased representation of the long history of the nation.

Since the National Museum plays a parental role in the development of museums throughout the country, it plays a significant role in the balance of political history, ethnography and art. Its role can be broadly summarised as:

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM FORMULATES NATIONAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

The National Museum as a mirror of the nation represents the social, political, economic and cultural aspects of the nation. Various political events arising out of different political circumstances and cultural dimensions have created different communities that form the national identity of the country and its society. However, over time, changes in the perception of human thought, technological inventions and other developments etc. have affected tangible and intangible culture.

In every historical period, political situations are experienced, which call for vivid historic change in the world. Politics is the backbone of a country. With the change in the political, social and economic spheres of a country, its international diplomacy also changes. The National Museum plays a vital role in the writing of cultural and political history by conducting deep research and studies of political philosophy and ideology of different time periods in Nepal. Recently, Nepal experienced a great political revolution in 2008, which saw the end of 240 years of monarchy. Nepal was declared a democratic republic and a federalist country in 2008. The National Museum has incorporated these changes and disseminated this new information to society as well as developed documentation for future generations. While most museums

have recorded only the ruler's history, the National Museum should put effort into equally representing all political events. For this, a detailed study of how such events form a national history is needed. The National Museum should represent not only rulers and elites but equally incorporate those philosophical and political leaders, revolutionists and martyrs, whose contributions are equally valuable for the sovereignty and prosperity of the country.

Regarding politics, national and international relations should be studied in detail and incorporated into the museum. In Nepal's context, after the 2008 declaration of federalism, which addressed the people's demands, the royal palace was transformed into a museum. The people and society's interest should be taken into consideration.

Regarding art, culture and indigenous perspectives, Nepal is termed "a garden of various tribes." A recent survey carried out by the Nepal Government shows that Nepal has 125 ethnographic groups and 102 linguistic groups. Many are indigenous and on the verge of extinction. The cultural aspects of these groups should be identified and addressed properly in society. The National Museum has an important role to play in this. After Nepal became a republic, ethnic groups realised the importance of the museum in understanding their cultural identities and developing their historical representation. Thus, many groups are quickly establishing museums to represent themselves. In such a context, the National Museum should research and study the cultural aspects of these groups and help them institutionalise their actions. In providing all ethnographic groups tribal identification and ensuring their cultural protection, the National Museum enhances social unity, cooperation and brotherhood between people.



Traditional ornaments of Newar Community of Kathmandu gifted by local community and collected in National Museum
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Nepal

TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FOR THE COLLECTION AND PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL ASSETS

There should be due consideration paid to equal representation. The collection should be built with the intention of equal representation. Without the collection, a museum's above mentioned role as balancing ethnography, art and culture cannot be achieved. Again the museum cannot proportionately represent all 125 ethnic groups in Nepal at the same time. Due to this, prioritisation is necessary. The National Museum, through direct collaboration with society, should encourage communities to contribute to and enrich the museum's collection. Annual acquisitions by a museum alone cannot contribute to striking a balance. Culture is being threatened by modernisation. As a result, the National Museum should put effort into protecting its deep relations with society. Collections from communities should be included in the museum through gifts, loans or purchases. The National Museum should create a con-

ducive environment for these items. The collection of art objects, tangible and intangible and other cultural assets should be brought to museums where the objects' security can be assured.

NATIONAL MUSEUM EXPANDS THE MODALITY OF EXHIBITION

The National Museum is a multi-disciplinary museum. It displays every aspect related to its theme on permanent display. However, having only permanent displays cannot meet the expectations of every community. The above mentioned balance cannot be assured through permanent exhibitions. As with contextual changes over time, themes should also change. For example, from ancient times to today's federalism, public interest has changed with time. The National Museum in creating a balance should also consider the public interest. For this, temporary exhibitions, mobile exhibitions, cultural villages, home-stays, cultural expos, etc. should be used as mediums to promote culture and art.

NATIONAL MUSEUM STRENGTHENS PUBLIC RELATION

To balance these categories, methodologies should be applied. The museum's friends, schools, institutions, museum councils, museum associations, different age groups, volunteers, colleges, etc. should participate. The National Museum not only includes the elites. Grass-roots level people are also equally encouraged to associate themselves with museums. This gives them a sense of belonging in the museum and a place within national mechanisms. Through its programmes like school students memberships, the National Museum maintains a public relationship not only with students but also with their parents. It is also broadening its relationship to the world outside Nepal through international organisations like ANMA, ICOM, etc.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS IS ESSENTIAL TO ASSIST A NATIONAL MUSEUM IN ASSURING BALANCE

For a balanced environment for creation, programmes that build awareness are essential. Until a society is well aware of their social and cultural identification, and there is political stability, tangible and intangible heritages will not be protected and preserved. For this, society should be aware of the important role of a national museum. Through its activities, technological innovations, documentation and outreach programmes, society is made aware of how to implement a balanced policy for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

CHALLENGES

In the Nepalese context, museum development was only recently initiated. Public interest towards museums is not well-developed. In such dire circumstances, the National Museum, being the first museum in Nepal, faces

many challenges in the field of management in the technique and economic aspect of museum management. Yet, laws and bylaws still have not been formulated for cultural heritage and the museum. There is a lack of skilled manpower. Due to the influence of Western culture and civilisation, new generations are fed up with their own culture. Traditional skills are slowly abandoned. In spite of these challenges, the National Museum has successfully and continuously conducted its responsibilities. It has been doing its best to develop the museum in spite of the hindrances mentioned. In order to do this, the collection and display has been broadened. Last year, in 2014, the illicit trafficking gallery and portrait gallery were opened. These galleries brought a new dimension and added more value to Nepalese art. The collection donated by indigenous communities is protected and represented. Communities are very keen to donate their cultural and historical artefacts to the museum for preservation. Inspired by the museum's programmes that build awareness in different communities, many communities have donated their cultural items to the museum for safeguarding, which they return after use in their rituals.

Educational programmes run by the National Museum have earned 7000 schools and colleges student membership with the museum. Through students, families and the general public, the museum has been able to maintain its collaborative effort in sharing knowledge of *thanka* paintings. Contemporary art, writing and sculpture moulding are also taught by the museum. This will contribute to the preservation of Nepalese art and culture.

In April 2015, a huge earthquake added more challenges and opportunities. Tangible assets destroyed and dismantled by the earthquake have been collected by the National Museum. From one perspective, managing these assets has been challenging for the museum.



*Tempera wall painting of Vishwaroopa dated 19th century rescued from residential palace of Prime Minister General Bhimsen Thapa
Image courtesy of the National Museum of Nepal*

However, it has also been an added opportunity for further research and study, from which additional information about Nepalese culture can be developed. The tempera wall painting of

Vishwaroopa has been successfully restored in the gallery of the National Museum after the earthquake of 2015. This was a great achievement after the disaster.

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A NEW CHAPTER: THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM (ACM)

Mr. John Teo
Deputy Director, Curatorial, Collections & Exhibitions,
Asian Civilisations Museum

THE ORIGINAL ACM (1991 – 2015)

The ACM was created out of the recommendations of the Singapore Museum Precinct Master Plan 1991, devised by the then culture ministry, the Ministry for Information and the Arts (MITA). This study projected Singapore's long-term planning needs for museum spaces and facilities, based on a recommended collection development strategy.¹ The strategy took as its starting point the need to convert other historic buildings within the civic district to serve as museums. This was not only a cost-saving measure, but was also meant to address the criticism of the widespread destruction of much of Singapore's architectural heritage in the preceding decades.

Conceived as an offshoot of the National Museum, the ACM was intended to eventually be set up in two separate locations within the Civic District: a first iteration, ACM1 at the Tao Nan school building on Armenian Street (now the Peranakan Museum) opened in April 1997, while ACM2 at the Empress Place Building opened in March 2003. After more than a decade, the government decided in 2014 to fund a S\$25 million revamp of the ACM to expand and refresh its galleries so as to enhance visitor experience.

THE COLLECTION: ART VS. ETHNOLOGY AND HISTORY

ACM's original mission was "to explore and present the cultures of Asia, and to interpret the civilisations that created them, so as to promote awareness of the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans and of the heritage of the Southeast Asian region". It was "pioneering the idea of an Asian civilisation – not as a dogmatic thesis but as a tentative hypothesis to be examined and tested both in the permanent collection and in a series of temporary exhibitions being arranged with many other Asian countries over a period of years".²

Firstly, the aim of the ACM was to represent the high points of Asian artistic development, through an 'aesthetic display' as "objects of art in their own right". Hence, based on the national collection, generally there were two approaches to the narratives of the galleries: firstly, for collection areas where there were already substantial holdings (for example, for ethnographic / anthropological collections from the old Raffles Museum and Peranakan material which had been actively collected from the 1980s), galleries were planned based on the strengths of the collection³, as well as the availability of (potential) loans. Given the space limitations at ACM1, there was only one

comprehensive display, of Chinese art. Secondly, for relatively new collecting areas, such as South and West Asia, the curators determined themes to be explored in the new permanent galleries. For example, for West Asia, Islam was showcased in three themes - as a Way of Life, Islamic Art, and Seeking of Knowledge. Based on these themes, new acquisitions were then added to the collection accordingly.

GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS VS. 'CIVILISATIONS' AND CULTURES

From the earliest planning stages the intention was for ACM to focus on core geographical regions – Southeast, East, South and West Asia – as conceived as part of a wider interaction with the world. ACM was meant to eventually exhibit "the rare arts of East, South, West and Southeast Asia and interpret the cultures which produced these rare arts".⁴ These geographical regions were supposed to directly represent the 'ancestral cultures' of Singapore's main racial groups, i.e. Chinese-Malay-Indian-Others (CMIO), through their roots in China, the Malay World, India, and other regions, such as Arab traders. However, the system proved problematic because of the conflation of the two. ACM was organised by a dual system of regions (Southeast Asia being exceptionally multicultural and multi-religious) as well as by a system of traditionally defined, monolithic cultures (China and India). This emphasized the chauvinism of those cultures, with minorities and interconnections less frequently represented.

Regions were not also comprehensively covered. For example, while labeled 'East Asia', no other cultures besides China were represented.⁵ Similarly, 'West Asia' actually referred to the collection area of 'Islamic' arts of the Muslim world (which included territories as diverse as

the Arab lands, Anatolia, Central Asia, Iran and even South and Southeast Asia). 'South Asia' referred almost exclusively to India (and more specifically, Tamil Nadu in the South), while Gandhara, Sri Lanka, and the Himalayas were almost entirely absent, although later acquisitions and gallery modifications helped to address this imbalance. The South Asia gallery also contained a section focused on the 'Islamic' architecture and decorative arts of the Mughals, which further complicated the distinction from the 'Islamic' / West Asia gallery.

A NEW CHAPTER: THE NEW ACM (2015 - 2017)

The new ACM, which will be launched in three phases from November 2015, emphasizes the historic connections between cultures, and pushes the notion that cultures have never been fixed over time.

TWO MAIN THEMATIC THREADS

New entrances and expansions allow a different overall flow and conceptualization of the museum. The different floors, which were extremely difficult to link in the past, will present two different multi-cultural narratives: the first floor will focus on trade and the exchange of ideas, while the second floor galleries will focus on the spread of ancient religions.

The themes of exchange and inter-cultural contact will be reinforced throughout all the galleries. Panels will draw attention to the historic features of the building or to neighbouring monuments visible through windows. Since Singapore's historical foundations in trade and immigration are immediately evident in the Singapore River, this takes advantage of the ACM setting. Each gallery will also have a panel

1. According to this study, the recommendation for a 20-year collection horizon (by 2010) was to plan for a 'final' collection of 100,000 objects, and to plan for the museum precinct to accommodate such a collection. Barry Lord, "Cultural Resources Planning & Management", in *National Museum, Singapore – Museum Precinct Master Plan (1990)*.

2. Barry Lord, *Emerging National Identities: A Look at Asia*, Paper presented at a meeting of the Association of American Museums in 1998.

3. At the time of the collection audit by Lord in 1990, only 3% of the national collection was categorised as Fine Art – the majority was History (42%), Ethnography (32%) or Archaeology (23%). Lord, 1990. Hence, for example, the West Asia gallery – being the last collecting area for the museum – was originally mainly filled by long-term loans from the Tareq Rajab museum of Kuwait. The narratives for the Southeast Asia galleries were also shaped by the collection, which included extremely diverse elements such as island Southeast Asia, Hill people of mainland Southeast

Asia, vernacular Buddhism (a new collecting area), Vietnam (Sinicized Southeast Asia), the 'Malay world', textiles and metal work (jewellery and weaponry) and the 'performing arts' (a gamelan set from one of the Yogyakarta courts was acquired for this purpose).

4. Kwa Chong Guan, *Structure and Themes of the Asian Civilisation Gallery in the NM Precinct (1990)*.

5. This was because the Chinese population in Singapore was "not directly related to Japan, Korea and the northern nomadic peoples across the central Asian and Siberian steppes", and the national collection did not include any artefacts from these other regions. *Storylines for the Second Wing of the Asian Civilisations Museum*, 22 Jul 1999.

to discuss the relevance of history to culture today in Singapore and its surrounding regions.

TRADE: THE EXCHANGE OF GOODS AND IDEAS

This gallery focuses on trade exchanges to allow visitors to discover cultural connections through trading networks. As a major port city, Singapore is the product of many different peoples living together: the ACM similarly reflects the unique qualities of Singapore's blended communities. The display will introduce the historical context of trade routes, both land and sea, and key production centres of port cities across Asia.

Themes explored include early trade between China and Southeast Asia; the continuation of trading links between China and the Islamic worlds; encounters between Europe and Asia from the 1500s; expanding markets in the 16th and 17th centuries; *Kunstammer* and luxury goods; Southeast Asian trading ports and mixed communities; and trade and missionary work.

The gallery display will include a mix of media, ranging from Chinese export ceramics, metalwork, trade textiles, paintings, exotic materials, furniture and decorative art. Visitors are encouraged to discover the deep connections that link artistic and cultural traditions in Asia and the world.



*A view of Singapore harbour, by an unknown Chinese artist, Singapore, c.1830, oil on canvas
Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum*



*Ritual Hanging, Coromandel Coast, India, early 18th century
Cotton; painted, mordant and resist-dye
Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum*



*Casket Gujarat, India, 16th century
Mother-of-pearl, wood and silver
Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum*



*Octagonal cup with musicians and a dancer
China, ca. 830
Gold*

Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum



*Vishnu with Lakshmi and Saraswati
Eastern India, 12 century (Pala Kingdom)
Bronze with silver inlay*

Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum

**KHOO TECK PUAT GALLERY
(TANG SHIPWRECK)**

A new gallery on the riverfront wing will trace the early roots of trade in Singapore and the region, through a shipwreck carrying a large Chinese cargo bound for the Middle East dating from the 9th century. This gallery will reveal the strong commercial and cultural links between China, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East one thousand years ago: linking Tang China, Southeast Asian Srivijaya, and the Abbasid Empire in the Near East. It also serves to demonstrate Singapore's historical strategic location as a pivot point along the maritime Silk Route.

FAITH AND BELIEF: THE SPREAD OF ANCIENT RELIGIONS

The second floor galleries will emphasize the connections between the cultures of Asia through the major role played by religion, witnessed especially as ancient Indian religions that spread to the rest of the continent. As Buddhism and Hinduism migrated, visual expressions adapted and changed within local cultures.

The first gallery will present the origins of the oldest pan-Asian religion: Buddhism. The ancient Vedic sources of Buddhism and Hinduism in India will be explored, along with the interactions between the two religions. The gallery will show purely symbolic representa-



Brush rest
 China, Jingdezhen, 1506-21
 Marked: 大明正德年製 (Made in the Zhengde reign of Ming dynasty)
 Porcelain
 Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum



Opium bed
 China, Chaozhou, 1875
 Gilded and lacquered namwood
 Image courtesy of the Asian Civilisations Museum

tions of religious ideas to the flowering of figural Buddhist art in the 3rd and 4th centuries. The gallery will conclude with the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia, drawing a strong connection with Singapore's region.

Two adjacent galleries will focus on Islam and Christianity in Asia. These will open in Phase Three of the redevelopment

**THE KWEK HONG PNG WING:
 CHINESE AND CONTEMPORARY ART**

A gallery dedicated to merchant, court and the scholar's studio will focus on the scholar in Chinese culture, and how this aspirational ideal took hold in wider Chinese society through the social hierarchy.

The display examines how early diaspora Chinese migrants to Southeast Asia, mostly merchants and traders, explored and redefined their cultural identities in relation to the ideals of Chinese taste reflected in the lives of the literati and in the culture of the imperial courts.

Objects will be used to illustrate key concepts such as the scholar-official, Confucianism, imperial tastes and status, the four pursuits - namely, *qin* (a musical instrument), *qi* (a strategy game), *shu* (calligraphy), and *hua* (painting) - and patronage. Chinese furniture, both studio and regional variations, will be displayed. This will help to illustrate how ancient scholars in the Ming and Qing dynasties lived and worked. Comparisons will be made to the original contexts in southern China - in Fujian, Teochew, and Canton.

CHINESE CERAMICS

A new gallery of Chinese ceramics will open in Phase Two. An entry into an understanding of Chinese ceramics as art, the gallery aims to encourage close contemplation of physical traits appreciable by the naked eye - body, glaze, and form. Visitors will use this as a starting point to explore broader contextual questions, such as the historical development of ceramics in China, and its importance in international networks of trade, culture, and technology. Themes explored will include the history of Chinese ceramics from the Neolithic period to the Qing dynasty, and specific case studies: Dehua porcelain of Fujian province, porcelain made in Europe after Chinese models, and Transitional ware.

CONCLUSION

The ACM reflects Singapore's unique position in the world at the intersection of many cultures. From the museum collection's origins as an ethnographic collection of a colonial museum, its remit has expanded beyond monolithic 'ancestral' cultures of Singapore's immigrant population, to incorporate new pan-Asian approaches to cultural studies and the humanities. The revamped ACM devotes special attention to the artistic connections between cultures, and blended artistic forms, or cross-cultural art. This distinguishes Singapore and the ACM from other civilisation museums around the world.

BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY AND ART: THE ROLE OF A NATIONAL MUSEUM – SRI LANKA

Mrs. Sanuja Kasthuriarachchi, Director,
Department of National Museums, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

The National Museum of Sri Lanka was established in 1877. It has played a very significant role in the national life of the Sri Lankan people by protecting their national heritage. Until recently, however, specific functions of the museum were confined to documentation, preservation, and conservation of the cultural heritage of this multi-racial island, whose history goes back 2500 years. Colombo National Museum contains artefacts from Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic cultures.

Therefore I believe that the theme for this year's meeting and conference *Balancing Political History, Ethnography, and Art: the Role of a National Museum* is very relevant to my institution: Colombo National Museum, Sri Lanka.

THE COLOMBO NATIONAL MUSEUM, SRI LANKA

As I mentioned before, we are a multi-racial country. So, as the National Museum, we have to play a significant role in reconciliation between various ethnic groups and communities. For over 138 years we have served as the national repository of arts and artefacts, historical evidence and a platform for their ethnographic representation.

A museum does not merely preserve a nation's cultural heritage in a static manner. Through preservation and interpretation, a museum contributes to the national and cultural formation of a country. In a society such as ours, the rate of historical and cultural change increases daily. Many customs and items of tra-

ditional use pass into disuse, usually in tandem with socio-economic transformations that are taking place. Meanwhile, the formation of new cultural structures becomes a major national responsibility. This is deeply influenced by both internal and external factors.

The galleries in the Colombo National Museum are arranged under the following themes:

Political History Galleries

1. Pre and Proto Historic Gallery
2. Anuradhapura Period Gallery
3. Polonnaruwa Period Gallery
4. Transitional Period Gallery
5. Kandy Period Gallery

Art and Crafts

6. Stone Antiquities Gallery
7. Painting Gallery
8. Textile Gallery
9. Ceramic Gallery
10. Coins and Currency Gallery
11. Standards and Banners Gallery
12. Arts and Crafts Gallery
13. Arms and Armaments Gallery

Ethnography

14. Traditional Rituals Gallery
15. Traditional Agriculture Gallery

The first gallery provides information on world 'pre-history' and the evolution of man. The main hall is devoted to exhibitions on Sri Lanka's pre- and proto- history.

Dioramas, stone implements and megalithic burials provide a good source of evidence to study this period.



(Left) Diorama of Pre-History Gallery
(Right) Pre and Proto Historic Gallery
Images Courtesy of Colombo National Museum, Sri Lanka

Galleries 2 to 5 consist of a valuable collection of exhibits relating to historical periods in Sri Lanka. Originating in the 4th century BC, Anuradhapura was the first historical kingdom in Sri Lanka. The exhibition contains a unique collection of artefacts relating to the historical developments and the Buddhist and Hindu culture of that period.

Polonnaruwa Period Gallery reveals the multi-cultural heritage of this period with a large number of Buddhist and Hindu artefacts. This gallery has an excellent collection of Hindu sculptures excavated from Hindu Shrines in the area.

The Transitional Period Gallery provides good examples of the roles of cultures and communities which cross national borders and cultural objects that have been retooled over different historical periods. The Royal capital of Sri Lanka was shifted from the Dry Zone to the Wet Zone because of invasions. Hence the period between the 13th and 16th Century turned out to be a transitional era.

The trilingual inscription discovered from Galle inscribed in Persian, Chinese and Tamil, provides important evidence of Indian Ocean trade activities in the 14th Century.

In the Textile Gallery, there are traditional costumes representing all the ethnic groups in the country – the Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, Malay and Burgher communities.

In Gallery 7, the visitors can view ancient mural paintings. This gallery is very important because original copies exhibited no longer exist insitu.

The ethnographic galleries in the museum present a collection of exhibits depicting the religious, economic and political life of the people. A number of very useful exhibits provide deeper insights into the rural life and agricultural economy of the country during ancient times.

The Colombo National Museum collection is the only place one can find enough authentic evidence to study the evolution of religions, art and architecture, paintings, Buddha images, carvings and motifs, agricultural and domestic equipment, masks, costumes and jewelry which make up the cultural heritage of the people of this country.

The following images will give you an idea of the rich collection that the museum has and how it represents and showcases the multi-cultural history and heritage of Sri Lanka:



From left to right: Buddha Image, Goddess Tara, Goddess Parvati, God Siva and Goddess Parvati
Images Courtesy of Colombo National Museum, Sri Lanka



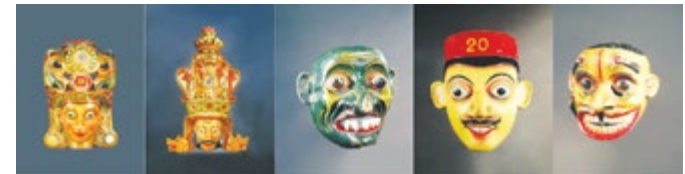
(Left) Tri-Lingual Stone Inscription
(Right) Traditional Sri Lankan Costumes / Flag
Images Courtesy of Colombo National Museum, Sri Lanka



Objects from Arts and Crafts Gallery
Image Courtesy of Colombo National Museum, Sri Lanka



Agriculture Gallery



Traditional Masks of Sri Lanka displayed in the Colombo National Museum



Chinese Ceramics displayed in the Colombo National Museum's Ceramic Gallery



The last King's Throne and Crown, Kingdom of Kandy
Images Courtesy of Colombo National Museum, Sri Lanka

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is useful to look at the challenges faced in balancing the demands to provide adequate representation of political history, ethnography and art. The Colombo National Museum from its inception focused on mainly collecting objects from archaeological contexts that related to the major historical periods of the country's history. Therefore, its presentation of the political history of ancient Sri Lanka is extensive. The more recent political history of the country is presented in the Independence Museum. Due to the richness of the museum's collections, the

traditional arts and crafts of the country are also well represented. Despite having a large collection, the museum only has a few ethnographic galleries. Branch museums located in Galle and Anuradhapura provide greater insight into the life of the communities in these maritime and agricultural areas .

A significant shortcoming is the lack of adequate representation of all the ethnic groups in the country. Some of these groups are under-represented both in the museum's collections and in the exhibitions.

THE CHALLENGE OF RUNNING ETHNOLOGY MUSEUMS: BETWEEN ART AND HISTORY MUSEUMS IN THAILAND

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The Office of National Museums, Thailand



*The National Museum Bangkok, the first museum of Thailand (141 years old)
Image courtesy of the Office of National Museums, Thailand*

INTRODUCTION

The origin and development of Thailand's national museums is linked to the royal collection of art objects and antiquities. This wonderful collection, which was presented to the national museums, and the government's policy to preserve artefacts found in ancient sites has ensured that the 42 national museums throughout the country are full of art objects and antiquities. This collection is a defining characteristic of the national museums. The only exception to which is the unique National Museum of Ethnology.¹

Thailand's National Museum of Ethnology was founded in 1996, in honour of His Majesty the King's golden jubilee (Thai: *Kanchanaphisek*). Thus, the official name of the museum is "The *Kanchanaphisek* National Museum". Under the jurisdiction of the Office of National Museums, Fine Arts Department, two buildings were built for the museum; One of them has been used as the Central Storage space for the Office and the other for the National Museum of Ethnology.

In 2007, I was the Director of the museum and worked on the master plan for the museum based on the concept and objective that

the museum should be a learning centre for the culture and traditions of all of Thailand's ethnicities. According to our research at the time, more than 60 ethnic groups including Thais (75 per cent), Chinese (14 percent) and other ethnicities (11 percent) live in Thailand. Although the fundamental idea of establishing the museum was to introduce and showcase all ethnic groups of the country, the museum gave priority to the minority groups, which are more than 40 in number. Some of these groups have become vulnerable due to irreversible change.

While working on the master plan, our museum staff collected data, materials and ethnographic objects from various sites. Although the written master plan was completed before my departure from the museum to take up the Directorship of the National Museum in Bangkok in 2009, till today no permanent exhibition has been organised and it has yet to officially open to the public. Only the visible storage galleries and the occasional temporary exhibitions at the office building have been opened to some visitors. Why has this situation gone on as it has?

This paper discusses the past and current challenges that the National Museum of Ethnology and local museums of ethnology have encountered, addressing the tension between a top-down governmental policy and ground-up strategic plans undertaken by museum personnel who strive to fulfil the museum's goal.

SOME FOCAL POINTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY THAT IMPACT THE MUSEUMS

1. Over the past two decades, the government has promoted the local identity and cultural diversity of Thailand in order to support the main policy of decentralisation of government administrative bodies. The national museums had to follow the government's policy by allowing local ethnographic objects and folk

traditions to be exhibited in some other national museums. Three national museums, *Roi Et* in the Northeast, *Satun* in the South, and *Suphan Buri* in Central Thailand were established to serve this policy. They are sometimes known as "City Museums" rather than as National Museums.

2. In 1995, the government supported the Fine Arts Department's project of building the National Museum of Ethnology at Pathum Thani Province, 30 kilometres to the north of Bangkok. Due to the country's economic crisis in 1997, followed by frequent political changes, the government did not approve a five-year construction plan of a 'large-scale' exhibition and the management of the National Museum of Ethnology. The government has merely allocated budget for maintaining the office (with museum staff) and a visible storage building, and for small temporary exhibitions.

3. Over the past two decades, the government adopted a policy of "lifelong learning" and developed a strategy to increase "learning sites", either in schools or temples, so as to make them unlimited in number. There was a growing interest in smaller museum and community-based projects. Due to voluntary collectors, who lacked the basic knowledge of museology and conservation to handle objects, a large number of ethnographic materials and folk handicrafts were collected, stored and exhibited improperly. Furthermore, the stories, origins or provenances of objects were poorly recorded.

4. Her Majesty the Queen's initiative to promote local and ethnic textiles and handicrafts was adopted as a government policy and lent to a government strategy to promote them in domestic and global markets. One of the government policies on the issue that had been implemented by several bodies under the jurisdiction of the Fine Arts Department including the Office of National Museums and Regional

¹ Amara Srisuchat, "Proposed Activity Programmes for Cooperation among Asian Museums", in *Museum and Urban Anthropology: Proceedings of the International Conference* (Hanoi: Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, 2008), 17-20, 123-129



Visible storage of the National Museum of Ethnology, Pathum Thani Province
Image courtesy of the Office of National Museums, Thailand

National Museums was the project on the “Creative Fine Arts”²

THE NATIONAL MUSEUMS’ GROUND-UP STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR BEST PRACTICES

The Office of the National Museums, a government body for implementing government policies in the preservation of material culture, the development and maintenance of standards and the promotion of National Museums and other museums has collaborated with the 42 national museums throughout the country to design ground-up strategic actions to implement government policy successfully.

The approved ground-up proposals were supported by the government and the national museums that had an influence in shaping the government’s policy and strategy of best practices. This created a win-win situation for our stakeholders:

1. Apart from opening up a space in the regional National Museums’ buildings for exhibiting ethnographic items, the National Museums had to arrange several training programmes on ethnology for its staff. Although it placed excessive demands and responsibility on the staff, it was a good opportunity for the regional National Museums to provide new knowledge to museum staff to share with visitors so as to prevent the loss of Thailand’s ethnological art and crafts.

2. The establishment of the “National Museum of Ethnology” led to an official meeting on the revision of the National Museum’s definition and mission, for instance; according to the 1961 *Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums of Thailand*, a ‘National Museum’ is established to be a place for keeping antiques or objects of art which are State property. Thus, ethnographic objects are excluded from this by law.³ After discussion, directors and curators of all the National Museums requested a further revision of the 1961 Act so that ethno-

graphic objects and ethnographic related issues could be included in the definitions and missions of National Museums. We finally agreed to proclaim that any ethnographic object in a National Museum is regarded as an object of art that should be protected, according to the Act. However, the declaration is in practice workable only in the National Museums. It does not yet cover the ethnographic items that exist outside the National Museums. Therefore, they are not legally protected and we are completely losing more of them day by day.

3. The five-years allocated for the construction of the National Museum of Ethnology in the museum’s master plan was subject to reconsideration in light of economic considerations. The Office of National Museums realised that the National Museum of Ethnology had not kept pace with the master plan because of budgetary constraints. It was better to propose a long term plan for the construction of exhibitions and additional buildings for the museum. A promising new development came from the government’s acceptance of the proposal. It provided the capital for permanent exhibition buildings of the National Museums of Ethnology on the condition that the exhibition

buildings would be built one by one. This would take several years to be completed. However, the museum’s research and outreach programmes connected to the exhibitions have continued to be financially supported.

One of the successful examples of the implementation of the National Museum of Ethnology’s programme is the *Story-telling from our Elders: The Ethnological Forum*. The forum was designed to invite a number of indigenous scholars from various ethnic groups to share their knowledge and experience of various aspects of the way of life of their ethnic group. This included their views on ethnic material culture in relation to the modern globalised world and on ethnographic items as museum objects. This was a way to increase opportunities for ethnic people of all generations and all levels to learn from each other. Contact between the participants from different ethnic groups and socio-cultural backgrounds enhanced the museum staff’s and participants’ capacity for developing a wider network.

4. When the local administrative sectors and communities adopted the government policy on the “life-long learning centre at hometown”, a



Some groups of visitors are allowed to access the visible storage of the National Museum of Ethnology
Image courtesy of the Office of National Museums, Thailand

² Amara Srisuchat, *Elaborate Vintage Textiles and Clothing* (Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 2015), 8-9.

³ *Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums*. B.E. 2504 (1961) As last amended by the *Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums* (No.2), B.E. 2551 (1992). (Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 2010), 40.



Textiles of ethnic groups exhibit in the Special Exhibition “Elaborate Vintage Textiles and Clothing” at the National Museum Bangkok on August 14 - November 4, 2015
Image courtesy of the Office of National Museums, Thailand



House of the Thai Song Dam ethnic group, used as the local museum of the ethnic group
Image courtesy of the Office of National Museums, Thailand

large number of “storehouses of folk crafts and art”, which are called “museums”, were founded throughout the country. Knowing that taking finds from archaeological sites and ancient monuments are illicit, the local museum stakeholders avoided taking objects of antiquity to place in their “museum.” Thus, they preferred to acquire ethnographic objects, such as household utensils made of wood and textiles and clothing of ethnic groups and handled them regardless of their fragile condition. To collect fragile ethnographic objects, such as those, without knowledge of museology and conservation has caused serious damage to the objects. According to the national law, the government’s budget is designed to support the National Museums, which are government agencies. There are no provisions for the state to subsidise private or local administrative sectors for maintaining museums and collections. To overcome the problem, the Office of National Museums plans to deepen its involvement in the improvement of these “museums” that are filled with ethnographic collections.

According to our mission, the National Museums have to transmit and disseminate knowledge of artistic and cultural heritage to the general public. We have to provide academic knowledge and practices to government museums, local museums and temple museums based on their requests so as to develop such museums. Thus, we decided to work in close cooperation with the non-national museums to improve the quality of their collections and professional standards of their personnel. Several long-term projects to back-up and develop local museums have been submitted to government administrators and some have received government budget allocations to implement them.

The Office of National Museums’ project of “Best Practice” is a “museology training course” that offers training opportunities to per-

sonnel of museums belonging to other government entities (e.g. school museums, museums of local administrative sectors, temple museums, or private museums). It was designed to help both unskilled and poorly skilled personnel to learn either theory or practice with experts and senior curators, conservators and technicians of the Office of National Museums. From 2003 to 2015, 180 participants from government, local and private museums attended the training course. They became strong personnel that worked on improving exhibitions and collections in their museums. The project is very important for the future of museum development, and will greatly enhance the museums’ network and links across the country.⁴

5. Some activities of the National Museums were designed according to the Ministry of Culture’s policy of raising awareness of the value of cultural assets with regards to the economic development of the country and promotion of material culture for tourism. The activities that were able to capitalise on the National Museums during the creation of a creative economy that intended to generate wealth and sustain the country’s development are as follows:

- 1) The promotion of artistic souvenirs or products made and inspired by objects of art, antiquity and ethnographic objects in the National Museums.
- 2) The organisation of an animated film and short-film contest on the theme of “Museums for All.”⁵
- 3) The occasionally night programmes of the National Museums. Today, the term “Nocturnal Visit to the National Museums” or “The Night Museum” is well known to the public. It has become a new trend in visiting the National Museums.⁶

⁴ Sornlak Khamtrong, “Developing Wider Museum’s Network through a Museology Training Project”, in *Museum Newsletter No. 4 July-September 2014*, (2014), 8-9.
⁵ Duangchai Pichitnarongchai, “Thai Museum Day’s Activities at the National Museum Bangkok”, in *Museum Newsletter No. 4 July-August 2015*, (2015), 13-15.
⁶ Thatson Tantiwong, “Nocturnal Visit to the Palace Museum or the Night Museum”, in *Museum Newsletter No. 3 May-June 2015*, (2015), 13-15



Household utensils of the Thai Yuan ethnic group, Local Museum of Ethnology in Ratchaburi Province
Image courtesy of the Office of National Museums, Thailand

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Due to the needs of ethnic groups and the different contexts of people in society, the government can no longer see the National Museum of Ethnology as the sole responsibility of the government. Therefore to promote peace among the majority and minority groups, the government needs to create partnerships not only between government officials at all levels, but also with social enterprise and private enterprise that share the museum's goal. The National Museum of Ethnology must work closely with other government bodies and private entrepreneurs by connecting related agencies vertically and horizontally from the national level, provincial level to the ethnic community level through the innovative projects that answer the people's needs. In terms of regional perspective, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

has declared the 2020 ASEAN's vision, and one of the goals is to be a community of caring societies. In a 21st century global society, the knowledge and demand for understanding minorities to solve the challenge of the conflict between the majority and minorities of certain countries, of migration, and of the loss of the minorities' tradition and culture is a serious issue that has to be addressed. As such, the ethnology museum's framework needs to be able to respond to global challenges. This requires collective response with a strategic vision that is global in character, rather than one which is limited by national or regional frontiers. The utilisation of the National Museum of Ethnology or local museums of ethnology as mediators of cultural heritage will reduce the gap between ethnicity and nationality, which is a factor that prevents people from living together peacefully.

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ROLE OF THE VIETNAM NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY: ON BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY AND ART

Dr. Nguyen Van Cuong
Director of the Vietnam National Museum of History



Logo of Vietnam National Museum of History
Image courtesy of the Vietnam National Museum of History

INTRODUCTION

A National Museum is a special cultural institution. It is the head of the museum system in a country. It leads, influences and orients the operation of a nation's museum system. It is also a place that stores the majority of a nation's artefacts (cultural property) and is the most abundantly resourced with human resources, typical display systems and basic research programmes. Its research covers the entire country and a broad range of historical periods (from the ancient to contemporary) that relate to the most essential characteristics of the culture, civilisation and history of the nation.

THE ROLE OF THE VIETNAM NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

In this regard, the Vietnam National Museum of History has always played an important role in Vietnamese museums' activities. Its function is to give people an objective view

- the most objective and balanced approach in understanding political institutions through history. It not only provides the value of information and knowledge to the public, but also gives politicians and contemporary political institutions a deep understanding of the basics of national political history in strengthening cooperative relations. Through exhibitions and other research projects (such as archaeological excavations, surveys, basic research etc.), the public can recognise the formation and development of the state. The public can also learn of the role of the state in the historical evolution of the nation from the primitive to the contemporary, in relation to ethnic issues. The representation of history, culture and civilization of each nation means addressing ethnic issues, ethnic groups and ancient kingdoms in history. This creates unity in diversity. In a multi-ethnic nation like Vietnam, the research and introduction, storage and preservation of ethnic cultural values addresses the historical formation and development of the nation, ethnicity and territory.



The Vietnam National Museum of History precinct
Image courtesy of the Vietnam National Museum of History



Co-operation Exhibition "L'envol du dragon-art royal du Vietnam" at Guimet Museum in Paris, France
Image courtesy of the Vietnam National Museum of History

The Vietnam National Museum of History has to set goals. It gives priority broadly to ethnic issues. In this process, we have built a collection and a combination of permanent exhibitions

that addresses the theme of ethnic, national culture, civilisation and the diversity of a unified multi-ethnic country. We build a general awareness of the cultural and civilised values of eth-

nicities as components of national and cultural civilisation. Many collections with multi-ethnic themes are managed by the Vietnam National Museum of History. However, intangible culture is not valued enough because it is not codified and promoted.

With contemporary trends of development, ethnic issues are one of the most complex issues for a country or social group to address. Seeking an ethnic balance in a national museum's activities is a basic task that contributes to stabilising this complex problem.

ART AND THE VIETNAM NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

With regards to art, we must first define the concept of art for museums. Art is cultural and historical property. Artefacts through the ages are full of artistic elements. Secondly, modern artworks are independent works, and

architecture is a pluralistic construction. The artworks of a country is managed and promoted by the national museum. Artworks can be historical evidence that represents the nation, civilisation, culture or a certain period of a nation's history. This is why the management, promotion, research and collection are focused in a National Museum.

Many artworks are introduced to the public locally and abroad regularly through media channels and publications. This is the most effective way to provide the public with information and to build public awareness and understanding of all the activities of a national museum. However, it can be said that the management of contemporary works of the Vietnam National Museum of History is not a priority. The National Museum is the place that stores national art. It is necessary to establish policies and strategies for collecting and storing contemporary artworks in this context.



The activity of Volunteers Club, Vietnam National Museum of History at a Primary School
Image courtesy of the Vietnam National Museum of History



The activity of I love history club at the Vietnam National Museum of History
Image courtesy of the Vietnam National Museum of History

CULTURAL PROPERTY AND THE VIETNAM NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

It can be said that the National Museum is the place that contains the full and most profound evidence of the nation's history. It stores historical artefacts associated with the civilisation and development of the nation. Cultural institutions (such as the National Museum) are the pride of each nation and its people. Cultural property assigned to the National Museum to manage certainly deserves to represent a nation in a historical and cultural dialogue with external relations.

ON BALANCING POLITICAL HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY AND ART

Obviously, the theme of the 5th ANMA conference is a problem arising out of the traditional nature of museums, politics and the current affairs of each National Museum. The

National Museum through its activities plays an important role in society of balancing political history, ethnography and art and has always faced many challenges to fulfil that mission. National museums are cultural institutions. Culture is one of the few best possible approaches to address peoples and nations. In other words, cultural understanding and economic benefits of a nation are the most important factors and the foundation of effective cooperation between countries and their peoples

With this awareness, I totally agree with the theme of this conference given to each member to share and discuss perceptions of how we accomplish our mission of contributing to the nation and addressing our common interests. I trust that this conference organised in Asian Civilisations Museum (Singapore) will continue to achieve success as those previously have.

Hanoi, September 2015

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