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BOOKENDS

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READER: Lee Chor Lin, 44, director of the National Museum of Singapore. The museum reopened early this month after a 3½-year revamp.

She started working at the old National Museum in 1985 as an assistant curator, and joined the Asian Civilisations Museum a decade later as a senior curator of the Chinese and South-east Asian Collections.

She was appointed acting director for the then Singapore History Museum in 2002, while continuing her senior curatorial work with the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Since April 2003, she has been director of the Singapore History Museum, now known as the National Museum.

She has a master's degree in history from the National University of Singapore and a diploma in Asian art from the School of Oriental and African Studies, in collaboration with Sotheby's Institute. She is married with no children.

What are you reading now?

I have just finished re-reading Amitav Ghosh's *Dancing In Cambodia, At Large In Burma*. The book is in three parts, with two on Cambodia.

The first of these two stories begins with King Sisowath's visit to France in 1906, during which his court nymph dancers inspired a series of sketches by painter-sculptor Rodin. Ghosh then goes on to interview a former court dancer, who was the sister-in-law of Pol Pot.

I connected with this story immediately because I produced a documentary with a friend in 2000 about a group of artists who survived the Pol Pot era, and also because the National Museum is presenting *Revitalising Monkeys & Giants* – a modern interpretation of the classical Cambodian mask dance *Lakhon Khoal* – this Friday and Saturday.

I am also reading Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories And The City*. I love every chapter of it. The insider's view of the great city without orientalist trappings is refreshing and liberating. It is certainly not a travelogue.

If your house was burning down, which book would you save?

I would rescue books that are out of print. One such book is from my late father's library – a 1954 Beijing edition of the 12th-century epic poem, *The Knight In The Tiger Skin* by Georgian poet Shot'ha Rust'hveli.

I first read it when I was 10 or 11, and was completely bowled over by the sheer romanticism, the dramatic imagery and its length. It's definitely a book that is part of my life.



Istanbul: Memories And The City (\$19.95) is available from Books Kinokuniya, while *Dancing In Cambodia, At Large In Burma* (US\$12 or S\$18.47) and *The Knight In The Tiger Skin* (US\$28.50 or S\$43.86) are available from www.amazon.com