

MEDIA RELEASE

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THE ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM FIRST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TO HOST 103 RARE FINDS OF EARLY CHINESE CIVILISATION FROM ANCIENT SICHUAN

Mystery Men: Finds From China's Lost Age, 16 January – 15 April 2007

The Asian Civilisations Museum is the first in Southeast Asia to present 103 mysterious finds from Ancient Sichuan, China, in the exhibition named ***Mystery Men: Finds from China's Lost Age*** starting from 16 January 2007 to 15 April 2007. The exhibits on display are intriguing artefacts from an archaeological discovery that took the world by storm 20 years ago. The exhibits featured in *Mystery Men: Finds from China's Lost Age* will bring about a whole new understanding of early Chinese civilisation during the Bronze Age. This exhibition is jointly organised by the Asian Civilisations Museum and the Cultural Relics Bureau of Sichuan Province.

Amazing Discovery of Mysterious Men, Mysterious Culture

An archaeological breakthrough in the summer of 1986 near Guanghan city in Sichuan Province, China, had since rewritten the history of Chinese civilisation and challenged the common belief that the early Chinese civilisation was primarily based in the Yellow River Basin. Two sacrificial pits were discovered in a village in Sanxingdui (or 'three star mound') and more than 4,000 artefacts were unearthed. Larger-than-life bronze masks with flaring pointed ears and protruding pupils, heads, figurines, gold and jade artefacts were found to have been made some 3,200 years ago, dating to the 13th to 11 century BCE (or Before Common Era). Other items found included elephant tusks and cowrie shells. When this amazing discovery was first found, archaeologists were puzzled who might have made them. Despite the lack of written information, scholars today agree that the people of Sanxingdui were the Shu

people. Archaeological research has revealed that the Sanxingdui site is a Neolithic and early Bronze Age culture that occupied the Chengdu Plain. The discoveries at Sanxingdui illustrate the existence of an important early socio-political centre in a region which was once considered a cultural backwater in ancient China.

Since the discovery, these artefacts have received great amount of international interest and attention. They have been exhibited at world renowned museums such as The British Museum, Taipei's National Palace Museum, National Gallery of Art (Washington), Guggenheim Museum (New York), Asian Art Museum (San Francisco), Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney) and Lausanne Olympic Museum (Switzerland).

Dr Kenson Kwok, Director, Asian Civilisations Museum said, "We are extremely happy to bring these mysterious and rare finds from Sichuan to Southeast Asia for the first time. Since the archaeological discovery in 1986, the rare finds have attracted a lot of international attention, showing at museums such as The British Museum, Guggenheim Museum, and the Taipei National Palace Museum where they attracted large crowds. We hope that Singaporeans and tourists will take this opportunity to visit *Mystery Men* at the ACM. I am sure that visitors will gain insights and have a better understanding of early Chinese civilisation. This is also aligned with the ACM's objectives to help visitors understand the cultural roots of modern Singaporeans."

Principal Sponsor of *Mystery Men*, Mr Ronald Ooi, Managing Director, Kim Eng Securities Pte Ltd, said, "Kim Eng is proud to be the principal sponsor of this exhibition of artefacts from Sanxingdui. These artefacts are not only breathtaking for their antiquity and beauty but also for their significant impact on our understanding of how Chinese civilisation evolved. We congratulate the Asian Civilisations Museum on being the first in Southeast Asia and the third in Asia to host this remarkable collection. With this exhibition, the ACM joins a select group of internationally renowned cultural institutions. It is exhibitions like this that will put the ACM and the Singapore in a good standing in the international cultural arena."

Mystery Men is also supported by the Lee Foundation, AXA Insurance Singapore Pte Ltd, Min Jiang Restaurant at Goodwood Park and Min Jiang Restaurant at one-north.

First Ever Appearance of Largest Mask Measuring 1.32 metres at *Mystery Men*

Visitors will view 103 artefacts of which 20 are classified as top grade and some are exhibited outside China for the first time. Measuring 1.32 metres in width and 0.72 metres in height, the largest bronze mask ever found in the sacrificial pits is making its debut in *Mystery Men*. This massive and spectacular mask has undergone years of restoration after it was excavated in a burnt and damaged condition from the pit. One of the top grade artefacts on display is a bronze head with gold foil mask from the 12th century BCE. At the time of discovery, the gold mask was separated from the head and at least six of such gold masks were discovered in Sanxingdui. For the Chinese, gold is closely associated with solemnity and the power to ward off evil spirits hence the mask would have conveyed a divine brilliance to its on-lookers and might also represent a symbol of authority. Other highlights in the exhibition include a mask with protruding pupils and ornamented forehead and a tiger appliqué with markings that clearly identify it as a tiger, to name a few.

Mystery Men: Finds From China's Lost Age Special Exhibition

Mystery Men draws on a web of knowledge sources in Chinese literature and history. Research is on-going at Sanxingdui and this exhibition has incorporated what is known to-date to help shed light on some of the mysteries of this early society which flourished more than 3,200 years ago.

During the exhibition, guided tours in English, Mandarin and Japanese for “*Mystery Men*” will be available for visitors. Seminars, workshops and activities including *RED*, a two-day festival named that filled with exciting programmes, performances and films have also been organised in-conjunction with *Mystery Men*. Please refer to www.acm.org.sg for more information on guided tours and upcoming programmes.

About the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)

The Asian Civilisations Museum's mission is to explore and present the cultures and civilisations of Asia, so as to promote awareness and appreciation of the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans and their links to Southeast Asia and the World. The Asian Civilisations Museum first began its operations at Armenian Street in 1997, which closed at end-2005 and will re-open in 2008 as a brand new Peranakan attraction. ACM's new flagship at the historic Empress Place Building opened on 2 March 2003.

Address

1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555

Museum Front Desk: (65) 6332 7798

Public Programme Hotline: (65) 6332 3284

Opening Hours

Mondays : 1pm – 7pm

Tuesdays – Sundays : 9am – 7pm (to 9pm on Fridays)

Admission Charges

Adult : \$8

Concession : \$4 (Full-time students and age 60 years and above)

Family Package : \$20 for maximum of 5 persons

- Free for children under 6 years old and below and NHB Season Pass Holders.
- Discounted admission on Fridays, 7pm – 9pm.

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