

MEDIA RELEASE

ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM LAUNCHES MILESTONE EXHIBITION ON ANCIENT TREASURES FROM MYANMAR

Singapore, 29 November 2016 – Celebrating 50 years of diplomatic ties between Singapore and Myanmar, the Asian Civilisations Museum will for the first time in the history of Singapore present an international loan exhibition from Myanmar.

The exhibition *Cities and Kings: Ancient Treasures from Myanmar* will be open to public from 2 December 2016 to 5 March 2017. The exhibition is supported by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Heritage Board.

The exhibition tells the story of three of the most significant eras in Myanmar history: the formative Pyu and Mon period, where early city-states emerged; the famed Bagan period, where Buddhist temple architecture flourished; and the Mandalay period, with its celebrated courtly arts.

ACM Director, Kennie Ting shared that, “This is truly a partnership between Myanmar and Singapore. 32 works of art have been loaned from four institutions; the National Museum of Nay Pyi Taw, the National Museum of Yangon, the Bagan Archaeological Museum and the Department of Archaeology, Yangon. Of these, 14 have never travelled out of Myanmar. ACM has supplemented these pieces with 28 objects from our national collection and a private collection in Singapore.”

Speaking about the exhibition, ACM curator for *Cities and Kings*, Dr Stephen Murphy explains, “We worked closely with our colleagues in Myanmar to select rare and beautiful objects. The show starts with a monumental warrior stone from the fifth century set up by a king. It comes from one of the ancient Pyu cities. From Bagan, we were allowed to borrow one of the most sacred Buddha images, as well as other fine works. The glory and splendour of Mandalay – the last royal capital – is represented by gold-leaf lacquerware and elaborately worked silver wares. We hope the exhibition will kindle an interest among the general public in the history, arts, and culture of Myanmar and inspire them to visit the country themselves as it reopens to the world once again.”

The exhibition presents 2000 years of dramatic history through 60 spectacular works of art representative of the Pyu, Mon, Bagan, Inwa, and Mandalay periods. It tells of city-states emerging, the use of art and architecture to glorify religion and the state, the rise and fall of the economies, influence of foreign aggression, and adaptation and innovation by artists.

The public can also look forward to a series of interactive programmes and events, ranging from curator tours, lectures, and a special festival of Asian traditional music and performing arts. See Annex A for programme highlights

Cities and Kings: Ancient Treasures from Myanmar runs from 2 December 2016 to 5 March 2017 at the Asian Civilisations Museum. Admission charges apply for this special exhibition.

Annex A: About the exhibition and programme highlights

Annex B: List of lending institutions for the exhibition

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About the Asian Civilisations Museum

The Asian Civilisations Museum is the only museum in region devoted to exploring the artistic heritage of Asia, especially the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans. The museum has launched two new wings with new galleries in late 2015 and early 2016. Founded in 1993, and in its present building by the Singapore River since 2003, the museum's collection grew out of the 19th-century Raffles Museum. The ACM spotlights the long historical connections between the cultures of Asia, and between Asia and the world.

Objects on display tell stories of the trade and the exchange of ideas that were the result of international commerce, as well as the flow of religions and faith through Asia. Singapore's history as a port city that brought people together from all over the world is used as a means of examining the history of Asia. Special exhibitions bring magnificent objects from around the world to our Singapore audience. Programmes like the annual River Nights encourage

visitors to connect more closely with culture and the arts. For more information, visit www.acm.org.sg.

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Annex A: Programme highlights

Lectures

Cities and Kings: A journey through the art and archaeology of Myanmar

Dr Stephen Murphy, curator, Southeast Asia, ACM

7 December 2016, 7pm

This talk traces Myanmar's culture from the ancient Pyu cities, through the temples of Bagan and the Mon cultures of Lower Myanmar centred around Bago, to the last royal capital at Mandalay. These fascinating places created the artistic heritage of Myanmar.

The Mon Cities and Myanmar Cultural Heritage

13 January 2017, 7pm

Elizabeth Moore, visiting researcher, Nalanda- Sriwijaya Centre, ISEAS Yusof- Ishak Institute, Singapore; professor emeritus and in-religion liaison Yangon, School of Oriental and Asian Studies, University of London

Local traditions of the Mon cities of the Lower Myanmar reach back to early settlers from India; and ceramics produced in the area were traded internationally. The Mon Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon continues to be the most venerated place of pilgrimage and donation in the country. The legacy of the Mon cities has been and remains a significant part of Myanmar's cultural heritage.

Daily Life in Bagan, 1000 – 1300

3 February 2017, 7pm

Goh Geok Yian, associate professor of history, Nanyang Technological University

Temples remain on the plains of Bagan as evidence of devotion and the glory of kings, but what was life like in the city? This talk will provide an understanding of Bagan's urban character beyond its functions as an administrative and ritual centre by examining what it meant to live in Bagan between 1000 and 1300.

**From Monarchy to Military: Modern Myanmar history and the crisis of community,
1886-2016**

3 March 2017, 7pm

Mairii Aung-Thwin, associate professor, Myanmar/ Southeast Asian history, National University of Singapore

Through long periods of interaction with others, the people of Myanmar created local cultures of their own. This presentation looks at community, focusing on the making of the British Burma and the independent nation-state. Contemporary contests over democracy are a continuation of a much older struggle over Myanmar's identity.

Curator tours

Fridays

9 December 2016, 8pm to 9pm

13 January, 24 February, 3 March 2017, 7.30pm to 8.30pm

\$25 per session, book at ACM front desk or Peatix (search 'ACM Curator Tours')

Asian Culture & Music Festival – ACM! Festival

Friday, 6 January 2017, 7pm to 9pm

Saturday, 7 January 2017, 5pm to 7pm

Dive into a thousand years of traditional Asian music, dance and drama across four months with performances, workshops, and evening concerts at the Asian Civilisations Museum. From the melodious bells of a Gamelan ensemble to the poetry of Ragas and skilful manipulation of Asian puppets- experience this rich, varied legacy with the wind in your hair and music in your ears along the ACM waterfront.

In January, kick off the festival with an array of traditional music including the harp and xylophone from the ancient cultures of Myanmar, in conjunction with *Cities & Kings: Ancient Treasures from Myanmar*.

Saturdays@ACM

7 January 2017, 1 to 5pm

Free Admission

Start your year off differently by celebrating it at the museum! Learn a little more about Burmese culture, and begin the year with dance, music, and other festivities.

Cities & Kings – Distinctively from Myanmar!

Thursday, 9 February 2017, 7 to 10pm

This exhibition introduces the art and culture of Myanmar through some of the country's finest objects, selected from the National Museum Collections of Myanmar. The works span three of the most significant eras in Myanmar history: the formative Pyu and Mon Period, where early city-states emerged; the famed Bagan Period, where Buddhist temple architecture flourished; and the Mandalay period, with its celebrated courtly arts.

Take a bite of Myanmar with us this month. See the exhibition with our exhibition curator Conan Cheong, and hear travelogues from the museum team on the making of this exhibition. Ancient treasures on display are a sum of the diverse cultures in the cities where they were made. Largely unknown and different from its Asia peers, Burmese fare is no different with its distinct amalgamation of bold flavours. Discover the cuisine with its local beers, wines, and the Pegu Club cocktail named after the legendary Victorian gentleman's club built in 1880s.

Win at Trip to Myanmar

Take a photo of your favourite object in Cities and Kings, share with ACM why you want to visit Myanmar, and like our facebook page. One lucky winner will win the grand prize of 2 return tickets to Yangon, Myanmar and 2 nights stay at the Sule Shangri-la Hotel.

ACM: Festival of Asian Traditional Music and Performing Arts Souvenir Contest Giveaway

Stand a chance to win a souvenir from Myanmar! Submit a photo of yourself at the Festival of Asian Traditional Music and Performing Arts on Instagram, tag @acm_sg and include #CitiesKingsACM. Ten lucky winners will be selected in each months draw.

Prizes: Longyi (December), Burmese Lacquerware (January), Limited edition printed scarves from Binary & Co., inspired by patterns found in *Cities and Kings* (February), Panthein Paraol (March)

Annex B: List of Lending Institutions for the Exhibition

| Country | Institutions |
|---------|---|
| Myanmar | National Museum of Nay Pyi Taw National Museum of Yangon Bagan Archaeological Museum Department of Archaeology, Yangon |