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A model of the Patarana.



A group of leopard cats.



Brass kettles.



A weaver at work.

PERPUSTAKAAN JABATAN PENERANGAN BRUNEI

Front Cover

Burong Hantu (Owl).

Inside of front cover

Spiral Stairs at the exterior of the museum building.

Inside of back cover

Dishcovers with pandan leaves and velvet finish.

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TREASURE TROVE OF KNOWLEDGE



The Brunei Museum (top) and some of the exhibits inside are :

Burung Nisan Buaya (oriental darter)

Surokan (crested green wood partridge) (left)

EVERY country naturally wants to discover as well as preserve evidences of its history and culture to enable its people — present and future generations — to acquaint themselves with the past. The best place to keep and display such records is, of course, the museum.

It is with this in mind that Brunei Darussalam has furnished itself with three museums, namely the Brunei Museum, Constitutional History Museum and Malay Technology Museum, where a myriad of documents and other relevant examples from the country's bygone days are being exhibited. The oldest of these is the Brunei Museum, which moved into its present building along Jalan Kota Batu, about 6.5 km from the capital, in 1970.

The grey building, situated on a hill overlooking the Brunei River, is an exquisitely elegant structure and is often pronounced one of the most original public edifices in the State. Among the factors prompting this acclaim is the collection of traditional Malay designs decorating the exterior which the architect developed from tombstones in the vicinity.

The Government officially established the Brunei Museum on

1st January, 1965 at the then State Secretariat. Shortly afterwards it was transferred to the nearby Civic Centre, which soon proved too small for the fast-growing museum.





Empire

A new permanent building was needed and Kota Batu (Stone Fort), being one of the country's historical places, was chosen as the site. Kota Batu stands out from the rest because it was here that Brunei's old capital was located and one of its greatest sovereigns, Sultan Bolkiah, is entombed.

Known as Nakhoda Ragam or Singing Captain because he liked to bring along his Court musicians during his voyages, Sultan Bolkiah was Brunei's fifth monarch and was on the throne from 1485 to 1524. During his lifetime as ruler, he roamed the seas and conquered the whole of Borneo and a greater part of the Philippines including Sulu, Luzon



Bedil (brass cannon)

Traditional wedding dresses (left and right).

PAK AJAN PENGANT
BERSANDONG



and Mindanao. Thus it was his reign that gave birth to the Brunei Empire and transformed the kingdom into a dominant power in the region for several decades.

Work on the construction of the museum got underway in June 1968 and was completed a year later. After year-long preparations, the museum moved in on 1st October, 1970 to the delight of Bruneians everywhere. The museum's ceremonious opening was performed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 29th February, 1972 in conjunc-

tion with her visit to Brunei Darussalam. date a large entrance hall and six permanent exhibition galleries. Together they offer fascinating instances of past and contemporary Brunei life, history, natural history and artifacts, which are spread over a space of slightly more than 3,623 square metres.

Three of the galleries, which are found on the first storey, have numerous exhibits on fishing equipment and animal traps; the oil industry, including a large photograph of the country taken by the Landsat satellite from 917 km above sea level; and natural history. The rest of the



tion with her visit to Brunei Darussalam.

Exhibits

The museum is constructed on three levels. The first, which has a total floor area of 1,290.39 square metres, is set into the hill slope and houses, among other things, the administration, archives, library, and natural history sections, and storerooms. The other two storeys accomo-

Tempayan (earthenware jar)

Three types of earthenware jars and a dressing table







LANJANG



JABAH





Kitil Tembaga (brass kettle)

Lanjang (brass cooking pot) and Jabah (brass container for keeping rice etc)

galleries are located on the second floor. Two of these are devoted to the cultures of Brunei and Borneo; and earthenware; while the last is reserved for special exhibitions.

Undoubtedly the museum's nerve centre is its multifarious collections of exhibits, which cover ethnography, archeology, art, and natural history. These are acquired through the efforts of its own staff members as well as purchases with funds allocated to it annually.

For work purposes the museum's various bodies are categorised into academic and

supporting groups. The former comprises the archeology, ethnography, history, and natural history sections; while the latter consists of the archives, library, exhibition and educational services, and administration sections.

Foreign

In general both groups are engaged in a variety of work enhancement activities including gathering exhibits; carrying out trial excavations in areas that are perceived to have historical evidences; looking after historical sites to make sure that they are not disturbed or damaged by



The Malay Technology Museum (article about the MTM was published in the December 1988 issue of Brunei Today).

Five different types of ladies' traditional dresses, namely (l to r) Baju Bermasuk Butang, Baju Kebaya Panjang, Baju Kedayan, Baju Kurung and five-buttoned Baju Kurung Panjang with bugis sarung.





A bridal dais.



*Kuching Batu
(leopard cat)*



Part of the Exhibition on HADC with the Patarana or Throne Room.

man, animal or environmental change; and preserving wild-life species that are believed to be gradually extinct due to urbanisation.

In addition, they are involved in numerous research and voluntary tasks such as conducting field works; lending local as well as foreign researchers a hand in specific matters related to Brunei Darussalam; making expeditions with representatives of overseas institutions; providing research facilities for those who assist the museum on voluntary basis; putting out publications to disseminate the results of researches undertaken by the

museum and members of the public.

Interest in the museum has never slackened since its inception. According to statistics, an average of 55,000 Bruneians and foreigners, including VIPs, tour the museum every year. A great number of the local visitors constitute groups of students, who take advantage of the museum's educational services. Based on individual group requests, these services include documentary films and lectures on history, archaeology, ethnography and natural history. They are either given in the museum or outside, through its mobile exhibition

unit, for those who prefer to have them at their own institution.

Technology

The other two museums mentioned earlier are branches of the Brunei Museum. The Constitutional History Museum, which is also known as the Exhibition On The History And Development Of The Constitution, first opened its door to the public in February 1984. It is located in the Churchill Memorial complex and has on display interesting articles, photographs and documents about Brunei, especially the last hundred years. The Malay Technology Museum (MTM) is a gift from the Royal Dutch/Shell Group of Companies to mark Brunei Darussalam's resumption of full independence. It was handed over to the Government in December 1986 and was officially opened in February 1988.

The MTM is a repository of var-

ious aspects of Brunei Darussalam's traditional technology and their relations to the people's activities during the period from 1880 to 1950. The exhibition focuses on two main fields, namely the technological know-how and life of the Kampong Ayer (Water Village) inhabitants and

those on the mainland.

Thus, with their ever expanding exhibits and services, the Brunei Museum and its branches will continue to be a treasure trove of perpetually inexhaustible knowledge for people of all walks of life.



The Churchill Memorial Complex, which houses the Exhibition on the History and Development of the Constitution (HADC).

An exhibit in the MTM showing cloth-weaving in progress.



Wak wak (girey gibbon)

A DISH OF A COVER





Dishcovers with coloured Pandan leaves finish.

LIKE basket-weaving (*Brunei Today*, Dec 1988), making other traditional household articles from nature's abundant sources of materials still blossoms in Brunei Darussalam.

One such item is the *tudung dulang* or dishcover, which continues to be popular not only as food protector to keep flies and other pests away, but also as ornaments to adorn walls with.

Again like basket-weaving, it was started by housewives as a hobby to kill the time while their husbands went about their respective works such as fishing, trading or farming.

But unlike the former, which has its roots in two mainland



Daun silat, as it is known to Bruneians, is a kind of ornamental fan-palm whose leaves are gradually replacing the Pucuk or shoots of the Nipah palm in dishcover-weaving, primarily because of its close-at-hand availability.

villages, namely Sengkurong and Tanjong Nangka, dishcover plaiting has its origins in Kampong Ayer (Water Village).

It is not surprising, of course, that the craft had flourished in Kampong Ayer since it has been home to many of Brunei Darussalam's traditional arts and handicrafts, including cloth-weaving, cannon-making and brass and silver-crafting.

Coterie

To perpetuate the country's cultural heritage, the Government set up in 1975 the Brunei Arts and Handicrafts Training Centre at Berakas about 10 km from the capital. It expanded very quickly and was moved in 1984 to a new multi-



Datin Hajjah Zainab binti Abu Bakar, a former instructress at the Arts and Handicrafts Training Centre until her retirement recently, is another leading weaver whose speciality is turning out dishcovers with plaited designs at the dome.

Madam Hajjah Saleha binti Adi of Kampong Tamoi, a component village in Kampong Ayer (Water Village), is one of the country's top weavers. She is seen here working on a nearly completed dishcover.

storeyed building on the bank of the Brunei river, overlooking the Water Village. Making dishcover is one of the subjects being taught at the Centre to young Bruneians who aspire to inherit the expertise.

Prior to 1975 the know-how in

most of the country's traditional arts and handicrafts was in the hands of a small coterie of the Kampong Ayer inhabitants because custom dictated then that such knowledge was allowed to be passed on only to certain family members. Thus in those days skills in anything were a



As most dishcovers are now made for decorations, velvet is used instead of Pandan leaves for the exterior.



closely kept secret, and those outside the group probably just resigned themselves to the fact that they were not cut out for such talent. Hence the number of craftspersons was dwindling until the Government came to the rescue.

Dishcovers are made from the leaves of the Pandan plants or screw-pines, which come in many species. The one commonly used (*Pandanus odoratissimus*) in Brunei Darussalam has leaves that attain



up to five metres in length. Each leaf is covered with thorns or spikes on either side and has to be handled carefully to avoid getting pricked.

Sanggi

The Pandans grow well in various places in the forest as well as on the seashores and riverbanks. But some of the species, whose leaves are utilised for making, besides dishcovers, thatches, baskets, bags, mats and the like, are cultivated in

gardens. The leaves of one variety called *Pandan Wangi* or Fragrant Pandan (*Pandanus amaryllifolius* or *Pandanus odoratus*) are in great demand as food flavouring.

As with basket-making or any other handicraft, a great deal of skills, patience and concentration are needed to create a dishcover that people really appreciate. The process of plaiting begins with the removal of the thorns from the supple green leaves. To make them soft and pliable the

leaves are bundled up, boiled and taken out to dry overnight.

They are then cut - using a sharp knife known locally as *sanggi* - into strips, which are again boiled. The heat is turned off, and the strips are left in the cauldron for two days before they are taken out to dry in the sun for two to three days until they become whitish.

Then the strips are tied up into smaller bundles and immersed in dyes of different colours.

Nipah

For the dishcover's frame, the shoots or *pucuk* of the *Nipah* are used as they are strong and supple. The *Nipah* is a palm that abounds in swampy land along many of the country's riverbanks.

With a stem rarely a foot above the ground, the *Nipah* is a versatile plant whose leaves were widely used for thatching in the old days. It bears a cluster of fruits, each the size of an adult's palm with wrinkled, dark brown covering that encloses a fibrous shell within which lies a tasty white kernel.

The shoots, which can number fifty or more, huddle so closely together that at a glance they resemble a stout-pointed stick. Apart from serving as the inner part of the dishcover, the shoots' other uses include as wrappers for rice dumplings known as *ketupat*, rice cakes, and home-made cigarettes.

Before they are used, the shoots are separated and dried in the sun. When this is done they are cut to the required lengths. In dishcover-making, layer after layer of these are sewn together until they are quite thick and hard. To construct the rim of the bottom part, the weaver makes



use of the ribs of the coconut palm leaves. These are wrapped together - until they are as thick as a thumb - into the desired shape, which is either rectangle or round if the dome form is intended.

Next the weaver sews up the thickly knitted *Nipah* leaves into the kind of shape he or she wants. Once the dishcover has gained form, the weaver then stitches the dyed Pandan leaves on the exterior thus giving it a multi-coloured finish.

The Pandan species whose leaves are used in the dishcover-making is nowadays grown mostly in the garden.

