

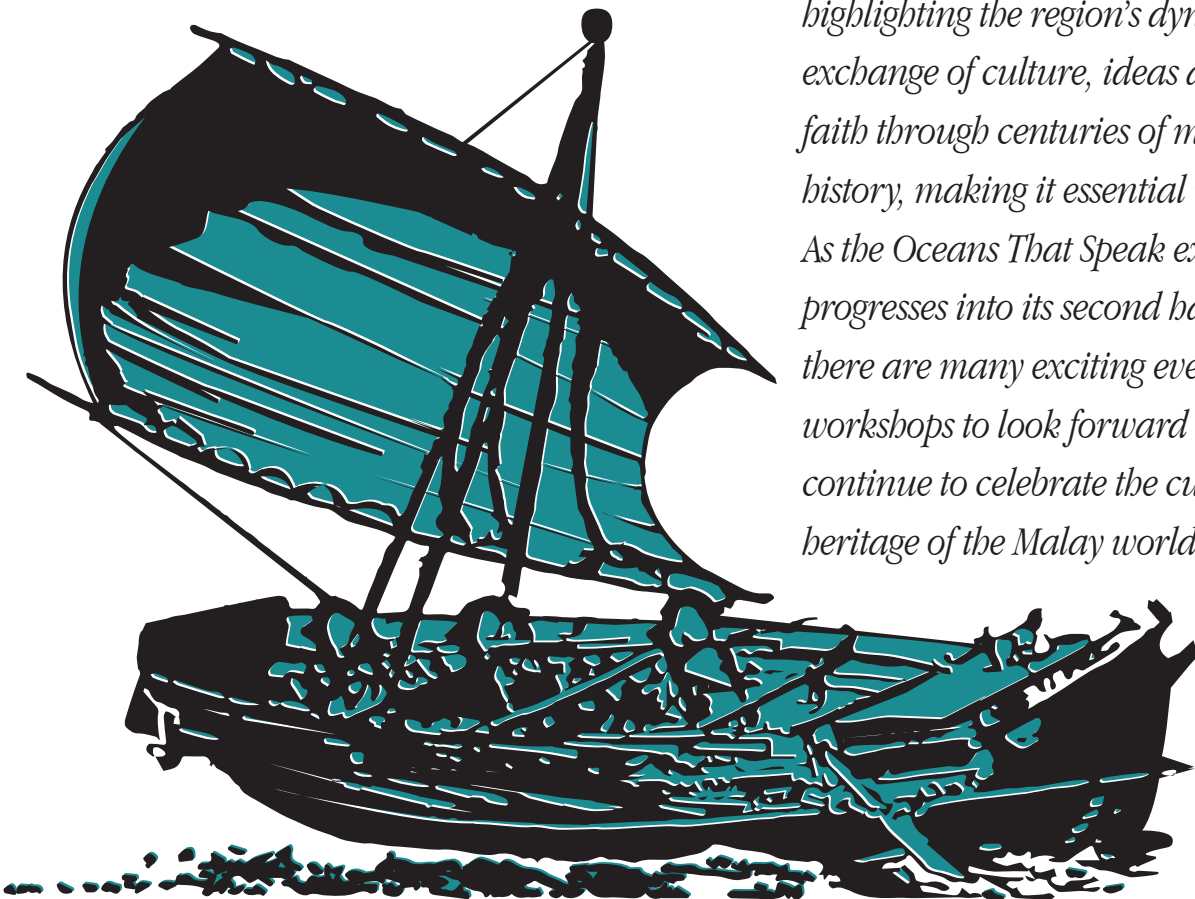
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Apr - June 2025

*Since its successful launch of the **Oceans That Speak** exhibition, the ongoing exhibition has brought the heritage of the Malay world to life, highlighting the region's dynamic exchange of culture, ideas and faith through centuries of maritime history, making it essential viewing. As the Oceans That Speak exhibition progresses into its second half, there are many exciting events and workshops to look forward to as we continue to celebrate the cultural heritage of the Malay world.*



## Director Message

Ramadan al-Mubarak.

In this holy month of Ramadan, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia continues to organise its annual Tadarus programme. This encourages the public to join a Qur'an recitation session in the morning, led by a qualified imam. At this blessed and reflective time of year, I am glad to report that the Tadarus programme remains as popular as ever with the public as we mark our 17th year of this initiative.

Now that we have reached the second quarter of the year 2025, our acclaimed exhibition project *Oceans that Speaks: Islam and the Emergence of the Malay World* also continues to prove its popularity. It will last until June and, we hope, continue to attract as many visitors as it has so far. The exhibition catalogue has already proved to be a milestone among publications on the subject of the Malay world.

In May, IAMM will also be participating in International Museum Day. This event is celebrated by museums and heritage institutions across the globe, with a different theme every year. For 2025, the focus is on "The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities". We invite all of you to come and join us by participating in the wide variety of programmes and activities that we have planned for 21st May.

For the upcoming third and fourth quarters of the year, IAMM will be launching further exhibitions. These will as always explore carefully researched and explained subject matter while highlighting new selections of masterpieces from our museum's ever-growing collection.

Before this, I would like to take the opportunity to thank our newsletter subscribers and everyone who has shown support for our institution over the years. For all our Muslim brothers and sisters, IAMM sends it best wishes for Eid al-Fitr al-Mubarak.

Syed Mohamad Albukhary  
Director  
Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

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## Oceans That Speak: Islam and the Emergence of the Malay World *Celebrating Educational Programmes at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia*

By Umi Amalin Zafirah Sakri

The ongoing exhibition *Oceans That Speak: Islam and the Emergence of the Malay World* at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) has brought the heritage of the Malay world to life, highlighting the region's dynamic exchange of culture, ideas and faith through centuries of maritime history, making it essential viewing.

The exhibition hosted its first educational talk with **Bicara Songket: The Evolution of Gold Threads** led by Khairul Anwar focusing on songket textiles' history, artistry and cultural significance, along with the accompanying unique motifs and vibrant colours.

Next, we had the **Exploring the Sound of Kompang Workshop**, at which participants explored the traditional percussion instrument central to Malay cultural celebrations, led by Kompang Anak Cheras. Then there were the **Adventure of Captain Azlan Tales of the Malay Seas**, a storytelling series on adventures through the



maritime history of the Malay world, bringing the rich cultural background and landscape — plus seascape — of the region to life.

Our **Ocean Encounters** offered hands-on activities that reflected the cultural exchanges that shaped the Malay world. With the **Langkasuka Woodcarving Workshop** participants explored the art of woodcarving and the 'langkasuka' motif, guided by the skilled woodcarver Mohd Zarir bin Abdullah.

During the school holidays, we had an interactive theatre

performance titled **Legendary Princesses of Malaysia** led by *The Story Book*, a dynamic performance on Malaysian legends, such as Puteri Gunung Ledang and Princess Cik Siti Wan Kembang, blending traditional folklore with modern storytelling. Alongside that we had a series of **Family Fun: Build a...** where families created a variety of items like ships, mosques and maps using recyclable materials, offering not just a creative way to bond but also to indulge in the Malay world's culture.

Towards the end of the first half of the exhibition period, we had



our **Conservation's Sharing Session: Meet the Painting and Preventive Conservators**. Participants learned how artefacts, such as an Indonesian Gebyok, were restored and displayed by IAMM's conservation experts. Last but not least, a book talk hosted on the exhibition's publication **Oceans That Speak: Islam and the Emergence** of the Malay World by our curator and writer Siti Marina Mohd Maidin. This talk explored the evolution of pre-Islamic decorative motifs under Islamic influence.

## What to expect in the second half of the exhibition?

As the Oceans That Speak exhibition progresses into its second half, there are many exciting events and workshops to look forward to as we continue to celebrate the cultural heritage of the Malay world.

One of the highlights will be a talk on **The Philippines in Nusantara: Connections and Exchange** by Dr Felice Noelle Rodriguez, Director of El Kaban de Zamboanga. As a contributor to the 'Oceans That Speak' catalogue, Dr Rodriguez will delve into the historical exchanges of goods, culture, language and ideas between the islands of the archipelago.

For those interested in traditional crafts, the **Tekak Workshop** will offer an opportunity to learn about the intricate art of gold-thread embroidery on velvet fabric. This will be under the guidance of Puan Faizatol Fazleha Rasdi.

**The Classic and Modern Jawi Literacy Workshop** will also offer a chance to master the Jawi script. Associate Professor Dr Adi Yasran Abdul Aziz will teach both the classic and modern forms of Jawi, enabling participants to read and write this important script.

To further celebrate the exhibition, the **Navigating by the Stars talk** will take participants on a journey through the ancient practice of celestial navigation, which was vital for maritime exploration. Dr Mohd Hafiz Safiai will explore how navigators used celestial bodies to chart safe courses across the oceans.

Next we will have a talk on **Traditional Malay Boats**, led by Associate Professor Dr Ahmad Jelani Halimi, where he will examine the history and design of Malay boats, highlighting unique features such as their sails and rigging.

For a more interactive experience, the **Wayang Kulit and Traditional Music Workshop** will allow participants to create their own shadow puppets and learn traditional music techniques from expert Mohd Jufry Yusoff, a master of Kelantan's shadow puppetry.

Another exciting opportunity is the **Telepuk Wooden Stamp Workshop**, where participants can learn about the art of stamping gold leaf, a practice essential to Malay textile ornamentation. This workshop

will be led by the highly skilled Mohd Noor Idzuan Bin Muhammad Radzali and is a tribute to the late Tokoh Kraf Negara, Adiguru Prof. Adjung Norhaiza Noordin.

Finally, the **Talk on Trans-Oceanic Connections Through the Historical Mosques of Maritime Southeast Asia** will be presented by Dr Imran Bin Tajudeen. This talk will explore the historical mosques of the region, focusing on how architectural styles and decorative elements reflect the many cultural influences of Southeast Asia's port cities.



## Coming Soon

### *More than a Day as a Tiger: The Legacy of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore*

By: Zulkifli Ishak

It was the mission of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia from the very beginning to represent the history, art and culture of the Islamic world at its best through the Museum's collection. This collection encapsulates stories of the rise and fall of dynasties, and at the same time highlights the legacy of historical figures in Islamic civilisation.

#### **Profiling Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore**

One of the key figures in the global history of the 18th century was Tipu Sultan (r.1782-99), a Muslim ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore, in southern India. Tipu Sultan and his father Haider Ali (r.1761-82) were models of leaders who tirelessly protected their sovereignty from foreign intrusions; in this case, the British expansion into the Indian Subcontinent. Both rulers of Mysore were hated and to some extent respected by their nemesis as they proved to be among the toughest adversaries of the British. It took thousands of East India

Company soldiers and their allies to storm the fortress in Srirangapatna on 4th May 1799. Tipu Sultan, nicknamed the 'Tiger of Mysore' by the British, died while defending his capital.

Tipu Sultan's legacy after the fall of his capital city astonished the British. His valuable weaponry, jewellery and other treasures were plundered with haste. These important objects tell us not only about the ruler but also his kingdom. Even though the reigns of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan lasted for less than 40 years, they made an indelible mark on the history of Britain and the Indian Subcontinent. Although the names of these two rulers are unfamiliar to many in Southeast Asia, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia is determined to put their history in the spotlight.



*Flintlock blunderbuss  
Srirangapatna  
18th century AD*



*Sword with a bubri-pattern blade from  
the Palace Armoury of Tipu Sultan  
Srirangapatna, South India  
18th century AD*

#### **Tipu Sultan collection**

Tipu Sultan's artefacts never fail to ignite curiosity among our visitors. As long ago as 2005, a flintlock blunderbuss with intriguing features was acquired by IAMM. Heavily decorated with distinctive symbols and motifs of design, it is complemented with gold inlaid inscriptions. Based on these inscriptions, it was manufactured at one of Tipu Sultan's armouries located in Patan (Srirangapatna), India, and made by a local gunsmith named Asad al-Dindar, around 1797-8. A poem written in Persian inscribed along the upper part of the barrel reads, "The peerless gun of the Emperor of India, To which the forked lightning is second, Can seal the fate of the enemy If the forehead is made the target." This firearm also had a special emblem in the form of a tiger face and was decorated in bubri (tiger stripes) motif along the barrel.

Over the years, the Museum managed to build on this with assorted types of firepower. In the collection there are now flintlock blunderbusses, sporting guns, pistols and even cannons. All these were manufactured in different armouries located within the kingdom of Mysore, and made by local gunsmiths. There are many more stories to tell and share with others. The most visible element is a tiger motif, found on multiple parts such as the barrel, stock and flintlock mechanism. Bladed weapons associated with Tipu Sultan also adopted this motif. There are bubri-pattern blades and hilts that resemble a tiger head. Armour could also feature tiger stripes, most notably a magnificent archery set with embroidered arm guards and belt. There is also a striking-coloured quilted helmet adorned with bubri stripes and fish scales motifs to provide a glimpse into the forms of warrior protection that existed in a tropical climate such as southern India.



Quilted helmet  
Mysore  
18th century AD



Embroidered quiver and arm guards;  
related belt and seven decorated arrows  
Mysore  
18th century AD



Gold finial from the throne  
of Tipu Sultan of Mysore  
Srirangapatna, South India  
18th century AD

### The upcoming exhibition

When Mysore fell to the British, Tipu Sultan's palace was sacked and his legendary gold throne was broken up and dispersed. Constructed from precious materials and decorated with eight finials crafted from gold in the shape of a tiger's head, these were set with diamonds, emeralds and rubies. Some were lost forever but one is now in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. This and other items that have not been on public display form the core of a superb collection. They will appear alongside archival documents, paintings, engravings, coins and much more. The accumulation provides us with information about the complex geo-political backdrop of Mysore during the 18th century. This collection testifies to the story of the bravery of Tipu Sultan, who was famously associated with the quote, "It is better to live like a tiger for a day, than to live like a jackal for a hundred years." These objects and their fascinating stories are central to the upcoming exhibition project titled *More than a Day as a Tiger: The Legacy of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore*, opening this August.

## Bidriware *A Study in Contrast* By Rekha Verma

Bidriware is among the most practical art forms of the Islamic world, which in no way diminishes its radiant appeal. Combining two rich traditions — Persian and Indian — bidriware’s roots lie with Persian artisans invited to the court of Bidar during the 14th century. It has flourished ever since in locations as diverse as Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Murshidabad in West Bengal, Purnia in Bihar, and Maharashtra.

Immediately identifiable, this unique style of metalwork is characterised by its striking contrast of silver-hued inlay against a blackened zinc-alloy base. Traditional motifs, heavily influenced by Mughal designs, often include flowers, human figures and a variety of fish, birds and other animals. Needless to say, there are also geometrical patterns.

The bidri technique is as labour intensive as it is versatile. Zinc, combined with copper in a specific ratio, forms the base material and provides a beguilingly deep black colour when oxidised. Applying the correct type of soil is essential

to the process, along with a painstaking approach to artisanship. To achieve the fully contrasting effect involves moulding, filing, designing, engraving, inlaying, oxidising and polishing. The use of precious-metal inlays, such

as gold and silver, would have been reserved for royal patrons.

The forms that can be created with bidriware are varied. These include hookah bases, spittoons, vases, ewers, basins, bowls, flasks, betelnut boxes,

containers and plates. In modern production, artisans have also diversified into innovative products such as jewellery, cigarette cases, ashtrays, and even USB casings.

Bidriware has been admired outside the Subcontinent for a long time. In 1851, India actively participated in the

Great Exhibition in London, an event organised by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce. The display included a few remarkable bidriware objects. These received an overwhelmingly positive response and made a lasting impression on British designer Owen Jones. His visit

to the exhibition provided the inspiration for him to include a detailed page showcasing the decorations of a hookah in his book “The Grammar of Ornament”. This went on to become one of the most influential publications in the history of design and aesthetics.



*Bidriware hookah base  
India  
19th century AD*



*A nobleman smoking a hookah on  
a terrace with attendants  
India  
18th century AD*



*Owen Jones, 'The Grammar of  
Ornament,' London 1856,  
Plate XLIX*

## Acrylic Mounts

### *Art and Illusion*

By Mohd Azizi Mohd Azhar,  
Muhamad Said Abdullah  
and Aristoteles Georgios  
Sakellariou

Imagine an exhibition in which all the artefacts lie lifelessly at the bottom of their display case: an uninspiring sight. Without the visitor even being aware of it, museums aim instead to elevate and angle every exhibit to maximise the viewer's appreciation. The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia is especially committed to ensuring that the storyline of an exhibition is enhanced by the display, and the best way to accomplish this is with artefacts that appear to 'float', unhindered by the restrictions of gravity.

The raw material of such displays is a mount, formed from acrylic sheets to elevate and to angle exhibition objects. Although almost invisible, this effect is the result of a long and complex process. It starts by envisioning each object within the space of the display case. For each mount, input is needed from a curator, a display specialist, a conservator and a designer-mount maker. The curator defines what role the object plays in the story of the exhibition; the conservator sets safety standards to the design of the mount; the mount-maker

finalises the design and creates the mount; the display team then attend to the installation.

To accomplish this, sketches are translated into technical drawings which then materialise with the use of laser-cutting equipment, in-house. The final product aims to be discreet — for which the transparency of the acrylic

sheet is essential — and to hold an object secured at the angle intended by the design. For the 'Oceans that Speak' exhibition, more than 40 mounts were created, some of which were not used or had to be re-made to meet the vision of the storyline. For the mount-makers, the challenge is the time required to produce a custom-made

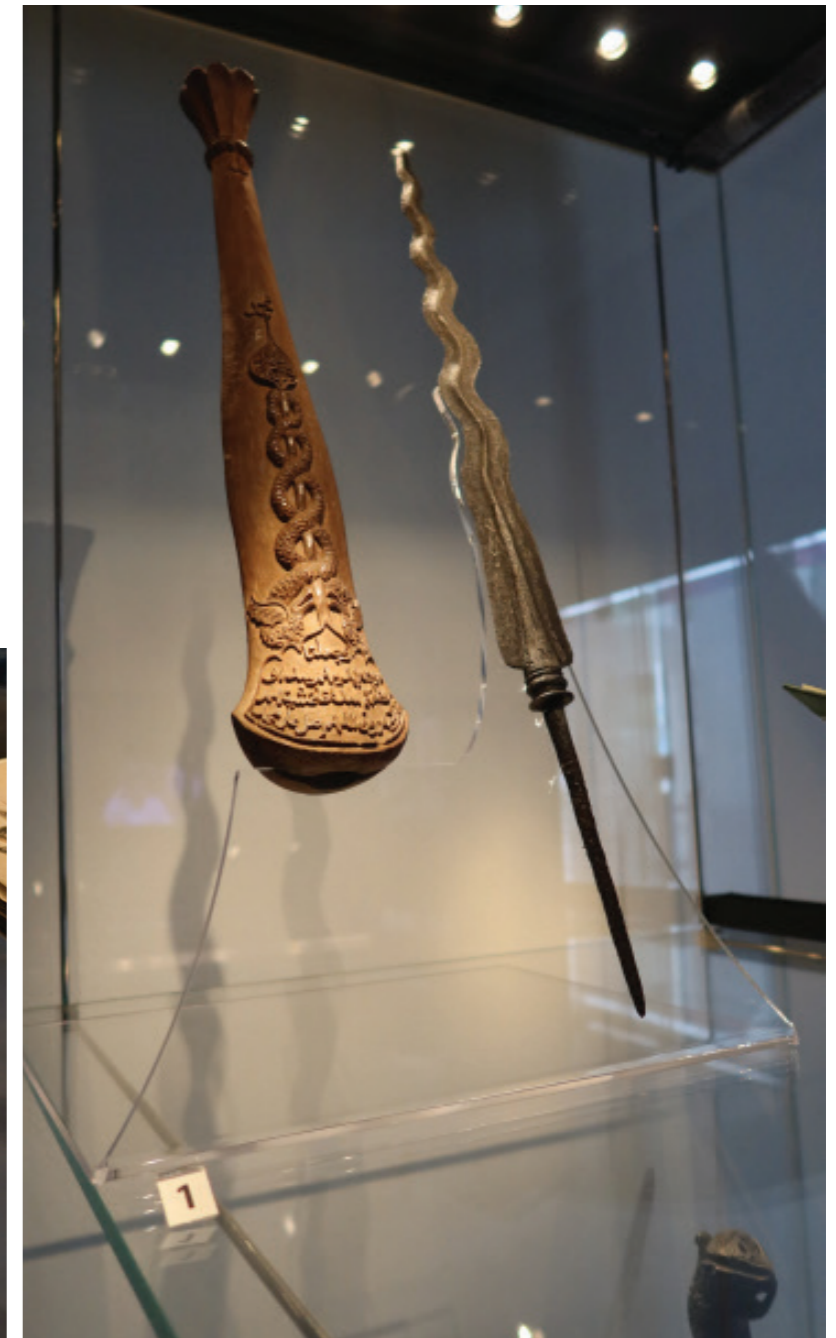
mount for each object. This needs a lot of experience to achieve without errors. The result, however, is worth it. The collaboration of staff members from different disciplines has the added benefit of building trust and rapport. Every mount is different in the same way that every object is different. Each one is a new challenge, and the team remains creative.



*The mount-maker supports the exhibition design with their technical expertise*



*A complex mount enables more than two pages of this Qur'an to be viewed*



*Shaping acrylic sheet is a demanding discipline*



## International Museum Day 2025 Celebration

### *The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities*

This coming 21st May, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia will take part in the global celebration of International Museum Day 2025, a highly anticipated event for museum enthusiasts around the world. Come and join us to experience cultural performances, interactive activities, special guided tours, cultural and educational talks and a dynamic fashion show. There will also be booths by Forest Learning Centre, Sea Monkey and Reef Check, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and Brooke Museums. The IAMM will open its doors to the public with no entrance fee on this day. Come and join us on 21st May, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## IAMM's Tadarus Al-Qur'an 1446h / 2025

Every year, in conjunction with the holy month of Ramadan, the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia organises the Al-Qur'an Recitation Programme. This year we offered two sharing sessions in the museum galleries during the programme. The first session was on the history and architectural aspects of the Kampung Laut Mosque, held on 4th March, and the second sharing session was held on 18th March focusing on the museum's venerable Gebyok wooden wall partition.



## Upcoming Events:

### Arabic Calligraphy Workshop with Fuad Kouichi Honda

After the success of last year's workshop at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, we are excited to welcome back the renowned Arabic calligrapher Fuad Kouichi Honda. Join us for two special workshops designed for both beginners and advanced learners. The Beginner workshop is scheduled on 24th May and is perfect for those new to the art form. Meanwhile the Advanced workshop scheduled on 25th May will elevate your calligraphy skills to the next level by refining your ability to compose basic sentences in Arabic script.

### Colouring Competition on the Illumination of the Qur'an: Mushaf from the Malay World

We are excited to announce the Colouring Competition on the Illumination of the Qur'an: Mushaf from the Malay World, a collaboration with UKM's Pusat Penyelidikan Manuskrip Alam Melayu (PPMAM), Institut Alam Dan Tamadun Melayu (ATMA). This will offer a wonderful opportunity for young artists to engage with and celebrate the beauty of the Mushaf Al-Qur'an as seen through the rich artistic traditions of the Malay world.



#### OPENING HOURS

Monday – Sunday (except Eid ul-Fitri & Eid ul-Adha)  
9:30 am – 6:00 pm  
Last entry at 5:30 pm

#### ADMISSION FEE

Adult RM20.00  
Others (Visitors below 18 years old, Students of Higher Learning  
Institutions & Malaysian Senior Citizens) RM10.00

Children below 6 years old FREE


#### FREE ADMISSION

Museum Shop  
Children's Library  
MOZA Restaurant  
Education Centre


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