

Back from the Brink: Heritage, Culture and Art in Timor-Leste

Saturday 16 May 2009 at the MAGNT Theatrette.

SEMINAR PROGRAM

Seminar registration: Events at www.magnt.nt.gov.au

10.00 – 10.30am REGISTRATION (Tea and Coffee)

10.30 – 10.40am WELCOME ADDRESS (Seminar Convenor)

10.40 – 11.05am KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Virgilio Simith, Secretary of State, Culture, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Topic: Past and future directions for the preservation, maintenance and development of Timor-Leste's heritage and culture. This presentation will consider the work of the Secretary of State and the National Directorate of Culture since 2002 and will also focus on the development of a national cultural policy developed since 2008

11.05 – 12.15am CARING FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE AND COLLECTIONS

Associate Professor Robyn Sloggett, Director, Centre for Conservation of Cultural Materials, University of Melbourne.

Topic: Infrastructure and capacity building aimed to protect Timor-Leste's cultural heritage in the post-Independence era.

Cecilia Assis, Director, National Directorate of Culture, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste & Dr Nuno Vasco Oliviera, Advisor to the Secretary of State, Culture.

Topic: The National Collection and proposed National Museum of Timor-Leste.

DISCUSSION

12.15pm – 1.30pm Lunch

1.30 – 3.15pm

**PRESERVING TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE
HERITAGE IN TIMOR-LESTE**

Jill Jolliffe, Director, Living Memory Project.

Topic: The collective memory and sites of East Timor's torture survivors: recording, storing and exhibiting for future generations. This presentation will include the screening of a *Living Memory* project DVD 'Gregorio's Story'.

Professor Sue O'Connor, Head, Department of Archaeology and Natural History, Australian National University.

Topic: Rock art heritage sites of Timor-Leste.

Maria Gloria de Castro, member of Darwin's Timorese and Portuguese community.

Topic: Tracing the Hornay, da Costa and Crus dynasties from the settlement of the Oecussi enclave in 1641 to life in Darwin in 2009.

DISCUSSION

3.15 – 3.45

Afternoon tea

3.45 – 4.30pm

**SUSTAINING AND DOCUMENTING LIVING
CULTURAL PRACTICES**

Cecilia Fonesca, Community Development Officer, Alola Foundation.

Topic: Art and craft production livelihoods initiatives implemented by the Alola Foundation in the post-independence era.

Joanna Barrkman, Curator, Southeast Asian Art and Material Culture, MAGNT.

Topic: An assessment of *tais* textile collections as the basis of a future textile interpretation centre in Timor-Leste.

DISCUSSION

4.30 – 5.00pm

PLENARY SESSION

5.15pm – 6.45pm

SOCIAL FUNCTION at the MAGNT AMPHITHEATRE

PRESENTATION SYNOPSIS AND SPEAKERS

PAST AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE PRESERVATION, MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF TIMOR-LESTE'S HERITAGE AND CULTURE - presented by Virgílio Simith.

The Secretary of State for Culture, within the Ministry of Education, is Timor-Leste Government body responsible for implementing cultural policies and legislation. In accordance with the current Government's program, it has as its first priority the use of the country's rich and diverse culture to affirm the East Timorese state and to build a wider sense of national identity.

This presentation will consider the work of the Secretary of State and the National Directorate of Culture since 2002. Such work has involved the rescuing and curation of the National Collection, the mapping and characterisation of cultural sites and traditional activities throughout the country, the organisation of cultural festivals, and the support to cultural groups across Timor-Leste. Many of these activities were carried out with the support of international partners, such as the MAGNT.

This presentation will also focus on the development of a national cultural policy developed since 2008. This is the first policy document for the cultural sector in Timor-Leste and defines the objectives and the strategies to be used in this sector until 2012. Amongst others, the maintenance of the National Collection, the building of a National Museum and Library, and the development of new cultural heritage legislation will be highlighted.

Virgílio Simith is the Secretary of State for Culture, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. He formerly worked as a curator at the Provincial Museum of Timor-Leste from 1982 – 1999 establishing the museum and its collections.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING AIMED TO PROTECT TIMOR-LESTE'S CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA - Presented by Associate Professor Robyn Sloggett

Immediately after Timor-Leste's 1999 Referendum the United Nations and the World Bank agreed to support a Community Empowerment Program and funds were allocated for infrastructure and capacity building aimed to protect Timor-Leste's cultural heritage. Human resources are the real key to effective governance and effective management of cultural heritage and by 2001 UNESCO Jakarta was providing support for training of museum workers in Dili. At this time, when it was not possible to purchase string in Dili, training was a very practical affair that addressed the immediate concerns relating to the security of the museum material. At a planning meeting held in Dili in December 2005 staff in the Division of Culture in the Department of Education and Culture identified the longer-term key needs for the development of Timor-Leste's National Museum. These needs fit with broader strategies within Timor-Leste's government to build tourism, to assist national stability and security through cultural programs and community engagement and to develop national education, through school programmes at the museum in Dili and outreach programmes to schools throughout the national museum.

Associate Professor Robyn Sloggett is Director of the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC). She has qualifications in Art History, Philosophy and Cultural Materials Conservation. As Director of CCMC she oversees programs in painting, frame, paper, objects and textiles conservation that include responsibility for the conservation of the cultural collections of the University of Melbourne (comprising some 32 separate collections and valued at over \$100M.) and the provision of a consultancy program for external clients. CCMC also delivers comprehensive post-graduate conservation teaching and research programmes, including the Masters by Coursework (Cultural Materials Conservation), Art Authentication and Photographic Preservation. Robyn is currently a member of the University's Cultural Collections Committee; founded and is Production Manager for the Melbourne Journal of Technical Studies in Art; is a member of the Collections Committee of the Library Board, State Library of Victoria; Chair of the Indemnification Committee Arts Victoria; and an Expert Assessor under the Federal Government's Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act. She is an associate of the School of Enterprise and the Centre for Free Radical Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Melbourne. In 2004 she was awarded the Australian Institute for Cultural Materials Conservation's Conservator of the Year Award for service to the profession.

THE NATIONAL COLLECTION AND PROPOSED NATIONAL MUSEUM OF TIMOR-LESTE – presented by Cecília Assis and Dr Nuno Vasco Oliveira.

The National Directorate of Culture was established in 2002, following the first democratic elections in Timor-Leste. One of the priorities of the National Directorate of Culture, for the past seven years, has been organising and curating the National Collection of Timor-Leste. This collection resulted from a collection first put together by the former Dili Provincial Museum, under the Indonesian occupation. The objects collected represent most regions in East Timor. Following the 1999 events, two thirds of the collection was damaged, looted and dispersed.

In 2000 the MAGNT, whose collaboration with the former Dili Museum extends back to the early 1990s, helped rescue the remaining collection objects. MAGNT's support to the work carried out by the National Directorate of Culture has translated into improving the technical capacity of our staff, helping with materials to curate the National Collection, donating a database system to organise the existing items, and advising on an acquisition policy and developments for a future National Museum.

In this paper, the work carried out in collaboration with the MAGNT since 2000, and later by the National Directorate of Culture, will be described. The recent developments regarding the National Collection and the future National Museum of Timor-Leste will also be summarised.

Cecília Assis, Director, National Directorate of Culture, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and **Nuno Vasco Oliveira**, Adviser, Secretary of State for Culture, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND SITES OF EAST TIMOR'S TORTURE SURVIVORS: RECORDING, STORING AND EXHIBITING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS – presented by Jill Jolliffe.

The *Living Memory* project was formed in Dili in 2005 after earlier discussions involving Timorese who had been political prisoners during the Indonesian

occupation period. Since then, this project staffed by ex-prisoners has filmed over 50 interviews recording their experiences. Interviewees are drawn from former prisoners of the Indonesian military as well as of Timorese political groups. The overwhelming majority are survivors of torture.

Living Memory aims to create a permanent video archive which will form part of East Timor's national heritage. Its staff tour the country regularly with a message directed at the younger generation: that the violations of human rights described in the films—in particular, the practice of torture—should never be repeated in their new nation. The project has also collected around 300 archival photos and documents, which are exhibited with the video testimonies, and is in constant expansion.

This paper looks at the role of memory in repairing broken lives, part of the fabric of a lost history that needs to be reconstructed in order for the new nation to thrive. It examines also the role of story-telling, of documents, objects and historic sites in this important process. It will focus on the post-1999 history and treatment of three sites of heritage importance for ex-political prisoners: the former *comarca* prison in Balide, Dili, the Sang Tai Ho building in the Colmera district of Dili and the Baucau Pousada.

Jill Jolliffe is a Darwin-based writer who began her career as a journalist in East Timor in 1975. Her latest book, Balibo, will be released in July 2009, in time for the premiere of the film of the same name, starring Anthony LaPaglia. Both are based on her 2001 work Cover-Up: the inside story of the Balibo Five. She also works in East Timor as director of the Living Memory Project and is writing her autobiography as a PhD with Flinders University, Adelaide.

ROCK ART HERITAGE SITES OF TIMOR-LESTE – presented by Professor Sue O'Connor.

There are a number of rock art sites in Island Southeast Asia but one of the richest concentrations occurs in Timor-Leste. While most of this art occurs in limestone shelters clustered around the small village of Tutuala at the eastern end of the island, a few painting sites are known from the regions of Baucau and Bagia. This paper discusses the regional variations in the corpus of painted art from Timor-Leste and speculates about the distribution of the art, its age and the social connections it implies. It also looks at the long term issues for protection and management of this important body of art.

Professor Sue O'Connor, FSA, FAHA, Head, Archaeology and Natural History, RSPAS College of Asia and the Pacific Australian National University Canberra,

TRACING THE HORNAY, DA COSTA AND CRUS DYNASTIES FROM THE SETTLEMENT OF THE OECUSSI ENCLAVE IN 1641 TO LIFE IN DARWIN IN 2009- presented by Maria Gloria de Castro.

Using historical and recent photographs and of family heirloom objects, this presentation will trace the Hornay, da Costa and Crus dynasties from the settlement of the Oecussi enclave in 1641 to life in Darwin in 2009. Through the lens of three generations of women (Gloria's great grandmother, grandmother and mother), she will explore the role women have played in her family in maintaining the transmission of her family's unique history until the present.

***Maria Gloria de Castro** arrived in Darwin in 1975 as a refugee from East Timor. She is an active member of the Timorese Portuguese community of Darwin. Since 2008, Gloria has worked as an Assets and Property Advisor for the Ministry of Finance, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste Government.*

ART AND CRAFT PRODUCTION LIVELIHOOD INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED BY THE ALOLA FOUNDATION IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA – presented by Cecilia Fonseca.

This presentation will explore strategies implemented by the Alola Foundation with textile weavers to document their spinning, dyeing and weaving practices. Several case studies will be presented. This work aims to explore livelihoods opportunities for communities through their weaving whilst also contributing to the broader goal of preserving this unique aspect of Timor-Leste's culture.

***Cecilia Fonseca** is the Manager of the Economic Development Program of the Alola Foundation. Cecilia has a background in community development, and has worked throughout Timor-Leste in this area for the past 10 years. Cecilia comes from a leading weaving family of the eastern region of Lautem. At Alola, Cecilia is responsible for the development of the business arm of the agency, which has a production and retail facility supporting the continued production of woven cloth, the display and promotion of traditional pieces. The business aims to make a profit for the weaver groups of Timor-Leste, and create employment in sewing derived products.*

AN ASSESSMENT OF TAIS TEXTILE COLLECTIONS AS THE BASIS OF A FUTURE TEXTILE INTERPRETATION CENTRE IN TIMOR-LESTE – presented by Joanna Barrkman.

This presentation will consider the nature of existing textile collections in Timor and Australia and will identify some initial progress in developing these collections as a resource to profile, promote and sustain the ancient craft of textile weaving in Timor-Leste.

***Joanna Barrkman**, Curator Southeast Asian Art and Material Culture, MAGNT where she recently curated the exhibition **Husi Bei Ala Timor Sira Nia Liman – From the Hands of Our Ancestors** and edited the accompanying exhibition catalogue. Her main area of curatorial research is Southeast Asian textiles.*