

# MUSEUM STORYBOOK

**PART 1**

February 2013  
Asian Heritage Museum Sdn Bhd  
Kuala Lumpur  
Malaysia

## **INTRODUCTION**

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**The proposed Asian Heritage Museum (AHM) would be more than just displaying a large and diverse collection of Asian, colonial and geological artifacts.**

**To become a world-class museum, it must have the curatorial expertise and the right management approach.**

**It must ALSO have great and interesting stories to tell about the unique artifacts in the collection.**

**It must have impactful ways of displaying these artifacts and telling the stories.**

**The proposed museum would also use available, meaningful and relevant audio-video materials.**

## **STORY 1 : 1492 - STORY OF 2 GLOBAL EMPIRES**

### **In The West**

The year 1492, in the West, the course of world history was changed when Christopher Columbus “accidentally” discovered America. The event was well portrayed in the 1992 Hollywood movie entitled “1492 – Conquest of Paradise” and its catchy theme music by Vangelis became a global hit, with one version on YouTube here, which we intend to use in the Asian Heritage Museum (to view, copy and paste on a new web page) :

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHZ2eoOk-I>

More than 500 years ago, Spain was a nation gripped by fear caused by a ruthless inquisition that persecuted minorities and those who dare to dream. Columbus’ idea of sailing westwards was seen initially as unconventional and he did not get the support of the ruling Spanish Council. He even went to Portugal to seek financial support but was unsuccessful. Finally, Queen Isabella I of Spain agreed to sponsor his adventure with promises from him to bring back gold. It was speculated that the Queen was also hoping that the voyage would bring back some good news from the “unknown” to divert and distract the tense political situation at home and in Europe.

Columbus on his voyages to the where the sun sets was representing the mighty Spanish Empire, the first global and largest European colonial power at that time. On his first voyage, he had 3 ships with 104 men and he set sail from Palos, Spain on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1492. After a near internal rebellion from his men for no signs of land yet, he finally found land at an island he named San Salvador, the Bahamas on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1492, which he thought it was the new Asia. He returned to Spain in 1 ship (captain of one ship deserted him to explore on his own and another ship ran aground) arriving in Palos on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1493 to convince the Spanish crown to finance a second voyage of discovery and colonization.

On his second trip on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1493, he led 17 ships with over 1,000 men and he landed at Hispaniola in the West Indies to start the colonization process. He also brought along a very large mission bell which was holstered on the town hall of Isabella (named after the Queen of Spain), symbolizing the arrival of Christianity in the New World.

The bell had many uses such as the call to the church for services at sunrise, communicate the time of the day and to regulate daily affairs in the community. The bells used in the early missions were sent by ship with other supplies from New Spain (Mexico) but when the Philippines were colonized by Spain from 1521, many mission bells were made and cast in and around Manila.

The Philippines were the only Asian country colonized by a colonial power (Spain) moving westwards across the Pacific Ocean. All other Asian countries were colonized by the new emerging powers (Portuguese, Dutch, British and French) moving eastwards from Europe round the southern tip of Africa and through the Indian Ocean.

The Spanish Empire spread to other parts of America. In the San Antonio Valley of the old Alta California, a Spanish priest Father Presidente Junipero Serra set up a mission in 1771 named San Antonio de Padua in honour of a famous 13<sup>th</sup> century friar of the Franciscan Order, St Anthony who was laid to rest in 1231 in Padua, Italy. Father Serra died in 1784.

The San Antonio mission was built by 750 native Indians and a handful of Spanish soldiers and soon it reached a population of more than 1,000 Indians and 200 Spaniards, two of them padres.

The mission at the San Antonio Valley, one of the most well preserved, is a popular tourist spot in the present-day Monterey County of California and near the present-day town of Jolon. This beautiful, oak-mantled valley at the foot of Santa Lucia Mountains was known as the "Valley of the Oaks". It was the first mission to have adobe bricks, tile roofs and a water-powered gristmill.

The economy at Mission San Antonio de Padua was similar to the other missions in that they planted crops of wheat and corn. They also planted vineyards, and raised cattle and sheep.

After Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, it decided to end the mission system and sell the land. In 1845, Governor Pio Pico declared Mission buildings for sale but no one bid for San Antonio and after 30 years, the missions were returned to the Catholic Church.

California joined the United States of America in 1850. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed an Act declaring that all of the 21 missions in California would become the property of the Catholic Church and have remained so since that time. A year earlier in 1862, President Lincoln also signed a patent to restore the extensive structure to the church at the mission but after 1882, when the last priest died, the building was left to the mercy of elements.

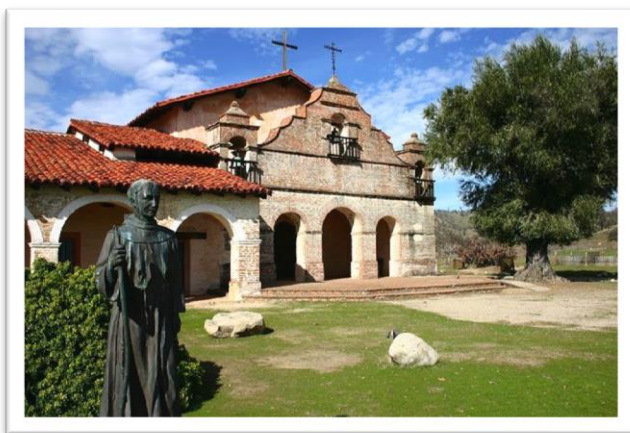
The first attempt at rebuilding the fading mission came in 1903 with considerable progress being made until the great earthquake of 1906. It took nearly 50 years to completely restore the mission. Today the mission is one of the two original California missions that still exist in its natural rural environment with its elaborate water system still largely preserved and the archaeological materials mainly undisturbed.

The mission became a military base during World War 11 until it was discovered by the public some years later. It is now fully restored and one of the most well preserved and popular missions open to the public. Historians consider the mission pastoral location in the picturesque valley as an outstanding example of early mission life.

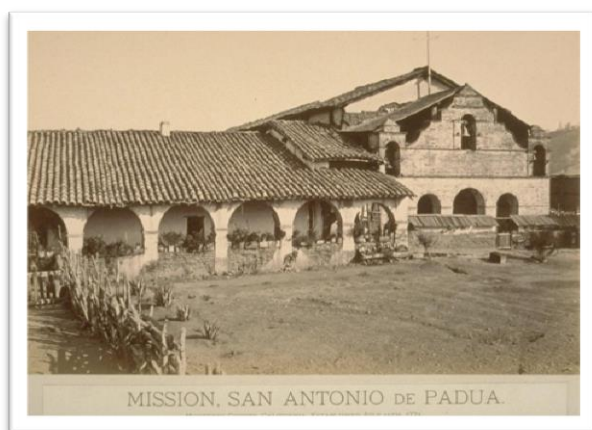
*More information about the San Antonio mission in Appendix A.*

The Spanish bell to be displayed at the Asian Heritage Museum (AHM), weighs nearly half a ton and is probably the largest shipwreck recovered mission bell in the world. It has the engravings 1784 ANOS (date of casting) and S ANTONIO D PADVA ('V' is most probably mis-spelt as 'U'). It was most likely cast in the Spanish colonial Philippines and meant for the San Antonio de Padua mission in California. The Spanish galleon carrying it must have sunk in a thunderstorm after it left the Filipino port. This bell can be considered a legacy of the Columbus era. The date of casting on the bell (1784) is the same year the mission founder (Father Serra) died. The bell must have been made in his honour.

The above bell provides an historical link between Asia, America and Europe. It was made in an Asian country designated for a mission in America started by a European colonial power.



**Mission San Antonio de Padua, California, in 2006**



**How it looked like in 1873**



**AHM's Spanish Mission Bell**

At the proposed museum would also display a unique full set of 9 Spanish signal cannons used by the Spanish warships to send signals to the other ships and allies on the land.



## In The East

Around the same time in 1490s, in the East, the course of world history was also changing when the mighty Ming Dynasty in China, which was the largest industrial and naval power in the world at that time and led a few decades earlier by the famous Admiral Cheng He, decided to withdraw its trading and naval forces from dealing with the world outside and to become a reclusive but self-sufficient kingdom. The Ming Emperors during this period (second half century of 1400) felt that China did not need anything from the outside world.

There were 2 Ming junks which sunk around this time (1490s):

- one discovered in 1997 in Lena Shoal in the Philippines and documented in a coffee table book entitled "Sunken Treasure: Fifteenth Century Chinese Ceramics From The Lena Cargo" by 3 world renown experts on Ming artifacts (Frank Gaddio, Stacey Pierson & Monique Crick) . There is also a fascinating story about the Ming Emperor Hongzhi, probably the fairest and most just emperor that China ever had, who ruled during this period. More information about the Lena Cargo and Emperor Hongzhi in Appendix B.
- another shipwreck discovered in 2000 just off the coast of Brunei and portrayed in an excellent 60-minute documentary film produced in 2001 by Nova Channel of North America entitled "Sultan's Lost Treasure". Transcript of the film in Appendix C.

Unlike the European powers, the then Asian (Ming) empire never had any intention of colonizing other countries or lands even though it could have easily done so. It traded peacefully and equitably with the rest of Asia, Middle East and even Africa and it never imposed oppressive or unfair practices on other people.

AHM has many Ming porcelain artifacts for display similar to those recovered from these 2 shipwrecks, especially the Lena Cargo.



**Ming Lena Cargo Porcelain Dishes**



**Ming Power Boxes and Jarlets similar to those from the "Sultan's Lost Treasure"**



**Large Ming Jar**



**Ming Jar**



## **STORY 2 : PIRATE KING OF THE EAST - LIMA HONG**

If the Ming Empire were to have fought a war with the Spanish Empire over the Philippines, it would have been a deadly and ugly one between these 2 superpowers at that time.

Instead, the war for the control of the Philippines was re-ignited by the biggest pirate of the East, a Chinese named Limahong, also called Lim Feng, who became the biggest public enemy of the Ming Dynasty.

With a huge army of several thousand marauding men and nearly a hundred ships at the height of his power, Limahong was on the run from the much more formidable Ming Emperor Wanli and his mighty imperial forces. So Limahong decided to find himself a new country to be king and he orchestrated a conquest for the Philippines in 1574 to make himself the new emperor there. But Spain had already colonised much of the Philippines by then.

Limahong and his pirates fought a one-year war with the Spaniards but were eventually driven away by the better armed Spaniards with the support of many locals. Limahong hid much of his treasure in the caves, forests and riverines in the Philippines when he escaped from the Spanish forces, hoping that he would return later to recover them. But he never did and he disappeared from all records, with rumours that he fled to his former island stronghold in the Pescadores (near Taiwan) and to an unknown death.

Many of the ancient Chinese artifacts from AHM including some unique “one-of-its-kind in the world” pieces might have been from the collection left behind by Limahong in the Philippines. However, it is pure conjecture at this stage and cannot be proven yet.

This would be the first time in the world for an exhibition about Limahong and perhaps his lost treasure.



**ient Chinese Artifacts, Probably From Limahong’s Treasure**

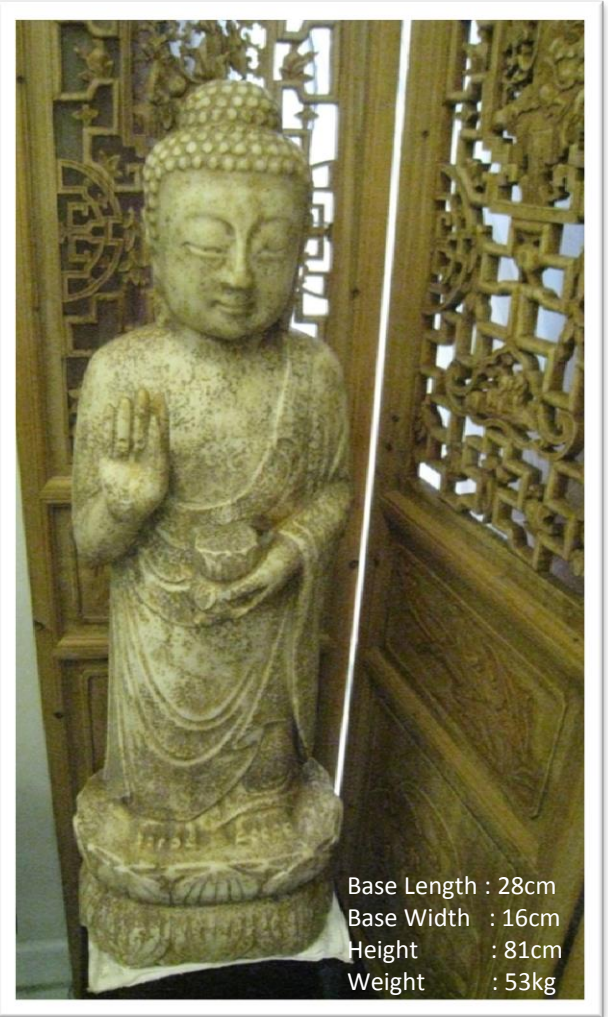


**300 B.C Warring States Bronze & Gold Inlaid Sword**



Top Diameter : 45cm  
Height : 83cm  
Weight : 29kg

**3000 Year-old Shang Dynasty Bronze  
Cauldron (Food Vessel)**



Base Length : 28cm  
Base Width : 16cm  
Height : 81cm  
Weight : 53kg

**Tang Dynasty Buddha Statue**



**Large Shang Jade Urn**



**Large Warring States Jade Tiger**



**Large Yuan Celadon Dish**



**Wooden Foo Dog**



**Ancient Ceremonial Jade Swords**



**Ancient Ornamental Jades From Various Periods**



**Ancient Jade Inkwells**

### **STORY 3 : HERITAGE FROM THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO**

The colonization of Asian started in the Philippines by Spain and it was followed by the Portuguese (in Malacca), the Dutch (in Malacca and Indonesia), the British (in the Indian sub-continent, Malaya) and the French (in Indochina).

The old Malay Archipelago, incorporating parts of Malaya, Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, Borneo, Indonesia and some other islands in South East Asia, has a rich cultural heritage, with trade and migration flourishing along the coastal areas and the sea routes of the South China Sea.

The Muslim Malays of Southern Philippines (part of the old Malay Archipelago) resisted the colonization by Spain which had to deal with the many small islands and the relatively superior weapon technology of the local people such as the Lantaka cannons which helped to halt the southward advance of the Spanish army.



**Lantaka Cannons**



**Assortment of Weapons**

The 200 to 300-year old giant Muslim/Malay drums used for the call to prayers and to attend mosques are the world's largest drums. They are unique and have never seen anywhere else in the world. They are testament to the handicraft skills of the local inhabitants in Mindanao who made them.



**Ancient Malay/Muslim Drums & Gongs**



**Antique Model Sailing Ships of Seafaring South East Asians Show The Advancement In Ship Making Even Before The Arrival Of The Colonialists.**

## **STORY 4 : PLUNDER OF CHINA BY FOREIGN POWERS**

The Ching Dynasty (1644-1911), started by the Manchurians from the north, was China's last imperial era.

It was also the period, especially during the second half, that China was at its lowest point in history, engulfed by weak, repressive and corrupt governments and unable to meet the basic needs of its people. This gave rise to many internal rebellions and the virtual carving up of areas of influence inside China by the colonial powers including Japan. China was literally bullied and at the mercy of these powers and the best example are the Opium Wars between the Ching Government and the British Empire in the nineteenth century.

The wars were sparked by the legitimate actions of the Chinese authorities against British merchants and their local allies to prevent the mass importation of opium (to be mixed with tobacco) to be sold and distributed to the local population. Many Chinese people became drug addicts and it weakened the resolve of the Government to fight back.

Some auction houses often glorified this period of the Ching Dynasty, only because of the availability for sale of many of its imperial artifacts. It is true that by then, the technology of colours and tools used in making artifacts was more advanced and the artifacts (being more recently made) have been better preserved, so some of the imperial porcelains from this period were magnificent looking. But the beauty of these artifacts cannot hide the fact of China being weak in stopping its plunder during the second half of the Ching Dynasty.



**Special Bone Inlay Opium Pipe**



**Large Opium Day Bed**



**Unusual "East & West" Chess Set**



**Ching Porcelain Dish**





**Ching Snuff Bottles**

## LENA CARGO IN LONDON & GENEVA



Percival David Foundation, London  
September - December 2000  
Baur Foundation, Geneva  
April-July 2001

Discovered in 1997 by Franck Goddio the [Lena junk](#) sank at the end of the 15th century in the Philippines.

The most significant artefacts found on the wreck were first presented in an exhibition held at the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art in London from September 6th till December 15th, 2000. It featured over 80 blue-and-white porcelains and celadons recovered from the "Lena Cargo". The ceramics date to the late fifteenth century with forms and decoration that are typical of the export wares of the period. The porcelains were made at Jingdezhen, the location of the Ming imperial porcelain factory and the celadons are from the Longquan kilns which specialised in this type of ware. Examples of imperial ceramics in the David Foundation were included in the exhibition for comparative purposes and a fully illustrated catalogue was published.

The exhibition then went on to Geneva where it was presented at the Baur Foundation – Museum of Far Eastern Art from April 5th to July 1, 2001 with a display of 150 ceramics, blue-and-white Chinese porcelain, jars and celadons of the Ming dynasty.

[Baur Foundation Website](#)  
[Exhibition catalogue](#)