

Presentation 3

Living Heritage Experiences in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Singapore

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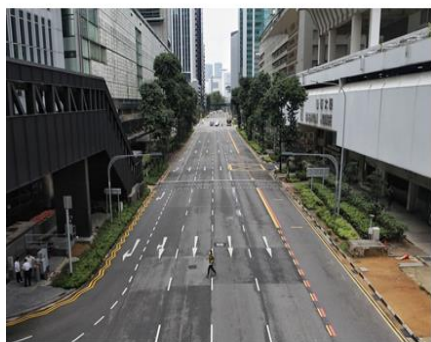


Living Heritage in the time of COVID-19 Experiences from Singapore

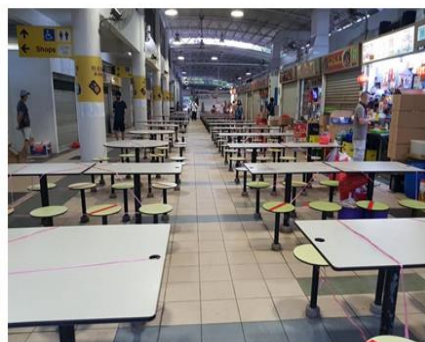
Yeo Kirk Siang, Director (Heritage Research & Assessment)

Webinar on "Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific Region" 18 June 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on Singapore



Central Business District



Hawker Centre

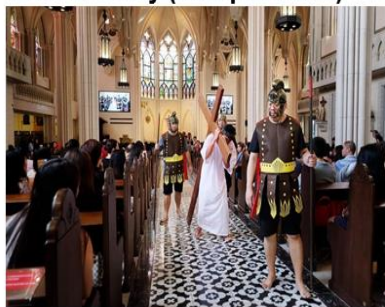
- First case of COVID-19 in Singapore confirmed on 23 January 2020
- Strict restrictions on activities and businesses during the "Circuit Breaker" period from 7 April to 1 June 2020.
- People are advised to stay at home and only go out for essential needs (e.g. buying food and groceries). Significant impact to daily lives.
- Impact to ICH practices across all forms, performing arts, crafts, festive events, rituals.
- Gradual easing of restrictions from 2 June 2020 onwards.

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Impact on ICH in Singapore

Good Friday (10 April 2020)



Catholic masses and worship services were streamed online (right) in place of the usual large gatherings of the congregation

- Safe-distancing measures has affected all religious and cultural festivities.
 - Access to places of worship are restricted.
 - Festive events are not allowed to take place
- Communities have shown resilience during these times, by finding alternative ways to celebrate and/or continue their practices through the use of digital means

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Impact on ICH in Singapore

Qing Ming Festival (清明节) – 21 March to 19 April 2020



ICH Practice

Families would clean the graves of their ancestors in a practice known as *sao mu* (扫墓) or "sweeping the graves". Following which they will make offerings and prayers to their ancestors.

Impact of COVID-19

- Cemeteries and columbarium's limited the capacity of people who could visit
- Mass chanting sessions were also streamed online while offerings could also be placed electronically

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Impact on ICH in Singapore

Tamil New Year (14 April 2020)



ICH Practice

Hindu families would typically visit temples to conduct prayer rituals before gathering a family or friend's house for celebration with festive food

Impact of COVID-19

Hindu families held simple meals within their immediate households and use digital conferring tools to connect with families. Hindu temples also hosted online *poojas* (prayer rituals) for devotees

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Impact on ICH in Singapore

Vesak Day (7 May 2020)



ICH Practice

Buddhist devotees would often gather at Buddhist temples for large-scale prayer ceremonies, and conduct practices such as the bathing of the Buddha statue and the lighting of oil lamps.



Impact of COVID-19

With a ban on gatherings, temples groups developed online initiatives such as talks on Buddhism and meditation sessions. Members of the community also gathered online together to conduct their on sets of prayers.

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Case Study – Ramadan Together



Crowded bazaars in past years



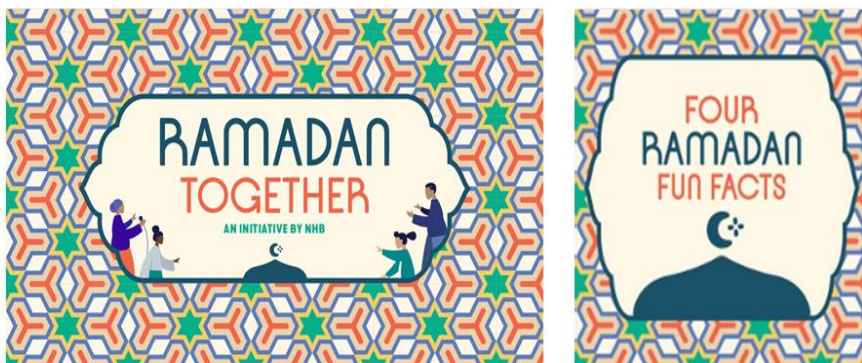
Worshipping at a mosque (Pre COVID-19 days)

- Month of Ramadan (24 April – 23 May 2020) – holy month of the year for Muslims. Involves fasting and other social-cultural practices involving families and wider community.
- Closure of mosques and cancellation of bazaars; families not allowed to interact outside of their immediate household.

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Case Study – Ramadan Together

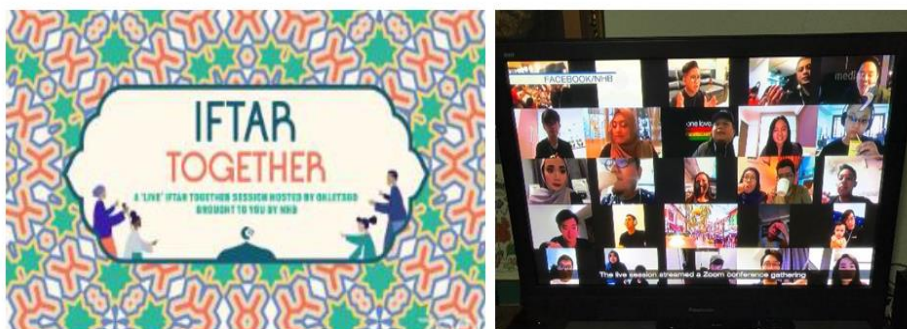


- NHB started a month-long campaign titled #Ramadan Together:
 - Foster sense of togetherness amongst local Muslim community during COVID-19 times
 - Raise awareness of Ramadan to non-Muslims
- Anchor Website (Roots.SG/Ramadan)
 - Provides details of ICH practices of Ramadan
 - Links to online events (e.g. videos & live-streaming)

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Case Study – Ramadan Together



- “Iftar Together” Online Event
 - Hour-long Facebook Live session on 9 May 2020, led by Malay-Muslim celebrities
 - Digital space for Muslim and Non-Muslims to convene in digital space to share what Ramadan means to them, and how community is adapting with the pandemic.
 - Q&A for people to understand practices of Ramadan
 - Ended with breaking fast together as a community

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Case Study – Ramadan Together

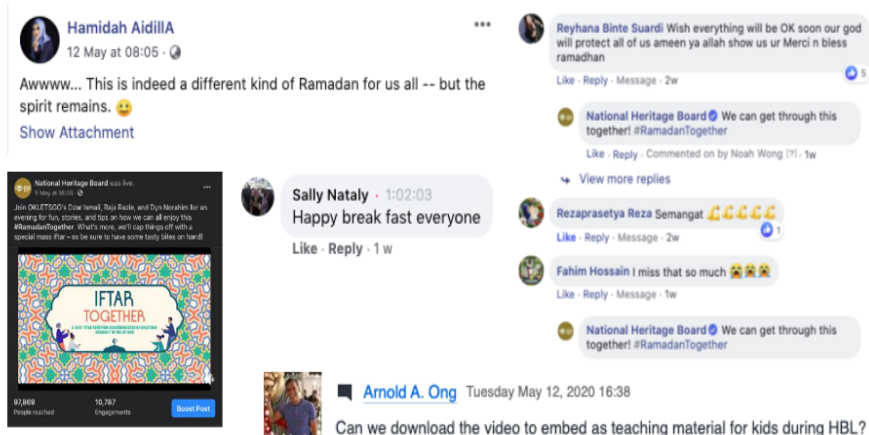


- Other activities of #Ramadan Together Campaign included:
 - Online concerts
 - Live-cooking demonstrations of festive foods
 - #OnXOnRayaFest initiative: Provides bite-sized information on Malay heritage and culture through social media

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Case Study – Ramadan Together



- Positive feedback from community on the campaign.
- Maintains some degree of normalcy & enabled communities to interact and carry on their practices despite the challenges.
- Reaches new audiences who may not be familiar with cultural and religious practices associated with Ramadan and Hari Raya Puasa.

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Other Digital Initiatives

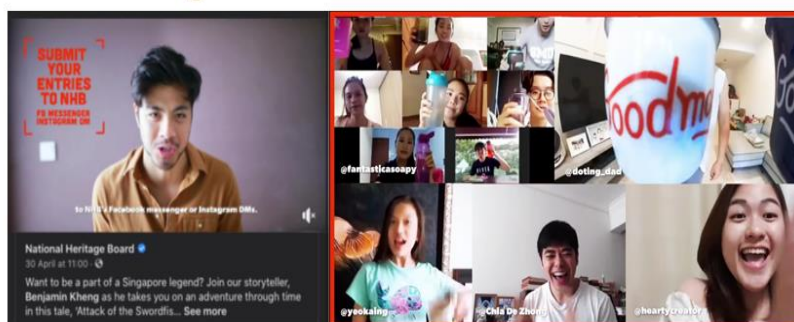


- Promoting cultural heritage from various ethnic communities in Singapore by Heritage Institutions in Singapore

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Other Digital Initiatives



Fun ways of promoting oral traditions & expressions (e.g. "Attack of the Swordfish")

Performing Arts Groups like the Singapore Chinese Orchestra have also held virtual concerts for their followers



Other Digital Initiatives

COVID-19 SPECIAL

Neither dusty nor old: Youth come up with fresh ways to document heritage during Covid-19 pandemic

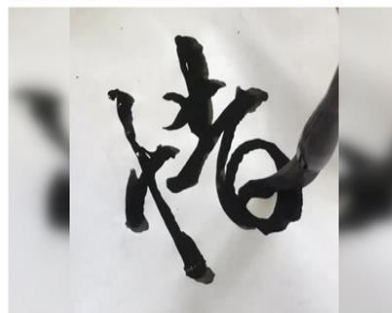


Founder of Singapore Noodles Pamela Chia (left) and founder of Hakka Scribbles Sung Chang Da. PHOTOS: PAMELA CHIA, VERONICA SUNG

Youths starting their own ICH projects during COVID-19

Source: The Straits Times (8 June 2020)

IN TOUCH WITH HIS ROOTS THROUGH HAKKA SCRIBBLES



Resilient heritage researcher Sung Chang Da writing the Hakka term sing, which means to live in a familial way or give physical affection. PHOTO: HAKKA SCRIBBLES/NOTAGRAM

RESEARCHER STARTS REPOSITORY FOR FESTIVALS



Independent researcher Lynn Wong is trying to bring back a forgotten festival. PHOTO: COURTESY OF LYNN WONG



Singapore Heritage Festival (Digital)



The annual Singapore Heritage Festival (19 June – 5 July) will be going completely digital.

The festival will include performances, workshops and other programmes featuring ICH groups and practitioners.

Nanyang Tea Challenge 2020: Digital Edition

Social distancing measures shall not keep us away from appreciating Nanyang Tea. Sign up for this digital edition of the Nanyang Tea Challenge Today!

Register on Peatix: <https://ntc2020.peatix.com/>

Registration closing: Sunday, 17 May 2020

Registration Fee: \$22*

*Includes the tea and equipment required for the challenge

Preliminary Round:

Tasting The Nanyang Tea Variety and Brewing The Nanyang Tea

Final Round:

Presenting Your Nanyang Tea and Nanyang Tea-Food Pairing

Tune in to the live-stream of Round 3 and vote for your favourite finalist on 21 June! Visit www.heritagefestival.sg to find out more!



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Documenting COVID-19

The National Museum of Singapore and National Library Board have launched a project to gather photos from the public to document the impact of COVID-19 in Singapore.



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Conclusion



Pongal Celebrations (Pre COVID-19)



Documenting Hawker Culture (Pre COVID-19)

- ICH continues to play important role to society and communities during times of crisis.
- Physical interactions of ICH are important; but necessary to find ways for communities to continue their practices.
- Digital platforms opens up ways to engage new audience; but risk of segregating others
- COVID-19 further emphasised the need for adaptation amongst ICH communities, and embracing digital transformation.
- COVID-19 situation continues to evolve globally and in Singapore:
 - Need to further analyse and observe the impact on ICH over the next few months/years and explore how safeguarding measures will need to adapt in order to help ICH and their communities

