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BY JORDI BALTÀ PORTOLÉS  
24 OCT 2016

# Sarawak Museum Campus Fellowships 2017 | Malaysia



The **Sarawak Museum Department (SMD)**, through its Sarawak Museum Campus Project, is **welcoming applications in 2017 for 12 fellowships (postdocs)** based at the **Sarawak Museum** in Kuching (Malaysia), an ASEMUS member. The Sarawak Museum Campus Project is a State-funded project to revive the international status of the Sarawak Museum and **to build a new museum to showcase Sarawak's rich cultural and historical heritage which will incorporate education and public outreach programmes**. Its main goal is **to establish a world-class museum campus** and become one of the best museums in the region. The fellowships will be granted for the period of one year, and **research will be concentrated on material culture and the significance of the museum collections**. Part of the assignment will also be to exchange knowledge with the museum's curators and to assist in capacity building. To make the research

sustainable, expert sessions will be organised to engage community members and other professionals involved in the knowledge sharing and validation process.

## Fellowship research topics and themes

The following themes have been identified for the research fellowships:

- Establishing the history of the Sarawak Museum collections; the processes by which the collections themselves were formed (acquisitions, sales, key persons involved) and reconstructing the historic exhibition lay outs since the opening of the Sarawak Museum in 1891. Tracing back Sarawak's collections overseas distributed through the network of first curators of the Sarawak Museum. And the movement and exchange of collections from Sarawak internationally and the effect of their presence in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe.
- Establishing local conservation requirements and preservation standards for the collections through combining traditional techniques, local knowledge and international practices for all artefacts selected for display in the permanent galleries.
- Providing inventory and overview of the migration of communities within Borneo since early history in relation to shifting political and social powers, trade relations and international migration.
- Understanding the significance of the human skull for indigenous communities and the role it played in their belief systems. And to further research the effect skulls had in European collections (myths, meanings) in their understanding of Borneo and the role they played in the image building of Borneo and later Borneo's understandings of itself.
- Understanding the significance and symbolism of animals in indigenous cosmologies and oral traditions.
- Understanding the significance of martebans (including the presentation in longhouses) for the indigenous communities in Sarawak and the role of the martebans in the maritime trade with the Chinese community/China. And select Martabans from the museum collection for documentation and to research the provenance back to the local owners and production locations in mainland China, Borneo or other.
- Research and produce holistic exhibition materials, texts and object captions for the archaeology galleries highlighting the international significance of archaeological sites in Sarawak and telling the interpretative story of community life in prehistoric times, with focus

on the Kelabit Highlands, Niah Caves and Santubong. And to provide preliminary training in human bones work and practical experience in burial archaeology, using the prehistoric cemeteries in Sarawak as a data set.

- Inventory research and documentation of key objects from the Charles Hose and Hugh Brooke Low ethnographic collections in museums worldwide to establish it as a reference collection for the Sarawak Museum collection.
- Establishing zoo archaeological research and documentation on the vast collections from Niah. Understanding the use of animal bones by humans in prehistoric times in Borneo. Investigating the existence of extinct species like the tiger in Borneo which is often named in oral history.
- Understanding early human settlements through rock art sites in Sarawak. Description of the rock art locations and drawings and their significance in relation to the period and culture of the people who made them. With a detailed description and digital visualisation of a life size model of Kain Hitam (Painted Cave) in Niah for the gallery, and an explanatory study of the paintings and rock art in Guah Serai and Santubong.
- Inventory of the provenance, traditional use and significance of traditional Sarawak patterns and designs used in basketry, mats, weavings, tattoos and carvings.
- To develop (through the museums' collection and collections worldwide) a reference collection of butterflies and dragonflies for display (involving artists) representing the biodiversity in Sarawak for the purpose of engaging a young audience.

Each fellowship has a budget of RM 96,000, including stipend (before tax and local insurance), publication, travel and teaching and equipment.

**Candidates should have completed a PhD** in Archaeology, Anthropology or History and have very good knowledge of English. Applications should be sent by e-mail, before the deadline of **30 November 2016**. Additional information about the submission procedure and contents of the applications can be found in the **document enclosed**.

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