

A Royal Treasure: The Javanese Batik Collection of King Chulalongkorn of Siam

His Majesty King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, r.1868-1910) was Siam's first ruler to travel outside of the kingdom in peacetime. In 1871, at the age of just 17, the King visited Singapore and Java to observe modern technology and Western-style governance. This was in keeping with His Majesty's goal to modernize Siam as well as to establish friendship between Siam, England and the Netherlands. After this brief first visit, His Majesty returned to Java on longer, private trips in 1896 and again in 1901.

During all of his visits, King Chulalongkorn showed a great interest in the shared history and culture of Siam and Java. He visited many famous centers of batik production, bringing back a collection of 307 pieces, including several rare surviving examples. The collection also includes inventory tags with informative details such as place of origin, pattern name and price for many of the pieces—exceptionally rare documentation.

A Royal Treasure: The Javanese Batik Collection of King Chulalongkorn of Siam is an exhibition dedicated to showcasing this collection and telling the story of His Majesty King Chulalongkorn's three trips to Java and his fascination with batik. It presents exceptional examples of batik from His Majesty's collection which have never been publicly displayed. The exhibition runs from 1 November 2018 to May 2021 in Galleries 3 and 4 at the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles. There will be two additional complete rotations of all objects in the exhibition, please check the QSMT website for details after August 2019. The museum is open daily from 9 am. to 4 pm. (last admission 3.30 pm).

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