

# Where There Is a *Whale*, There Is a Way: The Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum and the National Heritage of Singapore

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the notion of zoological collections as heritage in the context of the National University of Singapore's Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum (LKCNHM). The public museum was established in 2015, Singapore's Golden Jubilee year, yet few are aware that it inherited significant historic collections representing the national heritage of Singapore from its antecedent institutions. The discussion begins with the premise that the Anthropocene offers us a window to better understand contemporary heritage practice in Singapore. It explores how ideological requirements shape the LKCNHM's institutional role and further renegotiate the meaning of its zoological collection. At the heart of this are matters of continuity-inheritance, custodianship-ownership, and identity-memory constructions. Drawing upon a range of sources, the paper seeks to contribute towards the debate focusing on the 'reunions' of culture and nature as well as intangible and tangible heritage respectively within a museum context.

Keywords: ideological requirements, national heritage, natural history museum, Singapore, zoological collection