

ASEAN Youth Camp Viet Nam 2010 "DRAGON: Legend in ASEAN Culture"

By Siti Hajar (Brunei Darussalam)

In a world where so many changes are taking place, it is of no surprise that some of the most important things that have made us what we are today become distorted and unless something is done to ensure that youths are reminded of their roots, shown how our ancestors lived and what they used to practice, our respective histories will remain that way – just history.

The ASEAN Youth Camp programme is one of the many ways where us youngsters can further develop ourselves in terms of learning more of our own background considering that a lot of preparations had to be made prior to the start of the programme.

Because of the demands of the programme, we had to equip ourselves with so much historical knowledge that, personally speaking, it opened up so many doors to dig deep and discover what we wouldn't have discovered on our own accord.

It has allowed us to appreciate where we come from, allowed us to appreciate what our ancestors have done for us and, most importantly, it has taught us how important it is to ensure that the efforts our ancestors have made are preserved, remembered and shared with our own future generation as well as with the rest of the world.

Furthermore, aside from just learning about other ASEAN countries from textbooks and classrooms, we were also given the chance to know our counterparts on a more personal level and this has thus given us the chance to share among ourselves what is great about our own countries, listen to how great other countries are and gave us the opportunity to diminish any misunderstanding or misconception that we may have come across over the past years.

For the most part, the programme has given us the opportunity to build bridges with so many people across so many countries and this is perhaps the best aspect of the camp.

So many friendships were made and so many bonds were made even stronger within the one-week period and the great thing about this is that those who were able to make friends know that these friendships are the types one can rely on should a decision is made to visit other ASEAN countries.

Overall, the programme is one of the best experiences an individual should not miss out on if given the chance. (Among other things) not a lot of people can actually say they celebrated on a cruise ship in the middle of Halong Bay.

The camp was the kind of experience where one will say that it was "Once-in-a-lifetime" and, as with all the other participants, it was an honour to be a part of this year's camp and hopefully, in future, another Bruneian brethren will be able to echo the same feeling.

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By Salehin Haji Salleh (Visual Artist - Brunei Darussalam)

The ASEAN youth camp is one of the key projects of the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (ASEAN-COCI) with the aim of building a stronger regional identity by raising awareness of South East Asia's history and heritage through the arts. Fifty five young creative talents from ten ASEAN member states and China gathered in Ha Noi (the City of Ascending Dragon) from 23rd – 29th April 2010 to participate in this year's ASEAN Youth Camp under the theme of "Dragon: Legend in ASEAN Culture".

We stayed at Thang Loi 4 stars hotel during the programme. They showed good hospitality. The organizer did not served halal food, however they provided us with alternatives such as seafood and breads. Liaison officers were assigned to each country delegation to manage their affairs and to make sure the programme flows well and smoothly. Unfortunately, it was disappointing that our LO was always absent when we needed him the most. We were given rooms which accommodate two people from different countries but of the same skills. This is to let us bond with the other delegates.

Various workshops were conducted to harness our talents. We were grouped according to our talents – visual art, dance, music, photo journalist and pottery. Each workshop is led by professional instructors. From the visual art group, we were asked to make one individual artwork relating to our background and personal skills. The finished product of this workshop is exhibited during the closing ceremony. All art materials and accessories provided at the workshop are of professional qualities/standards. It was quite difficult for us to get ideas and make a piece of art within a short period of time, but with help of our instructor, Mr. Tiew and fellow members, we managed to pull it off together.

The program involved a tour to the Museum of Fine Art where we learned about the history of art. Vietnamese Lacquer paintings are most popular where they make use of paints, sea-shells, mother of pearl and eggshells which are then coated with hot lacquer to make interesting effects. Others include painting on Vietnamese silk and woodblock printing.

Other activities include a charity programme for orphans at Bo De Pagoda. The Water Puppetry show at Thang Long – Epic story lines were played with many different puppets using traditional scenes of Vietnamese life. The play was accompanied by traditional musicians. This was followed by an outrageous overnight boat trip across Ha Long Bay.

During the closing ceremony, all ASEAN delegates made their performances. We exhibited the artworks and skills which we had worked on and refined together throughout the workshop / camp. We can see the strong bonds and cooperation between delegates in a well synchronized performance by the music and dance groups. Exhibitions by photojournalists, pottery and visual art group showed many similarities and differences between them. The ceremony was supposed to be held out door but unfortunately the weather was not cooperative. The working committee had to improvise and moved the ceremony inside. This made the ceremony a bit chaotic and disruptive because the hall is small. Sadly, our exhibitions were left outside and unseen.

Throughout the seven-day workshop, we had learned about one another's culture and history through arts. We shared our experiences and through this we build friendship and understanding. After sharing, learning and spending enjoyable moments together, I realized that we are not different after all.

I personally think this youth camp would have been perfect if it was organized and prepared properly. Apart from the absence of our Liaison officers, it would have been great if they provide halal food separately because as they know other Muslim delegates would be attending this camp / workshop i.e. Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore as well.

The activities and visits that I experienced in this ASEAN Youth Camp were exciting and memorable. The instructors were of great help and I had learned a lot from them especially Mr. Tiew in refining our artwork with his suggestions and teachings during the workshops. The theme of the programme "Dragon: Legends of ASEAN culture" make me acknowledge further the culture in our history and others that I have never would have known.
