

**VIVIENNE WEE****Anthropologist and Managing Director, Ethnographica Private Limited, Singapore**

Vivienne Wee is an anthropologist who has done extensive field research in Singapore and Indonesia, especially the Riau Archipelago. She has a PhD in Anthropology from the Australian National University, MSocSc in Sociology from the University of Singapore, and Bachelor's degrees in Music and Anthropology from the University of Minnesota. She was previously Associate Professor at the City University of Hong Kong and also at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In 2015, together with Geoffrey Benjamin and Sarah Benjamin, she co-founded *Ethnographica Private Limited*, which is dedicated to ethnographic research on social development, community engagement, heritage conservation, cultural mapping, linguistic documentation and other related fields. The key members of *Ethnographica* individually have many years of experience in undertaking research and consultancy in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Laos and other Southeast Asian countries. *Ethnographica* has been contracted by the National Heritage Board to do research and documentation on Pulau Ubin's community heritage, as well as for the design of a methodology to conduct a heritage survey of Singapore's intangible cultural heritage.

**Local Custodians of Pulau Ubin's Intangible Cultural Heritage**

This paper examines the role of the present and former inhabitants of Pulau Ubin as local custodians safeguarding its intangible cultural heritage. The *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* and the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (ratified by Singapore in 1995) provide frameworks for understanding the relationship between local custodians, their environment and cultural heritage. Although Pulau Ubin's population has dwindled from some 4000 inhabitants to less than 100, present and former inhabitants are nevertheless crucial in maintaining social continuity with *kampung* life as lived. The term *kampung* refers, not just to a rural settlement, but to a type of social organisation founded on relationships between persons known to each other. Ferdinand Toennies differentiated between *gemeinschaft* (generally translated as "community"), based on relationships that are small-scale, personal and particularistic, and *gesellschaft* (generally translated as "association"), based on relationships that are large-scale, impersonal and universalistic. The Ubin *kampung* is thus a social network based on small-scale, personal and particularistic relationships between present and former residents of Ubin. It is this network of persons known to each other who collectively safeguard Pulau Ubin's intangible cultural heritage as shared heritage in one of the last two villages in rapidly urbanising Singapore.



**Family visit House 760D, Ubin**