



KHABIR ROSLAN

SUKMA: MEGAH, TUNDOK



Wei-Ling Gallery

KHABIR ROSLAN
SUKMA: MEGAH, TUNDOK

27 MAY – 21 JUNE 2025

Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Front cover: Close-up of *Tebing Singgora (Singgora Edges)*

'Sukma: Megah, Tundok' considers the passage of time through processes of decomposition, repair, and transformation. Rooted in the Malay words sukma (soul), megah (greatness), and tundok (humility), the title frames Malaysian artist Khabir Roslan's reflections on the quiet, cyclical rhythms of care by presenting a body of work shaped by hand, repetition, and a commitment to slowness as method and philosophy.

Marking his first solo exhibition at Wei-Ling Gallery, Khabir's works blur the boundaries between object and gesture. Neither strictly painting nor sculpture, they invite a reconsideration of material and process. Compost soil, rich with traces of food waste and microbial life, is applied directly onto canvas and cotton bandages, producing surfaces that hold both texture and memory. As Khabir shares, "I was drawn to compost not just for its texture and colour, but because it holds memory. I see compost as a living body that reflects us."

Hexagonal shapes reference Singgora clay roof tiles from traditional buildings across the Malay Archipelago. Cut, rearranged, and hand-stitched, they recur throughout the work. Some bandages are sectioned and re sewn, their seams recalling scars or shifting ground. Elsewhere, pigments mix with soil and oil, forming textured surfaces that bear traces of care, time, and erosion.

Several large, soil-stained scrolls stretch the height of the main space. Composed of stitched bandages and cloth, and anchored by part of a boat's hull, the exhibition is grounded both physically and thematically. The body is absent but implied through weathered textures, bound forms, and a measured pace of making that points to healing and repair.

Khabir's materials hold time within them, with his forms hinting at a constant state of becoming. Up close, the balance between fragility and resilience becomes palpable, unfolding in a way that surprises and invites a fresh perspective on his continuous process.

'Sukma: Megah, Tundok' adalah pameran solo pertama Khabir Roslan. Pameran ini meneliti perjalanan masa melalui proses pereputan, pemulihan, dan perubahan. Nama pameran diambil dari tiga perkataan Melayu: sukma (jiwa), megah (keagungan), dan tundok (kerendahan hati). Melalui karya-karya ini, Khabir merenung tentang proses seni yang tenang, berulang, dan perlahan, yang menjadi asas bagi pendekatan dan falsafah kerjanya.

Karya yang dipamerkan sukar untuk dikategorikan sebagai lukisan atau arca. Ia mengaburkan sempadan antara objek dan perbuatan. Khabir menggunakan tanah kompos yang kaya dengan sisa makanan dan mikroba, terus ke atas kanvas dan kain balut kapas. Permukaan yang terhasil penuh dengan tekstur dan kesan memori. Khabir berkata, "Saya tertarik kepada kompos bukan hanya kerana rupa dan warnanya, tetapi kerana ia menyimpan memori. Saya melihat kompos sebagai jasad hidup yang mencerminkan kita."

Bentuk heksagon diambil inspirasi dari jubin bumbung tanah liat Singgora yang biasa ada di bangunan tradisional seluruh Kepulauan Melayu (Malay Archipelago). Bentuk ni dipotong, susun balik, dan dijahit tangan, ulang-ulang dalam karya ni. Ada pembalut yang dipotong dan disambung balik, dengan garis sambungan yang nampak macam parut atau tanah yang bergerak. Di tempat lain, pigmen dicampur dengan tanah dan minyak, jadi permukaan yang bertekstur, simpan kesan penjagaan, masa, dan hakisan.

Beberapa gulungan besar bertompok tanah melintang sepanjang ruang utama. Dibuat daripada pembalut dan kain yang dijahit, dan diikat pada sebahagian badan perahu, pameran ni ada tapak dari segi fizikal dan tema. Tubuh manusia tidak nampak tapi rasa kehadirannya melalui tekstur lusuh, bentuk yang terikat, dan rentak buat yang perlahan, tunjuk proses penyembuhan dan pembaikan.

Bahan-bahan yang digunakan oleh Khabir menyimpan unsur masa. Bentuk-bentuknya memberi bayangan kepada kesan perubahan yang berterusan. Dari dekat, keseimbangan antara rapuh dan kukuh menjadi jelas, mengajak pengunjung di galeri kami melihat semula proses penciptaan karya ini yang tiada penghujungnya.

Khabir Roslan: Soul, Strength, and Humility

Prissie Ong
June 2025

Khabir Roslan. What can be said of this young emerging artist that hails from Pahang is the Malay word that I was introduced to by him — *mantap*. This word means excellent or awesome, but the Cambridge Dictionary describes it with the following words: *firm* — strong and steady; *sound* — having or showing good judgement or good sense; *stable* — firmly established and likely to last; *unfailing* — constant.¹ These Cambridge definitions of the word *mantap* perfectly encapsulates Khabir as a person and an artist. He has been unfailing in his commitment to his craft since the beginning, standing firm in his path. Qualities that (in my opinion) cement him as a stable and grounded presence in the art world. Though he may appear “wet behind the ears” due to his youthful looks, he is unassuming. In conversation with him, his thoughts, speech, wisdom, and intellect reveal a soul that seems to have lived a thousand lifetimes.

This exhibition, his first solo, bears a title in his mother tongue, Malay — *Sukma: Megah, Tundok* — which speaks to how personal this body of work is. *Sukma* means soul, *megah* denotes strength, and *tundok* expresses humility. Together, they tell the story of his journey, carrying the tension he feels being human. Khabir explains, “*It's like a soul that longs for greatness but is grounded by humility. This title is like a confession. It keeps me rooted while letting the world reach upwards because I always lack the material control over the world. As I said, I work with slowness and very organic(ally) because I use organic materials. It's much more of a conversation between time and decay.*”²

These works trace Khabir’s journey from humble beginnings in his hometown, a fishing village on the east coast of Kuantan, to where he stands today. It is a continuous exploration of time, impermanence, and the quiet grace of slow transformation.

What makes Khabir’s work so compelling is how deeply human it is. It isn’t overly polished or perfect, and that’s the point. He is embracing imperfection as part of the process, as something to learn from. His materials have the propensity to break down over time, but rather than masking this, he allows the decay become part of the story. He has built this show on quiet, thoughtful reflections on life, change and the liminal space between strength and surrender, permanence and decay, ritual and rupture. His work is not a shout into the void but a series of murmurs stitched from the rhythms of a fisherman’s dawn. He speaks of his father waking before dawn to head out to sea, of his mother patching clothes and mending nets. All of these small unspoken gestures taught him that love doesn’t have to be loud. “*That the most powerful things are often the less seen, like roots underground or a prayer set in solitude. For me, humility isn't about shrinking. It's about standing in truth without needing to prove it.*”³ This is not art as spectacle, but as sediment — layered by time, slated with memory, and stitched with the unseen threads of survival.

Khabir’s artistic practice is shaped by deliberation, stillness, and the sacred repetition of daily life. He wakes in the wee hours, in the darkness of dawn, as if in subconscious

mimic of his father — when the world is still and quiet. He prepares his space by lighting incense as music ranging from Beethoven to Indonesian folk plays, doing small acts such as reflecting or reciting verses inwardly that help him enter a meditative state. These rituals aren't about performance. They are an act of grounding, gestures that bring him into presence with the work and himself. Be it stitching bandages or handling compost soil, his process flows more like a prayer than a plan. These early hours spent on his art offers clarity; the kind that only silence and Subuh prayer can bring. This is where his art emerges. Not from noise or ambition, but from attuned awareness, from feeling the world before trying to shape it. It's about being honest, staying grounded, and listening to what materials, time, and the world are trying to say.

What many might not know is that Khabir is also a *chef de partie*, working in a professional kitchen alongside his art practice. His daily routine reveals a quiet discipline: rising before dawn to create art, then heading into long hours of work in the kitchen. Yet, he pours the same care and attention into both canvas and cuisine. He often works in long, silent stretches until physical and mental fatigue sets in or until it's time to begin his kitchen shift. But far from being separate worlds, his life as a chef and artist are deeply intertwined. In both spaces, he works with his hands, his senses, and his heart. To him, food is akin to art — an offering. A way of showing care, of being present with another.

I asked him whether there were any similarities between making art and cooking, to which he responded with such clarity and poetry that his words ask to be quoted, not rewritten:

“Both are deeply sensory experiences, grounded in intuition and intention. In cooking, just like in art, I engage with crucial principals which are sense of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound and each of these aligns with artistic elements and principles.”

For Khabir, art is a deeply sensory and intuitive practice. One that draws from the rhythms of daily life and the quiet intelligence of the body. He speaks of art not just as a visual experience, but as one that echoes across all senses: how colour and composition can guide the eye like a well-plated dish, how texture and form can evoke memory much like the crunch of something fried or the softness of a purée. He sees aroma as atmosphere, taste as tonal balance, sound as rhythm — all elements that shape how we feel, remember, and respond. These connections to cooking are not metaphors but lived experiences, grounding his art in real gestures of care. In both the studio and the kitchen, there is repetition, patience, and presence. Whether plating a dish or composing a visual piece, he honours process over perfection, finding poetry in repetition and patience in chaos. But more than just a balancing act, his dedication to his artistic practice despite the demands of a full-time job that was taken up as means of survival speaks of the unwavering commitment that places art not as a luxury, but as a necessity of being.

Even in exhaustion. Khabir embraces his struggles as part of the path. There are times when the materials don't cooperate, or when kitchen duties take precedence over creation. Still, he lets the flow shift — like a river carving new paths when obstructed. Rest, he says, is not failure; it is part of the creative cycle. When feeling overwhelmed or burnt out, he returns to small, grounding actions. A sketch, a meal, a moment with loved ones. His art is a reflection of the care and love passed down through his family. Anchored in sincerity and faith in the unseen impact of small, sincere acts. Khabir reminds us that art is not separate from survival or the mundane; it is shaped by them. It is through these small, deliberate acts like touching soil, stitching cloth, and plating food that meaning is made, and the human spirit is honoured. Despite being physically drained, it is these seemingly mundane routines and ordinary moments that are what reminds him he is alive and connected.

Through it all, he remains committed to showing up. Not because he must, but because this is what keeps him whole.

References

¹Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). *Mantap*. In *Cambridge Indonesian-English Dictionary*. Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/indonesian-english/mantap>.

²Vanan, M. [Mikhail Vanan]. (2025, June 7). *Episode 53: Khabir Roslan Traces the Body and Spirit in his First Solo, 'Sukma: Megah, Tundok'* (Wei-Ling Gallery Podcast) [Audio podcast snippet, 00:01:08-00:01:18; 00:01:50-00:02:20]. Wei-Ling Gallery. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3HczRwsUOcudU9SNIHN5sG>.

³Vanan, M. [Mikhail Vanan]. (2025, June 7). *Episode 53: Khabir Roslan Traces the Body and Spirit in his First Solo, 'Sukma: Megah, Tundok'* (Wei-Ling Gallery Podcast) [Audio podcast snippet, 00:08:11-00:08:26]. Wei-Ling Gallery. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3HczRwsUOcudU9SNIHN5sG>.



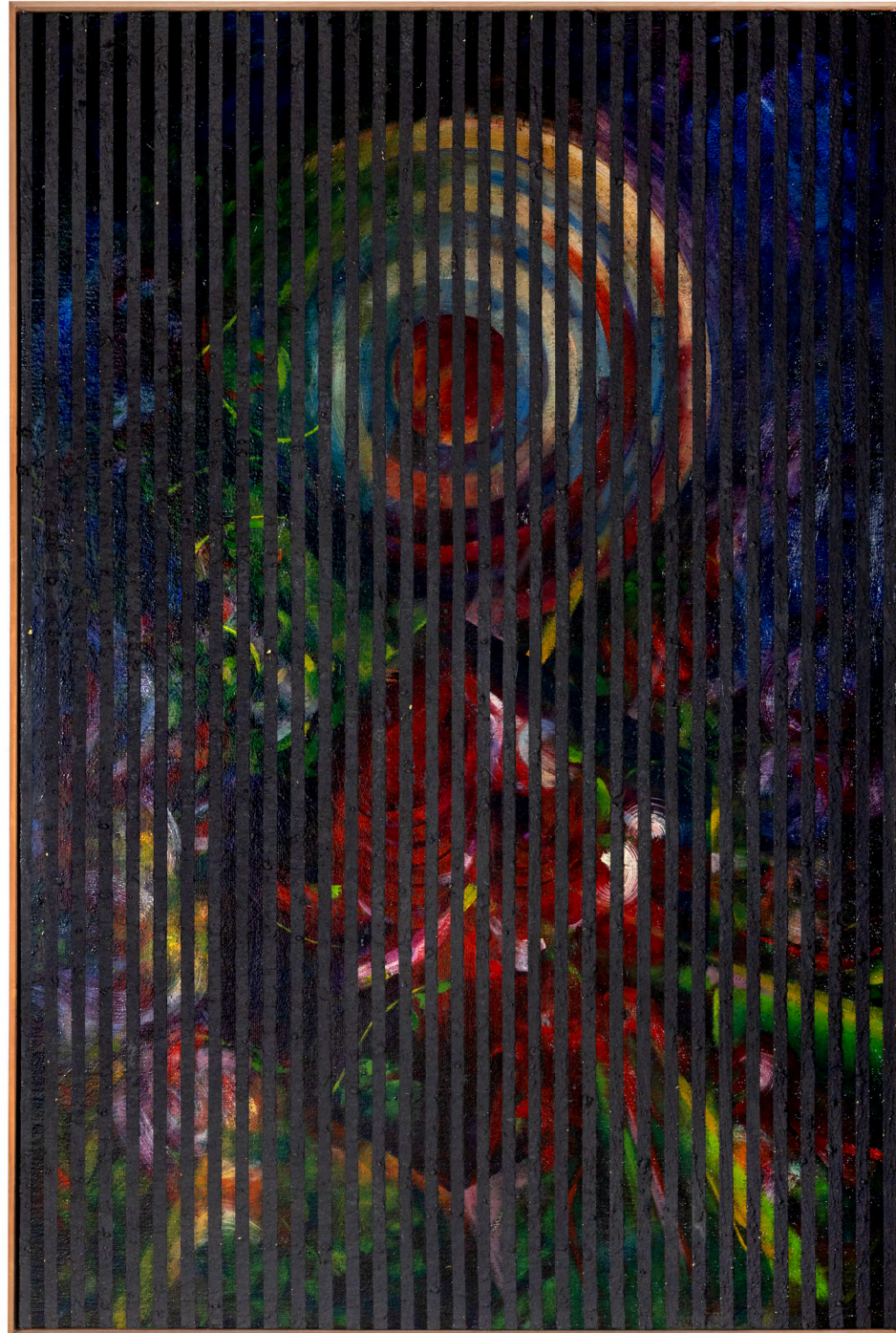
Dalam Jeriau Nafas
(Within the wailing breath)
Oil Paint, Compost Soil on Jute
152cm x 122cm
2025



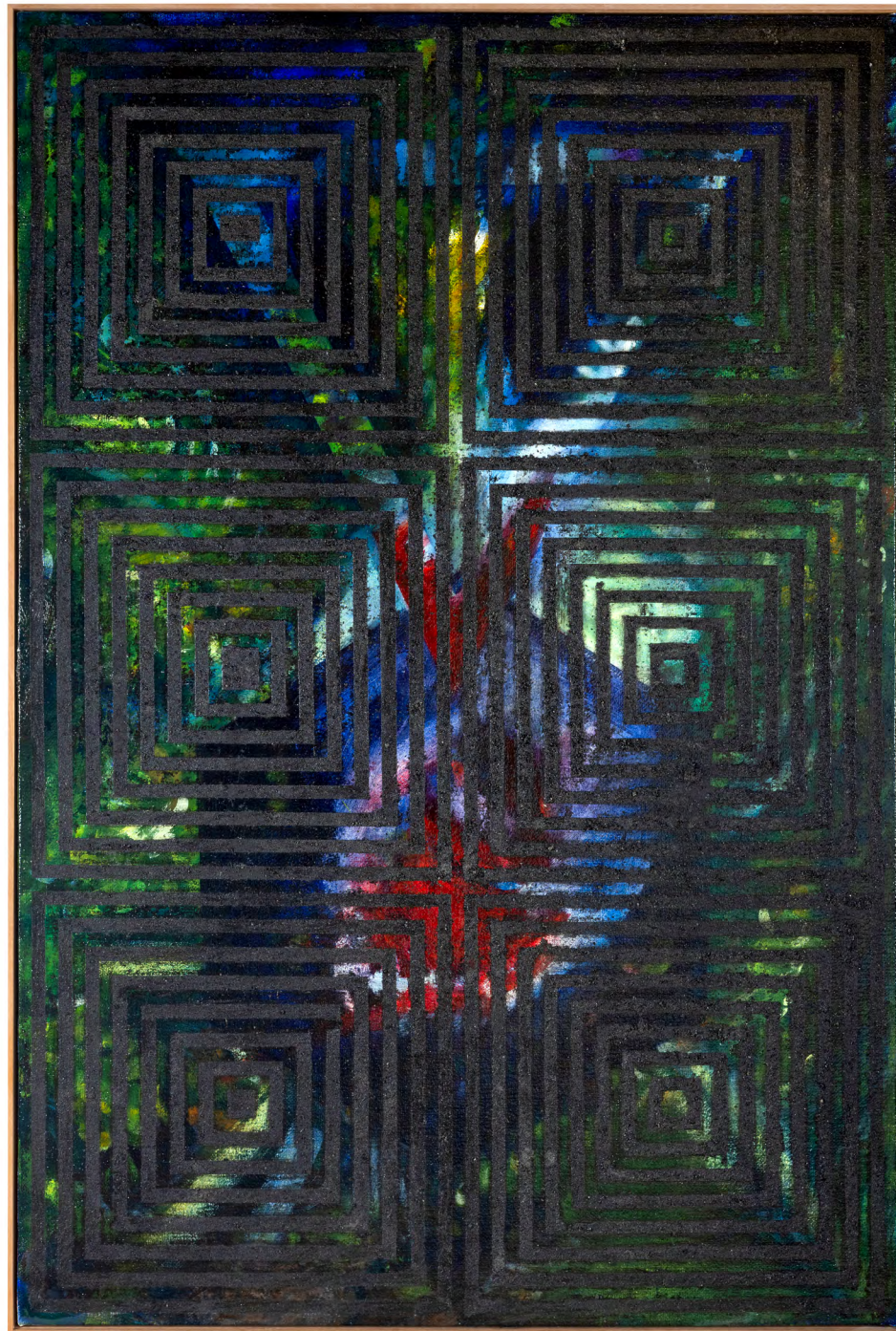
Gerak Geruh Sukma
(Shifting of the subtle body)
Oil Paint, Compost Soil on Jute
152cm x 122cm
2025



Dalam Tenunan Sangkala
(Woven in the loom of time)
Oil Paint, Compost Soil on Jute
152cm x 122cm
2025



Dalam Jalur Sukma
(In the line of the souls)
Oil Paint, Compost Soil on Jute
183cm x 122cm
2025



Gema Alam
(Echoes of the land)
Oil Paint, Compost Soil on Jute
183cm x 122cm
2025



Installation view at Wei-Ling Gallery

LARGE-SCALE WORKS



Installation view at Wei-Ling Gallery



Tebing Singgora (Singgora Edges)
Compost Soil, Gauze on bandage
68cm x 38cm
2025



Tanoh Meusoho (The Weiry Soil)
Compost Soil, Fiber Thread, Gauze on Bandage
Approx. 419cm x 243cm
2025



Tanoh Tuwah (Ancient Soil)
Compost Soil, Red Soil, Gauze on bandage
Approx. 320cm x 185cm
2025

SMALL-SCALE WORKS



Installation view at Wei-Ling Gallery



Lapik Teduh (Shade Beneath)
Compost Soil, Gauze on bandage
68cm x 38cm
2025



Mendongak Langit (Peeking at the sky)
Compost Soil, Gauze on bandage
68cm x 38cm
2025



Tebing Singgora (Singgora Edges)
Compost Soil, Gauze on bandage
68cm x 38cm
2025



KHABIR ROSLAN

(B.1995, Based in Selangor, Malaysia)

Khabir Roslan is a transdisciplinary artist whose work explores the intersections of art, science, cosmology, and philosophy. A graduate of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Shah Alam, Malaysia, with a Bachelor's in Fine Arts, he received the UOB Painting of the Year 2020 award in the Emerging Artist category as "Most Promising Artist." From 2019 to 2022, he participated in various exhibitions and residencies.

His work reimagines the value of language, connecting it to the concept of Nature (Fitrah), inspired by Physics, Nusantara cosmology, Wabi-Sabi, Theosophy, and Islamic philosophy. In 2021, he was selected as a Guest Trainee in the Ilmu Program at Museum Gallery Tuanku Fauziah, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), where he explored site-specific installations in traditional Malay houses focused on traditional arts and culture.

In 2023, Khabir was selected for the WLG Incubator Young Artists Program, an initiative by Wei-Ling Gallery that supports emerging Malaysian artists. Under the mentorship of prominent Malaysian painter Yau Bee Ling, he developed a body of work titled '*Inter-Connectivity*', which investigated the complex relationships between language, nature, and the cosmos.

EDUCATION

- 2018-2021 Bachelor in Fine Arts, UiTm Campus, Shah Alam, Malaysia
2013-2016 Diploma in Culinary Arts, UiTM Campus, Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia

SOLO EXHIBITION

- 2025 Sukma: Megah, Tundok, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 18@8 pLay, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
SUNYI: CONTEXT SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION, Hospital Lama Kuah, Langkawi, Kedah, Malaysia
Sunyi-Artist-Residence Balai Seni Negara, Langkawi TUKANG 2.0 REKA LESTARI:
SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION, The Spine - PJ Kita, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
- 2023 WLG Incubator Young Artists Show 2023, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2022 'Kongsi KI, open day, Projection mapping
'Alir/Flow, Klang river festival, Projection mapping
'Alchemy, Sareng Gallery
- 2021 'EUPHORIA : A virtual return, Final year show Bachelor of Fine Art, University Technology Mara
'Rumah Tokmah Virtual presentation, Museum and Gallery Tuanku Fauziah, University of Science Malaysia
- 2020 'UOB Painting of the year, Virtual Award
- 2019 'VOID, Phenomenology of Spirit (Performance), University Technology Mara, (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia
'Art and Style, University Technology Mara (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia

RESIDENCY

- 2024 Sunyi-Artist-Residence Balai Seni Negara, Langkawi
- 2021 'Pelatih Tamu: Inap Ilmu Rumah Tokmah', Museum & Gallery Tuanku Fauziah (MGTF), University Science Malaysia (USM)

AWARD

- 2020 Most Promising Artist of The Year award, UOB Painting of the Year (Malaysia)

To accompany the exhibition entitled '**Sukma: Megah, Tundok**' by Khabir Roslan from 27 May to 21 June 2025

Gallery Information

Operating Hours: 10 AM – 6 PM (Tuesday to Friday),

Operating Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM (Saturday)

Closed: Sundays, Mondays, and Public Holidays

Image Courtesy : Wei-Ling Gallery & Khabir Roslan

Artwork images photographed by Kamarudin Diran

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Back cover: Close-up of *Mendongak Langit (Peeking at the sky)*

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