

Duration is 4 minutes

Title

Learning with Grandad

Episode: Prayer Mat

Sipho thinks that's a cool mat (inner thought) before proceeding to the hallway. He catches up with his grandad Pedro, who has been waiting for him.

'Come on Sipho, let's go.' Pedro ushers him into the next room, which is a living room.

Sipho notices tapestry on the wall resembling the prayer mat he saw on the floor in the bedroom. A tour guide walks in and immediately Sipho says hello.

'Hi! Are you on a trip with your grandad?' The tour guide asks.

'Yes! This is grandad.' Sipho smiles.

Pedro waves and says, 'Hi, I am Pedro.'

'Hi Pedro, nice to meet you.' The tour guide expresses and comes down to Sipho's level to ask him his name. 'And what's your name?'

'Sipho.' Sipho grins.

'Nice to meet you Sipho, I'm the tour guide. Is there anything you would like to know?' The tour guide asks.

'I was wondering (short pause)why is this mat on a wall when the other one is on the floor?' Sipho asks.

'Good observation, Sipho.' The Tour guide affirms. 'Well, have you ever felt homesick?'

Sipho nods in agreement.

'So did King Akbar, the emperor of the Mughal empire.' The tour guide begins to tell a story.

'When King Akbar invaded the north of India he felt homesick, so he introduced an art form called carpet weaving.'

'Carpet weaving?' Sipho questions.

'Yes, but more on that later. How about a background story first?' The tour guide

'Oh yes please.' Sipho agrees.

Zoom into the mat on the wall, the patterns move as the tour guide tells the story of carpet weaving. The patterns on the fabric unfolds to reveal a story in the tapestry.

'Well, the Mughal empire was a Muslim dynasty who ruled the south asian subcontinent, what we know today as India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.'

They were very successful in trade and textile production . so much so that the Mughal went down in history as one of the world's most affluent cultures.' The tour guide adds.

'Wow.' Siphon marvels.

Audience hears Granddad chuckle at Siphon's reaction.

Back to the living room at the heritage house, we see the tour guide interacting with Siphon and Granddad.

'What's your favourite part about your culture Siphon? The tour guide asks.

'O the food! I really like the food!' Siphon exclaims then pauses to add. 'I like food from around the world!'

'That's very good, Siphon. How about you Granddad Pedro?'

'Well, like Siphon I like food too but my favourite part of our culture is art.' Granddad Pedro replies.

'Brilliant. But back to carpets. Did you know that carpets were woven as works of art, and produced by everyone in Islamic society?'

'I know you use mats for praying but I didn't know they could be art too.' Siphon is astonished.

Back into the imagery world, the audience sees women weaving and a mughal royal court (Durbar)

'Yes they can! Women have been weaving for centuries in villages and nomadic communities all over the Middle East, Anatolia and Central Asia. It wasn't just one particular group either, carpet weaving was also happening in the royal court too.' The tour guide explains further.

'This is so interesting! (short pause) but what is a nomadic community?' Siphon asks.

'Well, it's a community that travels from place to place finding fresh pastures for their animals.' The tour guide explains.

'O they travel with animals like cattle?' Siphon exclaims.

'Yes, Siphon.' The tour guide continues. 'But back to the Mughal. In the royal courts, they employed Persian artisans to weave their carpets.'

The artisans would work with fine materials like silk, metal-wrapped thread and the carpets would be enormous and very luxurious.' The tour guide details.

The audience can hear Granddad and Siphon oohing and ahing in awe.

'The artisans took inspiration from nature, animals and floral decorations to create the patterns.' The tour guide continues in excitement. 'The floral designs were symbolic to spirituality and they tended to have one type of flower in the centre of the mat.'

'O wow!' Siphon exclaims.

Those carpets were just not just for floor coverings, they were ornate works of art that resembled status and wealth.' The tour guide expresses. 'They would feature in the royal court at reception halls, audience chambers, mosques and temples.'

'It wasn't limited to Muslims either, did you know King Akbar allowed Catholics to construct their churches in Agra and Lahore?' The tour guide adds. 'And you'll never guess what decorated their walls.'

Granddad Pedro and the tour guide both chuckle.

'So the mat you see in this room is one the curators have decided to display like a painting because of all the marvellous detail.' The tour guide explains.

'And the other mat on the floor?' Siphon asks

'Ahh, the other mat you saw in the bedroom is a prayer mat that is used in religious practices within India.'

'And what religion would that be?' Siphon asks.

'It could be Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, we don't know much about this mat. You see, whoever collected it didn't record where it comes from and who it belongs to.' The tour guide says before sighing. 'This is a common issue with many museums and heritage houses, some of the cultural artefacts they have they don't know where they came from because of colonisation.'

'Colonisation.' Sipho repeats in confusion.

'Yes, perhaps in your next visit I'll tell you more about how Britain colonised India using the East India Company.' The tour guide promises.

'You promise?' Sipho asks eagerly.

'I promise.' The tour guide affirms.

'In the meantime, Sipho, in our next visit we will learn about the collector of the prayer mat and the stupa.' Grandad reminds Sipho.

'O really Grandad? That's exciting!' Sipho exclaims then pauses. 'Grandad I'm hungry, are we eating in the cafe like last time?'

'Yes and this time we are going to try a new dish.' Pedro says.

End.

Credits

Production and curation - Sanne Chiza Blanco & Edward Williams

Animation - Gabriela Bran

If you would like to add to the story please contact us at info@wedontsettle.com

If you want to know more about the food Sipho and Grandad are eating please visit (*url tbc?*)

Thank you for watching!

Don't Settle empowers young People of Colour from Birmingham and the Black Country to change the voice of heritage through the arts, governance and research

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Pedro and Sipho are eating an indian snack called Murukku. It is a crispy famous Indian snack prepared from rice flour, urad dal, and bean flour mixed into a spiral-shaped batter and deep-fried in oil. These savoury nibbles are spiced with cumin, onion powder, or chilli. It has its origin in Tamil Nadu. **Image below**



Visual references for patterns/textiles:

Link: [V&A · The Arts Of The Mughal Empire](#).