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# SPAFA JOURNAL



## FEATURES

ARCHAEOLOGY	The Art of the Ancient Kingdom of Champa Its Originality and Diversity BY PROFESSOR JEAN BOISSELIER TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH TO ENGLISH BY PROFESSOR M.C. SUBHADRADIS DISKUL AND JANE PURANANANDA	2
	Some Preliminary Remarks on the Identification of Beads BY PETER FRANCIS JR	11
VISUAL ARTS	Art Education in Thailand: An Australian Perspective BY IAN BROWN	24
PERFORMING ARTS	The Ramayana Epic and Traditional Indonesian Music BY DR. SRI HASTANTO	30
	The Magic Flower An example of a "Theatre in Education" Project in Singapore BY ASSOC PROF CHUA SOO PONG	34

## DEPARTMENTS

SPAFA Affairs	49
Bookmark	53
Book Review	60
Contributors	65

## COVER

LION. CHAM ART, VIJAYA 10TH TO 14TH CENTURY. EXCAVATED BY  
L'ECOLE FRANCAISE D'EXTREME ORIENT, NEAR QUI-NHON M.72. ON  
DISPLAY AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, BANGKOK. PHOTOGRAPH BY  
SUTHIN ROJPRASERT.

# **THE ART OF THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF CHAMPA ITS ORIGINALITY AND DIVERSITY**

by **Professor Jean Boisselier**

A LECTURE GIVEN AT THE BANGKOK  
NATIONAL MUSEUM ON 20 FEBRUARY 1990.

TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH TO ENGLISH BY

**PROFESSOR M.C. SUBHADRADIS DISKUL**

AND JANE PURANANANDA.

For those who have visited the Bangkok National Museum, the art, or at least the sculpture, of ancient Champa is not completely unknown. And while this art, which is at times so admirable, yet often so perplexing, is not as well represented in the museum as Javanese art, the six sculptures in the collection which were presented to King Rama VII about seventy years ago (fig. 1), reveal certain tendencies which are the most striking and the most unvarying in Cham art. Dating from the 10th to 12th centuries, these six pieces are almost sufficient in showing how different, both in terms of aesthetics and popular themes, the schools of Cham art are from the rest of Southeast Asia.

These sculptures testify to a vision of beings and of objects which is essentially decorative, and a denial of the existence of a division between what is real, or at least what appears to exist, and that which is imaginary. And yet, this art, which is so profoundly original, is often nothing more than a sort of plagiarism of sculptures from the various neighboring or distant regions with which Champa had more or less lasting relations. Yet, if the diverse sources of inspiration or prototypes (whether successive or contemporary) of Cham art, can generally be identified without difficulty, not once has a work of Cham art ever been confused with its prototype. Through many centuries, Cham sculptors have revealed their own unique personality, as well as having shown much refinement in their interpretations. This rule holds true during the eleven troubled centuries of Cham history, whether the subject is animal or human, real or mythical; as well as for floral elements, borrowed from Indian art, the significance of which art historians have forgotten, stressing instead their decorative value.

But before trying to explain Cham art more precisely, without doubt it would be useful to recall in a few words, that this ancient kingdom, which today no longer exists, was in 1177 AD "presumptuous" enough (according to inscriptions) to dare to attack the Khmer capital Angkor, which Chams were valiant enough to seize.

Before finally being absorbed and integrated into Vietnam at the beginning of the 19th century, and following almost incessant conflicts and conquests which lasted 850 years, (which occurred even after Vietnam

became independent) Champa remained the most oriental of the Indianized kingdoms in the Indochinese Peninsula due to its direct contact with Chinese culture and with Sino-Vietnam. Founded at the end of the second century, it was also — with the exception of the southern part of the Malay Peninsula — the only region in the Indochinese Peninsula whose population spoke an Austronesian language.

Without even taking into account geographical conditions, which were hardly favorable for the establishment of national unity (the Cham kingdom,

which extended along some 1,100 kilometers, was compressed between the mountains and the sea, and the whole region consisted of a series of small plains with difficult access to each other except by sea, fig.2) it should be noted that Champa owed its undeniable originality to a

collection of heterogeneous, or even at times antagonistic components: an Austronesian base, a superimposed Indian culture, peaceful or more frequently antagonistic contacts with China and later with Vietnam, contacts with Indonesia (in particular with insular and peninsular Srivijaya), contacts with the Khmer kingdom (which followed the original contacts with Funan)...

With such a historical background and with its almost incessant warfare — which as one knows is never favorable for the flowering of a culture — what is most remarkable is that Cham art was able to develop as it did. If perhaps it lacks homogeneity (is there an art which is perfectly homogeneous?), still it has produced some of the most authentic masterpieces to



FIGURE 1. SIX CHAM SCULPTURES EXHIBITED IN THE BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM



FIGURE 2. MAP OF CHAMPA



FIGURE 3. BUDDHA  
FOUND AT DONG-DONG.  
BRONZE. FIRST HALF OF  
THE FIFTH CENTURY A.D.

be found in all of Southeast Asia. At the center of a production, which at times seems puzzling, and which continued even during the kingdom's most destructive and decadent periods, is an art which never leaves one indifferent. The Chams observed all, copied all, with their own unique vision, often placing very little value on 'classic' beauty, and instead giving grace to that which is graceless, beauty to that which is ugly, and a serene grandeur to that which is nothing but ridiculous.

Various writers have proposed that Cham art is the heir of the Dong-son culture (the civilization famous for its bronze 'kettle' drums). This theory does not take into account all the facts, and if we raise the issue here, it is because this mistaken idea continues to reappear from time to time. The bronze drum culture is a Vietnamese proto-historic culture, or to be more accurate, a Sino-Vietnamese culture, which was for the most part exported by sea routes as far as the Malay Peninsula, and towards the upper part of the Me Nam Klong (Tham Ong Ba) in western Thailand, as well as towards Indonesia (where it became an aspect of the local 'Bronze and Iron' culture). Yet Dong-son culture never appeared in ancient Champa.

In the case of Cham art, it would seem that following a late neolithic period, characterized by ceramic production (the culture of Sahuynh), an Indianized culture, no doubt transmitted through the intermediary of Funan or directly from India by maritime routes, was superimposed in the region. In fact, the most ancient Sanskrit inscription of Southeast Asia, that of Vo-can, dating at the latest to the 3rd century, and found *in situ* near Nha-Trang, marked the farthest limit of Funan. This location would become one of Champa's most sacred sites. But, in contrast, the famous Buddha of Dong-Duong (fig. 3), attributed

rather vaguely to the southern Indian style of "Amaravati," and dated to approximately the first half of the 5th century, could not have been carried to where it was found except by a maritime route. This image thus attests to the probable religious dissemination in Champa of the teachings of Gunavarman (a Kashmiri prince who became a Buddhist monk). He travelled to Nanking at the request of Emperor Wudi of the Sung dynasty in order to teach dhyana (meditation) according to the Sarvastivadin school. He must have arrived in China in 431 after having left Sri Lanka around 413-414 and stopping in Java and Champa.

The two historical 'boundary markers' just mentioned, serve above all in showing the paths by which Indianization left its marks on Champa; they also help to better explain the types of contact established between those regions, either neighboring or distant, with which Champa had relations.

However, even if from the 4th century onwards (according to inscriptions), the Indianization of Champa was an established fact (at

least in part), we must wait until the second half of the 7th century in order to find Cham art which can be dated with any certainty. And, there is a Khmer influence which seems to pervade in the Mi-son E. 1 Cham sculptures of this period. This influence can be explained by the existence of ancient ties with Funan, and even more so by relations with pre-Angkorian Cambodia during the reign of King Isanavaraman (617-634) who was of sufficient notoriety to be mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang and with whom the surrounding kingdoms wished to establish dynastic relations. Such relations were most likely desired by the kingdom of Dvaravati according to a bronze inscription found at U-thong in Thailand, and most certainly also desired by the Chams.



FIGURE 4. STONE STEPS FOUND AT MI-SON E.1.  
SECOND HALF OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY A.D.



FIGURE 5. GANESHA OF MI-SON  
E.5. STONE. SECOND HALF OF  
THE SEVENTH CENTURY A.D.



FIGURE 6. DHARMAPALA  
(THE LAW GAURDIAN)  
FROM A VIHARA AT  
DONG-DUONG. 875  
A.D.



FIGURE 7. DVARAPALA (DOOR  
GAURDIAN) RIDING ON A BEAR AT  
THE SECOND GOPURA (GATE) AT  
DONG-DUONG. STONE. 875 A.D.



Although certain Khmer influences are undeniable, these are not sufficient in explaining what constitutes the real beauty of the Mi-son E. 1 works and their indisputable originality. In addition to the compositions being unknown in Khmer art (low pediments, bases with pedestals which are monumental and narrative), their decorations have only slight connections with pre-Angkorian art, and hardly more with so-called "Dvaravati" art. But even this double ancestry does not suffice in explaining everything, because the figures decorating the steps (fig. 4) as well as the compositions of the frame-work of the staircases suggest a connection with southeast India or even Sri Lanka (although Mi-son E. 1 is indisputably Brahmin in outlook.) From such complex sources of inspiration, combined with the undeniable talent of Cham sculptors—a talent which is doubled by a sensibility that is rarely found elsewhere—emerges the true beauty of these 'first' Cham sculptures. The only statue which can be attributed to the same period, the Ganesha of Mi-son E. 5, which is hierarchical and monumental in spite of its small dimensions (fig. 5), does not come close to the same beauty. In fact, this statue confirms how limited Cham dependency on pre-Angkorian iconography was. As it is not a question here of summarizing the history of Cham art, but only to draw attention to what constitutes its originality, we will pass over two centuries without stopping, in order to briefly discuss the art of Dong-duong, an important Buddhist monument. Founded in 875 AD, this edifice gives birth to a style whose power, and at times, whose heaviness and even ugliness, does not limit its originality nor its grandeur (fig. 6). A number of

unique characteristics found here led Ph. Stern, one of the rare scholars of Cham art, to write that this art, which is extremely original, was without a doubt the most profoundly Cham in nature. Although his proposal is seductive, it is not acceptable, unless one believes that the originality of Cham art is due to the most diverse borrowings, which have been remodeled by a very specific type of aesthetics and subjected to profound changes. If one takes into account this reservation, then it is possible, and only then, to regard

the style of Dong-duong as the most authentically Cham. In fact, there is no other art style that has received so many foreign influences—Indonesia, Dravidian, and above all Chinese (figs. 7,8)—in a manner which is so personal, so obviously unrestrained, and yet without altering the most universally accepted aesthetics.

As it would have been difficult to develop any further in the direction described above, the 10th century (style of Tra-Kieu) bears witness to a radical change in Cham art and a return to a conception of beauty which is closer to more generally accepted ideals. In this case, Indonesian influences prevail, leading to a search

for beauty, or for a charm, which is more humane. This profound change induces one to speak of a 'Second Golden Age' of Cham sculpture, the first having been represented by the works of Mi-son E. 1 style. However, such an idea is based on subjective considerations influenced by our Greco-Roman aesthetic. It is certainly permissible to doubt whether the Chams had in mind the same criteria because, during the 10th century, as well as the 9th century, they were not looking to create mere menial copies of their models.



FIGURE 8. BASE OF THE PRINCIPAL SANCTUARY AT DONG-DUONG, SHOWING ON THE TOP PANEL: THE CUTTING OF THE HAIR OF THE BUDDHA, AND ON THE LOWER PANEL: THE GREAT DEPARTURE. STONE. 875 A.D.



FIGURE 9. BASE OF THE DIVINITY  
OF PO NAGAR AT NHA-TRANG.  
965 A.D.



FIGURE 10. STANDING LION  
FROM TRA-KIEU. NINTH-TENTH  
CENTURY A.D.

FIGURE 11. FRAGMENT FROM A BASE FROM  
TRA-KIEU. NINTH-TENTH CENTURY A.D.





No amateur, even the least knowledgeable, could confuse a sculpture form Mi-son or Tra-Kieu with an authentic Javanese piece. Always drawing from the same source — their simple, innate sense of decor — they were inspired to create a number of exceptional pieces, which as a result are superior to the models from which they were copied, as for example the base of the divinity of Po Nagar of Nha-Trang, which probably dates to 965 AD. (fig. 9).

Simultaneously, the traditional interest in Champa for animal figures (with the exception of the horse, which for some reason was generally poorly modeled) led to the limits of reality, often creating a mimicry of animals which is most unexpected, (fig.10) especially in the case of lions. These are mimicked in a manner which appears to be a predecessor of Walt Disney — a style not found elsewhere in the arts of Southeast Asia. This interest pushed the Chams to enrich their list of new and fantastic animals, and as a result they borrowed from the repertoire of Sino-Vietnamese animals, although their interpretations were always quite liberal in comparison to the original models (fig.11).

Advancing more than a century, we stop at the sculptures of Thap-mam, a vast monument, which had already begun to fall apart before it was finished, and which was only discovered in 1934. The sculpture of this unfinished temple dates to approximately the 12th century and is of rich iconographical interest. Inspired by traditional sources, both Indonesian and Sino-Vietnamese, the sculpture is characterized by contradictory tendencies, which however remain within Cham tradition: a search for decorative styles which are puzzling in their excesses (a misuse of heavy ornamentation, sculptural intrusions leading to divinities or fantastic animals being endowed with too heavy trappings) (fig. 12); a contempt for reality in the

representation of animals (whether concerning the morphology or posture of real or mythical animals.) This leads to a certain dryness in representation of human or divine figures. And yet, certain dancing figures— although unfinished— present a new paradox in Cham art, as they can be singled out as the most freely rendered in this school of art (fig.13).

Yet one of the most surprising aspects of this art, of which the influence was the strongest in the monuments of the region of Vijaya, the Cham capital from 1000 to 1477 AD, which was founded after Indrapura was abandoned due to Vietnam's movement towards the south, is that Cham art also held some

influence on Khmer iconography, in particular in the representations of the Garuda (fig. 14). That Cham art helped to promote the evolution of one of the most favored themes in Angkorian art, is not really unexpected. We have already alluded to the conquest of Angkor by Champa in 1177, an exploit, the consequences of which were more disagreeable for the conqueror than for the vanquished because Jayavaraman VII was to inflict a brilliant vengeance (according to Chinese texts) on Champa, the country being more or less completely

occupied by the Khmer until 1200 AD... From this Champa was definitely left weaker and poorer, and became an easy prey for Vietnam which seized Vijaya in 1471.

We could stop our discussion of Cham sculpture at this point, as it is never agreeable to dwell on a decline and its agony... However, we will continue because even up until its last manifestations, although suffering from a mediocrity of technique, the art of Champa maintained some of its more profound qualities. We can no longer look for Brahmanic sources of inspiration, because these, as in Indonesia, were exhausted, and in addition



FIGURE 12. DRAGON FROM THE SIDE OF A STAIRCASE, FROM THAP-MAM. 12TH-13TH CENTURIES A.D.



FIGURE 13. UNFINISHED DANCING FIGURE FROM THAP-MAM. 12TH-13TH CENTURIES A.D.



FIGURE 14. GARUDA FROM THAP-MAM. 12TH-13TH CENTURIES A.D.



FIGURE 15. KUT. LATE CHAM ART

sources of inspiration, because these, as in Indonesia, were exhausted, and in addition Champa had been completely cut off from these sources because the control of maritime routes had fallen into other hands. Thus it is perhaps in the very final works that the true Cham aesthetic ideals appear. It is an art which is more concerned with grandeur, (and the ornaments which evidence this grandeur: it must not be forgotten that statues of divinities were also ornamented with real jewelry) than with correct physical anatomy (fig 15).

Arriving at the end of this discussion, it must be underlined that never has an art, except perhaps, in a very different manner, the diverse pre-Columbian arts, more clearly shown how purely subjective the concept of beauty is, nor how much a personal vision of things and their interpretation could replace the creative imagination...The problem is being able to understand the true significance of 'creation' in artistic terms. In any case, it is possible to like the art of Champa in its entirety or to appreciate only certain works...but in either case it is an art which will never leave one indifferent.

# SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF BEADS

BY PETER FRANCIS JR

*"The writer of a report  
which contains beads must  
recognize the responsibility  
inherent in publishing them.  
A mere slip of the pen or  
simple misunderstanding  
can lead to considerable  
confusion."*

Beads make for compelling study to many people. Beads are a universal expression of an ancient human need to beautify. They are often products of evolving technologies at the forefront of more sophisticated development of new materials and extractive or manipulative processes. They are often made of durable materials, which means that they survive into the present from much earlier times. Since the trade in beads extends far back in time, they mark the interactions between communities and the commerce in goods and ideas. Beads are vital archaeological, historical and ethnographic resources.

Once the relevance of beads is acknowledged, their study becomes a useful adjunct to research into the human condition, past and present. As with any artifact, such a study cannot be conducted properly unless all involved can speak of the object in question with some degree of precision.

For far too long, reports on beads have included such phrases as, "they are round, tubular, and keg-shaped, made of glass, stone, and shell, and are brown, red, green, and white in color". Such descriptions are as uninformed as they are uninformative. If one takes the time to deal with beads, one must also expend the

effort to deal with them scientifically and to describe them properly.

The writer of a report which contains beads must recognize the responsibility inherent in publishing them. A mere slip of the pen or simple misunderstanding can lead to considerable confusion. A recent example in this region is the reporting in English of a bead assemblage in which the beads were said to be "wound". To her credit, the author realized her mistake and corrected it, although in a paper published in another language. In the meantime, an important paper was published by another writer who had seen only the original report and drew conclusions on that basis. His conclusions, needless to say, were thereby jeopardized.

The ability to describe beads is by no means the ultimate goal of bead research. Indeed, it is merely the initial, mechanical step required for serious study into this subject. Although not the final objective, accurate and complete description of beads is absolutely necessary before any further work can proceed.

#### THE MATERIALS OF BEADS

BEADS CAN BE AND HAVE been made of virtually any solid substance. The material from which a bead is made is of fundamental importance. Its identification can greatly aid in determining the age or origin of a given bead. In the case of synthetic materials, particularly glass, the constituents of the substance and the way in which it was manipulated are crucial in the process of identification.

Both the bead researcher and the less specialized scholar dealing with beads must become acquainted with a broad range of materials. The recording of materials must be as specific as possible. In the case of biological substances, the botanical or zoological taxa must be included.

For stones, the proper mineralogical or petrographic name needs to be specified. If the researcher does not personally have the expertise to make such identifications, the help of a specialist must be sought.

#### NATURAL ORGANIC MATERIALS

MOST ORGANIC MATERIALS are perishable and do not survive into the archaeological record. Plant and certain animal products were likely the most common ornaments in prehistoric times and are still widely used for adornment today. A thorough familiarity with local native species of the plant and animal kingdoms will aid in the recognition of exotic products.

The most widespread organic material used for beads are mollusc shells. They can be employed in two ways: 1) by taking advantage of the color and shape of the whole shell; 2) by cutting large shells into smaller beads. When whole shells are used, they must be identified and it should be noted how they were perforated, whether gouged, ground, or hammered, or more rarely sawn or scratched, or a combination of these actions (Francis 1989a). The placement of the hole in the shell also furnishes data about how the shell functioned as an ornament.

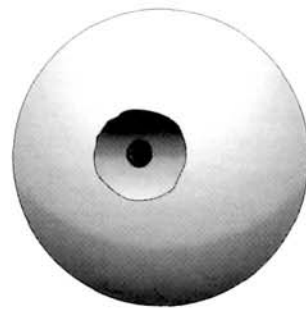
Large shells can be broken up and made into beads. Flat shells, usually bivalves (but also large univalves and other flat materials), are often made into disc beads by being broken into circlelets, drilled individually, strung together and ground on a stone to smooth them and make them the same size. This "heishi technique" is tens of thousands of years old and common throughout the world. Its presence, marked by the similarity in the diameters of large numbers of disc beads, should always be investigated and noted (Francis 1989a).

Very large round beads of shell can only be made from the columella (central supporting column) of large univalves, such as certain conches. They reveal their origin by a visible spiral structure. All cut shell beads can be distinguished from other beads of similar white materials by their three growth layers, resulting in two parallel layers separated by a third oriented diagonally or perpendicularly to the others. Several other animal parts have been used for beads, many of them for tens of millennia. Among the most important are teeth (including ivory), and bone. The identification of the source of teeth may shed light on the cultural meaning of beads. For example, those of carnivores demonstrate the strength of the procurer and probably served as talismans to bring the power of the wild animal to the wearer, while teeth of herbivores indicate prowess in hunting. Bones are often so altered that their origins cannot be identified, but usually a distinction can be made between the bones of

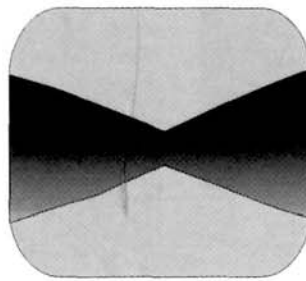
FIGURE 1: STONE BEADS



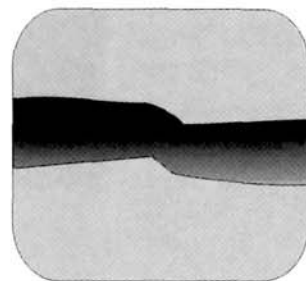
*a*



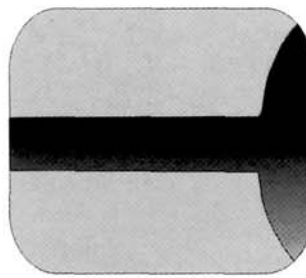
*b*



*c*



*d*



*e*



*f*



birds, mammals, and fish.

Though much rarer in the archaeological record, the ethnographic evidence strongly suggests that plants were very important in prehistoric times, as they are to many people today, for beads and other ornaments. Indeed, plants may have vastly outnumbered ornaments of other materials (Francis 1984). They survive for very long only in unusual circumstances, such as in a very dry or a waterlogged situation. However, there is little doubt that plant materials such as the fruit of "Job's tears" (*Coix lacrymajobi*) were long used to beautify the body and other objects.

#### NATURAL INORGANIC MATERIALS

STONES, MORE PROPERLY, rocks and minerals, have been widely used for beads, particularly since the introduction of metal tools. By far the most common bead mineral is quartz, either crystalline (rock crystal, amethyst, citrine), fibrous microcrystalline (the chalcedonies: agate, carnelian, onyx), or granular microcrystalline (jasper, flint). Quartz minerals are often color-altered by man. Carnelian is almost always heated to bring out its red color. Onyx is invariably man-induced by soaking banded agate in a sugar solution then heating it (for brown onyx) or putting it into sulfuric acid (for black onyx), (Plate 1). Golden citrine is made by heating poor quality amethyst in a complex process.

Other minerals, notably feldspar, apatite, garnet, serpentine, nephrite and jadeite, and certain rocks,

especially lapis lazuli, granite and diorite, and limestone are widely used for beads. Steatite ("soapstone") has been heavily exploited. A massive form of talc, it can be scratched with the fingernail and is thus easily carved. But when heated, the water of crystallization is expelled and the stone becomes quite hard and, though dull and opaque, is most suitable for beads,

amulets, and small objects.

In the case of stone beads, the methods of manufacture should be noted as far as it is possible to discern them. Raw stone is usually chipped into shape, and then ground into a final form. It is then either perforated and polished or vice versa. Polishing is usually done either by abrasion, which leaves tiny striae on the bead and ensures very sharp edges on faceted forms (Plate 2), or by tumbling, which gives a more even polish and rounds the edges of faceted forms.

Before the use of diamond drills, large, usually conical holes resulted from the coarser width of stone drill bits (Fig. 1c). If the holes are badly off centre ("wobbly"), the use of a hand-held (Fig. 1a), as opposed to a mechanical drill (Fig. 1b), is indicated. Diamonds have been used for drilling stones in South and Southeast Asia for more than 2,300 years. The holes of diamond drills are usually fairly straight and thin. Nearly all hard stones are drilled from both ends (Fig. 1d) to prevent the far end from chipping as the drill emerges (Fig. 1e). A joint in the perforation can be detected either with the eye or by lightly running a pin through the hole (Fig. 1d, 1f).

Unfortunately, the techniques for making stone beads and the shapes in which they are formed tend to change very slowly over time. This means that there is not as great a variability among these beads as compared to glass, and the sourcing of stone beads and dating of them out of context are relatively difficult. At this stage of our knowledge, the



Plate 1. Semi-finished agate beadmaking waste from Limudra, Gujarat, west India. The grey banded stone is "Babaghoria" agate, commonly altered to onyx. The flat, rounded pieces are of chalcedony: black ("Lyidian stone") red (carnelian); and white. They are center blanks from cutting stone rings. (Largest chip 3cm long).

bulk of semiprecious stone beads (particularly of the quartz group) seem to have come into Southeast Asia ultimately from India, either from the large but relatively short lived lapidary of Arikamedu or the venerable industry of Gujarat in western India. It is of great importance to identify other stone bead-making sites in the region. Several have now been found, and more identifications will help refine our understanding of this industry and the trade in its finished products. To confirm an industrial site, waste products and unfinished beads need to be found. (Plate 3). Then it is possible to reconstruct the method by which the stone beads were being made.

Metals, whether in their native state, smelted, or alloyed, have been used for beads for millennia. All metals known to the ancients, with the exception of tin, are first recorded as having been used for beads or pendants. Metallurgical studies are rather advanced and can be called into service to discern the type of metal — and sometimes its source — of a given bead. The ability to melt and re-use metals and the intrinsic value of certain metals limits their occurrence in many bead assemblages.

#### GLASS BEADS

GLASS IS A SYNTHETIC, AND like clay and faience a ceramic product. Clay, though long used by humans, has a surprisingly restricted use as a bead material. Faience was never made in Southeast Asia, and though a few beads from the Islamic West were imported to a limited number of sites, it is rather rare.

Hence, neither of these materials will be dealt with at length here.

On the other hand, glass has for the past several millennia been the most popular material for beads due to its relative economy, its durability, and its great variety. Distinguishing glass from other materials is not difficult, as glass must be manipulated (though on

rare occasions, glass pieces are drilled as beads in the manner of stones), and the results of this manipulation can be recognized.

There are many ways to form glass into beads. The most common is by winding a stream of hot glass around a rod or mandrel, (Plate 4). This will leave the fabric of the glass and any inclusions (especially air bubbles) oriented around the perforation, (Plate 5). Bubbles will also usually remain spherical in shape. This process is known as "winding", and may be effected by any of several means. It was virtually the only glass bead-making method used in China and northern India, and a major method used in the Middle East and Europe (Figs. 2a, 2b).

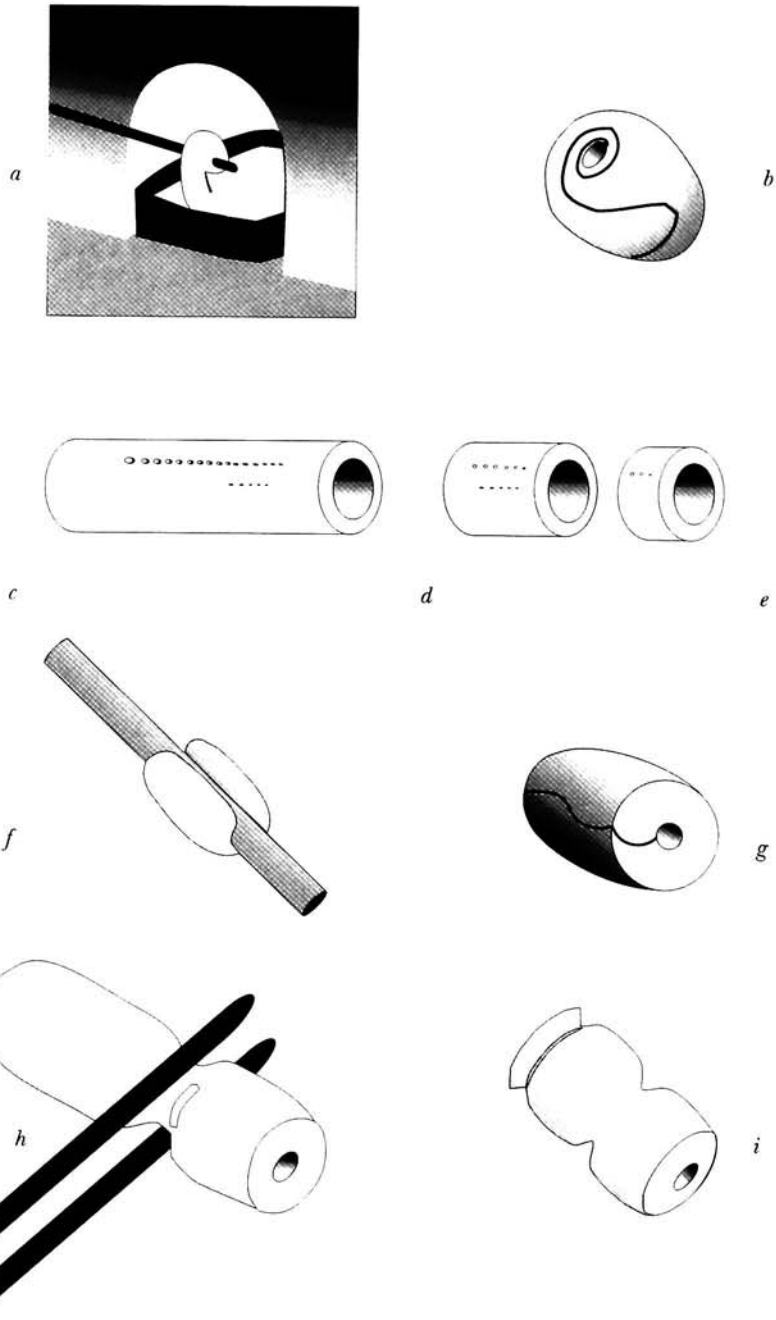
Another very important glass working process in Southeast Asia is done by drawing the glass into a tube, cutting it into sections, and heating the cut sections to smooth off the resulting sharp edges. These beads are distinguished by having their fabric and inclusions aligned in the direction of the perforation. "Drawn" beads, as they are called, were the dominant bead in Southeast Asia from the last few centuries B.C. to ca A.D. 1200, having been made in India, Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and perhaps elsewhere in the region. These small, monochrome drawn beads are known as "Indo-Pacific beads" because of their wide distribution, (Plate 6).

The process of drawing beads is not limited to this region. Drawn beads of several types have long



*Plate 2. Bead polishing stone with several grooves for the beads. From Kotalingala, Andhra Pradesh, India ca. 5th to 2nd century B.C.*

FIGURE 2: GLASS BEADS





formed the backbone of the European glass bead industry, the small ones commonly being employed in beadwork (Fig. 2c-2e).

What distinguishes the Indo-Pacific bead industry from other industries which made drawn beads is the unique way in which the tube is formed. This complex process, known as the "lada" technique after a key tool used in the work, is the hallmark of this industry. It is not possible to say whether a certain bead was made by this technique simply by examining finished specimens. What is necessary is the finding of a bead-making site with its attendant specific glass waste. A number of such sites are known in the area, and the identification of others will help us expand our understanding of this key past industry (Francis 1990a).

Among the other methods for making glass beads, two of especial importance to Southeast Asia can be noted. One is the manipulating of a ribbon or plaque of glass by heating it and folding it around a wire or by joining two or more around a wire. Such "folded beads" are mostly the product of the early Islamic West (Figs. 2f, 2g), although also employed at Sririjaya (Palembang, Sumatra).

Another is a technique by which glass tubes are heated and constricted along their length to form bulges which are then cut apart for beads. Thin tubes, often with several beads left in succession, are known as "segmented beads", and are mostly from the Islamic West (Figs. 2h, 2i), (Plate 7). Thick

tubes, constricted so that single beads are detached, are called "pinched beads", and are one of several by-products of the Indo-Pacific bead making industry.

THE FORM AND DESIGNATION OF BEADS  
THE CLASSIC WORK ON THE description of beads is by the pioneer of bead studies, H.C. Beck

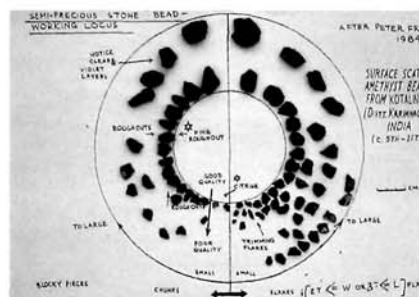


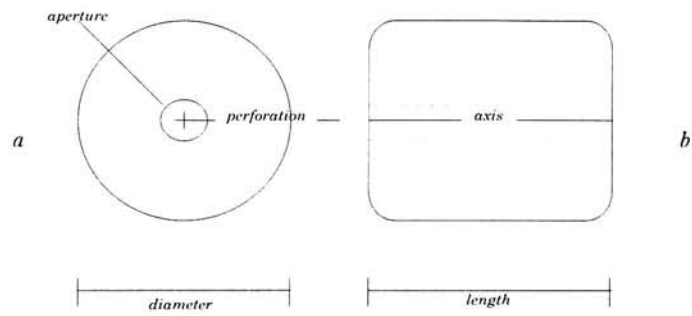
Plate 3. Distribution diagram of surface collected waste of amethyst from Kotalingala. By separating the pieces by size, shape (flake or chunk), and quality it is possible to see at a glance what work was being done at a particular locale. This beadmaker was using pre-refined stones to chip out roughout (crude bead blanks).

(1873-1941). Although his classification (Beck 1928) scheme has rarely been followed, his nomenclature has been widely adopted. As a result, there are standard terms which have been in use to describe beads for many decades. These terms have been developed through the customary scientific method of assigning priority to the first description of beads. They have been collated and are easily available (Francis 1989 b). To deviate from the accepted usage of terms is not only annoying, but risks having a particular work on beads being misunderstood or ignored (Fig.3).

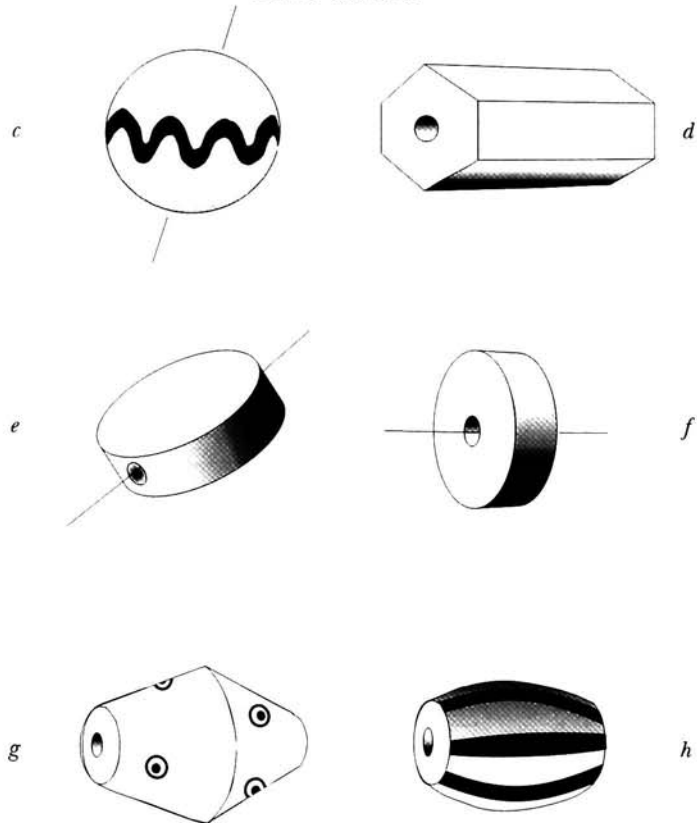
Many beads can be described simply by noting their geometric shape. Terms such as "sphere" and "oblate", "cylinder", and "cube", "barrel" and "bicone" are standard words whose dictionary definitions will usually suffice for understanding. In general, the cross section of a bead precedes the profile in describing it, but there remains room for choosing alternatives. A "hexagonal prism", "hexagonal tube", and "hexagonal cylinder" will be recognized as being the same thing. The term "disc" is reserved for beads which are much shorter (end to end) than wider. One special term used is "tabular", which refers to a disc-like bead which is perforated from edge to edge (Figs. 3c-3h).

There is a growing consensus that bead classification needs to be rationalized. A classification system is currently being developed as a joint effort by the Bead Roundtable, consisting of a group of volunteers

FIGURE 3:  
SOME BEAD TERMS



SOME COMMON  
BEAD SHAPES



among bead researchers (Francis 1990 b). The further systemization of bead nomenclature will also follow.

Finally, it should be stressed that care and common sense prevail in the subject of bead nomenclature. A glaring example in Southeast Asia is the recent use of the term "capped bead". I have discussed this term with several people, and discovered that it has arisen from a misinterpretation of a drawing in van der Sleen (1975) in which a round capped bead is shown. The bead on the plate, however, is called a "capped bead" because the ends are "capped" with small hemispherical metal "caps". However, the simple drawing was erroneously taken to be the depiction of an ordinary round bead, and several recent reports in the region have referred to "capped" beads when "round", "globular", or "oblate" beads are meant. Though we can see how the mistake arose, simple common sense or a glance at a dictionary would have shown that the term "capped" is in no way a synonym for "round", and cannot be substituted for it.

There will be instances in which the researcher needs to describe and name a new bead type. How should this be done? A growing consensus stresses a hierarchy of nomenclature for beads. Priority is assigned the name of a bead given to it by the bead maker. If a bead is especially important to some group of people who have given it a name, this is an acceptable designation for it. In the absence of such data, a name which is

satisfactorily descriptive or derived from the type site is acceptable. Terms used especially for older beads by antiquity dealers or collectors have the weakest claim to being appropriate for a hitherto unclassified bead, as such names are far too commonly coined to give the bead a certain false cachet and have often been found to be unsatisfactory.



*Plate 4. Winding a glass bead by inserting an iron mandrel into the hot glass in the furnace (furnace-winding). A few twists of the rod allow the glass to form into a bead shape which can be changed further by manipulation. This small glassworks is in Cairo, Egypt.*

#### BEADS AND BEAD COLLECTING

ALTHOUGH A SLIGHT digression, this may be the convenient juncture to discuss the value of unscientifically formed bead collections. The collecting of beads has become more popular around the world in the last few years. In most of Southeast Asia, many collectors are willing to pay large sums of money for unusual beads, and they have their counterparts in North America, Europe, and Japan, (Plate 6).

Few serious students of the past will disagree that this can cause severe problems for archaeology. In Indonesia and the Philippines, and especially in Thailand, organized gangs of looters routinely destroy archaeological sites in search of the objects which they contain so as to sell them in the antiquities market. Increasingly, beads are a focus of such activity. There is little disagreement that this is to be deplored.

But a problem for the researcher arises: what use, if any, can be made of such collections? Unfortunately, in some situations, there is little else to do but to study them. One famous site, quite possibly dating to the first half of the first millennium is a source for beads. The religious official whose establishment has control of the site has for many years collected materials from there, and this collection is invaluable in studying the bead industry which once flourished there. Compounding the problem, however, is that he also buys antiquities from other sites elsewhere and adds them to his collection, thus greatly confusing the

picture. There is little else to do but to study his collection, but the researcher must be aware of its many limitations.

Private bead collections have the advantage of giving us an idea of the range of beads available in a given region or country. The disadvantages are clear, however, and any use made of such collections should be circumspect and should in no way encourage the further purchase of beads or other ancient objects on the antiquities market.

#### THE COLOR OF BEADS

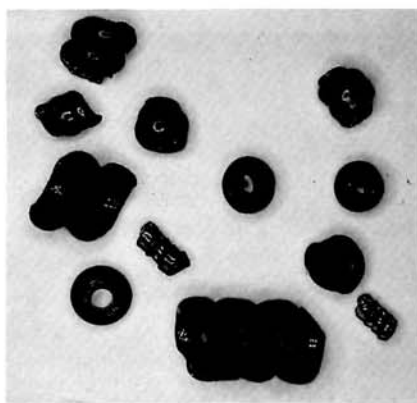
THE COLOR OF MANY natural materials is often well established, though when there are variations (as is common with rocks and minerals), these must be reported. For the most part, the question of color is especially important with glass, as color alone can offer clues to the nature of the glass or specific ingredients used in it. Along with the hue, the degree of opacity also needs to be recorded.

For glass, western researchers are increasingly relying on the use of the (U.S.) National Bureau of Standards ISCC-NBS Centroid Color Charts because of their availability, acceptance, and low cost. They distinguish 267 colors. Finer distinctions between shades are hardly necessary when describing ancient glass, as the color of such glass was always highly variable even on a daily manufacturing basis.

Researchers who do not have access to this set are advised to use the Munsell color cards (which are

far more expensive). If no charts are available, the best thing for a researcher to do is simply to describe colors as clearly as possible. It is highly inadvisable to use some obscure series of color chips, such as might be available from a local paint supplier or printer. In one case, such a system employed for an otherwise widely used classification scheme, caused considerable

confusion in North America. It is also strongly discouraged to make arbitrary designations or new names for colors of given beads, as has recently been published in a paper on some ancient Thai beads. It is far better to describe a bead as "dark translucent blue" or "opaque reddish brown" than to coin imaginative terms for these colors or to use a color coding system available to no one else.



*Plate 5. Examples of one sort of wound bead in which the twisted nature of the glass fabric is easily seen. These are heirloom beads among the Akha of northern Thailand. They were made in China down to the 17th century or so. We call them "coil beads." (Largest bead 2.5 cm long).*

The colors of glass result from small amounts of metals or metalloids present under the proper furnace conditions (oxygenation or reduction). When first made, glass is usually a characteristic translucent "bottle" green, caused by the universal impurity of iron in both the ferric and ferrous states. Iron and copper can make nearly any desired glass color. In addition to these two, cobalt (with its rich purplish blue) and manganese (for violet or to clarify glass) were common articles of commerce. Opacifying glass requires antimony, tin, or other ingredients or the presence of many bubbles. In antiquity, true black glass was unknown, and black was really a deep green from iron or a deep violet from manganese.

Because of the considerable danger of intrusive beads in an assemblage, an understanding of more recent coloring materials is useful. Translucent red with gold (or more recently selenium) was not known in Europe until the early 17th century, though the Chinese made a duskier red with copper from the 11th century or so. Uranium for greens and yellows, cadmium sulfide

for opaque yellow, and the bright greens and yellows of chrome are all markers of more recent beads.

#### THE DECORATION OF BEADS

BEADS CAN BE DECORATED in any number of ways, usually by altering or adding something to their surface. Descriptions of decorations should be as straightforward as possible, using easily understood terms such as "zone" (for lines encircling the beads), "longitudinal stripes", "waves", and so on. Many beads are decorated with spots, rings, or a combination of these. These are commonly called "eye" decorations, a term which is especially legitimate in regions where the Evil Eye superstition plays an important cultural role (Fig. 3g).

Glass beads are almost never "painted", and this term should not be used unless paint was applied to a given bead. Glass beads are decorated by having other colors of glass put on them. To refer to this as "enamelling" is also misleading and is to be avoided.

Certain stone beads, especially the chalcedonies, have been given surface decorations. In some cases, the beads were turned brown or black in patterns by the same technique used to make onyx from banded agate with some sort of resist added to the areas which were not to receive the color. White lines made with the addition of soda are sometimes added to these beads or are put on plain carnelians. This is known as "etching", though acid is not involved. These techniques originated in India over 4,000 years ago, and may have spread to this

region at a later date, (Plate 7).

#### THE SIZE OF BEADS

BEADS ARE MEASURED IN two directions. The "length" refers to the length of the axis of the bead, an imaginary line going through the perforation, and usually equal in size to the perforation. The "diameter" of a bead is the widest spot parallel to the perforation (Figs.



*Plate 6. A typical group of beads on the market in the Philippines. The small monochrome beads are the drawn "Indo-Pacific" bead, made in Southeast Asia from the 2nd to the 12th century A.D. The small blue and white bead is a Chinese imitation of a European bead (16th century). The long red and blue beads are Chinese (14th-15th century). The bead with the twisted stripe is from East Java (9th-10th century). Such a collection is common on the antiquities market, though has no chronological value.*

3a, 3b). Only rarely, as with cubical beads, will more than two dimensions be necessary to record.

Measurements should be made and recorded carefully. A Vernier caliper is an appropriate and easily accessible tool for this work. Measurements are commonly done in tenths of a millimeter. The width of the perforation bore should also be noted.

Although measurements may be thought of as a mere exercise in the cataloguing process, there are cases when the size of beads becomes crucial. One is the diameter of disc beads to determine if they were made by the "heishi technique", as discussed above. Another is the size of the perforation bores to establish what sort of tool was used to make the hole. Another may be purely technical: Indo-Pacific beads are cut from tubes and reheated to round them, but after a certain size (about one centimeter), it is no longer possible to round off segments by heating and tumbling them, and such large beads must be "pinched" off the tube while hot, thus accounting for this variation.

#### BEYOND DESCRIPTION

AS WITH ALL FIELDS OF knowledge, once preliminary groundwork has been laid, subsequent work expands exponentially. Bead research has advanced greatly in the last few years. One objective for this research is to identify and catalogue all known beads by country and by region. For this work to proceed, specialists in the various disciplines of the human sciences can contribute



by presenting accurate and comprehensive information about the beads which they encounter.

In order to describe a bead adequately, one must state its material, form, color, size, decoration, and where appropriate, its method of manufacture. Each bead must be treated as a separate entity, for as with potsherds, coins, or other artifacts, each has its own story to tell.

What is the goal of bead research? It is not the understanding of small perforated objects. Rather, it is using the information about these objects to enlighten us about past human behavior.

Because of their ubiquity, their importance to many people, and their many technical refinements, beads have much to tell us about ancient and remote societies, including areas of human conduct which are generally hard to discern by the more usual investigative methods, such as social interactions and stratification, aesthetic sensibilities, and magico-religious beliefs.

Once the task of identifying and classifying beads has been complete, we can then begin to ask other questions.

These questions can be subsumed under four major headings:

1. What is the origin of the bead? What is the source of its raw material, how was it exploited and by whom, and how did it get to the bead

- makers? How did the bead makers learn to make beads, what is their guild or familial associations, what is the source of their traditions? What tools did they use, what are the names of the tools, and what do these names signify? What was the status of the bead makers and how did that affect the commerce in the beads?



*Plate 7. The patterns on these chalcedony beads were artificially added. The black and white beads were first blackened and then the white lines were added. From Ban Don Tha Phet, Thailand ca 4th century B.C. National Museum, Bangkok.*

2. How did the bead get to the site? What was the nature of trade, whether gifting, bartering, or some form of money economy? Who were the traders and how were they related to the bead makers and the ultimate customers? Was there any altering of the beads by the traders or the customers after they left the bead makers' hands? How were the beads traded: loose, strung, or made up into pieces of jewellery? Was there any secondary trade in the beads and who was involved in that? (Plate 8).

3. How was the bead used? For the decoration of humans, clothing, animals, or inanimate objects? As a store of wealth, a means of debt payment or as currency? As a treasured heirloom, some of which are a thousands years old in the Southeast Asian context? For counting, as on a prayer strand or rosary? As social diacritical markers, denoting age, gender, marital status, group status, or distinguishing one people from their neighbors? As magical charms, either as amulets to prevent harm or talismans to bring luck? Or as ceremonial or religious objects interwoven into the social fabric of the community?

4. How did they leave the systemic (living) context of the site? Were some of them purposely deposited in graves, hoards, or foundation deposits? What about the others? Were they lost, discarded, or

abandoned? What does the pattern of lost beads at a site tell us; can it indicate a trap, a stress point, or an area of secondary refuse or distinguish between indoors and outdoors? What does the presence of a very large number of beads mean? What does the absence of beads tell us? Can we detect the curation of beads over time? If the beads were gathered in the ethnographic context, under what circumstances were they given or sold to the anthropologist? How long had they been in circulation? What can the current distribution of certain bead types tell us about social interactions?

Each of these questions, and many more as well, are legitimate problems in the inquiry of the human story. Beads cannot tell us about all of human history, having limitations, but do have much to contribute to a more rounded view of that history.

As was said before, bead research has made tremendous progress in the past few years. Scholars will ignore this only at their peril. With the advances in bead research and the materials now available, it behooves the serious student of the past to use this potential to its greatest extent. At a minimum, the trustworthy, speedy, complete, and accurate description of the beads at hand must become a task for all interested in the complexities of human life.

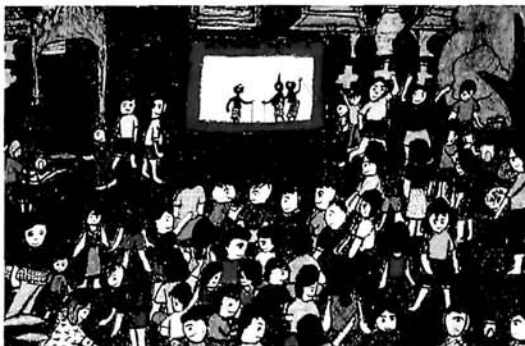


Plate 8. The "core beads" of Early Islamic Period (7th to 12th centuries) consisting of coral, lapis lazuli, carnelion, onyx, and gold-glass beads. These beads are constantly found on Middle Eastern sites of this age. All these beads originate in the Muslim world, except for the onyx/carnelion. Soon, however, the agate producing areas of western India were conquered by the Muslims. This shows that the Muslims, while being great bead traders, were self-sufficient in their own trade and willing to wage war in order to expand it. (Gold-glass bead 1cm diameter).

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"NANG-TALUNG" PAWEENA IAM-IN



"TRADITIONAL GAME" UMPAWAN SINGHAWIBOON



"DOVE'S PAGAENT" ARKHOM SING-NGAM



"ASEAN CULTURE" SUKANYA PUTWANDEE



# **Art Education in Thailand: An Australian Perspective**

*By Ian Brown*

*A kaleidoscope of colours, a mass of moving figures, a continuous repetition of shapes or forms, a technical skill which jumps from the page... A few humble impressions of an Australian art educator confronted by the artworks of eight, ten and twelve year olds in schools in Thailand.*

**T**his article is the result of a recent visit to typical Thai elementary and secondary schools, teachers' colleges and colleges of fine arts, where observations were made of how art education is taught and how it differs from Australian practices.

After teaching for a number of years in Australian primary schools and now at a tertiary institution, words cannot describe how one is visually confronted (and amazed) when one arrives at an educational institution which is so culturally different. To visit schools where students do not pass without lowering their heads,

raising their hands to their chins and offering a greeting of respect!

Few would dispute Eisner (1972) when he claimed that children are not only different in developmental levels but also in respect to the cultural backgrounds which affect their lives and their views of the

world. In respect to art education, the cultural differences are limitless. Brian Allison (1978) claims "remarkably few systematic and controlled studies of children's artworks on a cross-cultural comparative basis have been carried out".

Nevertheless, quantitative studies, although few, can be found which have shown that culture has some influence on children's graphic expression, (Kellogg 1967; Wilson and Wilson 1974, 1977, 1979; Brown 1990).

Carson (1981) claims that teachers across America are finding that in their classes children with Asian backgrounds, particularly those from Laos and Vietnam, are producing artworks which reflect impressive skill and aptitude. Carson claims that children from these cultures have "an innate respect for art as well as an unusual propensity for keen observation and the ability and

desire to draw and paint". In a study by Brown (1990) it was found that children with Vietnamese ethnic background, when compared to children with an Australian ethnic background, appeared to have superior drawing ability in all domains tested, using the Rouse Scale for Measurement of Art Products.

With moves for Australia to become more closely aligned to our Asian neighbours rather than our traditional English, European and American counterparts, speaking for Australians, I say we must make a concerted effort to redress the obvious void in cross-cultural art education research. The multi-cultural nature of Australia's society should encourage acceptance of the diversity of backgrounds of Australian children.

Recognition that the educational development of children, art education in particular, may be affected by both cultural and individual differences, is important to the development of relevant and appropriate curricula experiences for children in any country.

Could I start by generalizing, based on observation, that although the teaching methods appear not too dissimilar, certainly the products and discipline recognition are quite different.

### *System differences*

It is interesting to note that the reform of education administration in Thailand (1980) closely parallels the New South Wales educational reform (Scott Report, 1989), where in both countries there has been an attempt to decentralize administrative powers to the local level.

In Thailand this power of decision making is channelled through the committees formed at its four levels of administration, namely the national, provincial, district and school-cluster levels.

In Thailand in 1978, drastic curriculum reforms were carried out through the introduction of a new organizational structure for curricula content. The old method of teaching each subject separately or in isolation was replaced by the teaching of subjects under four subject groupings of skill, life experience, character development (which included art, music, physical and moral education) and work experience.

Similarly, New South Wales is currently rationalizing curriculum offerings by introducing six key learning areas within the primary

(K-6) area, one of which is called Creative and Practical Arts (art, craft, dance and music).

And Thailand, like Australia, has recently opted for a system of six years of primary schooling in one cycle. The division of the primary and secondary levels at the terminal grade six is thought to coincide with physiological and psychological development stages of children.

Obviously, many structural correlations can be made but the unique nature of both countries lend themselves to many system differences such as the non-formal school system, lunch programs and welfare programs.

#### *Art education differences*

In regard to art education teaching, one major difference appears to be that, although all children are instructed in art at the primary level, instead of being taught by the generalist primary teacher, as in Australia, children in Thailand are taught by a teacher who has art qualifications from institutions such as a teacher's college or college of fine arts.

It is interesting to observe the Thai art teacher at work. Children do not sit at desks as in Australia. The specialized art rooms, rarely found in Australian schools, are bare of furniture, and the walls, instead of displaying copies of 'fine' arts artists such as Van Gogh or Rembrandt, display the art works of the

students, which have been meticulously framed in glass and wood. More importantly, in many schools, rooms sometimes larger than the work rooms, are proudly used to display the medals, awards, certificates, and photographs of ceremonies or students' works which have been submitted, both nationally and internationally, to exhibitions and competitions. Participation in these competitions is obviously encouraged and promoted within Thai schools. Honour and recognition, by students and more importantly teachers, are obviously brought upon the schools. Many schools proudly display the 'diamond' painted above the door of the art room within the school.

Thais would obviously find it strange that within Australia we are constantly encouraging schools to exhibit children's artworks but discourage art competitions.

It appears, through loose translation of Thai art curriculum documents, that education is still based on the elements and principles of design, with much emphasis on composition. The repetition of similar compositional features recognizable

in many works at many different schools is overruled by the unique skill in the handling of the media displayed by the children.

I will identify four main differences in children's artworks and their teacher's strategies, between Thailand and Australia, from my own observations.

#### *Observation one*

Teachers in Australian schools are encouraged to help their students develop their senses and their imagination by looking and seeing. Teachers provide experiences for children which are direct.

Children are encouraged to explore and discover media in a variety of ways. This is one aspect that differs greatly between the two cultures.

and meticulously complete the works.

#### *Observation three*

Art in Thailand is steeped in cultural traditions. Art is an important part of the life of the Thais. The Thai religious culture is a blend of beauty and colour where the drabness of unpainted shanty buildings are suddenly overpowered by the richness and opulence of a Buddhist temple. The inside walls of the temples are intricately covered with colourful images which tell stories in a surreal and mystical manner. One can only assume that if a child is continually immersed in this kaleidoscope of artistic wealth, then the influence must be great.

Art in Thailand is recognized for what it is (or what it should be), a worthwhile educational activity, obviously encouraged by both the community and the educational system. Whereas Australians are immersed in twentieth century media and popular arts, the Thais contend quite satisfactorily with the blend of traditional, cultural images sitting side by side with contemporary 'western' representations. It is interesting to observe students working at colleges of fine arts in Bangkok where one group of students are expressing themselves in a post-modern, abstractionist or contemporary manner while just next door, another group is being instructed on how to apply gold leaf to lacquer using traditional techniques which have been passed

encouraged (as we do in Australia) to be expressive, free and to experiment with a host of media, with the belief that it promotes creativity (with the possible result that the child never gains mastery over any media)? Or do we limit the media, which allowing for extraordinary mastery of use, could somehow limit or stifle the breadth of expression?

#### *Observation two*

Thai children have the astounding ability, at a very young age, to persevere with an artwork over an extended period of time. Australian children appear to have a very short attention span, obviously cultural in nature, and will only spend a very short time on their works of art. I can imagine the dumbfounded expressions on the faces of ten year olds, if I insisted they spend three to four hours, over a few days, working on one artwork.

Time is devoted in Thai schools to the making of artworks but not necessarily at one sitting. Many of the schools which I visited encouraged their children to return after hours and on weekends to sit

Australian children's art consists of many media: paint, crayon, printing, collage, ceramics. In tune with the relative autonomy exercised in Australian classrooms, the use and choice of media is determined by each individual teacher or school.

It appears that the art produced at the primary or elementary level in Thailand consists mainly of oil, pastel or crayon. There is little doubt that Thai children have mastered pastel with the dexterity that many adult artists are still trying to grasp. The pastels are delicately blended and manipulated to produce a tonal quality quite unique. Colours jump from the page: bright, fictitious yet appealing.

When a teacher was questioned why the young children were not given paint to use, he retorted quite adamantly that the children were developmentally not ready for it. Here we have a philosophical dichotomy — should children be

on for thousands of years. The students appear to quite harmoniously accept the cultural traditions which are important to everyday life in Thailand.

#### *Observation four*

Undoubtedly, the subject matter of visual arts should be the child's world.

Thailand is, again, not unlike Australia, where in their early years all children are concerned in an egotistical way, about representing their lives and the things which are important to them. It appears that young Thai children enjoy representing village life, games which children play and landscapes or cityscapes from where the children live.

There appears to be quite a shift from younger children's work to those of the older children, in that the subject matter and compositional qualities change dramatically. Self is still of concern but instead of the truly representational nature of the

earlier works, it changes to take on a somewhat surreal feel where thought clouds appear and projections of life surround the subject. (Not unlike the inside walls of the temples).

In the number of schools visited over a variety of locations, it was interesting to note compositional similarities between the works. The obvious eastern style of perspective, by building the subjects towards the top of the page, could be found. After many years of observing Australian children's artworks, I was continually aware of differences as my eye was drawn to the horizon line at the top of the page. I was interested to discover the same shaped, two-tone blended pastel trees in schools in Bangkok and Loei, geographically poles apart. The students were obviously taught the elements and conventions of drawing from a very early age. There was an uncanny consistency in style and subject matter.

It is obvious that there are many similarities and differences in art education between the two countries. Acceptance that we can improve any one system would have to come with recognition that we need to share strategies and cultural traditions which are applicable to each educational context. Australia is one of the most multi-cultural countries in the world today. As an

Australian I would like to say that the exploration and realization of the wealth of information that exists, not only within my country but neighbouring countries, must be paramount to Australian educational research.

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# The Ramayana Epic and Traditional Indonesian Music

By Dr. Sri Hasto

Traditional Indonesian music consists of a vast repertoire of musical expression.

This is because there are hundreds of different ethnic groups in Indonesia, each group having its own individual culture.

Within each sub-culture flourish many kinds of music. Some of these sub-cultures have as many as ten musical types. So you can imagine just how many and different kinds of music there are in Indonesia. Some musical types are similar in nature, while others are distinct, but all are part of the family of traditional Indonesian music.

Traditional Indonesian music has been influenced by diverse factors such as natural surroundings, religion, faith, politics, or social legend, for example. Social legend has often influenced musical composition, as musical performances accompany the performance of these social legends. In Indonesia each sub-culture has its own social legend. The Pasundan sub-culture in west Java, for example, has a legend called Sangkuriang. In Bali there is the Calonarang. Some legends exist in more than one sub-cultural area, such as the legends of the Panji,<sup>1</sup> the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In this paper I will discuss the involvement of legend, specifically the Ramayana, in the life of Indonesian traditional music.



### THE RAMAYANA EPIC

THE RAMAYANA HAS BEEN known in Indonesia since the beginning of the eighth century. By the ninth century episodes from the Ramayana had been carved on the walls of the Prambanan temples (the temples of Shiva and Brahma). In Indonesia the Ramayana epic lives and flourishes in areas which in the past were strong Hindu kingdoms, such as the Srivijaya kingdom in Sumatra, the Mataram Hindu kingdom in central Java, the Majapahit kingdom in east Java, and likewise in Bali which has the largest Hindu population.

The Ramayana (and also the Mahabharata) in its spread from India, was adapted by Indonesian poets. In the process the cultural themes of the Indian Ramayana which were not relevant to Indonesian culture were altered. It is estimated that 40% of Indonesian Ramayana differs from the original version (Soewito Santoso 1990:75). And it is this Indonesian Ramayana which influenced many forms of traditional Indonesian music in Java and Bali.<sup>1</sup>

Traditional Indonesian music is influenced by at least three kinds of Ramayana. These consist of the old Javanese Ramayana, the new Javanese Ramayana (the Serat Rama and Serat Lokapala), and the Ramayana which lives and flourishes in wayang society such as the Sapta Kandha).

The first type of Ramayana uses the old Javanese language, the second uses a mixture of new Javanese and middle Javanese language,<sup>2</sup> as does the third. The third Ramayana of wayang society has many different versions.

### DIFFERENT FORMS OF RAMAYANA INVOLVEMENT IN INDONESIAN TRADITIONAL MUSIC



AS I HAVE ALREADY mentioned the Ramayana is alive and flourishing in Java and Bali. So in discussions of traditional Indonesian music, I will focus primarily on these two islands.

### KECAK IN BALI

KECAK IS A GENRE OF performing arts which presents a combination of music and dance based on the Ramayana story. The Kecak is an extraordinary art form, both visually and musically. About fifty or more dancers sit in a circle, and in addition to dancing as they sit, they also function as vocal instruments producing the sound 'cak' in various rhythmic combinations. These sounds make rich interlocking patterns and create an extraordinary weaving effect. These sophisticated patterns, which can make a person's hair stand on end, were inspired by the sound of thousands of monkeys.

### GENDER WAYANG IN BALI

IN BALI THERE IS A special type of ensemble that accompanies wayang kulit (shadow puppet theatre) which is known as gender wayang. It is given this name because the main instrument of the ensemble is the gender. In the Mahabharata performance its musical ensemble uses only two pairs of genders. To accompany the Ramayana performance, however, two pairs of genders would be insufficient for the range of expression required. The genders are thought to be unable to support the movements of the monkeys and giants which dominate the Ramayana's scenes. For this purpose the Balinese add a pair of

kendhang (drums), a set of ceng-ceng (cymbals) and several gongs. The vocal element in this ensemble is provided by the dhalang (puppeteer) who sings a narrative of each scene. The singing is known as suluk. In this type of Ramayana presentation the dhalang's singing is taken from extracts of the old Javanese Ramayana.

#### THE MUSIC IN JAVANESE WAYANG KULIT AND WAYANG WONG

THERE ARE SEVERAL KINDS of wayang kulit in Java, one of which is called wayang kulitpurwa and whose story is taken from either the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. A performance of wayang kulitpurwa is accompanied by a gamelan ensemble. The same ensemble is used to accompany either story. The order of gendhings (pieces) is basically the same. The only difference is in the suluk. Although the dhalang sings the same melodies, the texts are different. Most of the suluk texts in the Ramayana story are taken from the new Javanese Ramayana.

The texts which are found in the new Javanese Ramayana and the Mahabharata, for the purpose of suluk, can be divided into two categories, these being neutral texts and non neutral texts. Neutral texts do not mention the name of any Ramayana or Mahabharata character, for example:

*Kukusing dupa kumelun,  
ngeningken tyas sanga pekik,  
kawengku sagung jajahan, nanging*

*sanget angikibi, Sang Resi  
Kanekaputra, kang anjog saking  
wiyati.*

*(The smoke from the incense rises  
above the knight as he kneels in  
meditation. Although guarded by  
his soldiers there is still fear in his  
heart. God Kanekaputra descends  
from the heavens).*

This text comes from the Ramayana epic (Setat Rama), <sup>4</sup> but does not mention any Ramayana character. This kind of text is used to produce certain moods, as in the example above, to evoke the anxiety of a king meditating, irrespective of whether that scene is taken from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata.

A Ramayana text which evokes a feeling of melancholy is a scene in which Sita is in the gardens of Alengka where she receives Rama's ring, brought to her by Hanuman. As she cannot meet her beloved Rama face to face, she takes out her hair pin, called Cundhamanik, for Hanuman to give to Rama. She weeps and almost faints:

*Siyang pantara ratri, amung  
ciptapukulun, tana iyan kneksi.  
Mila katur, kang Cundhamanik,  
Prasasat rageng ulun kang*

*sumembah mungging padanta  
prabu, Myang kagunganta singsim,  
saksat sampun prati, katon asta  
pukulun, wulaten narapati. Rama  
dewaningsun.*

*(I think only of you, both night and  
day. Since we cannot meet, I am  
sending Cundhamanik as a token of  
my love for you. When your ring  
came, it was like your own sweet  
hands stroking my hair. See how I  
am suffering, Oh Rama my love).*

Because of its beautiful but melancholy tone, this suluk has been used to establish a king's melancholy mood in the first scene of every wayang performance.

The musical accompaniment for Surakarta style wayang wong <sup>5</sup> came from that of wayang kulit. Yogyakarta style wayang wong, although different from wayang kulit in its accompaniment, does not differ in its use of ensemble or gendhings. As with wayang kulit the difference in the accompaniment is found in the text of the dhalang's singing.

#### LANGEN MANDRAWANARA IN YOGYAKARTA

THIS IS A GENRE OF DANCE drama which uses dialogue and



monologue in tembang (song) form, accompanied by a gamelan ensemble. The word 'wanara' means monkey, and the dance drama does take its story from the Ramayana which is dominated by monkey characters. The melodies are specifically composed to fit the characters' monologue and dialogue. Because they are so rich in feeling and beautifully expressed, they are performed as concert music in their own right. This has enriched the repertoire of gamelan music.

#### GAMELAN MUSIC IN CENTRAL JAVA

IT IS NOT ONLY THE MUSICAL accompaniment of traditional theatre that the Ramayana influences. This influence can also be found in concert music. Because of the literary beauty and philosophy of the Ramayana (Serat Rama), song texts of gendhings are often taken from the Ramayana, although the gendhings are not presented in their context. These gendhings may be performed to entertain guests at weddings, wedding receptions, or other ceremonies.

The texts most often chosen are 'The Disappearance of Sita,' Hanuman as an Envoy' and 'The Great War of Alengka.'

There are many new compositions in Javanese gamelan music which have been inspired by the Ramayana epic. One composition takes the text which tells of Hanuman singing, accompanied by flute and drum, in the middle a resting group of the giant soldiers of Alengka. Unaware that Hanuman is an enemy, the giants join in dancing and then fall asleep because of Hanuman's beautiful singing!

#### NOTES

1. The Panji legend was derived from a fourteenth century historical event in the Kediri Kingdom in east Java.
2. The Ramayana is less popular in Sumatera and has not developed in the performing arts.
3. Middle Javanese language is the Javanese language which was developed between the old and the new Javanese language.
4. It tells of the time when King Rama nervously contemplates the eve of his attack on Alengka. When all the soldiers and their

commanders are asleep, King Rama meditates until the God Naraha visits him.

5. A wayang performed by human dancers.

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# The Magic Flower

*An example of a  
'Theatre-in-Education'  
project in  
Singapore*

BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CHUA SOO PONG

Nanyang Girls' High School has, since 1986, revitalized its 'Theatre in Education' programme, providing students with opportunities to attend drama workshops, specially arranged series of drama lectures and more importantly to present stage plays.

In the last five years, the school has produced locally written plays (*Love Under the Willows* by Felix Chia, *When the Sea Boils* by Chua Soo Pong) as well as eastern classics *Dream of the Red Chamber* and *Twilight Crane* and Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Woman of Sichuan*. The School has also chosen to present an adaptation of an Indonesian epic *Princess Jasmine*, in both Chinese and English.

The wide coverage of theatre styles over the years has enabled the young students and the alumni of the school to see the variety of performing genres in the East and the West. Brecht's play, *The Good Woman of Sichuan*, for example, showed the students the ways theatre can depart from the illusionistic stage. Brecht's 'epic theatre' demonstrated that important human experiences are often not personal stories of individuals but rather, significant social events and social forces. His technique of alienating the audience by breaking up the structure into separate events delighted the young cast of Nanyang Girls.

*Dream of the Red Chamber* is totally different in style. In the 1987 production, I borrowed the acting technique of Chinese Opera in the staging of this Chinese classic. It was in that production that the cast went through a year of training in of voice, speech modulation and traditional Chinese theatre movements. They also were requested to read the Ming Dynasty novel thoroughly and went through many indepth sessions. The reading helped the students enormously in the process of creating their complex roles. In that same year, the junior students of the school were involved in another production, a childrens' play written by Wang Ji Hou and Liu Xiteng, called *The Ginseng Boy* and participated in the Youth Theatre Festival, organized by the Ministry of Community Development. To help the students develop their acting skills, an intensive training programme which included a series

of exercises on concentration, observation, imagination and improvization was conducted.

A year later, an Indonesian legend *Princess Jasmine* was adapted in two languages, Chinese and English, and performed by the same cast. The challenge was not merely the demand of commanding two languages but also to learn a style



that was alien to the students, the *wayang wong* of Indonesia. For many months, students spent time learning Indonesian court dances, as well as games and mime, aimed at combatting inhibitions and stimulating imagination. It was an exceptionally difficult play for the young students as *Princess Jasmine* deals with the complex issues of betrayal of love, power struggle and court politics. The actresses were guided to analyse the core ideas of

the play to establish their basic interpretation. Gradually, they developed the ability to adapt to the highly stylised acting technique and communicated the full meaning of the text sincerely.

Since then three more small scale productions were presented; *Twilight Crane*, *Princess Ma Lang* and *When the Sea Boils*. These productions helped to pave the way for *The Magic Flower*. Based on the story by Ren De Yao written thirty years ago, my version of *The Magic Flower* is different from the original script, though the theme of the story remains unchanged. *The Magic Flower* with a live Chinese orchestra choir and large group of dancers, provides an excellent opportunity for mass participation. Over 150 students participated in this production. In the creative process of staging *Ma Lan Flower* the cast, as well as the backstage crew learnt to test their limits, refine their ability to articulate and to work cohesively for a common goal. The experience of struggling for artistic excellence was both joyful and painful.

In short of six years, the Nanyang Girls' High School has accumulated a wealth of experiences in staging drama and trained over five hundred students in theatre production.

Drama activities have become part of the very substance of education that can develop the students creativities. I hope that an annual public performance will continue to make colourful contributions to the development of Singapore youth theatre.

## The Magic Flower

AUGUST 1991

BY CHUA SOO PONG

Prelude: The Village of Evergreen

Scene I: The Midnight Intruders

Scene II: An Unexpected Proposal

Interlude: Ah Fu's Frustration

Scene III: The Weddings

Interlude: Plot of the Black Cat

Scene IV: Spring on Ma Lan Mountain

Scene V: Xiao Lan's Home Coming

Interlude: Squirrel's Nightmare

Scene VI: Stormy Day's Horror

Interlude: The Cat's Intimidation

Scene VII: Shocking Change

Interlude: Manoeuvring in the Mist

Scene VIII: The Reunion

### PRELUDE: THE VILLAGE OF EVERGREEN

*The full moon is seen against the dark blue cloudless sky. Silhouette of trees and a well at the back while Da Lan is seen lying on a couch, admiring herself in the mirror. She yawns frequently and finally decides to sleep.*

*(Lights off.)*

*A girl in silhouette appears near the well. She is Xiao Lan. After fetching water in the two buckets she brings, she sings the 'Song of Ma Lan Flower'.*

*(Lights off as she goes out.)*

*Morning Glory and her lover, chatting under the mushroom. They stop chatting and smile at each other attentively, full of admiration.*

*(Music.)*

*When the lights come on again, mountains are seen in the background. The moon seems to be so distant yet as bright as before.*

### SCENE I: THE MIDNIGHT INTRUDERS

Monkey: You rascals, don't run away! How dare you come to our forest to steal fruits.

Black Cat: You would better keep your mouth shut. If you wake the others up, with that loud voice of yours I will kill you.

Monkey: Who are you?

Black Cat: None of your business. Listen, take two of these bananas and let us go.

Monkey: Leave all the fruits you have stolen and get lost!

Black Cat: You can get all the fruits back if you answer a question.

Monkey: What question?

Black Cat: Isn't it true that the Ma Lan flower will bloom tonight?

Monkey: Of course. It blooms once a year on the mid-autumn full moon night.

Black Cat: When it blooms, it will grant wishes to whoever picks it up?

Monkey: No. Only to those who know the secret code!

Black Cat: Here are your two bananas. And I can give you more, if you can tell me the secret code of Ma Lan flower.

Monkey: You rascals. Give me back all the fruits you have stolen.

Black Cat: No! You can have the fruits only if you reveal the secret code.

Monkey: Nobody would reveal this secret code! Only diligent people are entitled to learn the secret code. Not thieves like you! Now, I demand that you return the fruits immediately.

Black Cat: Fat hope! Stupid monkey. Bye-bye!

*Black Cat and two other cats try to run away. The monkey attempts to block them. The cats are angry. They attack the monkey. The monkey grasps a branch and tries to hit Black Cat. They*

run away.

Monkey: Thieves! Thieves! Don't let the rascals run away!

Ma Lang, Shu Gong Gong and Mama Deer rush in.

Ma (Asks the others.): Did you hear the monkey scream?

Morning: Yes! There must be intruders somewhere. Let me hurry Glory with you. Mama Deer and Shu Gong Gong should stay back and alert everybody else here.

Mama: Indeed I should. See you later.

Fern: Let us rush off.

Gong Gong: Be careful. The bandits are very cunning nowadays!

The bird, rabbits, squirrels, and the baby deer all awake from their sleep.

Rabbit A: What was that noise? I am scared.

Bird: Don't be frightened. Shu Gong Gong and Mama Deer ask us to stay together whenever they are not around.

Baby Deer: Let's go back to the house.

Rabbit B: We are scared. Can we go to your house for a while?

Baby Deer: Of course you are welcome. Why doesn't everybody come to my house until Shu Gong Gong and Mama Deer come back?

Everybody cheers and agrees. They all go to the deer's house happily.

The Monkey is back again with a branch fighting with Black Cat and two smaller cats. They push the Monkey down the hill. The Monkey screams for help.

Ma, Morning Glory and Fern are back. A fierce fight begins. When the Black Cat is about to be overpowered by Ma, it turns around to throw sand into Ma's eyes and rushes off with its fellow cats. Morning Glory is also hurt by one of the aggressive cats.

Fern is disappointed the cats get away and is about to rush off.

Ma: Fern. You better remain here to look after Morning Glory. She is hurt. I will rush off to look for Monkey. I heard him screaming for help.  
(Ma rushes off.)

Fern: Certainly! (Turns to his girlfriend.): Oh my dear Glory, I am sorry that everything happened so fast and I couldn't look after you while fighting with those rascals.

Glory: Not to worry. You are just not alert enough otherwise you wouldn't be blinded by the sand that cunning creature threw at you and Master Ma.

Fern: All right my dear, I promise to be more alert.

Glory: Stop your endless promises. Actions speak louder than words! Shu Gong Gong and Mama Deer come in.

Mama: Are you hurt?

Glory: Just a cut at the elbow, not to

worry.

Shu: Where is the monkey?

Ma carries Monkey in his arms. Xiao Lan's father follows.

Ma: He was wounded when he rolled into the valley. Fortunately this kind man saved him from being killed.

Mama Deer sees that Monkey's left leg is wrapped up with a bandage.

Mama: Thank you, Uncle Wang from the village of Evergreen?

Uncle Wang nods his head.

Monkey: Let me down, I am alright now. Morning Glory, are you hurt too?

Uncle Wang: What is the matter? Let me help you.

Uncle Wang approaches Morning Glory and applies herbal medicine on her left elbow.

Shu: Uncle Wang is the expert on herbal medicine in the village. Year in and year out, he climbs up to the most dangerous cliff to pick the precious herbs for the patients in the village. I am sure, Morning Glory, you and the monkey will recover in no time.

Ma: Uncle Wang, do you know the girl who sings beautifully in the village of Evergreen?

Uncle: You mean...

Ma: The girl who always sings the song about Ma Lan flower on our

mountain.

Uncle: Ha ha ha... She likes singing but her voice is quite ordinary and doesn't measure up to that of a nightingale's.

Fern: We all like her sweet voice and Ma Lang always secretly hopes that one day he could meet the girl and propose to her.

Uncle: Really?

Ma: Fern, don't tease me! What about you and Morning Glory? When is your big day?!

Fern: Whenever you are ready to get married! Ma Lang, I know that you are full of admiration for that diligent village girl. Why not ask Uncle Ma for a favour and send the message to her...

Uncle: Do you really like the girl? You are sure that you will love her forever?

*Ma nods his head sincerely.*

All right! I will convey your message to her. And I am certain that she will say yes to your proposal.

Shu: Ha... ha... ha... When is the wedding?

Fern: Tomorrow night!

Glory: Tomorrow night? So soon?

Mama: Make hay while the sun shines!

Shu: Strike while the iron is hot!

Uncle: Storm or rain, the arrangement will not be changed.

Ma: How come you are certain that she will agree?

Uncle: You will find out tomorrow night! Bye for now.

Shu: Congratulations, young men!

Ma: Oh, I forgot to ask Uncle Ma the name of the girl!

Mama: Well, you can ask her yourself tomorrow right! Ha ha ha...!

Ma: We must be more alert from now on. Make sure that the intruders will not have any chance to get away with our fruits again.

Shu: Indeed, we must remain vigilant and keep our guard up all the time.

*(Black out)*

## SCENE II: AN UNEXPECTED PROPOSAL

*Xiao Lan is sewing while Aunty Wang is pacing up and down, full of anxiety. Da Lan has fallen asleep soundly.*

Xiao: Mama, why don't you go to bed first. I will wait for Papa.

Aunty: No, I can't. Your father seldom comes back this late. It is almost midnight.

Xiao: Not to worry, Mama. Maybe he has to help out in an emergency.

*(Dogs bark)* Papa is back. Papa is back. *(She rushes off stage.)* Papa, Papa!

Da: *(Da Lan awakens.)* Papa is back. Where is Papa? Mama, Papa promised to buy me some silk materials to make new clothes!

Aunty: Silk materials? You are not getting ready for your wedding, why ask Papa to buy such expensive things?

Da: Mama, should I not wear something nicer at the Lantern Festival night? If I don't have nice clothes to attract people, how do you expect me to ever find a suitor?

Aunty: What nonsense! Not all that glitters is gold. Wise men never judge girls by their appearance. Putting on a fake exterior will only attract the wrong kind of people!

*Xiao Lan comes back. Looks disappointed.*

Da: Where is Papa?

Xiao: It is Ah Fu, not Papa!

Da: *(Delighted)* Ah Fu? Oh, Ah Fu.

*She makes a move.*

Aunty: Da Lan, don't go near him. Although he is your cousin, it is best to avoid him. No decent girl would go near such a notorious person!

*Ah Fu is drunk and he holds a bottle in his right hand.*

Fu: Da...Da Lan. Cheers!

Da: Ha ha ha..... You look so funny.



Cheers! Ah Fu, why are you so happy tonight? What brings you here at this hour?

Fu: I won lots of money gambling in the town. 3,000 yuan in two hours! So I have brought you some presents! Come! Aunt Ma, this..... this..... this cosmetic powder is for you. ...Xiao...Xiao Lan, you can have this .....this perfume. ...Da...Da...Lan, may I give you this.....this silk scarf!

Aunt Ma: No thanks. Ah Fu, I really do not use anything like that.

Xiao: Thank you, Ah Fu! You should keep the perfume for your sweetheart!

Da: Well, I don't mind having all these. They are really lovely.

Aunt Ma: Da Lan! You should not take advantage of your cousin's drunken state don't think that these presents are really for us. Give them back to him, Papa will buy a new silk scarf for you later on.

Da: Mama.

Aunt Ma: Da Lan.

Da Lan returns the presents reluctantly.

Xiao: Ah Fu, it is getting late, you should go home now. Come, let me help!

Aunt Ma Wang and Xiao Lan support the drunk man who walks with faltering steps.

(Exit.)

Da: (Sigh.) With a strict parent like her you will never get free gifts from anybody. Do you know, Xiao Lan and I are twins but

we are quite different. I was born one hour earlier. Now I made up for my eagerness to be born first by opting for a slower pace of life. I prefer to have a more relaxed way of life, like getting up late in the morning, having a long nap in the afternoon and going to bed as early as possible...

Dog barks.

Uncle: Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan! (Finds only Da Lan in the house.) Da Lan. Oh what a surprise to find you awake at this hour. Where is Mama and Xiao Lan?

Da: Papa, where is the silk material you promised to buy?

Uncle: Da Lan, Papa didn't go to the town today. But I have brought back something special.

Mama and Xiao Lan come back.

Aunt Ma: What is so special?

Uncle: I was in the Ma Lan Mountain gathering herbs and met the man who guards the Ma Lan flower.

Xiao: I heard so much about this kind man. It is said that he is helpful to those who travel through the Ma Lan Mountain. Isn't he called Ma Lang.

Da: So what?

Uncle: Do you know what he is looking for?

Da: Well, none of my business.

Uncle: He is looking for a diligent girl to be his wife.

Da: Well, did he inherit any wealth from his parents? Does he own land? How many workers or maids does he employ?

Uncle: Unfortunately he has none of these things you entrusted me with this.....listed. But he is diligent, talented and sincere. Look, he has entrusted me with this beautiful flower to give it to the girl who is willing to marry him.

Da: A flower? A flower as a betrothal gift? What a joke!

Aunt Ma: Well, as long as he is sincere, it does not matter whether it is a flower or a jade bracelet.

Da: Sorry, I am not interested!

Xiao: Papa....

Uncle: Xiao Lan, would you like to accept this gift?

Xiao: Papa.....

Aunt Ma: Well, our good girl has agreed!

Da: Agreed? Xiao Lan. It is tough living on the mountain. Are you sure that you will be happy there?

Xiao: Dear sister, happiness is not necessarily measured by material wealth. I would like to believe life with Ma Lang would be a rewarding challenge.

Da: Well, good luck then.

INTERLUDE:  
AH FU'S FRUSTRATION

*The Black Cat is sleeping. Suddenly the little cats rush in, screaming. They are obviously frightened by Ah Fu.*

Fu: (Drunk) You bad luck devils! Everytime I see you, I lose money when I gamble. Let me warn you for the last time. If you follow me to town again, I will kill you !

*Ah Fu sits on the floor, continues to mumble.*

*The Black Cat awakens. Opens his eyes, the Black Cat yawns and looks at Ah Fu with scorn.*

Fu: Oh yes, I must go to see Da Lan. Maybe I can borrow some money from her, I have been treating her well, giving her presents whenever I win money. I think she should be grateful! I don't like Xiao Lan, she is a workaholic, always reminding me to study! Da Lan is much better, she knows how to be excused from all the housework and she never urge me to.....

*The Black Cat listens attentively and realizes that this is the right time for his plot.*

Cat: And she is always ready to help people who are in difficulties!

Fu: (Shock) Who... who are you?

Cat: I am your Black Cat!

Fu: What... What do you want?

Cat: I've come to help you!

Fu: Help me? What do you mean?

Cat: Don't you want to have more money to go back to the town to drink wine, to gamble and buy more presents for your sweetheart Da Lan?

Fu: Da Lan?

Cat: Now, there is an excellent opportunity!

Fu: An excellent opportunity?

Cat: Come, listen!

*The Black Cat whispers to him.*

*(Black out.)*

SCENE III:  
THE WEDDINGS

*The weddings of Ma Lang and Xiao Lan as well as Morning Glory and Fern. All the animals are exceedingly happy. They present a joyous dance to celebrate the occasion.*

Uncle: May you both have a happy marriage!

Monkey: Like the happy marriage of Uncle Ma and Aunty Ma!

Aunty: Xiao Lan, take care.

Ma: Mother-in-Law, I will take care of Xiao Lan. Don't you worry.

Uncle: (To Fern) You too, should take good care of your wife ! Ha ha ha!

Shu: Next year, when spring comes again, they will bring you a baby! Ha ha ha.....

Mama: A safe journey home, Uncle Ma and Aunty Ma.

*All the animals join in to bid farewell to Uncle Ma and Aunty Ma.*

INTERLUDE:  
THE BLACK CAT'S PLOT

*Da Lan carries the buckets unwillingly. She rests and sighs.*

Da: What a boring task! Fancy fetching water for my mother, everyday! Do you know, since Xiao Lan was married off a year ago. I have been doing all these mindless tasks. Worse still, I have to help my mother to cook and to wash the dishes! I could have married Ma Lang and enjoyed my life in the mountain. Life can sometimes be so unfair. Do you remember, Papa in fact had asked me first whether I was willing to marry Ma Lang. And I rejected the proposal ! How silly I was!

*The Cat grins with delight.*

I heard that Xiao Lan is doing so well there. She eats well, she dresses well and she has a husband who loves her!

Cat: Well, you can always find someone who loves you ! For example, your cousin Ah Fu, has long been in love with you for a

long tune.

Da: Who are you?

Cat: I am Ah Fu's black cat! And I bring with me a message from him.

Da: From Ah Fu?

Cat: Yes, Ah Fu! Well, it is more than a message. It is a joint-venture!

Da: What do you mean? I don't understand you!

Cat: Well, your sister is coming back tomorrow. You will see for yourself, she will be wearing a beautiful dress, a new pair of ear-rings, and she will also bring back a lot of presents. She is rich, very rich now! Do you want to be as rich? When you are rich, you can be a lady of leisure! You don't have to work and you just eat and sleep, sleep and eat!

Da: You must be joking!

Cat: Not at all. Listen, let me tell you a secret.

*Gestures to Da Lan and whispers to her.*

*(Light dims down gradually.)*

#### SCENE IV: SPRING ON THE MA LAN MOUNTAIN.

*Everybody on the Ma Lan Mountain is seen in the 'Dance of the Springtime', depicting the sowing process.*

Ma: Well, it was a job well done, everybody! We should expect a good harvest this year if we have good weather like last year. Let us help Xiao Lan get ready. Today is the day she promised Uncle Ma to return home and she plans to go off before the sun sets.

Monkey: Of courses let's not forget, we have a surprise for sister Xiao Lan. Friends, let us sing the song!

*Everybody sings the specially composed 'Song of Presents' expressing their gratitude to Xiao Lan for her kindness and exemplary diligence.*

*Xiao Lan is very moved.*

Xiao: Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thank you for your generosity. You all shouldn't have spent so much time to prepare all these for my mother and father and my sister. Thank you. But I too have a surprise all of you. Come, try this chrysanthemum tea I prepared.

Rabbit: Chrysanthemum tea?

*Everybody is curious. But once they tasted it they like the tea.*

Deer and Squirrel: Sister Xiao Lan. Please come back soon and make more chrysanthemum tea for us. We don't like you to be away for too long.

Rabbit: Sister Xiao Lan, please remember to bring some carrots back from the village for me.

Xiao: Of course, I will not forget! I shall be back the day after tomorrow!

Ma: Xiao Lan, why don't you stay a few more days?

Xiao: No, there is so much work here. Besides, I don't like to be away from you all for too long. Ma Lang, please don't forget to meet me by the river the day after tomorrow.

Ma: Xiao Lan, please take the magic Ma Lan flower with you. If you are in difficulties, you can recite this secret code :

*'Ma Lan flower, Ma Lan flower, the magic flower, withstanding storm and thunder. Please bloom immediately as the diligent person is now seeking for your help.' Can you remember this!*

Xiao: Of course, I can.

Bird: Hey, everybody. It's getting late, let us see Sister Xiao Lan off!

Animals: Let's us send Sister Xiao Lan off!

*(Light dims.)*

#### SCENE V: HOME COMING

*Courtyard of Uncle Wang's house. Xiao Lan has obviously been distributing presents. Uncle Wang and Aunty Wang stack all the new clothes, fruits and table cloths on the table. A few girls from the neighbourhood are admiring the materials Xiao Lan has given to them.*

Girl A: Thank you Xiao Lan, this is

wonderful! *(She puts the material Xiao Lan gave her on the chair.)*

Girl B: Xiao Lan, you should not have bothered about the present. We are just so happy to see you!

Aunty: Xiao Lan, you have no idea how much mum missed you!

Girl C: Please tell us more about life on the Ma Lan Mountain!

Xiao: What shall I say about Ma Lan Mountain? Everybody works together, ploughing the field, planting trees and collecting fruits, everybody does one's share of work!

*Da Xiao happily rushes in with a new apron.*

Da: Thank you, Xiao Lan, how did you find time to embroider such a beautiful piece of apron! Look, what do you all think? *(She turns around and discovers the piece of material Xiao Lan gave to Girl A.)* My goodness, what a lovely piece of material. Xiao Lan, may I have this as well?

Uncle: No, this is for Xiao Yuan. Papa will buy a new one for you.

Xiao La: Why don't you follow me to Ma Lan Mountain tomorrow afternoon? I can teach you how to weave this.

Da: Follow you to the Ma Lan Mountain? *(The Black Cat winks and reminds Da Lan)* Yes indeed I always wanted to go to see you! Too see how you all live there and how you embroider.

*Uncle Wang and Aunty Wang are surprised that Da Lan has changed, they are delighted.*

Aunty: Good idea! Xiao Lan take you sister with you. Da Lan, stay there for a month or two, until you master the technique of weaving and embroidering.....

Girl C: And you could come back and teach us!

Uncle: Well, children, let's go in to the house now. Dinner is getting cold.

*Uncle Wang and Aunty Wang as well as the village girls go in gradually.*

Xiao: Da Lan, after the dinner, I will help you pack your clothes for tomorrow!

Da: Don't bother I will only go to your house for a day or two!

Xiao: Didn't you want to learn how to....

Da: No, not really, I just wanted to do some of sightseeing.

Xiao: *(Disappointed, but she realizes it is difficult to persuade Da Lan)* All right. You could come and stay for a longer time whenever you like.

Da: Xiao Lan. Do you think you could do me a favour?

Xiao: Of course.

Da: Can you give me this new dress that you are wearing.

Xiao: Certainly!

Da: And... and... I also like your earrings very much.

Xiao: You can have them too, my dear sister.

Da: Thank you very much, you are a great sister!

*Aunty Ma shouts from the kitchen inside the house.*

Aunty: Da Lan, Xiao Lan, dinner is getting cold!

*Da Lan and Xiao Lan giggle and rush in.*

*(Light dims.)*

#### INTERLUDE: SQUIRREL'S NIGHTMARE

*Raining heavily. Thunder roars.*

Rabbit: Oh dear, such heavy rain.

Baby deer: I hope the rain will stop. If the rain does not stop. Sister Xiao Lan can't come back.

Squirrel: Brother Monkey, Brother Monkey, I am frightened.

Monkey: Don't be frightened, the rain will be over soon.

Mama: What is the matter? Why are you frightened?

Squirrel: I... I... dreamt that Sister Xiao Lan lost her way and she is now caught by a witch. What can

we do now?

Monkey: Ha ha ha, silly billy! Why do you worry about what you have dreamt?

Mama: Dear Squirrel, don't worry. Sister Xiao Lan will find her way home. Have you forgotten that she has the Ma Lan flower with her? Even if there was a witch trying to cast a spell on her, she will be able to overpower the witch using the magic of the Ma Lan flower and come back!

Rabbit: I hope Sister Xiao Lan comes back soon, with many carrots for me!

Mama: I am sure she will. Children, let's us go back to bed.

#### SCENE VI: STORMY DAY'S HORROR

*Thunder storm. Lighthing.*

*Aunty Ma carries umbrella.*

Aunty: Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan! Da Lan, Da Lan!

Uncle: Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan! Da Lan, Da Lan!

Aunty: Da Lan, Da Lan! Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan!

Uncle: *(Sigh)* Hai. I think Ma Lan has probably received them long ago and they have reached home safely.

Aunty: Well, I hope so.

Uncle: Shall we go home now? I am sure they will be all right!

Aunty: I hope that Ma Lan did not forget to meet them by the river.

Uncle: I am sure he didn't forget. Shall we go home now?

Aunty: All right! I hope that this terrible rain will be over soon.

*The Black Cat appears.*

Cat: What a nuisance to have this awful rain! Worse still, Ah Fu is not here to help me. He is now in the jail! You must be wondering what's wrong with him. He used the money he had won from gambling to buy himself tons of wine and had drunk more than what his system could handle. Then in his drunken state, he got into a fight with the members of the Green Dragon Gang. He set fire to a row of shops and was finally arrested. The magistrate gave him a seven-year sentence. I can't wait for him for seven years to get the Ma Lan Flower. Besides, after so many years in the jail he might regret what he has done and change his mind. So, I have to handle Xiao Lan by myself tonight. Shhh! Xiao Lan and Da Lan are coming.

*Xiao Lan is holding an umbrella while Da Lan is seen wearing Xiao Lan's new dress and ear-rings in Scene V.*

Xiao: Be careful, Da Lan, The rocks are as slippery as eels.

Da: If I had known that the journey

was this uncomfortable, I wouldn't have come!

Xiao: My good Sister. Don't you think that we have to pay a price for everything we want in life?

Da: Xiao Lan, nevertheless, I envy you. You always have many wonderful friends.

Xiao: Da Lan, you too can make wonderful friends if you get out of your little room.

Da: How I wish I too can find a caring and loving husband, and be given all the nice jewellery and clothes.

Xiao: My good sister, if you like anymore of my clothes, I will willingly give them to you.

*The Black Cat calls, giving Da Lan the hint.*

Da: I have enough of your clothes, I am asking for only one more thing.

Xiao: What is the 'one more thing' you would like to have?

Da: That pretty flower on your head.

Xiao: I am sorry my dear sister. This is a magic flower, the Ma Lan flower, given by Ma Lang as a betrothal gift. I am afraid I can give everything else but not the Ma Lan flower.

Da: Are you sure that you can't give me this little flower?

Xiao: Indeed I can't. I am sorry.



Da: All right, then I have no choice but to snatch it from you.

Xiao: Please don't joke like this.

Da: I am not joking at all, I am serious.

*Thunder roars. Da Lan begins her attack and Xiao Lan tries to run away. But the slope is so slippery that Da Lan falls down. The Black Cat then jumps out. It snatches the flower and tries to push Xiao Lan down the slope at the same time.*

*The Bird appears and is astonished to see what the Black Cat is about to do.*

Bird: Stop it, Black Cat!

*The Cat continues to push Xiao Lan and finally it overpowers Xiao Lan and she falls down to the river.*

Bird: Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan.

*The Black Cat quickly uses a stone to hit the bird. She is hit and falls too. Da Lan hears the scream and is shocked.*

Da: Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan.....

Cat: Ha ha ha ha... 'Ma Lan Flower, Ma Lan Flower, the Magic Flower, withstanding storm and thunder. I demand that you bloom immediately as I am now seeking your help!'

*Nothing happens. The Black Cat is very anxious.*

Cat: 'Ma Lan Flower, Ma Lan Flower, the Magic Flower, withstanding storm and thunder. Bloom without further delay as I am now

seeking your help.' (Silence) How terrible. It doesn't work! Do I remember the secret code correctly? *The Black Cat approaches Da Lan.*

#### INTERLUDE : THE CAT'S INTIMIDATION

Cat: Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan! Do you know the secret code?

Da: I am not Xiao Lan. I am Da Lan. How would I know the secret code?

Cat: (Irritated by Da Lan) Remember, you are Xiao Lan, NOT Da Lan! The whole purpose of getting you to dress up like Xiao Lan is to deceive Ma Lang. So you must remember all the time that you are Xiao Lan. You must talk like Xiao Lan, walk like Xiao Lan, eat like Xiao Lan. Can't you remember!!? Now that we have the Ma Lan Flower, the only thing left for us to do is to get the secret code from Ma Lang. This is why it is most important for you to convince Ma Lang that you are Xiao Lan. Do you understand?

*Da Lan is annoyed and frightened. She decides to leave but is blocked by the Cat.*

Cat: What's wrong with you?

Da: I want to go home!

Cat: Go home? You must be out of your mind! Xiao Lan has fallen into the river and is probably drowned

by now. How are you going to face your parents? Besides, Ma Lan is coming here to fetch Xiao Lan soon. If he knows that Xiao Lan is drowned, for sure he will kill you!

Da: What... What can I do now? *She is very distressed and starts weeping.*

Cat: You can't do anything except disguise yourself as Xiao Lan. After all, once you become Ma Lang's wife, you will learn the secret code and once you learn the secret code, you can get anything you want! You will be rich, you will be famous on the Ma Lan Mountain, you will have.....

*Ma Lan's call is heard, 'Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan'*

Cat: Now, stop weeping immediately and remember, you are a happy Xiao Lan. Ma Lang is taking you home up there!

Da: Taking me to the Ma Lan Mountain? What shall I do? What shall I do?

*Not knowing how to deal with Ma Lang, she rushes off.*

Cat: Stop running Da Lan. Why do you worry? I will be with you all the time!

Da: But... but... I have no idea what I should say to him.

Cat: As long as I am with you, you will be all right. I will protect you, I will guide you!

*Ma Lang's call is heard again.*



Cat: Quick, answer him!

Da: Hey, I am here.

Ma: (*Ma Lang rushes in*) I am terribly sorry I am late. I went to the other side of the mountain to gather herbs and was caught in the heavy rain. How is Papa and Mama? How is your sister? Xiao Lan, Xiao Lan are you all right?

Da: Yes, I... I am all right. (*The Cat calls*). No, I, I... I have a bad headache. (*The cat calls again.*)

Ma: Is this your cat?

Da: No, it is my cousin Ah Fu's cat.

Ma: Hey. Go home, go back to where you come from.

*The Cat gives Da Lan a hint.*

Da: Ah Fu is in the jail now and nobody is looking after him at the moment. He is sick and hungry rather pitiful!

*The Cat presents a miserable look.*

Ma: All right, let him follow us then.

*The Cat jumps for joy. Ma looks at him with suspicion. Da Lan kicks the Cat to remind him to behave.*

(*Light dims*)

## SCENE VII: SHOCKING REVELATION

*Ma Lan brings Da Lan and the Black*

*Cat into his house. Da Lan is delighted.*

Da: Oh, what a beautiful house you have.

Ma: Well, it is the same old house. There isn't any change, Xiao Lan.

Cat: I think Xiao Lan misses home so much that the house looks lovelier to her now after being away for two days.

*'Song of Fruits' is heard. The little animals come in with trays of fruits.*

*Da Lan picks the biggest apple in the tray presented by the squirrel and gobbles it up.*

Da: Mm,! Delicious! Plain heaven!

*Da Lan notices the peach in the tray brought by the rabbit.*

Da: What a lovely peach here! This is great!

*Da Lan picks up the peach and throws away the half apple she has eaten. She bites the peach with delight.*

*The squirrel, the rabbit and the baby deer are all amused as Da Lan seems to be so hungry.*

Deer: Sister Xiao Lan, are you very hungry?

Mama: Poor Xiao Lan, you must have been starving!

Rabbit: Sister Xiao Lan, have you forgotten to bring the carrots from the village you promised?

*Da Lan is not sure how to answer. The Black Cat quickly makes up a story.*

Cat: Of course sister Xiao Lan hasn't forgotten, She brought lots of carrots for you but the riverbank was so slippery because of the storm that the basketful of carrots landed into the river when she fell.

Ma: Xiao Lan, were you hurt?

*Da Lan shakes her head.*

Glory: Sorry that we are late, Sister Xiao Lan.

Fern: Welcome home, sister Xiao Lan.

Glory: We have brought your favorite chrysanthemum tea for you.

Da: Chrysanthemum tea? Sorry, I don't drink chrysanthemum tea.

*Everybody is surprised. The Black Cat senses that it is probably a wrong answer.*

Cat: Oh, sister Xiao Lan has a bad headache so she doesn't feel like drinking the chrysanthemum tea now.

Ma: Perhaps you should go to the bedroom to rest.

Da: That is a wonderful idea! Where is the bedroom?

*Everybody is puzzled.*

Cat: You see, sister Xiao Lan's headache is so bad that she can't even remember where the bedroom is!

*The Monkey jumps in and accidentally steps on the Black Cat's tail. The Black*

*Cat screams and rolls. The way it rolls surprises Ma Lan, Fern, Glory and the Monkey as it looks very very familiar although they could not recall immediately where they saw it.*

Monkey: Welcome home sister Xiao Lan, did you see the bird?

*Da Lan and The Black Cat answer at the same time.*

Da: No..... I.....

Cat: Yes.....

Monkey: She went to the river bank in the afternoon to wait for you.

Cat: You see, we were late because of the storm. I think she might have gone to the village to look for us. Don't you think so?

Da: Yes, maybe, maybe she lost her way in the storm.

Mama: It is very very unlikely! Oh, what shall we do now?

Ma: Not to worry, let us ask the Magic flower to find the bird. Xiao Lan, may I have the Ma Lan flower.

Da: *(Frightened, she does not know how to answer)* I..... I don't have it, it was the Black Cat.....

Cat: Yes, I was the last one who saw it!

Ma: Where was it? When was the last time you saw it?

Cat: I remember..... I remember seeing it in Uncle Ma's house.

Ma: Didn't you wear it all the time?

Da: Yes... Yes... I did.

Cat: I still saw it on the way here.

Monkey: Then where is it now?

Cat: Don't you remember, the storm was very violent. The wind was so strong. It blew and blew and blew. The Ma Lan Flower was blown away!

Ma: Where has it been blown to away?

Da: I... I can't remember.

Cat: I remember now! It was at the river bank. When Xiao Lan heard your call, she was so happy and she rushed to you. I remember seeing it fall into the river. I thought it was just an ordinary flower so I did not bother about it. If I had known that.....

Ma: Are you sure that you remember it correctly?

Cat: Sure!

Ma: Let us go to the river bank immediately friends.

Cat: Ma Lan. What is the secret code of the Magic flower? In case I find it first, I can recite the secret code and help to find the bird. Maybe she is in serious trouble and needs to be saved immediately.

Mama: Once you find the magic flower, you should return it to Ma Lang and let him recite the secret

code. Only diligent people are entitled to seek help from the Ma Lan flower.

Cat: I am diligent too. Everynight I stay up to catch mice....

Ma: *(He is now very suspicious of the Black Cat.)* It is not the right time to squabble. Friends, let's go to find the Magic flower and the bird. Xiao Lan, you take a rest at home. I shall be back soon.

Rabbit: Ma Lan, do not worry we will look after sister Xiao Lan.

Mama: I will stay back too. You all go immediately as we cannot afford to lose any time.

Ma: Let's go!

*The Monkey, Morning Glory and Fern followed Ma Lan exit while others bring Da Lan to the bedroom. Only the Black Cat remains on stage.*

Cat: Humph, they will never find the Magic Flower nor the bird. The bird is probably dead and floating on the river now and the Magic flower is still here, with me! Ha ha ha ha ha.....

*(Light dims.)*

#### INTERLUDE: MANOEUVRING IN THE MIST

*Shu Gong Gong is seen on stage, snoring. Uncle Wang and Auntie Wang hurry in.*

Aunty: It is very odd, Da Lan didn't come back last night. She didn't tell me that she was going to stay with Xiao Lan.

*Shu Gong Gong is awakened by their voices.*

Uncle: I thought she said she will stay on at the Ma Lan Mountain for a month or two, to learn weaving and embroidering.....

Aunty: Yes, she did. But she changed her mind hours before she left. She took Ah Fu's cat with her and told me that she will send Xiao Lan to the riverbank and then come home. You know, Da Lan seldom goes out, I am worried that.....

Uncle: Oh , Shu Gong Gong, good morning.

Shu: Good morning! Is Da Lan missing?

Aunty: Did you see her?

Shu: No, but the bird told me yesterday that Xiao Lan came back with a cat. I don't think Da Lan was accompanying them.

Aunty: Oh dear, where could she have gone? Where could she have gone?

Shu: Not to worry, I will ask everybody on the Ma Lan Mountain to help you look for Da Lan.

Aunty: Meantime we better continue to search for her.

Uncle: Thank you Shu Gong Gong. Da Lan.... Da Lan.....

Aunty: Da Lan..... Da Lan.....

*Two smaller cats appear and whisper to each other. Ma Lan, Morning Glory, Fern, and the Monkey come in.*

Ma: Shu Gong Gong, did I hear some one calling for Da Lan?

Shu: Yes, it was Uncle Wang and Aunty Wang. Da Lan has been missing since last night!

Monkey: Ma Lan, this is very strange, you mean Da Lan disappeared with the bird?

Glory: It is strange too that sister Xiao Lan has changed so much overnight!

Ma: I am more uncomfortable with the Black Cat. Somehow I am not convinced by whatever he said.

Fern: I feel the same.

Ma: We must be fully alert.

Shu: Hurry up everybody, I think the bird is probably in great danger!

Ma: Indeed. Let's continue to search!

*The two cats come out from their hiding place and whisper to each other again and exit.*

*(Light dims)*

## SCENE VIII: THE REUNION

*The Black Cat appears with two of his gang. When he hears that someone is approaching, he signals them the two cats to hide behind the rocks.*

*Ma Lang and his friends rush in and discover the wounded bird.*

Ma: What happened? Are you all right?

Bird: The..... The Black Cat hurt me and..... he pushed sister Xiao Lan down to the cliff ..... Quick..... go and look for her..... I..... I am all right.

Ma: Shu Gong Gong, you take the bird up to the mountain. Fern and I will go to rescue Xiao Lan and hunt for the Black Cat.....

Fern: We must look for the missing magic flower too!

Ma: Yes, let's rush to the river!

Glory: I will stay around here in case the Black Cat passes through.

*They all exit except Glory.*

*The Black Cat suddenly jumps out and grabs Glory.*

Cat: Ha ha ha ha.... Where are you going? Were you looking for me? Now, what can I do for you?

Glory: Release me at once, or else I will.... Help! Help!

*The Black Cat angrily covers her mouth.*

Cat: I warn you for the last time! If you shout for help again, I will kill you! Tell me, what is the secret code?

Glory: I don't know!

Cat: *(The Black Cat twists Glory's arm.)* Humph, do you know now?

Glory: *(Suddenly she realizes that the only way out is to lie to the Black Cat.)* All right, I.... I will tell you, but you release me first!

Cat: No! You will not be released until the Magic Flower grants me wishes! What is the secret code? *Twists her arm again.*

Glory: All right, all right, stop twisting my arm! It goes like this : Ma Lan Flower, Ma Lan Flower, withstanding storm and thunder. I need your help to do wonders.

Cat: *(Takes the Ma Lan Flower and happily recites.)* Ma Lan Flower , Ma Lan Flower, withstanding storm and thunder. I need your help to do wonders. Give me tons of salmon and mackerel. *(Nothing happens. Angry.)* You swindler! Why your secret code doesn't work?

Glory: Of course it doesn't work. After all, you are not holding the real Ma Lan flower.

Cat: What? This is not the real Ma Lan Flower?

Glory: The real one has two golden leaves. I am afraid you have been cheated.

Cat: *(Furious)* Tell me, where is the real one?

Glory: I can't tell you!

Cat: *(Twists her arm forcefully)* Can you tell me now?

Glory: All right! It.... it is in Ma Lang's house..... in in his bedroom.

Cat: *(He throws away the Ma Lan flower and turns to the two cats)* Let's go!

*Once they exit, Glory quickly picks up the flower. Ma Lang ..... Ma Lang.....*

*The Cats return and they see her holding the flower.*

Cat: *(Extremely angry)* You cunning woman I will not forgive you!

*Ma Lang and Fern enter.*

Ma: We will not forgive you for drowning Xiao Lan and killing the bird.

Fern: You disguised as good guy and fooled the people around. You are more dangerous than any other outright bandit!

Cat: I don't waste time talking nonsense. Give me back my

flower, cunning woman.

*They engage in a fierce fight and the monkey and other animal appear to give Ma Lang moral support. At the end the Cats are cornered and pushed down the cliff.*

Ma: *(Ma Lang holds the Ma Lan flower which he managed to get back from the Black Cat and recites the secret code.)* Ma Lan Flower, Ma Lan Flower, the magic flower, withstanding storm and thunder. Please bloom immediately as the diligent person is now seeking your help. Please help us to find Xiao Lan.

*Music. Xiao Lan, escorted by four waterlily fairies is back. Everybody cheers.*

Da: *(Da Lan comes in, she feels ashamed.)* Xiao Lan.... Xiao Lan, can you forgive me?

Uncle: *(Uncle Ma and Aunt Ma is heard.)* Da Lan... Da Lan....

Aunt: Oh, so you are here! What has happened?

Uncle: We had been searching for you all night.

Shu: Well, Uncle Ma, let bygones be bygones. Children, let us celebrate the reunion!

*Everybody sings and dances happily.*

*End of Play.*

# SPAFA Affairs

## M a r c h

### Recording Southeast Asian Dances in Labanotation

Leading choreographers and dance teachers gathered at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore during the month of March to learn Labanotation. Labanotation is a system for recording dance devised by Rudolf von Laban, a Hungarian aristocrat who had successfully developed a method to record western folk and theatrical dance. This was the first time SEAMEO SPAFA organized an Intermediate Training Course on Labanotation.

Most of the ten participants attended the Elementary Course on Labanotation held in Solo, Indonesia in 1989 and received intensive instruction from Indonesian masters Dr. Soedarsono, Tri Nardono, Suwarsidi Trisapto. The Intermediate Course, co-ordinated by SPAFA Senior Specialist in Performing Arts, Associate Professor Dr. Chua Soo Pong, was designed to expand on the Solo course by extending the theoretical and practical knowledge of the trainees.

The three course instructors were

Rhonda Ryman of the University of Waterloo sponsored by the Canadian International development association, Zhang Lingling of the Beijing Dance Academy, Sponsored by the Lee foundation, Singapore, and Judy Van Zile of the University of Hawaii, jointly sponsored by SEAMEO SPAFA and the University of Hawaii. The teaching team worked closely with the participants, exploring the theoretical concepts including complex transfers of weight, simultaneous and sequential actions, and spatial configurations of the torso, head and hands. To reinforce each concept, Madam Zhang presented many readings from her recently published book on Chinese dance. By reading and performing these dances the trainees received first-hand experience in some of the basic movements of Chinese dance. The participants felt that these examples, which place emphasis on hand movements and the usage of the torso, are similar to the dances of their countries. The trainees were also shown how Labanotation may be used to identify the elements unique to a dance style.

Labanotation looks at the spatial and temporal relationships underlying all human movement

possibilities. It has recently been used in movement-related disciplines as diverse as physiotherapy, kinesiology and anthropology. Unfortunately, very few Labanotation scores exist for the dance of Southeast Asia. Therefore it is SPAFA's plan to train a group of notators in the region so that later on a textbook of Labanotation for Southeast Asian dance can be published.

In addition to daily classes, the students and teachers were treated to a range of extra-curricular activities. These included viewing local dance companies (the Singapore Dance Theatre the Peoples' Association Dance Company), the Marine Parade Community Centre Dance Group), visiting performers (Indian dancer Lata Pada), and touring companies (Fushan Cantonese Opera form the People's Republic of China).

Thanks to the generosity of South Grand Computers Pte. Ltd., the trainees were able to explore the most recent advancements in computer technology. For one week the students had the use of an Apple Macintosh SE/30 computer to explore the Laban Writer, a Macintosh-based computer application under development at



Ohio State University (Project Director: Lucy Vendable; software Developer: Scott Sutherland). The use of computers to produce and edit notation scores promises to greatly enhance the process of publishing dance scores. The participants hoped that in the future they will be able to use such advanced technology to document the dances in their countries.

Throughout the course, each student worked on an individual project to record a representative dance or dance motif. By the end of the course, each had completed a first draft to be refined and edited before the next course. We hope that such ground breaking work will provide a body of scores illustrating excerpts of each region's dance. These scores will not only contribute to the documentation and preservation of the many rich dance traditions of Southeast Asia, but will also provide reading materials for students in subsequent SEAMEO SPAFA courses, introduce these dance forms to other cultures, and provide a basis for cross-cultural comparisons in Asia and the rest of the dance world.

## M a r c h

### **SPAFA Regional Seminar on Indigenous Traditional Theatre In Southeast Asia, 30th March-4th April, 1991**

SPAFA organized a Regional Seminar on Indigenous Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia funded by the Japan Foundation, from March 30 to April 4 at the National Library in Bangkok. Participants examined



the current situation of traditional theatre, compared the development of various indigenous art forms in contemporary societies, and explored the possibility of publishing a new book on indigenous traditional theatre in Southeast Asia. This seminar was indeed an important undertaking that would succeed in shedding new light on many crucial aspects of traditional theatre in the region, as declared by Mr. Sadao Ikeya, Director of the Japan Foundation's Bangkok Office.

Coordinated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chua Soo Pong, SPAFA Senior Specialist in Performing Arts, the six-day event brought together eleven leading scholars in indigenous traditional theatre in the region. In the eleven papers presented, the participants expressed their concern regarding the need to conserve and develop indigenous traditional theatre in the face of technological, economic and cultural changes. They also felt the need for redeveloping appreciation for indigenous traditional theatre as these art forms are vanishing rapidly. Such information, whether collected in books or video tapes would be valuable sources of cultural knowledge.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Solehah Ishak, of

the Department of Malay Studies, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, gave a paper entitled : 'Jikey and Bangsawan: Aesthetics of Two Traditional Malay Theatre Forms'. Colleague Dr Kamaruddin M. Sahid of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology of the same university, examined Jikey from a different perspective in his paper : 'Jikey : a Sociological Analysis'.

Singapore representative, Mr Hamid bin Ahmad, a veteran dramatist, gave a historical account of Bangwawan in Singapore. Mrs. Joanna Wong, from the National University of Singapore, discussed the development of Chinese opera in the urbanized environment of the city state.

Assoc Prof Preecha Nunsuk of Nakhon Si Thammarat Teachers' College, described two forms of indigenous traditional theatre in southern Thailand : Likay Pa and Manohra. Khunying Pha-op Possakrisana, retired Professor of Thai Literature, presented a comprehensive and concise history of Likay in Thailand. Mr. Chaturong Montrisart, Senior Lecturer of the College of Dramatic Arts in Bangkok, described features of 'Khon and Lakhon : Forms of Thai Classical dance'.

Indonesian choreographer and dancer, Ben Suharto, delivered a paper on 'Cosmology and Aesthetic of the Javanese Dance'. Amir Rohkyatmo, art administrator of the Directorate of Arts, Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia, narrated the development of 'Wayang Wong 'Pangung': Past and



Present'.

Dr. Nicanor G. Tiongson, Artistic Director of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines, gave a paper entitled 'the Sarswela : A Century of Indigenization'. Prof Doreen Fernandez, Chairperson of the Department of Communication at the Ateneo de Manila University, presented a paper entitled: 'The Philippines Komedia : Tradition and Revitalization'.

One of the unique features of this seminar was that all participants brought with them many well made video tapes of fascinating performances of their indigenous theatre. These examples vividly illustrated the richness of cultural heritages and re-interpretation of traditional theatre in the region.

The presentations generated much discussion. In the final plenary session, the participants made the following recommendations:

1. SPAFA is urged to publish up-to-date overview of the major traditional theatre forms in the region for educational purposes.

2. With the help of international funding agencies, regular seminars on indigenous theatre to be held in different member countries on a rotating basis.

3. Greater cooperation among researchers and institutions be initiated, so that research findings and news related to traditional theatre can be published and disseminated

## SPAFA Affairs

regularly.

4. A directory of theatre institutes, major professional and amateur groups in Southeast Asia be compiled.

5. Education documentaries to be made for educational institutions at all levels in order to develop an appreciation of indigenous theatre, especially among young audiences.

6. Since Southeast Asian traditional theatre is in dire need of support, it is necessary to formulate and implement programmes for the survival and renewal of this art form.

7. Information be effectively disseminated through the print and broadcast media.

8. Special schools or colleges devoted to indigenous traditional theatre to be established in all SEAMEO-SPAFA member countries.

9. Urge the governments of member countries to honor artistes and other individuals and organizations who conserve, develop and promote, that foster indigenous traditional theatre and the

national cultural heritage.

10. A data bank with contributions from regional scholars be set up so that it can serve as regional information center.

## M a y

**SPAFA Training Course on  
Conservation of Ancient Cities  
and/or Settlements (S-T112b)  
17 May - 29 June 1991**

Conservation and restoration activities in the past concentrated mainly on technical aspects of the projects. Because the ultimate goal was the restoration of monuments to the most authentic manner of their original state, the social-cultural context of structures were often neglected. The SPAFA Training Course (S-T112b) in Conservation of Ancient Cities and/or Settlements, held in Indonesia, from May 17 to June 28, 1991, taught participants to include the cultural-economic context of structures of archaeological sites.

The training course was co-organized by the Directorate for the Protection and Development of Historical and Archaeological Heritage of Indonesia. The 22 lecturers who taught the course included 19 highly respected Indonesian scholars. They were Mr. Uka Tjandrasasmita, Mr. I Gusti Ngurah Anom, Mr. Halwany Michrob, Mr. Soekarno, Mr. Maulana, Mr. Samidi, Dr. Hasan Ambari, Mr. Abu Ridho, Mr. Suyud Winarno, Mr. PH Subroto, Mrs. Inayati, Mr. Subyantoro, Mr. HR Sadirin, Mr. Th Ag. Sunarto, Mr. Mulyono, Mr. Mundardijito, Mr. Romli and Mr. Budihardjo, and Mr.

Martono. The organizer also invited three outstanding foreign experts to lecture for this training course. They were Dr. Edward MacKinon, Mr. Dumarçay and Dr. John Micksik.

Eleven participants consisting of faculty members, researchers, architects of leading universities or senior staff of museums or government offices at their respective countries were two Indonesians (Bambang Sulistyanto and Sadio Budi), two Malaysians (Mr. Zawawi b. Itam Osman and Miss Mamnah bt Nusi), two Filipinos (Miss Amalia A. dela Torre and Mr. Pelagio R. Alcantara Jr.), one delegate from

Singapore (Mr Tan Keng Leng), three Thais (Miss Saowalux Phongsatha, Mr. Tasana Doasa and Mr. Kraisin Ounjaijin) and one Laotian, funded by the Government of New Zealand, Mr. Bounheng Bouasisengpaseuth.

Coodinated by Mr Samidi, the training course was held in Banten, Banten Girang, Banten Lama,

Borobudur, Yogyakarta, Solo, Prambanan, Demak, Kudus, Trowulan, Malang and Jakarta. Through these practical sessions conducted at the various ancient cities and archaeological sites, the trainees were able to acquire practical knowledge and skills in the conservation or restoration of cities.

At the end of the training course, the trainees completed two reports: 'Field observation on the Preservation of Ancient City of Banten Lama' and 'Excavation Report on Pakojan Speelwijk and Pacinan Cites'. Both copies are now kept in the SPAFA Library.



#### UPCOMING SPAFA PROGRAMMES

TRAINING COURSE IN MUSEOLOGY AND MUSEUM CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY. FROM OCTOBER 20 TO DECEMBER 15, 1991 IN MALAYSIA, ORGANIZED BY THE UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA.

TRAINING COURSE IN THE PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HANDICRAFTS AND FOLKCAPS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. FROM OCTOBER 20 TO DECEMBER 20, 1991 IN THE PHILIPPINES, ORGANIZED BY THE PHILIPPINES NATIONAL MUSEUM.

ADVANCED TRAINING COURSE IN ETHNO-ARCHAEOLOGY. FROM JANUARY 12 TO MARCH 11, 1992 IN THAILAND, ORGANIZED BY SILPAKORN UNIVERSITY.

UNESCO-SPAFA WORKSHOP: CONVENTION ON THE MEANS OF PROHIBITING AND PREVENTING THE ILLICIT IMPORT, EXPORT, AND TRANSFER OF CULTURAL PROPERTY. FROM FEBRUARY 23 TO 28, 1992 IN THAILAND, ORGANIZED BY UNESCO.



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PETER DORMER  
**The New Ceramics Trends and Traditions**

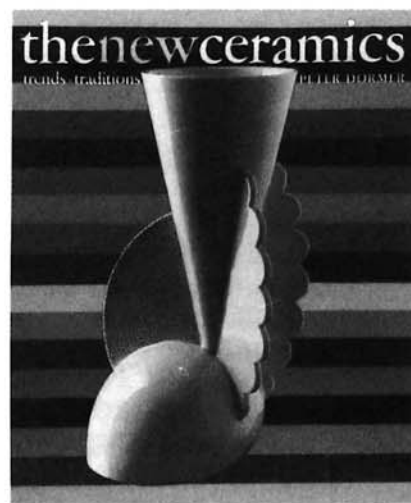
London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.,  
1989

208 pages with 234 illustrations, 86 in colour.

Ceramics has become a popular art form — expressive, domestic in scale, familiar in form, but often with sufficient variety to engage the mind as well as the eye. To call studio pottery a populist art form is not to imply that everyone should or could practise it. But the best and the most innovative of pottery's modern practitioners keep faith with pottery's domestic roots.

A glance through the pictures in this book reveals that the emphasis rests heavily upon the ceramic vessel in all its variety. As a whole, the author says, he believes ceramics is about pots and that ceramic sculpture should usually be considered alongside with other sculptures. But sculpture, notes the author, is concerned with a much wider metaphorical and conceptual range than is normally expected of or possible in pottery. Pottery is judged by a number of criterion but metaphorical and conceptual content need not be among them. The author stresses that his general exclusion of sculpture is based on the practical assumption that it is sounder to compare like with like. Modern pottery is, in any case, rich and surprisingly, enough to merit its own discussion, he says.

He further explains that modern handmade pottery falls broadly into two categories: production pottery, in



which a potter makes batches of useful domestic wares for sale, and studio pottery, objects made on a one-off basis as a form of art. The status of this pottery art is one of the subjects of this book. But, increasingly, the difference between the two categories is becoming blurred as the century progresses.

The second section of the book deals with pottery form. Writers on ceramics usually classify pottery into two divisions: form and decoration. But some artists argue that such a division is false — for pottery is a synthesis of form and surface.

Accordingly, a further divisions of form into "thrown" and

"constructed form" is more obvious. They are two separate approaches. Throwing proceeds from intuition. It is a skill that has become second nature. Construction, on the other hand requires a thinking close to that of the sculptor's — measured, thought out, and less instinctive.

The majority of the illustrated pots shown and discussed in this book are the works of studio artist potters. They have meticulously chosen the activity for aestheticism. There are forms of pots that are drawn from philosophical ideas. There are also pots that are products of art schools. One artist, Robert Turner, said that he manipulates his thrown forms while they are still wet. Getting a thrown form is a prelude to the next act. His work has a rawness about it, and it is not surprising that he should describe it all in terms of landscape. Robert Turner echoes the language of abstract sculptors.

One prominent artist Jack Troy, an American potter, has examined throwing on a wheel to research into the way the brain operates. Troy says that the potter proceeds by centering a blob of clay, opening the centre with thumb and fingers, thus giving a basic U-shape, unless a plate is intended. The inner wall of the form becomes the territory of the left hand, while the outer surface is governed by the right. Troy also points out that the left hand tends to pull the clay out from the axis of the wheel, while the right tends to push inwards.

Troy recapitulates the findings of scientists who have researched into

# BOOK REVIEW

the workings of the human brain. The left side controls the right hand, and the right side controls the left hand. Research confirms that in 90 percent of right-handed human beings, the brain's left hemisphere controls speech, and handles mathematical, analytical and rational thought. The right hemisphere of the brain deals with spatial relationships and image recognition. It also handles intuition. So, when a plate is thrown, the inner surface of the vessel (controlled by the left hand and the right hemisphere) is dominant. Narrow cylinders result from the reverse combination. Thus, the plate emerges from the potter's spatial and intuitive sense, and the cylinder results from the analytical sense.

The author states that modern ceramics work has some problems in terms of form. Some of these problems are discarded either by the maker or by future critics as each piece comes into focus. This is probably true of other activities in design and art. The author also mentions that the most successful artists of clay objects have been those close to potter's recognizable forms. These forms are created by a theme, hence, the predominance of the vessel colourfully shown in the book and the virtual absence of what could be called ceramic sculpture.

The last section of the book discusses the painted pot. One of the more interesting tests of accessibility and popularity to pottery is to note the influence of certain trends and styles in the craft movement and on mass

manufacturers. For example, the Leach style influenced factory potteries in the late 1860s and 1970s to the extent that they began producing dinnerware in the form of a kind of middle-class folkware.

It is also pointed out that ornament is an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary activity: it evolves with society or with an institution. The author states that in the west they have had some problems with the revival of ornament and decoration simply because of the long break with decoration that has been fostered by a certain kind of modernist architect, designer and art-school teacher. Decoration and symbolism in ornament has to emerge from common ideas and practice. If they have long been unfashionable, then the initial steps at rediscovery will appear arbitrary. Indeed, they are arbitrary, because the ornamentalist, either potter or architect, is starting fresh.

For the applied artist including the potter, this ceramic trend is exciting. On one hand, it ought to suggest to the potter that he or she can offer skills in decoration and ornament to the design world. On the other hand, the new upsurge of

ornamentalist design provides all decorative artist with a wider source of images, together with a greater chance of public acceptability as more people become used to the variety of ways in which a thing or anything can look. Pottery, as a decorative art form, has much to offer contemporary designers and private patrons alike. For all those who take pleasure in ceramics, as well as for anyone with a professional interest in the subject, here is an authoritative survey of the most exciting new developments in ceramics.

B.J. Manta

## Dance and Musical Instruments of Chinese Minorities

Minami Publisher, Japan, 1981.

Japanese language, 189 pages

Presently, the Republic of China has approximately 55 minority ethnic groups. They are scattered in the remote areas of China. The diversity in cultures and vastness of the area covered has made the documentation of these minorities' art forms a difficult task. The descriptions, too often, are lacking in depth. Thus, they are not very systematic and scholarly.

This book, printed in Japan by Minami Publisher, has 280 black-and-white coloured photos. It leads the reader through a visual journey of the dances, folk songs, and musical instruments used by the Chinese minorities. The two short essays, written by the Deputy Chairman of the Association of Chinese Dance Artistes (中国舞蹈家协会) Jia Zuo Guang (贾作光) and Jian Qi



Hua ( 简美华 ) of the Chinese Music Institute ( 中国音乐研究所 ), have provided the reader with a brief but comprehensive understanding of the dance and musical instruments of the Chinese minorities.

The book is neatly divided into three sections. The first deals with the dances and folk songs of various minorities according to geographical region. The four sub-sections are on northern and northeastern China, central and eastern China, southwestern China and northwestern China.

Dance and folk songs, are part of the daily lives of the people. Whenever there are events like harvesting, marriage, and traditional festivals, dances and songs express their joy. The differences in geographical settings, history, mentality, emotions and customs bring diversity to their arts. For example, the Koreans ( 朝鲜族 ) live in the northeast. Their dance movements flow naturally, emphasizing a gentleness of inner feelings. This is different from the Mongolians ( 蒙古族 ), whose dance movements are sharp and fast.

Musical instruments are categorized by the actions performed on them. There are four major groups, consisting of blow, pull, pluck and beat. The book shows the different instruments used by some of the 21 races. For the Mongolians, their major musical instrument is the string instrument. It comes in various forms. The Ma Dou Qing ( 马头琴 ), which literally means house head violin, was developed as early as the 12th century. It has a

## BOOK REVIEW



strong volume, with a wide range of tone. The Koreans have their characteristic drum called the Zhang Gu ( 长鼓 ). It is a two sided drum with a narrow centre position.

The final section of the book is a very useful guide to the facial characteristics of the different ethnic groups. It has photos showing the faces of each ethnic group. One can easily notice the differences of the people in complexion, colour and contour.

It is a pity the map of China on the last page, which intends to illustrate the distribution of various ethnic groups, is out of focus. However, the hundreds of photos in

this book provide useful visual aids for those who are not familiar with the Chinese ethnic cultures. Many of these are no ordinary photos. There are pictures of famous dancers, singers and musicians of the country, taken at the peak of their careers. There are Chui Mei Shan ( 崔美善 ) page 25, Liu Ying ( 刘英 ) page 37, Zhong Zhen Fa ( 钟振发 ) page 47, Dao Mei Lan ( 刀美兰 ) page 90, Liu Xiao Li ( 刘小丽 ) page 107, Kang Ba Er Han ( 康巴尔汗 ) page 117, to name a few.

Also significant among the photos are those taken in the villages, during various events. These off-stage photos give the readers valuable information about the colourful dances in the remote areas of China. Readers can see how they differ from their presentations in the theatres.

This book is both a useful introduction for non-specialists and a quick guide for the serious-minded dance student. The photographs are artistically taken which makes the book a good reference to another art form, that is, stage photography.

Lee Yen Hoe

ASMAD

**Kesenian Tari**

Kuala Lumpur: Associated Educational Distributors (M) Sdn Bhd,  
1990, 165 pages.

"Kesenian Tari" means cultural dance in Malay. Published in 1990, it is the latest publication about dance in Malaysia. The author Asmad, explains that the book is



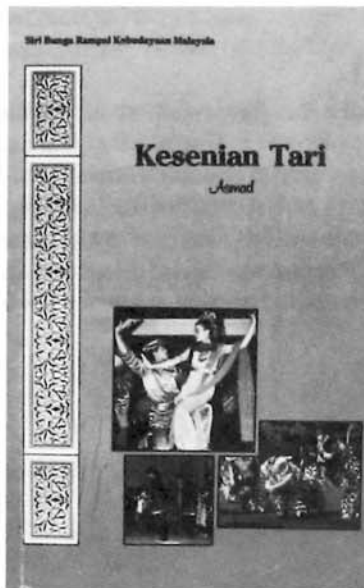
# BOOK REVIEW

about the different types of dances in Malaysia and he chooses to concentrate mainly on Malay dances. There are 54 types of Malay dances, two Chinese dances and one Portuguese dance altogether in this book. Malaysia's dance scene is, in fact, enlivened by the Malay, Chinese and Indian dance. The Indian community is particularly active in its promotion of ethnic dance. For example, The Temple of Fine Arts, is a voluntary non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of Indian culture. It offers highly successful dance training programmes. Ballet and western modern dances have also attracted a large number of followers in recent years.

The author divides the book into six chapters. All these chapters provide interesting material, in regards to what the author terms as cultural dance. However, if these chapters were better organized, the readers could probably follow the book better.

Most of the Malay dances mentioned in the book did not originate in the Malay Peninsula. They were either influenced by Parsi (Persia/Iran), Burma, Indonesia and other Asian countries, or changed by people through the passage of time. The writer provides a good collection of photos in these chapters but unfortunately some of them are quite blurred.

The author describes the dancers' clothes, music, movement, instruments and songs. Most of the songs were taken from poems. The author also describes when and how



these items were performed. He traces the origin of each dance form. It is a delightful surprise to learn that one of them goes as far back as 1839, during Sultan Umar's reign.

Readers are also informed that the famous "Tarian Joget" originated from the Malacca State. As a social dance, everybody performs it during celebrations. Participants of "Tarian Joget" can dance together only if they are relatives, of the same sex, or have mutual permission to dance. It is one of the most popular dances in Malaysia.

"Tarian Dabus" is believed to prevent disease from spreading.

When the dance begins the dancer, who is supposed to possess magical power, will prick his arm with a sharp weapon. It is said that he does not feel any pain because this is done unconsciously. When the dance is completed there is no wound on the arm of the dancer.

"Tarian Silat" is performed on stage. It can also be used in dancing competition. This competition is prevalent nowadays. There are also dances for celebrating crops, harvests, curing people from evil spirits, choosing a husband or wife, and for physical exercise. The author also describes several frequently performed dances that use props, such as the plate dance, candle dance and the "Tudung Salji" (food cover dance).

Worth mentioning are several dances of Sabah and Sarawak, from east Malaysia. These dances are rarely described in dance books of Southeast Asia. They were, until recently, unseen by outsiders. For example, the Sumarzau dance of Kadazan is a widely performed dance. It is often used as a cultural symbol of Sabah. Nowadays, even Chinese children learn and present the Sumarzau dance at school functions.

The tourist business however, had changed the tribal dance scene. Many of these dances, such as Tarian Datun Julud, Tarian Ngajat and Tarian Ambailuk are now performed for tourists!

The two Chinese dances mentioned in the book are "Tarian Naga" and the "Tarian Singa". Both

are popular folk dances performed during festive celebrations. "Naga" means dragon, a legendary animal that symbolizes power and prosperity. Sticks are stuck under various parts of the dragon and manipulated by dancers holding the sticks.

"Singa" means lion. This Lion Dance is possibly the most popular of all the Chinese folk dances. Widely practised by the Chinese all over the world, the Lion Dance is performed during Chinese New Year, major festivals or auspicious ceremonies. The writer describes

briefly the characteristics of the Lion Dance in the South. But he does not explain the style of the Lion Dance in the North, which is performed for theatrical performance.

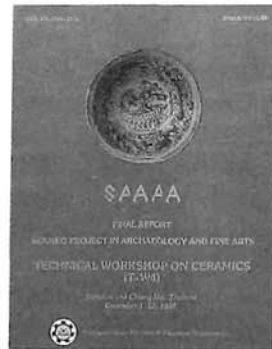
The author only mentions one Portuguese dance, the "Tarian

Portugese". It is usually performed by the Serani people, descendants of Portuguese colonials, during weddings and celebrations.

Overall, the book is a commendable attempt to describe the range of existing Malay dances seen in Malaysia. If you are hoping to read all the different "cultural dances" in Malaysia, then you will be disappointed. But if your intention is to gain some basic knowledge about Malay dances you will certainly get more than you bargained for.

*by Lim Mei Mei*

## BOOK REVIEW



THE SEAMEO REGIONAL CENTRE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND FINE ARTS (SPAFA) PUBLISHES FINAL REPORTS OF ITS TRAINING COURSES AND SEMINARS AS WELL AS BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND COMPILATIONS. BACK ISSUES OF THESE PUBLICATIONS, INCLUDING THE SPAFA DIGEST/JOURNAL, ARE AVAILABLE TO SCHOLARS, RESEARCHERS OR INTERESTED READERS. FOR TITLES AND LIST OF CONTENTS OF THESE PUBLICATIONS CONTACT SPAFA.



#### CONTRIBUTORS

PROFESSOR JEAN BOISSELIER IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE HISTORICAL ART OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SORBONNE, PARIS III.

PROFESSOR M.C. SUBHADRADIS DISKUL IS ONE OF THAILAND'S MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PROFESSORS IN THE FIELDS OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY. PRESENTLY THE SPAFA CENTRE DIRECTOR, HE WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE HISTORIC RETURN OF THE RECLINING VISHNU LINTEL TO THE PEOPLE OF THAILAND.

PETER FRANCIS, JR. FOUNDED THE CENTRE FOR BEAD RESEARCH IN 1979. SINCE THEN HE HAS PUBLISHED SOME THREE HUNDRED PAPERS IN POPULAR AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS, NINETEEN MONOGRAPHS AND DELIVERED OVER A HUNDRED LECTURES AROUND THE WORLD ON BEADS. THE CENTRE'S CURRENT UNDERTAKING IS THE INDIAN OCEAN BEAD TRADE PROJECT, WHICH INVOLVES THE COOPERATION OF SOME EIGHTY INSTITUTIONS.

IAN BROWN IS A LECTURER AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, AUSTRALIA. HIS CURRENT RESEARCH INTERESTS INCLUDE CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES IN ART DEVELOPMENT, ART CURRICULUM THEORY, AND POLICY ANALYSIS OF DESIGN EDUCATION AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA.

ASSOC PROF DR. CHUA SOO PONG, AN ETHNOMUSICOLOGIST BY TRAINING, IS A PROLIFIC PLAYWRIGHT AND CHOREOGRAPHER. HE TAUGHT AT THE NAYANG ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS AND AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE BEFORE HE CAME TO BANGKOK TO TAKE UP THE POST OF SENIOR SPECIALIST IN PERFORMING ARTS AT SPAFA.

DR. SRIHISTANTO IS THE HEAD OF THE KARAWITAN DEPARTMENT, ASKI SURAKARTA. HIS PUBLISHED PAPERS INCLUDE THE CONCEPT OF 'PATHET' IN CENTRAL JAVA GAMELAN MUSIC, THE VOCAL 'KARAWITAN', SLENDRO IN FINGER, AND GAMELAN AND COSMOLOGY.

PROFESSOR KHUNYING MAENMAS CHAVALIT IS IN CHARGE OF THE SPAFA LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTATION SERVICES, WHICH INCLUDE PUBLICATION AND CLEARING HOUSE ACTIVITIES. SHE HAS FOR MANY YEARS BEEN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTATION ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND AND THE REGION.

PROFESSOR BERTOLDO J. MANTA IS THE FORMER SPAFA SENIOR SPECIALIST IN PERFORMING ARTS.

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413/27-36 Arun Amarin Road  
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