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FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

COVER

THRESHING POLE DANCE OF THAILAND ILLUSTRATED BY CHOOMPOL TRIKRUTHBANDHU

The *Abhiseka* Rite of the Thai Coronation Ritual: *A reconsideration in the Buddhist context*

PRIYAWAT KUANPOONPOL

The Thai coronation ritual has been studied in the recent past by Thai scholars, but in Western scholarship the main source of information is still Quaritch Wales who published his book on Thailand's coronation ritual in the year 1931. A fascination of this ritual lies in the fact that it is an amalgam of progressive modifications of an original Brahmanic ritual; therefore, it reflects an aspect of the Thai cultural continuum that has been created by Brahmanic and Buddhist interactions. These interactions, which began in the 5th century BC when the Sakyamuni first preached his religion, are seen everywhere in Southeast Asia in relics and monuments that bear mixed images of the two religions.

In the last few colonial centuries, Thailand has kept its independence as well as the monarchy through feats of diplomacy, luck, and not least by adapting its institutions to meet the demands of world progress. This evolution creates constant tensions between traditional and modern values. A successful management of new challenges—a creation of true democracy or a full participation in the world-wide market economy—depends not only on technical expertise but also on a healthy integration of modern and traditional institutions in society in such a way that all social strata benefit from the fruits of progress. A successful social integration depends in part on understanding the traditional culture which must bend its values to the demands of the modern world. Studying rituals and their meanings helps us to understand these values, whose true significances are often packed into their symbolic forms. Through such forms that elicit responses, people perceive and adhere to social values. Adaptations of ritual forms also represent the ways that values have been modified in the past and may perhaps suggest how they may be, or ought to be, modified in the future.

Since the dawn of the Chakri Dynasty, the coronation ritual has undergone changes made partly by monarchs who had a strong hand in determining the overall arrangement of this week-long ceremony. In the original theory, a would-be monarch is the commissioner (*yajamana*) who reaps the benefits of a ritual that he commissions a Brahmin to perform on his behalf. A commissioner has a purpose in mind and accordingly asks for a certain ritual to be performed; he does not control or alter the nature of a rite and its symbolic meaning as described by ancient ritual texts. Again, in theory, the sacrificer, namely, the Brahmin-priest, knows a rite's meanings and the god to whom it is sacrificed. This knowledge is essential for the successful outcome of the ritual, for it is believed that a priest may render a ritual effective only through a knowledge of the nature of the sacrifice and the god to whom it is sacrificed (*Brhaddevata* 1. 1–21, Macdonnell 1904, 1–5). This knowledge is, so to speak, the Brahmin's special technology, which alone has the power to install the commissioner, i.e., the would-be king, on his throne.

The Thai coronation ritual is perplexing because it contains Brahmanic and Buddhist elements, symbolizing contradictory ideals in two quite different theories of kingship. Quaritch Wales, the author of *Siamese State Ceremonies*, sees the coronation ritual as a predominantly Brahmanic one and thus describes it as a process of installing a king by a high priest (Wales 1931). In Brahmanism, the ritual of royal installation, called the *Rajasuya*, is an extended and costly sequence of rites containing an intricate complex of symbols. In this ancient ritual there is no crowning. The ritual, on the whole, symbolizes and consecrates the king's rebirth as a god. The king partakes of a god's divinity and rules on earth as a deity ruling over mortals. He is, in short, a god-king (*devaraja*).

Prince Dhaninivat, in a small volume entitled *Phra Boromarachaphisek*, disagrees with Wales' interpretation of the god-king concept in the Thai coronation ritual. He states that Thai monarchs do not perceive themselves as god-kings, for they are Buddhists who attach only a superficial importance to the idea of divinity. Thai people, says Prince Dhaninivat, do not firmly believe that extrinsic rites and paraphernalia can turn a king into a god, like Siva. The Prince asserts, furthermore, that a Thai monarch's role is to protect and support religions. A king's divinity, associated with Siva in the Thai coronation ritual, is mainly ceremonial and secondary to the Buddhist ideals of kingship (Prince Dhaninivat 1946).

Some Western scholars, such as S. J. Tambiah and Richard Gombrich, look for and find Buddhist ideas and ideals of kingship in the often cited *Aggañña-sutta* of the *Dighanikaya*. This *sutta* is sometimes called the Buddhist book of Genesis because it tells of the origin of world, humans, and society. According to it, kingship originally arises from the need for good government. In the beginning humans live happily eating of the land where they do not toil for their subsistence. As time passes, they begin hording food and amassing private stores; they fall to fighting. A king is chosen because his morality and wisdom make him the ideal keeper of peace and justice in society. The function of a king is

precisely to prevent quarrels and hatred by insuring that goods are fairly apportioned and securely protected.

Scholars generally view the coronation ritual, like the concept of kingship, through discrete categories of Brahmanism and Buddhism: a rite is known by its features and its meanings as a Brahmanic or a Buddhist rite. Such a rite is analyzed according to the principles of one or the other religion, within its proper, respective cultural and social context. In this paper, I will suggest, however, that historically and at present Brahmanism and Buddhism, in all countries where both religions exist, share the same cultural milieu; their rites belong in the same functional and semantic continuum. Even where Brahmanism and Buddhism are most opposed, such as in their respective doctrines of the existence of the self, *atman*, and the nonexistence of the self, *anatman*, their arguments are complementary opposites, sharing the same fundamental assumptions, beliefs, and logical techniques. Showing the complementarity between these two religions, I will examine the rite of sprinkling, the *abhiseka*, which is central to the coronation ritual in Thailand. In this examination, features and meanings that are commonly shared by Buddhist and Brahmanic ritual semantics will be highlighted.

The idea of "abhiseka"

"*Abhiseka*" is derived from the Sanskrit root *siñc*, meaning "to sprinkle upon," or "to shower upon." Associated with water and the waters, the "sprinkling" is the heart of the coronation ritual consisting of a sequence of rites. The entire ritual can be schematically divided into five main parts:

1. preparing the lustral water to be sprinkled, engraving the king's name and birth chart, and carving his seal;

2. consecrating the water which has been collected from various rivers, this blessing being performed by monks reciting Buddhist mantras;

3. sprinkling a shower of water from the roof of the ritual pavillion onto the seated initiate's head, installing the king on the eight-sided throne made of fig wood (Thai อัฐทิศ Sanskrit *astadis*) where he sips water proffered by Brahmins and high officials, and finally installing him on the throne called ภัทรบิฐ (Skt. *Bhadrapitha*) where the king takes possession of his regalia and kingdom;

4. the new king appearing before the great assembly, installing the queen, declaring himself supporter of Buddhism, honoring the relics of former kings and queens, and inaugurating the palace;

5. undertaking royal processions by land and by water (see แสงสูรย์ ลดาวัลย์ 1983).

These processions are comparable to the ancient Indian *digvijaya*, or the king's victorious march in all directions to display his sovereignty over the kingdom.

When Thai kingdoms arose in Southeast Asia, the coronation ritual must have been a powerful technology imported by Brahmins who alone had the knowledge to invest a king with divinity, install him on the throne, and seal his rulership over a newly built or conquered city. A look at founding myths in the chronicles of old kingdoms reveals accounts of their origins in two paradigms, Buddhist and Brahmanic. City-founding myths of the Brahmanic model usully tell of an ascetic who miraculously raises a divine foundling to manhood and consecrates him by sprinkling as king over a city. The Buddhist model typically consists of the Buddha's prediction of a city's establishment. The story proceeds in this manner: At a certain time, the Buddha travels to a certain place and leaves an imprint of his august body there, predicting that at that spot made sacred by his presence a man will rise to power in the future. The king, founder of the city, is the very incarnation of that being so ordained by the Buddha's prophecy and destined to be anointed king. The monarch attains this status through lifetimes of storing up powers and perfections until he finally fullfills the Buddha's decree.

In the last one and a half centuries of modernization and adaptation to the international climate of scientific rationality and

technology, Theravada Buddhism, Thailand's state religion, is officially viewed as a "rational" religion. Thai intellectuals aver that its doctrines are based on critical analyses of reality acccording to the law of causality. Theravada Buddhism is officially presented as a religion characterized by an absence of devotion to a god: it not only discourages blind faith but indeed advises adherents to rely on reason to work out their own salvations according to their experiences and capabilities.

Buddhism as practiced in society, however, is far from being the rational religion described by its doctrines. While magic and mysteries are considered the art of Brahmins and Brahmanism, esoteric practices beyond the pale of the orthodox doctrines are revealed by studies to be prevalent in popular Buddhism (see Tambiah 1976; Terwiel 1969). In the case of the *abhiseka* ritual, the waters collected from rivers are combined in one vessel and consecrated by the Buddha's *mantra*, or พระพุทธมนตร์, recited by monks over the vessel. The Buddha's *mantras* are similarly recited for the sake of an auspicious performance of the main *abhiseka* rite. Such recitations are not an act consistent with "rationality." What, then, is the function of the Buddha's *mantras*? How do they become efficacious in this ritual?

Efficaciousness: transference and contagion

In order to understand this "extra-rational" function of Buddhist rites, and the duplication of Buddhist and Brahmanic segments in one ritual, it must be seen that the *abhiseka* is a general form common to Buddhist and Brahmanic ritual semantics. It becomes a particular rite with a specific function and meaning when used in a sequence of rites comprising an entire ritual process. A ritual sprinkling consecrates the king by transforming him from an ordinary mortal into a divinity, in identifying or unifying the king with a divine figure. In one ritual, the king may be identified with several gods in a sequence of rites; these gods are such as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, and Siva, for example. Similarly in Buddhism, the *abhiseka* consecrates the king's sacred status by identifying him with Buddhahood by transferring the Buddha's qualities to the king.

In the *Aitareya Brahmana*, it is explained that an *abhiseka* transfers a god's powers to the king. Because a god, anointed by a certain rite, was victorious, a king, anointed by the same rite, will be similarly victorious. A typical example can be seen in the *Indrabhiseka*. When the divine sacrificer Prajapati anoints Indra, it is stated that Indra

> ...became the supreme authority, as connected with Prajapati. Anointed with this great anointment Indra won all victories, found all the worlds, attained the superiority, pre-eminence and supremacy over all the gods, and having won the overlordship, the paramount rule, the self rule, the sovereignty, the supreme authority, the kingship, the great kingship, the suzerainty to this world, self-existing, self-ruling, immortal, in yonder world of heaven, having obtained all desires he became immortal. (*Aitareya Brahmana* 8.14, Keith 1920, 331)

It is said further:

> If he who knows thus should desire of a Ksatriya, 'May he win all victories, find all the worlds, attain the superiority, pre-eminence and supremacy over all kings, and overlordship, paramount rule, self rule, sovereignty, supreme authority, kingship, great kingship, and suzerainty; may he be all encompassing, possessed of all the earth, possessed of all life, from the one end to the further side of the earth bounded by the ocean, sole ruler,' he should anoint him with this great anointing of Indra (*Aitareya Brahmasna* 8.15, Keith 1920, 331).

The passage tells us that by this anointing the king will obtain all that Indra has obtained. The king becomes a great and immortal ruler, like Indra who became a great and immortal ruler because he was anointed by the very same rite.

In Brahmanism, interpretations of rituals made in the genre of literature called the *Brahmana* are further developed in later literature by the hermeneutical tradition called the *mimamsa*. No such tradition

exists in Buddhism. Monks are forbidden under pains of expulsion from the *Sangha* from using magic or boasting of their superhuman powers. Thus, their role in reciting the Buddha's *mantras* can be properly interpreted as a blessing which confers auspiciousness on the assembly. The meritorious force of the blessing derives from the Buddha himself; the powers of his auspicious person and his acts are transferred after his death to his relics, icons, and sacred texts. Finally, this force is passed on to the *Sangha* and individual monks who follow the Teacher into the religious life. When monks perform rites and recite *mantras*, the entire ritual enclave is encircled by a sacred thread (สายสิญจน์) secured to the Buddha's image. The efficacy of the *mantras* falls upon worshipers who are enclosed in the circle made by this thread. It is to be noted that the word "สิญจน์" (*siñc*) can be traced to the Indic root *siñc*, "to sprinkle," from which the word "*abhiseka*" is derived. "สายสิญจน์" literally means "the filament of sprinkling," i.e., the filament circumscribing the sprinkling.

In theory, no magical formulas can be recognized by the orthodox Theravada Buddhism, but monks regularly create lustral water to be used for sprinkling on various occasions, such as the inaugurations of businesses and buildings, the ceremonies for curing sicknesses and dispelling bad luck, and so on. According to a monk at Wat Suthat, mantras are คาถา selected from Buddhist sacred literature. Their efficacy issues from the power of the reciter's truthfulness (สัจจาภินิหาร). The paradigm for this mantraic efficacy consists in a vow once made by the Buddha that, by the force of his truthfulness, a body of water blessed by him be a cure for a cholera epidemic. A textual basis supplies this popular secondary elaboration of the miraculous curative efficacy of *mantras*: originally, the efficacious utterance take the form of a vow. In this way, Theravadins who are reluctant to believe in magic can rationally explain the efficacious nature of mantraic formulas.

Despite the "rational" explanation of the efficacy of verbal recitations, we see that in the installation ritual the lustral water produced by Buddhist *mantras* has the power to identify a king with the Buddha: for when a person becomes a king, his honorific title is พระพุทธ, meaning the "Lord Buddha." The king is considered an offspring, or a shoot of the Buddha (หน่อพระพุทธเจ้า). A common person addressing the king calls himself ข้าพระพุทธเจ้า, meaning, "the slave of the Lord Buddha."

After the coronation ritual, the king's person is sacred and unapproachable. Elaborate court protocol of the old days forbade contact with the king even by sight. Laws that used to absolutely segregate royals, nobles, and commoners were somewhat relaxed in the early period of modernization from the reign of King Rama IV onward. A king's majesty, the source of his forbiddenness, has two trajectories: he is the "Lord of life," on the one hand, and a refuge of the people through his meritorious powers and perfected virtues (บารมี) on the other (see เทพรัตนราชสุดา 2525, ch. 6).

Tambiah provides an answer for the transference of the Buddha's powers to the king. In Tambiah's study of Buddhist saints in Thailand, the author has found this transference in the form of charisma: transferred from the Buddha to saints and kings. The Weberian concept of "charisma" denotes the peculiar quality of an extraordinary, revolutionary leader, enabling them to bring about radical changes in a new paradigm. Charisma is defined as "the quality which is imparted to persons, actions, roles, institutions, symbols, and material objects because of their presumed connection with "ultimate,' 'fundamental,' 'ritual,' 'order-determining' powers" (See Tambiah 1984, ch. 21). Charisma, passed down from the Buddha, becomes institutionalized in kings who are perceived as incarnations of a *Bodhisattva*; charisma is also invested in forest saints who in turn bestow their charismatic powers to amulets and other potent objects. In millennial Buddhism, Tambiah finds that people may follow a charismatic leader believed to be charged with meritorious powers (ผู้มีบุญ). These charismatic figures are believed to be intimately linked with powers transferred from the Buddha, and they are often taken to be the future Buddha (พระศรีอาริย์) who will usher in the utopian society.

Tambiah's theory of the institutionalization of charisma in kings and saints is supported by

passages from Buddhist scripture. In the *Dighanikaya* 3.76, the Buddha predicts the advent of a wheel-turning, universal monarch (*cakkavattin*) who will arise at the same time as the future Buddha, Metteyya.

> Among such humans, brethren, at Ketumati the royal city, there will arise Sankha, a Wheel-turning king, righteous and ruling in righteousness, Lord of the four quarters, conqueror, protector of his people, possessor of the seven precious things. His will be these seven precious things, to wit, the Wheel, the Elephant, the Horse, the Gem, the Woman, one Housefather, the Councillor. More than a thousand also will be his offpsring, heroes, vigorous of frame, crushers of the host of enemy. He will live in supremacy over the earth to its ocean-bound, having conquered it not by the scourge, not by the sword, but by righteousness.
>
> At that period, brethren, there will arise in the world an Exalted One named Metteya Arahant, Fully Awakened, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, with knowledge of the world, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men, an Exalted One, a Buddha even as I am now." (*Cakkavattisihananada Suttanta* 26.24 , Rhys-Davids 1965, 3.76, p. 73).

In what sense is charisma passed down to saints and kings, so that they are said to be connected to the 'ultimate'? Charisma takes the form of the Buddha's prediction, for his prophecies, or his words (*buddhavacana*), are the living substance of the Buddha's presence. The Buddha's words are the body of *dhamma*; they are the material representation and successor of the once living Teacher. The *buddhavacana* extenuates the sacred time *in illo tempore*, when the historical Buddha was alive, because the Buddha had appointed his words, i.e., his *dhamma*, as his successor over a human disciple. Thus, a prophecy of a future king is an immanent substance that becomes materialized as reality in charismatic saints and kings. A Buddhist kingship is cast in the chronicles as an inevitable unfolding of the natural course, as foretold by the Buddha himself. Thus, in the history of Buddhist kingdoms, rulers and saints look back to the Buddha as the source of their inexplicable powers. They gain powers by an absolute faith in the original Buddha. They imitiate his acts, and conceive of their extraordinary successes as a derivation of the 'ultimate', 'fundamental' and 'world-ordering' powers of the Sakyamuni Buddha himself.

Because the Buddha's words are to be fullfilled by righteous kings whose advents have been prophesied, Buddhist scripture is a rich source of historical clues to the thought processes that underlie textual, artistic, and archeological remains produced by faith. To understand such kinds of evidence, we should discern the system of symbolic images that have grown out of centuries of Brahmanic and Buddhist interactions. These interactions leave their evidence not only in textual meanings, but in the linguistic, orthographic, and stylistic peculiarities of succeeding periods. Each later use of symbols and images harks back to earlier periods. Each layer of a text represents a new historical development evolving from previous layers.

Competing paradigms

Thai rulers in the past have made use of both Brahmanic and Buddhist rites of kingship. In his study of the Haripuñjaya temple in Lamphun, Donald Swearer observes that historical and legendary texts contain layers of Buddhist and Brahmanic accounts of the city's establishment, superseding each other in turn. Myths that enclose lesser gods in the fold of superior ones are not unique to Buddhist texts. When found in Hindu or Brahmanic material, they signal a tolerant rivalry between mutually inclusive gods, and between sects which use such accounts to glorify their titular deities who have other gods as attendants. The deities take turns occupying the paramount position, depending on the political fortunes of their followers. In the Lamphun chronicle, the story of King Adittaraja's enthronement reveals a supremacy of Buddhist over Brahmanic symbols of kingship. Swearer writes:

> "In the *Yonok Chronicle, Founding the Religion,* and the *Lamphun Chronicle,* the Buddhist layer of the chronicles tied to the Buddha's visit and the Buddha's relic is broken by the *rsi* and the Camadevi traditions. It is resumed again with the advent of Adittaraja in the year 409 of the Culasakara Era (i.e., 1047 AD)...
>
> As expected, the major event in the reign of Adittaraja is his discovery of the holy relic, related by the chronicler in a most humorous way. After the coronation ceremony in which the sovereign, Adittaraja, retired to his privy to relieve himself. It so happened that these quarters were built directly over the spot where the Buddha relic was being protected by the indigenous guardian of the soil and the black crow. The crow, being warned by the *deva* of the desecration due to take place, quickly flew over the king and let its drippings fall on his head... When the king had ascertained the cause of the crow's behavior, he had his privy demolished and the ground reconsecrated. He then prayed, "Servants of the Buddha of the magnificent destiny, Lord, I beg that you deliver all of us, Servants of the Master of the Sages. Lord, make the relic appear to us soon; show to us now this excellent marvel. Render us pure in the merit of our Buddha."
>
> With the above invocation of the relic, encased in Asoka's golden urn, appeared and emitted golden rays and perfume. Upon hearing Adittaraja's intention of moving it to another location, however, the relic disappeared into the earth." (Swearer 1975, 8-9)

Showing the supremacy of the Buddha's relic and lineage over the Brahmanic ceremony of coronation, this story signals the ascendency of Buddhism in the kingdom. Although the effects of the Brahmanic *abhiseka* are not totally cancelled out, they have to be further legitimized by the Buddha's relic and by the lineage of King Asoka. The story on the whole expresses the idea that the physical space of the kingdom has from an ancient past been pervaded by the Buddha's presence: it has been consecrated a Buddhist realm from a very early time. Thus, even though Adittaraja may have received a Brahmanic rite, his rulership is sanctioned utlimately by the Buddha's charisma in the form of a relic. The legend further expresses the idea that the legitimacy of Buddhist royalty is passed down through King Asoka's lineage, for Asoka was the ideal Buddhist who observed the *dhamma* and supported the Buddhist religion over Brahmanism. King Asoka first made Buddhist moral ideals a reality. By claiming a sanction bestowed by King Asoka's lineage, Thai Buddhist kings also aspired to live up to the exemplary stature of a paradigmatic, righteous, Buddhist monarch.

Buddhist rulers of Thailand have in the past sought to imitate the Buddha's acts. King Lithai's composition of the *Trai Phum Phra Ruang* was done in emulation of the Buddha who, it is said, went to preach the *dhamma* to his mother in heaven (Reynolds & Reynolds 1982, 10; 45–6). He proclaims himself a *Bodhisatta* who strives to build up the same kinds of *barami* as *Bodhisattas* in the past have done in order to become a Buddha (พัฒน์ เพ็งผลา 2528, 133). Buddhist kings commonly displayed the auspiciousness of their reigns by building temples and promoting *dhamma* throughout the realm. For a king's perfection of virtues (*barami*) is thought to be conspicuously displayed

in the kingdom's prosperity and morality.

Pious acts of kings have produced some of Thailand's finest lierature, when kings commissioned poets to compose quasi-sacred literary pieces in support of Pali literature. The *Mahachat Khamluang, Trai Phum Phra Ruang,* and many others, are some results of kings' pious acts. The *Ongkan Chaeng Nam,* said by some to be a first literary production of the Ayudhaya period, reveals traces of Buddhist literature and Buddhist theory of kingship at work:

> แลมีค่ำมีวัน
> กินสาลีเปลือกปล้อน
> บ่มีผู้ต้นแต่งบรรณา
> เลือกผู้ยิ่งยศเป็นราชาอคร้าว
> เรียกนามว่าสมมติราชเจ้า
> จึงตั้งท้าวเจ้าแผ่นดิน
> (การสัมมนาวิชาการ 1983, 5)
>
> And there are days and nights.
> [They] eat entirely chafless wheat
> without anyone trimming the leafy plants.
> They gladly choose as king a man of high honors
> naming him the Lord King by All's Consent,
> and thus set him up as lord of the land.[1]

These first few lines recall the *Agañña sutta* of the *Dighanikaya,* in which it is recounted that in the beginning days and night come into being, humans live happily without toil. Wheat grows by itself without planting, and wheat kernels have no chaff or germ. The epithet of the king, สมมติราชเจ้า (*sammatiratcao*), is precisely the nomenclature of the *Agañña sutta*'s Great Elect, or the *mahasammata* (See *Dighanikaya* 27.21, Rhys Davids 1965, 3.93, p. 88). Thus, while the *Katha Ongkan Chaeng Nam* begins by evoking Brahmanic gods Narayana, Isvara, and Brahma, it also refers to the Buddhist theory of kingship by naming the king the "Great Elect" as in the Buddhist myth of origin. Even in the Sukhothai era, these references to the *Agañña sutta* have already been made in the *Trai Phum Phra Ruang* by King Lithai (in 1345 AD), describing the evolution of the world and explaining that the king is a *Bodhisatta,* elected and anointed (อภิเษก) by the people to rule over them because of his superior physical, spiritual, and moral beauty (เทพรัตนราชสุดา 2525, 128).

The ritual semantics

In the shared ritual semantics of Buddhism and Brahmanism, an *abhiseka* is a ritual bath symbolic of washing away the old and inaugurating the new. During the Brahmanic New Year ceremony, Brahmins initially invite Siva down from Mt. Kailasa to reign over the earth. After celebrating the god's presence on earth, the priests enthrone the god by performing the rite of installation. At the end of this lengthy ritual, they send him back to heaven. The Brahmins chant and rock his chariot gently, as the god floats back to heaven (see Kuanpoonpol 1990).

The ritual of Siva's installation is in essence not different from a king's coronation ritual. Anointing Siva, the worshipers bring bottles of perfume which the officiating Brahmins pour over the Siva image placed on his throne. The throne is a diagrammatic representation of Mt. Kailasa. Perfumes offered by worshipers are poured over the image, collected, and returned in their bottles to the donors at the end of the ceremony. Each portion of the returned perfume is now lustral water: it is sacred because because it has been in contact with the presence of the deity. It has been used and left over by the god; it is an *ucchista* contaminated by the god's body and therefore imbued with his charisma. An *ucchista,* a leftover, polluted by contact with an ordinary person, is blessed by a touch of the divine.

In Buddhism, the Buddha's body is a source of charisma passed

on to all things that touch him, or that are used and left over by him. The physical body of the Buddha, the *buddhakaya*, after his death becomes the *dhamma*, which comprises words thought to have been spoken by him.

> Then the Bhagavan addressed the venerable Ananda: "It may be, Ananda, that some of you will think, 'The word of the Teacher is a thing of the past; we have now no Teacher,' But that, Ananda, is not the correct view. The Doctrine and the Discipline, Ananda, which I have taught and enjoined upon you is to be your teacher when I am gone." (*Mahaparinibbanasutta* (v & vi) of the *Dighanikaya*, Warren 1984, 107)

Thus, the recitation, or even mere physical presence of scripture, ushers in what Mircea Eliade calls *"illud tempus."* Speaking and hearing the *dhamma* recreate the real and original time, the center that emits all other times and to which they return again and again.

The original time is the Buddha's historical lifetime. It is the time when his perfections culminate in enlightenment and all his different lives converge into one life. For it is then that the Buddha remembers all his past lives and foresees all future lives. This is the time of the beginning of history, when all secular cities and future kings are born from his predictions; it is only a matter of time before they become a reality. The containment of times *in illo tempore* is also the mode of *jataka* stories: in these moral tales, causes take their effects in the lives of ordinary people. But, in the end the Buddha tells us, "I was so-and-so...," and back we go to the original time when the Buddha sits on his throne and holds all the cosmos in his knowledge.

In scripture, the Buddha's body is described in literally glowing terms: his inner powers issue through the top of his crown as a rising flame (*usnisa*). Rays of light emanate from parts of his body which glows with a golden light illuminating entire assemblies. In city-founding myths, an object touched by the Buddha, such as a half-eaten fruit or a ground touched by his foot, is an *ucchista* which lends its powers and auspiciousness to the founding of that city. The Buddha's footprint is an *ucchista*, a contamination that brings the Buddha's bodily presence to bear on an uncultured space and renders it cultured (*ariya*) territory, tamed by the Buddha's religion and claimed by his followers.

Like a Siva image bathed in the New Year's ceremony, Buddha images are also bathed on the Buddhist New Year (*songkran* สงกรานต์). The ceremony is called *song nam phra phuttharup* (สรงน้ำพระพุทธรูป), which may take place inside the hall of a monastery or in open air. After bathing the images, people go on to visit relatives and sprinkle them with perfume. At the same time young people sprinkle or douse with each other with water in an atmosphere of merry-making in the street. Thus, it is evident that the act of sprinkling is a general ritual form which is performed as a particular rite in various ritual contexts. In a particular context, it is placed in a sequence of rites as required by the design of the entire ritual.

In a comment on the Thai New Year, Sathiankoset (see เสฐียรโกเศศ 2525), noticing the similarity between Buddhist and Brahmanic *abhiseka*, calls the ceremony of the *song nam phra phuttharup* by a Sanskrit name of *"visesarghya,"* meaning a particular, respectful offering of water to a guest. In this context, "particular" may mean that the water is offered in a special context. Originally such an offering is made as a gesture of hospitality to a guest: the water is given for washing the feet and for drinking after a journey. In the classical Indian tradition, it is a common ritual: a householder is duty-bound to attend to a guest who arrives at his home, greeting him with water, i.e., the *arghya*.

Contamination and exchange through water

In particularized contexts of sprinkling, or proffering of water, the *abhiseka* is a rite of anointing by water. On the New Year's day, a sacred image, of the Buddha or of Siva, is bathed for the sake of blessing and consecrating a new year about to be born. This ritual renders a formless time formal: it brings an unknown time into the Buddhist realm of cultured and measured conceptions of temporality. The consecration is a rite in the form of contaminating the New Year by a sacred body: A Buddha image or an icon comes on contact with the water which becomes the lustral water, possessing the charisma of the sacred and passing it on to people and things.

Just as the bathing of the Buddha image consecrates the New Year, the *abhiseka* of a king consecrates his reign over the kingdom. The sprinkling of water is a ritual exchange in which the ruler is consecrated together with the ruled. The contact made by the flow of water is also a contract between the two parties touched by it. The waters collected from various parts of the country and proffered to the king represent the land and its people. The waters combined into one sacred water are showered on the king's person, as an offering of the essence and allegiance by the kingdom and its people. The king, bathing and drinking from the sacred water, in turn imbues the land with the presence of his body. The powers and efficacy of his person contaminate the realm and dominate it. At the same time, the king promises in turn to protect and rule his kingdom justly. A mutual binding of the king with his kingdom, signified by this rite of *abhiseka*, is theoretically elaborated in the *Manudharmasastra*, as well as in the Buddhist "Tenfold duty of kings" (ทศพิธราชธรรม).

A king, according to the Brahmanic *Dharmasastra*, is the wielder of the chastising rod: he rules by meting out punishments to transgressors who disrupt the communal welfare. In the Thai coronation ritual, from the reign of King Rama V onward, the king utters a verbal acceptance to rule justly and to be a refuge for all his subjects.

Thus, from its inception Buddhism has given an account of spiritual and secular aspects of rulership: governing by a moral religion is inseparable from government by secular laws. In the above-cited canonical passage (*Dighanikaya* 26.24), the Buddha foretells an ideal time in which the future king will rule by righteousness rather than by the sword. It is to be remembered that the Buddha himself is not only a teacher but also a universal king. In Buddhism, religion and society have been enmeshed in the dialectic of the world-renouncing and world-conquering roles of the Buddha (see Tambiah 1976). In Brahmanism the spiritual leadership is assigned to Brahmins and rulership to kings. In Buddhism, the king governs a just society and turns the wheel of moral law leading to spiritual knowledge. The core of Buddhism implies a natural reciprocity between just rulership and pious morality. Many rulers in Thai history have aspired to fulfill the secular and religious goals of bringing about a good society through their exemplary conduct.

Note

1. My translation. See also the same in *Ongkan Chaeng Nam Chabab Chiang Phram*, transliterated by Niyada Laosunthorn and Michael Wright in *ศิลปวัฒนธรรม(?)*. In this Chiang Phram manuscript, despite variants the substance is essentially the same. See also พระราชพิธีถือน้ำพิพัฒน์สัตยา. หม่อมหลวงปีย์ มาลากุล. พิมพ์ในงานศพของ พ.ต.ต. กฤช สังขะทรัพย์ 4 ธันวาคม 2511, 58.

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The Regional Folk Dances of Thailand

MOM DUSDI PARIBATRA NA AYUTHYA
TRANSLATED BY M.R. SUPRABHADA KASHEMSANT
ILLUSTRATED BY CHOOMPOL TRIKRUTHBANDHU

The culture of Thailand differs somewhat from region to region, as different ethnic or tribal groups provide differing traditions and patterns of living. Thai folk dances reflect these basic regional differences, and therefore an account of the dances arranges itself naturally according to geographic regions. Beginning with the north, which is represented by three dances, next four dances from the northeast, then three from the central provinces, and finally three from the far south.

Although in some respects these dances resemble each other, each region has its typical and distinctive characteristics. The dances of the north are marked by a special hand movement, in which the dancer holds her wrists together and swivels her hands in a circular motion without separating the wrists. The northeastern dancers' hands move actively, but without the touched wrists of the north, and torso bends and sways in a circular motion. In central Thailand the dancing is strongly influenced by the stylized movements of the classical dance, and so body, hand, and finger movements are in the classical style, graceful and slow. Southern dances call for more movements of the hips and feet than do those of other regions, and are of faster tempo. Their musical accompaniment tends toward the European style and the dances themselves at times seem to use European steps.

Instruments used in the various regions include the xylophone, the *kaen* (a reed mouth organ), gong, cymbals, rhythm sticks, and several kinds of drums.

For a number of years the author has been working to foster an interest in Thailand's regional dances, some of which have been virtually unknown in Bangkok and are in danger of dying out. She found that nothing at all had been published about these dances, and the compilation of this material was undertaken to fill the gap. Most of the information has been obtained from school teachers in all parts of the country. For their invaluable and painstaking research the author wishes to express her deep gratitude and appreciation. She is especially grateful for the interest and support of the America Charities Fund, which sponsored the project and has contributed 15,200 baht for publication costs. She wishes also to thank the committee for editorial assistance in producing the English version of the text. Special thanks are due to M.R. Suprabhada Kashemsant, who wrote the text in English.

The North

North Thailand, much of which formed the ancient kingdom of Chiengmai, is rich in folk dances (called *fawns* in the north) of various types. To name a few, there are the *Finger Nail Fawn*, the *Candle Fawn*, the *Ngiew Fawn*, the *Witch Doctor* or *Spirit Fawn*, and many hill tribe dances. All these dances, whether native to Chiengmai or introduced from neighboring countries, owe their popularity to Prince Kaew Navarathana, a ruling prince of Chiengmai about a century ago, and Princess Dara Rasmi one of the consorts of King Chulalongkorn. They commanded the chief court dancers to introduce new movements and steps based on those of traditional court ballet. These stylized versions of traditional *fawn* were danced before state visitors. Since that time, the northern *fawn* dances have been used not only for their original purpose, to celebrate festivals and religions ceremonies, but also for the entertainment of honored guests.

The musical instruments used originally were the pipe and drum, to which Prince Kaew added the xylophone, the gong and cymbals.

The Finger Nail Fawn

Perhaps the best known of a northern dances are the *Finger Nail Fawn* and the closely related *Candle Fawn*. In these dances the tempo and movements are slow, with eight to ten steps being taken to one movement. The torso is held fairly still, with emphasis on arm and finger movement. A frequently recurring dance figure is the rotation of the hands in opposite directions by swiveling them on a base formed by joining the wrists together. These fawn are closely connected with Buddhist religious observances, especially with merit-making customs. Every Buddhist merit-making occasion, such as a temple celebration, has a *fawn* to go with it, and to participate in the *fawn* is itself a form of merit-making.

A frequent form of village merit-making is the repairing of the village temple after the rainy season. The completion of repairs is marked by a temple festival, one of whose principal features is the dancing of the *fawn*. Gifts for the priests are collected, such as medicine, water containers, brooms, robes and money. On festival day these are borne in procession to the temple on splendidly decorated wagons, which are often converted

THE PU THAI FAWN

THE MO-LAM

THE THRESHING POLE DANCE

into mobile picture galleries depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha or from literature. The gift-bearing procession is preceded by a troupe of eight or ten girls dancing the *Finger Nail Fawn*. At cross roads or at densely populated places the procession stops so that the dancers can execute the more intricate steps of the dance. At the temple another troupe of dancers is on hand to welcome the procession. The two troupes then unite, lead the procession through the gate of the temple grounds, and dance around the temple itself. The distribution of gifts is last on the program, after the dancers have stopped.

The required costume for a *Finger Nail Fawn* dancer is an upswept hairdo, a flower behind the ear, a long-sleeved jacket, a long, straight skirt with horizontal stripes, and eight-inch-long false finger nails. Each pair of dancers wears the same color dress. Booming long drums beat out the rhythm for the performers.

The Candle Fawn differs from the *Finger Nail Fawn* only in some of the hand and finger movements. The dancers carry lighted candles between their third and fourth fingers and do not wear false finger nails. This dance is usually performed at night when the lighted candles are most effective.

Learning to dance the *fawn* is a time-honored tradition in the north for all young girls. When they reach the age of fourteen or fifteen, their mothers customarily take them to the courtyard of the temple, where the women take turns teaching them the art of the dance for a few hours at a time. On moonlit nights, drums resound throughout the temple grounds. Young boys dance and sing to the beat of the drums and young girls practice the *fawn* while the older members of their families look on. A pretty girls who becomes a good *fawn* dancer is honored by being chosen as a temple dancer. Come festival time, she has the chance to display her face and figure as well as her dancing abilities, and thus attract potential suitors. The ranks of the temple dancers constantly have to be refilled, for a *fawn* dancer usually performs only one or two seasons before marrying. It is evident that learning to dance the *fawn* has both a religious and a social purpose.

The Ngiew Fawn

The *Ngiew Fawn* is one the least known of northern dances, but nevertheless perhaps the gayest, though not as graceful as the *Finger Nail Fawn*. The *Ngiew* are a people who came originally from the Shan States in Burma, bringing with them a style of dancing which was carefree and masculine. Their *fawn* was originally danced only by men, but was modified to suit the court ladies of King Chulalongkorn's day. Thus what is known now as the traditional *Ngiew Fawn* is actually a happy combination of feminine grace with the free masculine movements of the original dance. The dance movements are still considered more suitable for men, however, because they include swaying and flexing of the upper torso and shoulders, and the dancing alternates with jumping. The dance aims at producing a comical effect.

In the original masculine version, the men's costume was trousers and no shirt, with a turban tied on one side of the head into a half bow. In the modified version, women dancers who participate keep the turban but wear long-sleeved blouses, and skirts wrapped between the legs to resemble trousers but ending in a bustle. Blouses and trousers are in bright, contrasting colors.

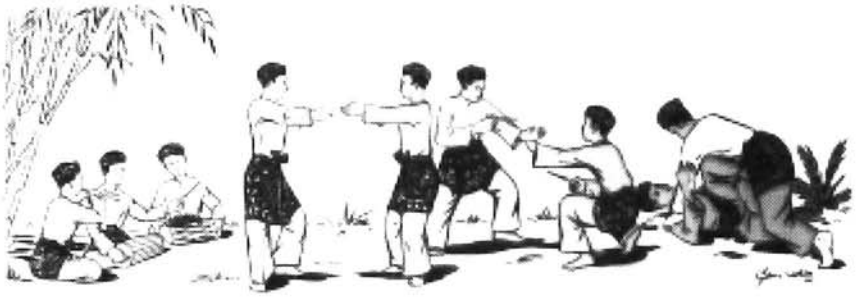
Instruments used are the xylophone, gong, drums, and cymbals.

The Northeast

Northeasterners are not natural *fawn* dancers as are the northerners, but they are talented in poetry and music. Thus northeastern dances are usually accompanied by singing in the native *aew* style, a chanting of verses with drawn out vocalization at the beginning and end of each verse. Instruments used are also more varied than those of the north, for in addition to drums, cymbals, and gongs, northeasterners also often use the *kaen* (a type of reed mouth organ), a stringed instrument called the *soong*, which is plucked, and rhythm sticks.

There are four distinctive regional dances: the *Mo-Lam*, the Threshing Pole Dance, the *Pu-Thai Fawn*, and the Ton Drum Dance, or *Ram Ton*. The basic movements of all these

THE RAM TON



THE DAGGER DANCE

THE RONG NGENG

dances consist of bending and swaying the torso in a circular motion, waving the arms in front of the body without the finger movements of the classical dances, and forward steps accented by emphatic thrusts of the body, jerking of the legs, and wriggling of the waist and shoulders. The delicate grace of the northern *fawn* dancers is missing, but it is replaced by an air of simple fun and gaiety.

The dances are usually performed at an annual festival called *Boon Bong Fi*, which accompanies a rain-making ceremony. The signal for the festival to begin is the lighting of a bamboo rocket (the *Bong Fi*). Then the musicians begin to play and the dancers get into step. The ceremony is concluded with a fireworks display.

The Ram Ton

Although the origin of the *Ram Ton* or Ton Drum Dance is not definitely known, it is generally believed to come from Nakorn Rajasima (Korat), one of the principal cities of the northeast. The *ton* drum is usually made of baked clay, and has a cow hide or a snake skin stretched over one end. As the *ton* drums beat out the rhythm, aided by cymbals and rhythm sticks, dancers in pairs move slowly around a wide circle, swaying as they move. The dancers do not touch their partners, but use their eyes in a kind of stylized flirtation or courtship. The dancing couples often break out of the circle and dance to the homes of friends and acquaintances.

Men dancers wear trousers and shirt in contrasting color, augmented by a brilliant sash about the waist. Women wear the usual long, straight skirt and long-sleeved blouse, also in contrasting shades, plus a colorful scarf draped over one shoulder. A flower behind the ear completes the costume.

In former times there was no singing to accompany the *Ram Ton* as there is today. Then the dance came to be used at gatherings of young men and women where popular songs and lyrics specially composed for these occasions were sung. The present day *Ram Wong*, as introduced by the Fine Arts Department, is a refinement of the *Ram Ton*.

The Threshing Pole Dance

A traditional dance at festivals in the northeast province of Surin is the *Ten Sag* or Threshing Pole Dance. Equipment for the dance consists of four wooden poles used in threshing rice, two of the poles measuring two and one half meters in length, and the other two being only one and one half meters long. The shorter poles serve as cross-wise rests for the longer poles, which are clapped together in time to the music by two seated rhythm beaters. The dancers, in couples, dance in a circle around the clapping poles till their turn comes to approach the clappers. They must then step into the space between the poles at the precise moment the rhythm beaters move the poles apart, then dance out before the poles are clapped together. Anyone who misses the beat will be clapped on the ankles by the poles. At times the dancers perform some steps between the poles while the rhythm beaters raise and lower the poles on their cross rests instead of clapping them together.

This dance gives opportunity for competitive skill and quite a lot of teasing. The two rhythm beaters, usually men, are very careful with the female dancers. It one of them misses a beat, the blow she receives from the clapping poles is rarely hard enough to bruise her ankles, whereas an error on the part of a male dancer is punished with a hard knock which causes much merriment.

The steps of the dance are very simple, but the tempo varies. The slower the beat, the more difficult it is to dance to; the fast tempo is the most popular. The dance is usually brought to an end by a skilled male dancer who delights the audience by clowning as he performs the steps.

The accompanying instruments are a pipe and two *ton* drums, which provide the beat for the clapping poles.

The dancers wear costumes similar to those worn for the *Ram Ton*. Besides the sash the men also loosely drape a stole from one shoulder across the chest to the other shoulder. The women secure the scarf in a fold at the waist.

In the modern version of this dance

THE SAPIN DANCE

THE NGIEW FAWN

THE FINGERNAIL FAWN

practiced in the central provinces, three principal changes are found. A lighter bamboo pole replaces the heavy threshing pole; the simple steps of the classical dance are used instead of the free movement of the Northeast, and the clown ending of the dance is eliminated.

The Pu-Thai Fawn

The *Pu-Thai* are former Laotian tribes who settled in the northeast, mainly in the provinces of Nakorn Panom, Sakolnakorn, and Udorn. The *fawn* is performed in the larger villages of these provinces to welcome honored guests. The dancers sing blessing and dance alternately. Customarily this *fawn* is performed by a large troupe of dancers preceded by a file of drummers. The drums vary in size from the largest, which must be carried by special bearers, to the smallest, which can be thrown like a ball. The drummer strikes the drum in a variety of ways, with his knees, elbows, fists, or heels, as well as with his palms. Large and small cymbal, a gong, and rhythm sticks are also used. The *kaen* (mouth organ) carries the melody from beginning to end.

The movements of the dance are those described in the introduction to this section, along with an up and down movement of the torso peculiar to this dance. Long false finger nails ten to twelve inches in length with bright colored pom poms at the tips emphasize the swaying movements of the arms and torso.

The *Pu-Thai* of each province have different costumes and hair styles. *Pu-Thai* women from Nakorn Panom cover their hair with turbans, while those from Sakolnakorn and Udorn pile their hair high and use flowers as ornaments. But all wear a similar blouse, which is invariably long-sleeved and black in color. With these the women wear silver necklaces and buttons made of silver coins. Their skirts, also black, are worn long and end in a wide bond of embroidery stitched in silver thread.

The Mo-lam

The *Mo-lam* is a popular form of song-dance typical of the rural villages of the northeast. It is actually a style of singing to which the dancing is incidental. It originated from the ancient practice of singing the stories of the various incarnations of the Buddha, later the music of the *kaen* was added as an accompaniment, and other stories and legends and rhymed debates were added to the song repertoire. The singing eventually became a form of courting, and dance movements were included.

The dance movements are very simple. The participants usually sway their torsos and arms in time to the music but confine their foot movements to one spot. It is not an active dance, the main emphasis being on the song. As the *Mo-lam* is now basically a courting song, only young unmarried people participate. A typical Laotian style costume is worn for the *Mo-lam*, with the women wearing the traditional long-sleeved black blouse. The long skirts are usually pulled up high at the sides. Hair may be worn in a high chignon ornamented with flowers, or hanging loose with a flower behind the ear.

The Central Provinces

The Central Provinces have very few folk dances of their own, due perhaps to the great development of the classical dance in this area. Such folk dances as there are seem to have been adapted from the dances of other regions, with the adaptation essentially a beautifying and sophistication of the bodily movements. Thus the Ton Drum dance became Bangkok's *Ram Wong*, and another northeastern dance, the Threshing Pole Dance, became the central provinces' Bamboo Pole Dance. Although there are several traditional dances, their movements are of the classical type, and they can thus not be considered true folk dances.

The Long Drum Dance

The *terd terng* or long drum is thought to have originated with the Mons, an ancient people some of whose descendants still live in eastern Burma and western Thailand. The Burmese adopted this instrumnet from the Mons and in turn introduced it into Thailand seventy or eighty years ago, in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Today the drum is used in Thailand for dances having Burmese characteristics and for certain festivals, such as

THE CANDLE FAWN

THE SWORD DANCE

THE LONG DRUM DANCE

harvest, homage to Buddha (*kathin*), and ordination.

A long drum is made from a whole tree trunk carved into the required shape. Cow or goat hide is stretched over one end and is held in place by leather thongs. The drum is then decorated by gaily colored pleated and frilled cloth. A strap is provided for the drummer, who slings it across his right shoulder so that the drum slants upward and can be manipulated easily. The drummers use their elbows and knees as well as their hands to beat their instruments, and vie with the cymbalists in producing the accompaniment for a lively dance is vigorous and free, with some modifications in the classical style. The tempo and the free movement of the dance are very popular and new dances are being created for the long drum constantly.

The playing of the long drum is associated with a time of fun and gaiety. In former days it played a special part in the ordination ceremony. Long drums led the procession taking a candidate for the priesthood to the temple. They were beaten at their loudest at the moment the candidate stepped into the temple, thus drowning out the voices of any evil spirit who might try to tempt him away from joining the priesthood.

The Ram Song

The Song Dance or *Ram Song* has its roots in the Laotian province of Sam Neua, traditional home of the Song tribe. Like the *Pu-Thai*, the Song emigrated from Laos into northeastern and central Thailand when Vientiane fell to the Thai armies of King Rama I, nearly two hundred years ago. They are to be found today mainly in the provinces of Pijit, Saraburi, Petchaburi, and Rajaburi. The Songs of these provinces are known as the Black Song or *Lao Song Dahm*, wearers of black. (A tribe wearing red would be known as *Lao Song Dang*, wearers of red.)

The dress worn by the *Lao Song Dahm* resembles that worn by other Thai tribes of Laotian origin, such as the *Pu-Thai*. The women wear the long-sleeved black blouse and long skirt, but Song women wear their skirts gathered up high in front. They are fond of silver ornaments, such as bracelets, anklets, necklaces, and buttons of silver coins. The men wear jackets like the Chinese jacket, but tied with string instead of buttoned down the front. They wear trousers rather than *sarong* and on festive occasions wear a stole thrown across the shoulders. Teen-age girls wear their hair at shoulder length. At the age of twenty, a woman puts her hair up in a chignon twisted to one side, but with one coil of hair sticking out to show she is unmarried. A married woman knots her hair neatly.

At festival time, men and women gather to dance in a communal courtyard in the center of village. They dance in couples, their basic movements consisting of swaying their bodies and moving their hands and arms up and down. A soloist, sometimes male, sometimes female, sings lyrics in praise of love or beauty to the accompaniment of a *kaen*. There are no other instruments; the audience claps its hands to help the dancers maintain the rhythm. Sometimes a group of male and female singers sing courting songs and clap the rhythm while gently swaying in a standing position. When finished singing, they will dance about, then alternate the singing and dancing.

The Sword Dance or Art of Self Defense

A form of art that is uniquely Thai is that of self-defense. This comprises boxing and the use of the sabre and staff, as taught from generation to generation with few changes down to this day and age. Originating in the era when Sukhothai was the capital of Thailand, it was developed into a fine art when Ayuthya replaced Sukhothai as the seat of government. *Pra Chao Sua* (The Tiger King) appreciated it so much that command contests were often held for his pleasure. Again, history tells us of another golden age of the art in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Self-defense contestants would duel before the king on every possible occasion, including tonsure ceremonies and cremations. It was during the reign of this fifth king of the Bangkok era that several groups achieved prominence. From these, camė two outstanding teachers, *Kru* (teacher) *Sri* and *Kru Chid*. Lieutenant Commander Charoen Trairat studied under these two experts and afterwards set up his own group which he called Suan Anand. This group later

THE RAM SONG

became known as the Sri Trairat with headquarters at Tumbon Chang Lor, Dhonburi. This is the only group trained in the authentic traditions of the ancient art in the entire kingdom.

To get back to history and the origin of the art, it is necessary to point out the fact that it began as a means of preparing for war. In times of peace every able-bodied man, with no exception, was called upon to be as proficient as possible in the use of all known weapons. As practising was compulsory it was only natural for friendly duels and matches to be arranged that would bring out the champions who were judged by their beauty of movement as well as bravery. These tournaments also served as morale boosters apart from the pleasure they gave. It was specifically understood by the contestants the duels were of a friendly nature, therefore the choice of weapons was towards those that were not so likely to cause wounds, such as soft sabres, or padded swords. The modern age tends towards realism, hence swords of cane or steel, which provide for more thrills.

Before coming to grips, both parties perform a ritual dance to the accompaniment of a pipe and a drum. The first movement of the dance is the honoring of the teacher who taught the art (if performed before the king, he must be honored too, according to customs). A triple reason exists for the preliminary dance; one, to enable the opponents to assess each other's skill, another, to build up their courage, and lastly, it gives each man the opportunity to check up on the other to see that no protecting armour or padded quilt is worn. Presumably, one who is encumbered by such safety devices would not be a light dancer.

The accompaniment and the movements of the dance (called *Mai Rum*) differ according to the weapons used. The instruments used are the Javanese pipe, the Javanese drum and small cymbals to give the beat.

The South

Except for a dance called the *Manora*, forerunner of the well-known Thai classical dance, the only folk dances of southern Thailand are those of the Muslim Thai. These dances have come from other countries and their style shows western influence. The

performers use leg, foot, and arm movements similar to those used in European folk dances. The tempo of the music, unlike that of other parts of the country, is fast.

The Muslim Thai men wear a turban wrapped neatly about the head, along-sleeved, high collared jacket, pants and a short *sarong*. The women wear a colorfully patterned skirt and long-sleeved cutaway jacket. The materials and designs show Malayan or Indonesia characteristics.

The Rong Ngeng

The *Rong Ngeng* is a folk dance of the four southern, or Muslim, provinces of Thailand. It was brought from Indonesia by Malayan actors about seventy years ago. It is danced as an accompaniment to several different songs, each song having its own dance variation.

Originally, the *Rong Ngeng* was a popular Indonesian court dance. Beautiful court ladies were trained to dance it with guests at royal parties. The dance first appeared in south Thailand with a dance drama called *Ma Yong*, introduced by Malayan actors. The *Rong Ngeng* was danced during the intermissions of the drama, and members of the audience were invited to join in the dance. Finally it became so popular that it developed into one of the folk dances of the region.

The *Rong Ngeng* is danced to various folk songs whose basic rhythm rather resembles that of a samba. The melody is carried by a guitar or violin, with gongs and drums beating out the rhythm. The lyrics are usually sung in the Thai-Muslim dialect and each song has its own distinctive rhythm and dance steps. The basic steps were probably derived from the Portuguese, which accounts for a certain similarity to western dancing, especially in the foot and hip movements. The arm and hand movements are graceful but not stylized in the classical manner. Even though the male and female dancers sing a courting song while dancing together, they never touch each other. A modern variation of the dance permits the crossing of a single finger between a man and a woman as they perform the dance together.

The Sapin Dance

This dance of Arabian origin was brought to southern Thailand by Malayans who taught it to the Muslim Thai. It is not so popular as the *Rong Ngeng*, hence is performed only rarely. It may be performed at especially happy occasions, such as weddings. It is not considered a social dance for men and women as is the *Rong Ngeng*, and the dancers are usually men. They maintain an almost military bearing in the dance, with the torso held rigid and with very little arm movement.

The instruments vary with each locale. Sometimes the instruments, as well as the tunes and rhythms, are those of western Malaya. In Sungaikolog district the entire accompaniment is provided by a set of drums beating out the rhythm in unison.

The Dagger Dance

The Dagger Dance of the south takes the form of a mock duel using the Malayan *kris*, a two edged steel knife about eight inches long with a handle of ivory, wood, or horn. The dueler has the choice of using a single k*ris* in one hand or two *kris*, one in each hand. As in Thai boxing, the opponents begin with a warm-up dance and pay reverence to their instructors. The movements of the dance tend toward the Balinese style and simulate actual fighting. The tempo slows down or quickens according to the progress of the duel. Besides using their daggers, the opponents can bring their arms and legs in to play as they wish. The musical instruments used are an Indian flute, two Indian drums, and a gong.

This dance is performed only on special occasions, such as a royal command performance or a state visit.

Public Theatre in Singapore
Present and Future

ROBERT LAU

I would like to say at the outset that I am totally incompetent to discuss public theatre in Singapore or indeed anywhere else. I have no experience in running a theatre company or an arts centre nor have I trodden the boards for the last twenty-plus years. Although I do occasionally partake of the offerings provided by some of the arts groups in Singapore, I cannot be considered as one of their enthusiastic and dedicated supporters who throng to each and every one of their productions. My sole link to the theatre is my good fortune to have a niece who is a playwright, among her other more esoteric and creative activities, and whose work for the theatre often drew gasps of admiration from an unschooled person such as I.

Being a total ignoramus about the theatre allows me the privilege of choosing any of the theatre-related areas on which to build my case. This will allow me to avoid troublesome areas where my lack of knowledge could lead me into tricky debate from which I could not escape unscathed.

Over the past two years, I have been privileged to have been asked to take a role in the development of the Singapore Arts Centre, now formally named as *The Esplanade—Theatres on the Bay*. This is a real challenge as can be imagined. Although I have been involved in a somewhat marginal way during my checkered career in the development of office buildings, hotels, institutional buildings and condominiums, I have never attempted to build a theatre. *The Esplanade* has a total of five theatres of various sizes and you can imagine my consternation when I was asked to undertake this assignment.

These plans represent the outcome of a substantial amount of dialogue and interactive sessions with the arts groups in Singapore. In addition, experts and practitioners in Asian performing art forms from Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, India, China were also invited to share their visions, knowledge and experiences.

One of the most significant outcomes of such dialogue and exchanges was the confirmation that indigenous arts and theatre are in a dynamic state of change. This is reflected in the range of suggestions put forward by the artistes for facilities in *The Esplanade* and the ambiance, possible configuration and character of the working spaces they would like to have for their use. There were serious debates over the transition made by Asian performing arts from their traditional outdoor spaces into enclosed theatre halls and vice versa. There were suggestions for provision of meditation spaces where artistes could focus their thoughts and spirit before a performance. There were requests for variable sized proscenium and orchestra pits, forestage, thrust stage and a whole host of other combinations.

In terms of designing an arts centre for the next millennium, this flood of requests and suggestions may appear to be insurmountable obstacles. In the finite world of absolutes, as in structures and buildings, the amorphous quality of creativity often result in the building of a facility which does not meet any of the anticipated needs. There is a distinct danger of ending up with a series of multi-purpose halls.

It is important to understand why this plethora of suggestions occurred. When designing the Shakespeare Theatre at the Barbican Centre, the needs of Kathikali obviously did not figure high on the list of priorities. Similarly, the design of the Myerson Symphony Hall at Dallas, Texas, did not have to pay too much attention to the acoustical demands of instruments ranging from the nose harp to Korean drums. They have been designed to respond to fairly specific performance needs.

The perceived need of any theatre or performing space is strongly influenced by the cultural fabric of the society or community in which the facility is located. Where the fabric is mature, stable and predictable, the process of designing an arts centre would be aimed at meeting the working and patronage needs of a relatively homogenous artiste community and audience support base.

The relative simplicity of this is clearly not applicable to theatres designed for the Asian milieu, particularly in countries which possess significant proportions of migrant population from diverse origins and strongly influenced by decades, if not centuries, of foreign domination.

Foreign domination does not relate only to domination in economic and military affairs. Lifestyles and indeed the attitude of the subjugated people underwent changes, some subtle and others quite startling in their eventual impact. Languages and cultures had been known to have disappeared and an entire people de-culturalised to the extent that apart from physical attributes, they bear no resemblance in any respect to the society from which they originally came.

The economic successes of countries in Asia over the last two decades have diffused into cultural consciousness. There is a greater sense of self-awareness and confidence. With this comes a heightened sense of identity and curiosity over origins and values. Questions are being asked and debates initiated on the rationalisation of some foreign cultures and values which could be alien to the beliefs and practices long entrenched in the philosophy and value system in this part of the world.

Expanding business interests in the region and globally have brought about a stark realisation of the importance of one's roots. Overseas Indians and Chinese seeking business opportunities in their respective lands of origin have been known to prioritize opportunities in their own provinces, districts and even towns from which their forebears originally came. Some might consider this a form of chauvinism, but it made a lot of good business sense to forge relationships with those who share the same language, dialect and values.

With such networking, an increase in awareness and interest in matters cultural, in the broadest sense, must inevitably occur. Under the supremacy of colonial masters, a performance of Teochew opera or Manipuri dances may be seen merely as an expression by the locals longing for a sense of identity in a foreign land. But if one has a number of factories or businesses in

Guangzhou or Manipur, such performances take on new and significant dimensions. The impact and relevance of such performances begin to strike much closer to the core and focus interest in their intrinsic worth, even if it is initially for material reasons.

This trend could similarly be observed at the international level. With prospects of becoming an economic power house of the 21st century, there has never been so much interest shown in things Asian by the Western countries than now. Western businessmen operating in South East Asia can be expected to increasingly speak Bahasa Malaysia or Indonesia. Some Australian education institutions are already teaching this language as part of their curriculum. They will increasingly speak Mandarin, Hindi, Tamil, Thai and Korean. Many of them are already proficient in Japanese. From conquest and domination, the name of the game has changed to immersion and integration.

The impact on performing arts in Asia could be fundamental. There are still strong undercurrents of Western influence in almost all genres of performing arts in Asia. The overpowering influences of media, TV, cinema and video and the immense opportunities offered by satellite broadcasts and cable; they all, without exception, draw upon software from non-Asian sources and these, almost without exception, are based on Western icons and precepts. The great immortal works of Kurosawa, a giant in his lifetime, drew less box office than *Schindler's List*. To be financially safe, it is prudent to stay with products with mass appeal and a ready market. The just emerging fashion design houses of India are not likely to want to convert the world to the saris. They are instead targeting their creative design efforts to take on the top houses of Paris, London and New York and to excel at designs for the Western markets.

The Japanese car industry still holds much in store to pursue the title of "*Europe Car of the Year*" as an effective benchmark to gain market share in Europe. Although there is a "*Japan Car of the Year*," recipients of this award are not likely to cause a similar stir in the European or US car markets.

In many ways, the world has become increasingly internationalised. But the direction and impact of internationalisation are still strongly influenced by the forces of market and economic opportunities. As long as Western economies remain the key markets for Asian products and services, successful penetration of these markets will influence the life-styles, thinking process and culture of the Asian exporting countries. The most evident of this phenomenon is in the dress code. The basic design of Asian apparel is loose-fitting and flowing and has evolved from the need to be comfortable in the climatic conditions and working environment in Asia. But today, shirt, tie, jacket have become the norm despite the unhealthy consequences that these

articles of clothing have on the users in this climate. Thanks largely to sushi and noodles, the fork and spoon have not yet replaced the chopsticks but they have made serious inroads into the way we feed ourselves in our homes.

These are not frivolous observations, because in many ways, appearances and lifestyles exert a strong influence over the thinking process and behavioural pattern. A number of countries in Asia have given this serious attention. The bush jacket and its derivatives have become the working dress in Malaysia and batik an accepted formal evening wear in Indonesia and Malaysia. The *barong tagalog* occupies a similar position in the Philippines and even Singapore is popularising the orchid shirt as a mode of Singapore dress. These are not symptoms of an extreme nationalistic viewpoint. Instead, they serve to demonstrate the diversities and richness of culture which they respectively inherited; an inheritance which, with increasing confidence and economic well-being, could now be positioned to re-establish the identity of a people in a pragmatic and non-dogmatic way.

How do performing arts in Asia fare in this changing milieu? To address this issue, it may be useful to examine the evolution paths of Western and Asian performing arts in broad and generalised terms. There are considerable risks in doing this and if there are inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the reading of history, I would crave your indulgence on the ground that I am totally ignorant in these matters.

In history, the flourishing of the arts, including performing arts, generally owed the initiation of their upsurgence to high level patronage during times of prosperity and stability. This created works intended for the sole enjoyment of the ruling class. Mozart's delightful minuets and mazurkas, Handel's Water and Fireworks music, Strauss' waltzes; they are all created for this purpose. The great masterpieces of Michaelangelo were created for the all-powerful church at that time and the Shakespeare series on kings of England rang with sycophantic fervour. By contrast, latter artistes who broke with tradition and established doctrinaire, such as Gauguin and Cezanne had a pretty tough time persuading acceptance of their works during their lifetime. The enormous value their works command today could perhaps be facetiously interpreted as the pressure of scarcity value and even more facetiously as the challenge to any truly great artist to accept that his works only live after him.

Patronage of the arts created a number of dichotomies in audience and other support. The common folks of Asia and the West are not without their sources of entertainment. While the high and mighty had their retinue of artistes

and performers, the common folks had their story-tellers, minstels, performing groups portraying great epics in legend and religion, puppetry and mime and a whole host of others. Many of these have long history and tradition and many streched their vocations through passing on their skills and repertoire from generation to generation.

The performing spaces also varied greatly. While those pandering to the tastes of the high and mighty performed and worked in exclusive spaces, the proletariat entertainers worked iin public places, in temples market places, unused open spaces and any place were they could set up shop. Theirs was a nomadic existence, moving on when audience support dwindled. Their repertoire could be limited but their audience were renewable as they moved from one location to another.

With migration of peoples in the nineteenth century from the grinding poverty of some Asian countries to the new centres of colonial possesssions in South East Asia, the performing artistes followed. They were either seeking opportunities amongst the new communities or at the invitation of such overseas establishments who wish to retain their cultural links and identities with the land they left behind.

The Industrial Revolution in the West gave rise to a massive re-distribution of wealth and a consequential erosion of the power base of the high and mighty. It signalled the beginnings of new political thought and systems, the evolution of which continued to this day. Patronage of the arts was transferred from individuals to the state as the former lords and masters had both their fortunes and positions eroded under the onslaught of new governments.

Asia never had an Industrial Revolution as such. It bore the consequences of the Western Industrial Revolution but not the rewards. The energies unleashed by the Revolution resulted in searches for new markets and new resources to feed the industries. Either by design or subterfuge, the expansion also brought about new ways of life and culture to new lands and peoples. Generations of Asians were schooled in Shakespeare and Milton; they knew more about the history and geography of Europe than their own and they learned to enjoy Verdi and Gilbert and Sullivan more than Beijing opera, *Kabuki* or *Mak Yong*. There are Asians who have taken to dressing up in some period European costume and singing arias with an awful Italian or German accent. And they consider that a part of their artistic heritage.

Theatres appear to have escaped, to some extent, the affliction of blind mimicry. As an effective means of communication with the masses, theatre was used extensively from the turbulent period early in this century as a powerful tool to influence ideological and social changes. Norway has its Ibsen and Russia its Pushkin and China its Lu

Shun. Even the Cultural Revolution of China was launched on the platform of a play by Wu Han (*Hai Jui Dismissed from Office*). The play itself was fairly innocuous but in the hands of a master strategist, it caused a decade of turmoil and took millions of lives.

It is clear that theatre in Asia has and must emerge from the set-piece of traditional and rigid disciplines to the more contemporary and relevant. This should not, however, mean that one is forsaken for the other. In the same manner that classical ballet, as a product of the French court has become a foundation, a discipline of the dance from which all modern abstract dance forms have continued to draw inspiration, traditional theatre must continue to exert a strong influence in understanding the depth and emotion of interpretation. In the West, the annotation as a Shakespearean actor on one's resume adds a distinct dimension to one's skills and experience despite the onslaught of the Method School of acting which has spawned many other superstars.

In the process of evolving the theatre in Asia, a number of conflicts need to be addressed. Apart from the traditional, there is no modern Asian theatre which could lay claim to being a distinctive genre. Language and its use in theatre compels the establishment of a mindset upon audiences and their acceptance of the messages driven by the production. In my younger days, much younger days, I participated in Beijing operas translated into English but with the full paraphernalia and symbolism of a Beijing opera. It was a shameful travesty on Beijing opera and a mockery of my cultural heritage. The colonial masters, then wanted to show how broadminded and receptive they were to a cultural idiom they would never be able to grasp this side of eternity. Their thunderous applause was particularly painful to me. I had danced to their tune. Needless to say, I never performed Beijing opera again.

The use of the English language in theatre, as a possibly universal language in most parts of Asia, is highly seductive. With the language comes the natural, if not compelling, response to explore theatre derivations and forms expressed in this language. The ability to communicate creates comfort and assurance and through this the conviction among the culturally vacuous and hungry that whatever developments created by theatre using this language must be correct and appropriate. This is perhaps unavoidable. How could anyone be expected to respond differently if one speaks and thinks only in English and no other language. I mentioned earlier the spectre of deculturalisation under the colonial system. Is it any different on the one hand for Asians to warble with great feeling Gilbert & Sullivan's "*Tit Willow*," and on the other to produce theatre performances echoing trite and outrageous issues

just because it is currently fashionable in some obscure school of theatre in the West.

Theatres need money to survive. In Western countries and erstwhile socialist states, the responsibility to provide funding is in the hands of the State. In some instances, financial grants in all shades and colours have been dispensed with charitable generosity. Returns on money spent have never formed the core of any consideration in evaluating justification for financial largesse. Creativity of the artistes has become the sole raison d'etre for providing the grants. No one questions creativity and its seemingly fragile and precious nature. It is considered a privilege to be allowed to give hard-earned money to creative people despite the fact that many productions could have bombed out at the box office.

Recently, many state authorities providing grants and subsidies to the arts have come under pressure to cut back because of unfavourable economic climate. Well-known orchestras, dance and threatre companies have to confront the stark reality of going out of existence. They have to explore new ways to improve financial performance in addition to the artistic. Their creativity has to be broadened to include finding ways and means to stay in business.

In Asia, the situation could be a little different. The prospects of an Asian Renaissance in culture and the arts increase with confidence and economic well-being. There is every reason to feel optimistic that the golden age of Asian culture could be on the cards. Perhaps it is possible to contemplate the likelihood of shaking off an alien culture and to replace it with a vibrant and lively culture not replicated out of the mold of the old but distilled from the richness of the past with the essence of the future.

There is a spate of developments afoot in Asia. In Singapore, apart from *The Esplanade*, a number of new museums are being built or planned. Taiwan is building a new museum in Kaoshiung, Malaysia is building a new National Theatre, so is Brunei Darussalam. South Korea has opened a new arts centre, Hongkong has its Performing Arts Centre, India is planning the new Indira Gandhi Performing Arts Centre in Delhi, a number of prefectures in Japan are also planning similar projects, in particular, the Hyogo Prefecture which is planning an arts centre of the magnitude of *The Esplanade* in Singapore. There is nothing in the West within the next decade which could match the scale of development for arts facilities in Asia.

What are the lessons that Asia

could learn from the track record of the West? What could be the pitfalls and, most importantly, how would this new generation of Asian arts centres come into their own, establish their distinctive cultural identities and avoid being a poor reproduction of something elsewhere.

There are two key ingredients involved. The first is architectural form and the other, the user-friendliness of the facilities planned to respond to both the physical and emotional environment of artistes who work in the spaces provided.

Enclosed, environmentally-controlled spaces carry an inherent feeling of separation alien to Asian performances. Historically, such separations were created to denote exclusivity and high stations in life. But, arts centres in Asia must pay particular attention to how the ambiance of the traditional outdoor and public performances could be translocated indoors without undue detriment to the quality of the performance. Merely building a hall of the appropriate capacity, sightlines, acoustics and intimacy, is not sufficient if one is to address the often conflicting demands of Asian and non-Asian performances.

As mentioned earlier, the first step in the preliminary design of *The Esplanade* was to get the performing arts groups in Singapore involved. Their suggestions were numerous and, as expected, often governed by personal likes and dislikes based upon previous unhappy experiences or inspired by a superficial reading of some facilities outside the country. Be that as it may, the requests and suggestions made were "dream" lists for a "dream" arts centre. Not all the wishes could be accommodated. But the important issue is that a certain presence of the arts centre began to form and eventually took on a distinctive personality.

A number of sacred cows in the lexicon of arts centres may have to be re-examined. Should the arts centre be operated as a commercial entity with similar responsibilities as a business? Should resident companies, if any, enjoy privileges and concessions in the arts centre which are inconsistent with good business sense? Should the pricing for the use of facilities be aimed at the highest that the market can bear? Under what conditions would it be appropriate for the arts centre to subsidize arts groups and assist them in their creative efforts and to what extent should the arts centre accommodate such loss leaders?

These are not easy questions. They establish in essence the way an arts centre should be managed in future. They also pinpoint the nature of arts groups' future operating posture; whether they would continue to be a cost centre

modern counterparts should consider resumption of at least part of that responsibility.

which society is obliged to bear or they should be allowed to rise and fall in the nature of all businesses.

There is no cut and dried answer momentarily and the issue is obviously emotional and highly subjective. But one factor stands out above all else. The days of generous and unquestioned subsidy may be over and not likely to return. It would be useful to put aside the temptation to cling to Western examples in support for the arts in those halcyon days and replace it by a new relationship which would facilitate a mutually beneficial engagement. Arts centres cost an enormous amount of money to build and even more money to maintain and operate. The public purse cannot be called upon to fund this expenditure perpetually and without limit, no matter how much value the society may be prepared to place on the arts. The artistes of old, the strollers, street performers, temple performers; they worked with what they have and paid their own way. Without being unduly harsh or critical, perhaps their

As I mentioned at the outset, I am completely ignorant in the arts. My association with businesses did not equip me adequately to speak on matters relating to the public theatre. However, my involvement in *The Esplanade—Theatres on the Bay* has given me the opportunity to view the arts, as a service product of *The Esplanade*, from the unusual perspective of a business person. I do have friends, many friends in the arts circles whom I admire greatly. They display a sense of conviction for their works which they pursue with a truly awesome passion. Perhaps this is needed to be successful in the arts. But this also creates a blind side in one's perception. A business person is never passionate or he would fall prone to misjudgment which could be extremely costly.

I believe in the great future that public theatre has in Singapore and the rest of Asia. It is the final stage of our maturity as viable and stable societies. The strategy that was responsible for the economic successes of Asia was not replicated from the West. But this new strategy worked. Without pre-judging any particular issue in the future of public theatre in Asia, there is every justification to adopt a fresh and uncluttered vision to ensure its long term viability and contribution to society. I am confident I have enough years left in me to see the full flowering of Asian arts.

Theatre and Indigenous Culture in the Context of Globalization

ASSOCIATE PROFFESSOR. DR. CHUA SOO PONG

In the context of rapid globalization and development of communication technologies, cultural change in East Asian societies is quicker in pace and intensity. It would be naive to pretend that it is possible to preserve or protect indigenous culture intact, (although the claim that indigenous culture or people need to be promoted in a special way has been used in the past to implement policies that discriminate against the minority in some cases) many do worry about the dominance of American popular culture in non-western societies. American music and television, books and magazines, and specially movies, seem to have spread to every corner of the world, becoming

universal. The American movie industry has a 4 billion dollars trade balance, and earns more than 40 percent of its revenues from abroad. From Biman Bangladesh Airlines to Air New Zealand, almost all airlines in Asia and the Pacific show American movies, rather than local films. In fact, it is not only Asians who are concerned about such overwhelming 'aggression' of American films, even the French are seriously worried about it. At the 1995 G-7 ministerial meeting in Brussels, the French pushed for quotas against American movies to ensure that at least 50 per cent of films viewed in Europe come from there. Two thirds of the 15 million copies of Michael Jackson's latest album: 'Dangerous' were sold outside the United States. As many as 109 countries in 1993, broadcasted the American National Basketball Association Final in Chicago, in 20 languages. Telecommunications Inc., the world's largest cable company, headquartered in Denver, recently announced plans to upgrade its system enabling it to offer 500 channels. Needless to say, many of its products in time will also flood the world.

The World of Global Communication

In the world where television and computer trap us into the gigantic network of global communication, how is information distributed and consumed? Does access to the information superhighway meansaccess to equal opportunity? If so, what measures need to be built in to ensure that nobody is left out? Will we witness a return of intolerant colonialism that makes indigenous cultures lose their self-confidence? Will economic and technological progress destroy the cultural diversity and pressure-cook our cultures into a single mush? Will there be more intense competition for space between the indigenous and the imported? Who would occupy the centre stage and be in the limelight in the 21st century, indigenous actors or imported pop singers? These questions surely are some of the key concerns regarding the future of cultures in Asia.

Culture as an Obstacle to Development

Begun as a process of decolonization, " Development " became in the Third World countries an ideology for rapid, planned, and directed social engineering. Newly independent nations began to move in the predetermined direction with defined economic goals and industrialized targets and development strategies. The administration took on the role of planners of future. Governments in East Asia struggled to fulfill the rising expectation of the peoples as they established the principle of shared growth, promising that as the economy expanded, all groups would benefit. The west served as the reference group and even proxied many development decisions and that raised complex problems. Westernization and modernization became synonyms of development.

Cultural specialists hold the view that the cultures of developing countries have become the victims of development as the contract-based structure of the market economy disintegrates the social fabric and brings with it enormous influence over the ways individuals make sense of their life. Social harmony has been replaced by individualism and heavy borrowings of loans by the young graduates to purchase luxurious goods or property. The participatory traditional theatre is replaced by the market system: one has to buy tickets in order to see a show in a theatre building, thus the new relationship of sellers and the buyers. Many complain that the values, perceptions, behaviour patterns of the west brought in via films, television and advertising as a result of development are exerting negative influence on the peoples. In traditional societies, where social change was rather slow, and brought about from within, socialization did not pose any problem. New members of the society were trained to enter into the patterned future.

But rapidity of changes in the modern world and speedy development of information technology have enlarged the range of possibilities and uncertainties. A case in point is the mother in a well-to-do family in Singapore who was very happy with her children's intense interest in their computers but was shocked when she discovered that what the children had been engrossed in were interactive pornographic programmes! It is in this context that we want to look at how indigenous culture will be featured in our future. There are indeed numerous possibilities of unintended consequences that deserve attention. The development specialists on the other

Students of Jahanginagar University presented a Marma folk tale "Princess Monori and Hunter Sathanu" directed by Selim al Deen.

"Undercurrent" by Mannan Heera was directed by Azad Abul Kalam, which dramatised the intense emotion of revolutionaries under interrogation.

hand, have attributed all the failure of planned development programmes to culture as they regard indigenous culture as an obstacle to development.

Globalization, Localization and Internationalization

In the world of information technology and telecommunication revolution, there is no chance of going back to our cultural shells by isolating and insulating indigenous cultures from external influence. It would be unwise to believe that indigenous culture is static as the truth is that its social and economic underpinning have in many cases disappeared. The opening up of intercultural dialogue, cross-cultural fertilization have brought into play two seemingly contradictory processes of globalization and localization or indigenization.

The coexistence of these processes is indicative of the resilience of cultures. That is the retention of cultural identities alongside of modernization, like the way bamboo bends with the storm without being broken. The samples of theatre productions featured in the three Bangladesh Theatre Festivals organised by the Bangladesh Centre of International Theatre Institute in the last five years clearly show the coexistence of these processes:

Like everywhere else, the great works of the playwrights of foreign lands are adapted to local situations to appeal to domestic audience in Bangladesh. William Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* has become *The Luxury of Errors* (*Bhranti Bilas*), Moliere's *The Gentleman* was translated as *Bhaddornok*, Anton Chekov's *Swan Song* was adapted as *Jaminir Sesh Sanglap*, Bertolt Brecht's *The Good Woman of Sezuan* was renamed *Sot Manusher Khonje*. Aly Zaker, well known for having adpated many foreign plays (Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Moliere's *Intellectual Ladies*, and his performance of Brecht's *Galileo Galilei*) has his secret of success: to create a genuine Bengali mood so that the audience are able to identify with the characters. Likewise, successful adaptations in other countries follow the same rule. It is not the matter of just changing names of the characters and wearing local dresses but at times involves rewriting and reinterpreting to make it relevant in the local context. The only regret in all these adaptations is that because of the serious lack of translation of non-western plays, Bangladeshi theatre practitioners have fewer opportunities to introduce foreign plays other than those from Europe and America. This problem can only be solved if in the future, non-western societies can provide more of their better dramatic works translated into English.

Traditional Theatre as Source of Creativity

Like her Asian neighbours, Bangladesh's rich traditional theatre offers contemporary playwrights and directors sources of creativity. *Katha-Natya*'s involvement of narrative enactment by a single performer, the three character musical model of *Naat-Geet* composed in medieval Bangladesh, drew its material from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, the night long performance of *Ghatu* on boat by young female impersonators and choral singers and musicians and the all male troupe *Chhokra*, as well as *Patuagaan*, the itinerant bands which travel from door to door singing narrative songs with painted scrolls, are some of the many traditonal forms that continue to inspire contemporary practitioners. Techniques of the enormously popular *Jatra* which combine the dramatic and the musical elements are constantly borrowed by directors. Many of them are choosing folk tales and using traditional theatre elements as their tools and recreating the stories with contemporary reference. Some move one step further by not only borrowing the folk theatre forms but also introducing a contemporary theme. Some of the most frequently cited examples are Badal Sircar's *Pagla Ghora*, *Pralap*, *Spartacus* and *Bhoma*. Among the theatre groups, Dhaka Theatre is particularly well known for its zeal in initiating a people's theatre movement under the banners of *Graam* (village theatre) and re-energising the folk theatre against all odds of modern time. The Bangladesh *Graam* Theatre, *Kendrio Parishad*, is an umbrella organisation of 163 theatre groups and has been active in printing a monthly bulletin which features plays written by theatre workers and plays in the oral tradition. It also organises folk theatre festivals in the villages. Several playwrights are known to have successfully used elements of

folk theatre in their writing. Pioneer Sayeed Ahmad, productive poet and playwright Syed Shamsul Huq, director and playwright Seleem-Al-Deen and Aly Zaker, all have at various times integrated traditional theatre elements in their plays or productions. Selim Al Deen, keeping close to the tradition of the narrative style of *Kathanatya*, wrote *Chaka* in 1990, directed by Jamil Ahmed played, to packed houses.

In the 1995 production of a Marma tribal tale, *Manori Mangt Sumui*, (Princess Manori), performed by the students of the Jahangginagar University at Savar, Selim Al Deen attempted to retain the music and songs of the ethnic folk theatre form. The play is the love story of the youngest daughter of the King of Heaven, Princess Monori and the hunter, Sathanu. The clever use of bamboo sticks and scarves made what Selim AI Deen called 'neo ethic-theatre' very attractive. The sticks are manipulated as columns of a house, arrows, spears, wheels etc. The scarves likewise are used in a hundred imaginative ways.

Integration of Theatre Elements

To achieve greater dramatic impact, many theatre directors in Asia integrate freely their traditional theatre elements and modern approaches in theatre production. Stagecraft of western origin is found to be useful too in enhancing the effects of performance. Special lighting and sound effects are employed to make greater dramatic impact. Thai director Patravati Mejudhon, for example, often liberally mixed Thai classical dance with non-ethnic dance forms whenever she feels it necessary. In 1993, she collaborated with Marisa Saenkulsirisak in staging a folk tale rewritten by a famous poet Sunthorn Phu, *The Tale of Temple* which centred on the story of Prince Singhakraiphob, for the Third ASEAN Theatre Festival held in Bangkok.

Singhakraiphob, born in exile, is a prince raised by a demon. Upon learning his true identity, he immediately abandons his foster father which causes the old man to die of heartbreak. He eventually kills all his opponents and regains his parents' kingdom. This story of greed and power was one of the many of Patravadi's experiments in adapting Thai classical music and dance to Broadway style musical. In *The Tale of the Temple*, she used masks, folk dance, Thai classical dance and modern dance to make it attractive to the young audience. Recently, in a production she called a rock-opera *Prince Inao and Joraka*, based on a folk tale from Indonesia, the dancers executed ballet steps as well as Thai and Indonesian folk dance. Clever set and costume design as well as special effects such as flying the main characters up and down with transparent ropes, helped her sell out many of her shows for months.

When Jamil Ahmed reconstructed and directed Biplab Bala and Mostafa Heera's adaptation of the 19th century epic *Bishad Shindhu* (*The Sea of Sorrow*), he used both the proscenium stage and the open floor to enlarge the space of interaction between the audience and the performers. The haunting quality of the production was enhanced by the powerful chorus singing, the impressive choreography of the fighting scenes, the inventive design and usage of props (horses and masks), the beautiful lighting design and the commitment of the well-disciplined cast. Nasiruddin Yousuff who directed several highly acclaimed productions, also employed similar tactics in combining the elements of folk theatre with modern approaches of theatre production. His productions of Selim Al Deen's plays: *Hat Hadai* (*Seven Purchases*) and *Jaibati Kanyar Mon* (*The Story of Jaibati*), were rich in imageries and metaphors derived from indigenous theatre. These approaches are indeed very similar to Asian directors who work in cultures that have exuberant theatre traditions.

Living in a multi-cultural social environment and having learned Javanese dance, Chinese dance and Teochew opera, it was quite natural for me to draw on techniques and modes of expressions in these conventions when I direct contemporary plays. The blending of elements is particularly applicable when dealing with period drama, epic and folk tales. In 1984 when I directed *Princess Jasmine*, an Indonesian folk tale rewritten for the Singapore Drama Festival, staged by I-Lien Dramatic Society, I found it workable to use movements of *Wayang Orang* dance, *Topeng* mask dance, Balinese dance in the production as they intensify the atmosphere of various

Theatre, the group led by Ramendu Mojumdar, presented a play written and directed by Abdullah Al-Mamun called "Ekhono Kritodash," portraying the traumatic experience of a slave of situation.

Jamil Ahmed's prodction of the 19th century epic in prose by novelist Msharraf Hossain, called "Bishad Sindhu" (The Sea of Sorrow), integrating the narrative and musical elements of folk theatre.

scenes which called for specific moods. The symolic sets were further enhanced by the lighting design of western theatre. These examples confirm that the twin process of globalization and localization need not be mutually exclusive but can relate and cooperate creatively. But how to operate in different cultural settings has to be worked out by individuals.

Problems of Inferiority Complex

Any discussion on the process of globalization and indiginization in Southeast Asia would be meaningless without examining the experience of colonialism. Nine out of ten countries in the region had experienced colonialism. Differences though exist in terms of the source of colonization (British, French, Portugese, Dutch, Spanish, American) and the type of colonization (political, economic, cultural). There also seems to be a link between the type of communalism and the type of colonial experience. The trend of change in a given society is also associated with the exposure to the wider world during and after political colonialization. All these forces and processes will contribute to the extent of inferiority complex in the society. Inferiority complex of the colonised is often reflected in the marked difference in treatment of their own theatre, music and dance and those from the west. Almost in all Asian cities, western symphony orchestra, ballet and opera performances charge much higher prices than indigenous concerts, dance and drama. Aspiring actors and directors use London and New York as their terms of reference. Piano teachers command a higher fee than *er hu* or *rabab* instructors and jazz dance lessons are much more expensive than *Bharatha Natyam* classes.

Some Chinese opera singers in China, think that mastering western opera singing techniques can 'improve' their presentation, not understanding that they are representing totally different styles. One can easily imagine the disastrous consequence of their performances. Selected Chinese opera directors were sent to Beijing and Shanghai Drama Academy to learn their craft from the teachers who are teaching directing for western theatre. Many of them fell in love with the multi-purpose platform and brought them back to the Chinese opera stage, used the ideas of blocking in western stage plays, resulting in distruption of the flow of movements which is essential for Chinese opera. These are some of the farcical examples of cultural contradictions and fragmentation. How can the problems be sloved?

Cultural Heritage and Cultural Autonomy

In today's world of 184 countries, according to the United Nations, with over 5,000 spoken languages, only ten percent of the countries of the world are ethnically homogeneous. If we are going to make the world a single market, the parts have to be smaller. Minority languages all over the world are achieving a new status as people hold more highly to their heritage for the fear of living in a boring culturally monotonous world. As many parts of Asia manage to break the vicious cycle of poverty and achieve high economic growth, Asians are regaining their self-confidence. While western patterns of consumption and pop cultures continue to flood in, many are trying to work out strategies to promote their cultural heritage and cultural autonomy. Artistes must take the lead in showing society that traditional cultural forms are reservoirs of knowledge. Indigenous theatre, dance and music must be thoroughly researched, documented, taught and promoted in the mass media. For those societies that are blessed with multi-cultural heritages and sizable immigrant communities, they would be better off if they can tap the resources of their traditional knowledge. The immigrant communities often evolve their own mechanism to present their cultural identity and yet develop interfaces with the culture of the host society. Stable cultural plurality within communities is a great strength for human resource development. They must be understood in totality, in relation to traditional norms, beliefs, arts and culture. However, this must not lead to cultural isolation and become cultural chauvinism. Nor be construed as an anti-western bias. Some of the Asian theatre forms may have to respond to the life style of present day and contemporary situation, with the condition that they are evolved within the cultural boundaries without destroying the very roots which define their characteristics. The world will be more beautiful if we continue to strengthen our

ability to express ourselves in a thousand beautiful ways.

Safeguarding and promotion of folkloric arts in SEAMEO countries

DR. RUANG CHAREONCHAI AND PROFESSOR KHUNYING MAENMAS CHAVALIT

Definition of terms

According to the UNESCO paper on "Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore" adopted by the General Conference at its 25th Session, Paris, 15 November 1989, folklore is defined as "the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts."

Generally speaking folklore characteristics are expressions of the folk or the common people and the ethnic groups, in contrast to those of sophisticated classes or royalty. Its creators are mostly anonymous and it is also folk or ethnic heritages, handed down, from generations to generations, orally, or by means of demonstration and imitation. Only recently, to a certain extent, it has been recorded by modern methods. Naturally it belongs to the community, or the nation where it was generated. Because of its being not documented properly, according to legal system concerning copyright its rights are facing threats of being infringed for commercial purposes, in particular its artistic aspects.

The joint UNESCO and WIPO Model Provision for the National Laws on the Protection of Expression of Folklore, (1983) provides definition of folkloric arts as productions consisting of characteristic elements of the traditional artistic heritage developed and maintained by a community of (name the country) or by individuals, reflecting the traditional artistic expectations of such a community, in particular:

(i) verbal expressions—such as folk tales, folk poetry, and riddles;

(ii) musical expressions, such as folk songs and instrumental music;

(iii) expression by action, such as folk dances, plays, and artistic forms or rituals; whether or not reduced to a material form; and

(iv) tangible expressions, such as:

(a) production of folk art, in particular, drawings, paintings, carvings, sculptures, pottery, terra-cotta, mosaic, woodwork, metalworks, jewellery, basket weaving, needlework, textiles, carpets, costumes;

(b) musical instruments;

(c) architectural forms.

It can be said that folkloric arts have three different aspects, at present:

(i) Those originated and developed at village, or ethnic group level, without outside influence. They are made for everyday use, for decoration and religious ceremonies and ritual purposes. For example woven basket, hand made textiles, pottery, decorative wood carving.

(ii) Those originated and developed at town or city level, having some outside influence, because of the contact with outside community, and yet within the same cultural or linguistic pattern.

(iii) Those originated and developed at country level, with various outside influences, within and outside communities of similar geographic and cultural environment, sometimes acquired by the country people, sometimes politically imposed upon them.

The needs to safeguard folkloric arts

Folkloric arts are an integral part of the ethnic community and national cultural heritage, and intellectual properties which constitute the basic elements of civilization and national identity.

In worldwide scale, folklore is also considered by the world community, through UNESCO, as "part of the universal heritage of humanity and that it is a powerful means of bringing together different peoples and social group and of asserting their cultural identity." It is important for social, economic and cultural fields, and has great role in the history of the people, and its place in contemporary culture.

However, because of its traditional forms, particularly the oral tradition, it faces the danger of being forgotten or transformed, or exploited for commercial purposes by business enterprises, within and outside the country without rendering benefits to originators, who, in most cases, are anonymous and cannot be identified. It also happens that tangible cultural objects have been subjected to illicit traffic, and thus impoverishing the national cultural heritages.

It is therefore necessary to safeguard folklore against threats, to promote appreciation and to take actions for sustainable preservation and development for contemporary and future generations.

Southeast Asian countries, activities concerning protection of cultural properties

Countries in Southeast Asia which are rich in folklore heritage, since decades in the past, have been aware of the fragility of the oral tradition and the dangers threatening tangible cultural heritages. Attempts have been made to safeguard these treasures. In 1972, a project, entitled ARCAFA was established by SEAMEO for the purposes of protecting and promoting appreciation of archaeology and fine arts productions and ideals expressed in tangible and intangible forms. ARCAFA which later on, was developed into a permanent project of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, renamed SEAMEO Project for Archaeology and Fine Arts—SEAMEO SPAFA, and from 1986 was re-instituted as a full-fledged, autonomous Regional Centre. Its missions and functions are to undertake such activities which fulfill its objectives i.e. training of cultural personnel, on methodology in documentation, preservation, of cultural properties; conducting seminars, workshops, and research; documentation and dissemination of information pertaining to the promotion and safeguarding of cultural heritage of the member countries and the region as a whole.

Legislation on cultural properties

Among various measures undertaken to protect folkloric arts heritage is the establishment of legislation which is the most fundamental requirement for the protection of properties having great significance for archaeology, history, and all forms of arts. ARCAFA Project Development Office in 1973, made studies on the existing legislation in member countries in Southeast Asia and published a monograph document entitled

"Legislation on Cultural Properties of the SEAMEO Member Countries." Countries which had already established legislation or ordinance for safeguarding cultural properties are Indonesia, Khmer Republic, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Indonesia issued the Staatsblad van Nederlandsch Indi 1931 no. 238, Rechtwezen Monumenten—Establishment of a Monument Ordinance, on 30 June 1931. The Khmer Republic issued a series of notices and regulations concerning the protection of historic monuments from 1900 on and established "Ordonnance royale" on 6 November 1935, followed by a number of regulations to cover safeguarding of natural sites and monuments which are of artistic scientific, legendary and picturesque value, including the creation of historic Parc d'Angkor. There were also a number of articles in Code Civil Khmer, concerning conservation of cultural treasures for the benefits of people at large.

As for Lao PDR, legislation concerning cultural properties are parts of the Lao Civil Codes, dealing with the excavation of archaeological sites and discovery of artifacts. The Antiquities and Treasure Trove Ordinance of the Federation of Malaysia was issued in 1957, dealing with the discovery of antiquities; excavations; ancient monuments and historical sites; archaeological reserves; treasure trove; and export of antiquities. The Republic of the Philippines issued the Republic Act. no. 4846, entitled "Cultural Properties Preservation and Protection Act," in 18 June 1966. The Preservation of Monuments Act of Singapore was issued on 29 January 1971, having the objectives to preserve for the benefit of the nation, monuments of historic, traditional, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest.

An Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums, BE 2504 was issued in Thailand in 1961, replacing the Acts of the same name issued in BE 2477, and BE 2486 (AD 1934, and 1943 respectively). There are also a number of Ministerial Regulations dealing with particular aspects of the implementation of the Act. Vietnam's Loi du 31 December 1913 sur les monuments historiques consists of chapters dealing with the immovable objects of historic and artistic values; the movable objects; the conservation of historic monuments; and the archaeological excavation. This was followed by the Decree of 23 December 1924, to replace that of 31 December 1913, and regulations on 11 July 1925, which includes excavations. The regulation issued 2 June 1926 concerns the exportations of art objects outside French Indo-China countries. The Decree no. 34/GD of 14 February 1959, focuses on additional items to be protected from exportation, i.e. art objects, ancient books or the reproduction by photographic or microfilming methods.

It is noticeable that during the 1900s to early 1970s the main concerns of the Southeast Asian countries are (1) the conservation of historic monuments and sites; (2) the archaeological excavation; (3) the discovery of cultural treasures, and arts antiquities; (4) the exportation of cultural treasures. Only one country, Vietnam, in 1959, issued a decree on the reproduction of art objects and ancient books by photo and microfilm technique. The existing legislation issued during the periods hardly cover folkloric arts, as defined in the UNESCO-WIPO Model Provisions for the National Laws on the Protection of Expressions of Folklore Against Illicit Exploitation and Other Prejudicial Actions, issued in 1983, and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, adopted by the 25th General Conference, Paris 15 November 1989. The legislation of Thailand and Vietnam, however, cover "art objects" without the affix of the word "antiquities," which can be interpreted to include contemporary artistic works. Intangible forms of folkloric arts such as songs, music, dances—which are not yet recorded on any tangible medium, are also not covered, neither are the issues on copyright, and illicit exploitation for commercial purposes.

The awareness of threats to cultural properties which endanger cultural heritage spreads all over the world. Even though measures against illicit traffic are established at the national level, the implementation of such laws and regulations require efficiency and right concept of all concerned, at national and international levels. It is felt necessary to enlist efforts and

cooperation in controlling illicit international movement of cultural treasures.

To build up co-operations between and among countries UNESCO had adopted in 1970, an international convention called the "Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970." Not all member countries of SEAMEO have deposited the instrument of ratification, acceptance or accession to this 1970 Convention. However, many countries keep contact with UNESCO for co-operation and advice. In 1992, UNESCO and SEAMEO SPAFA jointly organized a Regional Workshop on this Convention, in Thailand, during 24–28 February 1992. Three SPAFA member countries, Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand, who participated in the Workshop reported the losses they suffered from theft and illicit traffic of cultural property. They also reported on actions and measures undertaken by the governments.

Cambodia, one of the richest countries in Southeast Asia regarding cultural heritages, suffered the most. Stolen objects from museums and collections include those already inventoried and those which were not yet recorded. Architectural decorative ornaments and sculptures were broken. This is because of the network of traffickers and merchants and antique dealers from other countries.

Measures undertaken by these three countries which have already established the acts on conservation and protection of cultural properties are:

a) The setting up of the National Committee for Rehabilitation of the Monuments and Museums to define classified zones from which discovered cultural objects must not be exported, and to instruct national and local authorities to inform the population and the visitors of such decisions. *(Cambodia)*

b) The issuing of a new Bill on Cultural Property, the establishment of a special safety force to protect cultural properties, and to develop ways to educate the public in protection of national cultural heritage. *(Indonesia)*

c) The amendment of the existing Act to increase the punishment of culprit, to strengthen co-operation among various agencies, at professional and administrative levels; to undertake actions to promote awareness among the population of the values of cultural properties and their responsibility to help safeguarding them. *(Thailand)*

Recommendations from the Workshop to UNESCO, ICOM and Member States include some actions to be undertaken as follow:

To UNESCO

a) UNESCO should encourage Member States to assign top priority to the documentation of movable cultural property and to the preparation of inventories.

b) UNESCO should urgently contact UNTAC forces and seek their cooperation in stopping illicit traffic in cultural property, vandalism and pillage in Cambodia, namely by using and training the demobilized soldiers in surveillance of monuments.

c) UNESCO should continue and extend its efforts, in cooperation with the United Nations, for the establishment of a network of the existing data bases on stolen cultural property (such as the data bases of INTERPOL, Canadian Heritage Information Network, ICOM, International Foundation for Art Research...)

d) UNESCO should undertake a study on measures for protection of cultural property in remote areas.

To Member States

Every country may set up a National Clearing House, either attached to the respective National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO or the respective National Committee of ICOM, with the following purposes:

a) All thefts or cases of illicit traffic of cultural objects in a country should be promptly reported to the UNESCO-

ICOM Museum Information Center by electronic mail or fax.

b) Every National Clearing house shall urge upon the museums of its own country to approach the UNESCO-ICOM Museum Information Center before acquiring any object relating to some other country in order to determine whether such objects were stolen or illicitly exported, imported or transferred.

c) The national clearing houses, so formed, should remain responsible for proper implementation of the UNESCO Convention (1970) on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

d) The national clearing houses, shall also help in export, or transfer of cultural properties form one country to the other by legal means through mutual consent.

The Member States in the region, particularly Cambodia and its neighboring countries, should develop close cooperation between their services concerned, namely police, customs, museums, archaeologists, etc. so as to curb illicit traffic in cultural property.

Member States should cooperate with media for dissemination of news to informational television networks such as CNN, Star TV, BBC and others.

Member States should develop educational programmes, both in the primary and the secondary schools, on the creation of awareness regarding the importance of cultural property and the need to protect it.

Authorities responsible for the control of cultural property worldwide should strengthen cooperation and advise each other more quickly about the movement of cultural items.

Each Member State should consider the possibility of contacting their national police services and other concerned agencies in order to establish a list of institutions, dealers and others indulging in illegal traffic in cultural property, which should be transmitted to INTERPOL for appropriate dissemination.

To ICOM

a) ICOM should set up a computerized data base in UNESCO-ICOM Museum Information Center, in collaboration with UNESCO, CHIN, IFAR and other organizations on cultural properties with are stolen or subjected to illicit traffic.

b) ICOM should continue to encourage cooperation between museums, namely by twinnings of museums for documentation, conservation and security measures.

c) ICOM, in cooperation with Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, should provide all necessary assistance to Cambodia in its efforts to prepare a comprehensive documentation and catalogue on Khmer objects of art in possession of museums in various countries.

e) ICOM should continue its efforts to persuade its members to respect scrupulously the standards contained in its Code of Ethics, particularly with regards to the acquisition of foreign cultural material.

As regards cultural properties which can be identified as folkloric arts, which have not been included in the acts of the protection of monuments and sites of most of the SEAMEO member countries, the following countries have already listed these objects in their acts and regulations for protection.

Lao People's Democratic Republic cultural property subject to export control

New books, old books, magazines, journals, photographs, propaganda; ornamental pictures, sculptures in wood, stone, clay or ivory, engravings, ceramics and castings; badges and embroidered flags; basket work and embroidery; musical instruments made locally and cassettes of Lao songs and music approved by the Ministry of Culture (Art. 2)

Antiquities in stone, bronze, iron, wood, household articles, industrial articles, ancient weaponry relating to battles several centuries old or weaponry of great value

belonging to the period of the war of national liberation; books, documents, old manuscripts in any script but having historic, linguistic, literary, scientific or technological significance; personal effects of famous persons from the past as well as of the period of the war of national liberation; old musical works; presently rare or new works no longer being composed; sacrificial or religious objects including pagodas, bronze objects used by tribal groups in ritual functions (Art. 2)

Malaysia cultural property subject to export control

"Antiquities" (s. 21) and "historical objects"(s. 23).

An "antiquity" means any object at least 100 years old produced or modified by human agency; and part of the object added at a later date; any human, plant or animal remains at least 100 years old; any object of any age declared to be an antiquity (s. 2).

An "historical object" means any artifact or other object to which religious, traditional, artistic or historic interest is attached and includes any ethnographic material such as household or agricultural implements, decorative articles, personal ornaments; works of art such as carvings, sculpture, paintings, architecture, textiles, musical instruments, weapons and any other handicraft; manuscript, coin currency note, medal, badge, insignia, coat of arms, crest, flag, arms and armour; vehicles, ships and boats, in whole or in part, whose production has ceased (s. 2)

Philippines cultural property subject to export control

National cultural treasures which are designated items of cultural property which are rare or unique within that class of cultural property (Act, amended ss. 9, 7b). They are unique objects found locally, possessing outstanding historical, cultural, artistic and/or scientific value which are significant and important to the country and the nation (Act, amended s. 3(c)).

Cultural properties which are old buildings, monuments, shrines, documents, and objects which may be classified as antiques, relics, or artifacts, landmarks, anthropological and historical sites and specimens of natural history which are of cultural, historical, anthropological or scientific value or significance to the nation; such as physical, anthropological, archaeological and ethnographical materials, meteorites and tektites; historical objects and manuscripts; household and agricultural implements; decorative articles or personal adornment; works of art such as paintings, sculptures, carvings, jewelry, music, architecture, sketches, drawings, or illustrations in part or in whole; work of industrial and commercial art such as furniture, pottery, ceramics, wrought iron, gold, silver, wood or other heraldic items, metals, coins, medals, badges, insignias, coats of arms, crests, flags, arms and armour; vehicles or ships or boats in part or in whole (Act, amended s. 3(a)).

Thailand cultural property subject to export control

Any antique or object of art whether registered or not (1961 Act, s. 22).

"Antique" means an archaic movable property, whether produced by man or nature, or being any part of an ancient monument or of a human skeleton or animal carcass which, by its age or characteristics of production or historical evidence is useful in the field of art, history or archaeology (s. 4).

"Object of art" means a thing produced by craftsmanship which is appreciated as being valuable in the field of art (s. 4).

The UNESCO Recommendation of the Safeguard of Traditional Culture and Folklore, adopted by the General Conference at its twenty-fifth session, Paris, 15 November 1989 includes suggestions to be undertaken by Member States on:

a) Conservation of folklore by documentation of folk tradition and its objects; establishment of national archives to properly collect, store and make available; establishment of a central national archive function for services purpose, creation of museums or folklore sections at existing museums where traditional and popular culture can be exhibiting, and the training of personnel concerned

with the conservation of folklore, from physical conservation to analytic work.

b) Preservation of folk traditions and those who are the transmitters, in order to guarantee the status and economic support, both in the communities which produce them and beyond. Member States are suggested to undertake some actions such as: designing and introducing in school curricula the teaching and study of folklore; guarantee the right of access of various cultural communities to their own folklore by supporting their work in the fields of documentation, archiving, research etc., as well as in the practice of tradition.

c) Dissemination of folklore in order to draw the attention of the people to the importance of folklore as an ingredient of cultural identity; and to safeguard the integrity of the tradition must be fair and without distortion. Among other activities, Member States are recommended to: encourage the organizations of national, regional and international events, symposia, workshops, training courses, congresses, etc, and support the dissemination and publication of their materials, papers and other results; encourage a broader coverage of folklore materials in national and regional press and other mass media; to facilitate meetings and exchanges between individuals an institutions concerned with folklore, and to encourage the international scientific community to adopt a code of ethics ensuring proper approach to and respect for traditional cultures.

Protection of folklore as intellectual property calls for a separate action to be considered in line with the copyright issues established by UNESCO and WIPO.

In this connection UNESCO and WIPO, in 1977, formulated a Model Provision of Expression of Folklore Against Illicit Exploitation and Other Prejudicial Actions. By the time this paper is written, information about actions undertaken by SEAMEO countries is still to be collected. So far, in Asia, the country which has already issued the Code of Intellectual Property Act, which contains clauses about folklore, is Sri Lanka, in the Act of 1979. Thailand, in 1985, convened a national seminar to deliberate on this matter, and the Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Education prepared a draft Regulations for Protection of Folklore Arts which include folk tales, folk song, folk music and musical instruments, folk dances, festivals and tangible folkloric art objects.

SEAMEO SPAFA's activities for safeguarding and protection of folkloric arts

SEAMEO SPAFA's mission is to cultivate the awareness and appreciation of the cultural heritage, to promote and help enrich archaeological and cultural activities in the region and to advance mutual knowledge and understanding among the countries in Southeast Asia through joint programmes in archaeology and fine arts. The Centre's programme activities have been designed from its inception to contribute to the fulfillment of its mission through co-operation, concerted efforts and sharing of resources and experience of Member Countries, and through information dissemination. Its strategies for the implementation of the objectives are organized in five main areas, namely, training, seminars and workshops, research and development, personnel exchange and documentation and information dissemination.

In the areas of safeguarding and promotion of cultural properties, SPAFA organized courses such as: Development Strategies of Cultural Values, Documentation of Non-Print Materials on Culture, Promotion and Dissemination of Information on Southeast Asian Cultural Traditions, Conservation of Ancient Cities and Settlements, Preventive Conservation of Museum Objects, and Conservation of Archival Materials, Promotion and Development of Handicrafts and Folkcrafts for Social Development and so on.

There are also workshops and seminars on topics relevant to tradition and folklore such as Seminar on Problems of Conservation of Ethnographic Materials, Preservation of Traditional Handicrafts, Preservation of Traditional Performing Arts in the Modern Environment, Seminar on

Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia. Researches conducted included Researches and Documentation of Ethnic Music.

The workshops and seminars include country reports on activities undertaken by member countries, such as training programmes, documentation of music and traditional performing arts, promotion of traditional arts appreciation. Reports and proceedings of workshops and seminars are published for wide distribution.

SPAFA Library and Documentation Services not only publish seminars/workshops and research reports, but also issues a journal entitled SPAFA Digest, renamed SPAFA Journal in 1990. It contains articles relating to folkloric objects, and other kinds of cultural property. The unit compiles union bibliographies on archaeology, fine arts, and directories of monuments and sites in Southeast Asia. Both publications are records of written works, and inventories of cultural heritage.

In response to the suggestion of the Governing Board Members of the Philippines and Thailand, during the 7th Meeting of the Governing Board Members, in October 1992, that SPAFA should establish standard guidelines for archaeological activities in the region, SPAFA, with the technical co-operation of the office of the National Commission for Culture of Thailand, and the Fulbright-Thailand-U.S. Education Foundation, produced a draft Unified Cultural Resource Management Guidelines for Southeast Asia Volume I Material Culture in April 1994. The first draft was assessed by the Thai Officials of the Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Education, and those of the Non-Government Organizations such as the Thailand Tourism Authorities, the Association for the Protection of Cultural Properties, during the national seminar held for this purpose during 8–10 March 1994. Comments and recommendations of the seminar were incorporated, and the final draft was reproduced for circulation to SPAFA member countries for comments and suggestions, which are at present awaited. The Guidelines provide frameworks which can be adapted to suit country environment and situation. Volume II Intangible Culture, which will cover artistic and traditional expression is foreseen to be undertaken when financial and technical resources are available.

At regional level, concerted efforts of the Southeast Asian countries in the protection of cultural resources, tangible and intangible, have also been undertaken under the auspices of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations—ASEAN which is a governmental organization. ASEAN member countries, at present, consist of six countries; Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information (COCI), has since its establishment, some twenty years ago, undertaken joint programmes of activities to promote appreciation of, and to protect the countries' traditional cultural treasures which include, among others, traditional performing arts, visual arts and handicrafts, literature and archaeological artifacts. The ASEAN Working Groups on Culture and Information organize workshops, seminars, researches, festivals, exhibitions, television and radio broadcasting. They have publication programmes for ASEAN literature, source books for ASEAN cultures for children, monograph series on ASEAN traditional and contemporary for adults in the fields of dance, music, theatre, ceramic, etc.

CIOFF—the International Council of Folklore Festival and Traditional Arts Organizations has contributed much in preserving and promotion folkloric arts, especially dance, songs, games and music among world communities. CIOFF has member countries in Southeast Asia which have had opportunities in hosting the folklore festivals and executive meetings. It is praiseworthy that recently CIOFF has also included during its festivals, seminars on topics relating to preserving folklore and promoting its appreciation among adults and children as well. It is essential to include children into its programmes since children are those who carry the concept and ideals to the future.

One recommendation the writers of this paper would like to suggest CIOFF members in Southeast Asia in particular, that, if this has not been done, they take inventories of existing folkloric arts,

tangible and intangible, as well as resource persons, institutions and organizations working in the fields of folkloric arts. The databases should be created for the purposes of exchanges of information. It is possible, that a regional network of information exchanges should by created, with the view to connecting with international networks such as INTERPOL (International Criminal Police Organization), CHIN (Canadian Heritage Information Network), IFAR (International Foundation for Art Research); ICOM (International Council of Museums), the Getty Art History Information Program and so on.

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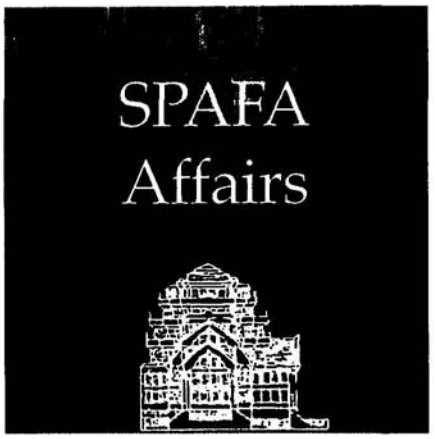


SPAFA Co-operates in Reading Promotion Seminar

During 2–4 May 1994 SPAFA co-operated with the Office of the National Commission for Culture, Thailand and the Thai Library Association in organizing a National Seminar on Reading Promotion: Let's Read Together. The purposes of the seminar are to brain storm on appropriate techniques to promote reading and to find ways and means to achieve the national target reading for all.

There were 100 participants including 22 resource persons who presented papers on theories as well as experience in tacking problems of non-reading groups, even among those who have completed primary education. It was pointed out that reading should start at home and family members should read together. The roles of parents and adults are to be good examples of regular readers, to make sure that there are books on different topics to fulfill their children's thirst for knowledge and information which meet their interest and accelerate their intellectual growth.

Schools are the next reading environment for children. There should be good school libraries which children should be encouraged to use regularly. The teaching methods should focus on guiding the child to read more than prescribed textbooks. Such practice should be observed at all educational levels. Education administrators must ensure that educational institution libraries are well stocked with books needed for learning, teaching and overall intellectual growth of students. The seminar also discussed on the roles of media for promotion of reading.

SPAFA library and Documentation Staff co-operated in documentation of the seminar and also in the reproduction seminar papers. Prof. Khuning Maenmas Chavalit participated in the seminar was elected Chairperson. She also contributed technical and professional advice to the seminar.

ASEAN Cultures: Strategic Studies

In the approach of the 21st Century, ASEAN member countries expressed main concerns about their cultural inheritance and the part they play in our national and individual everyday life, while ASEAN nations have been drawn more firmly into the global network which is dominated by the western culture through the powerful mass media electronic technology. The ASEAN

Committee for Culture and Information—COCI, at its 29th meeting, therefore, approved the project on ASEAN Culture: Strategic Studies to be implemented during fiscal years 1994/1995: 1995/1996 and 1996/1997.

The Preparatory Meeting to prepare the Conference on ASEAN Culture: Strategic Studies was held on 20–21 October 1994, at Ayutthaya, Thailand. Khuning Maenmas Chavalit, SPAFA Library and Documentation Officer was invited to participate and was elected chairperson of the meeting.

The two-day meeting focussed their deliberation on the definition of the terms "culture," "national culture," and "traditional culture" to ensure common understanding among participants on the project designed activities which consist of one main conference and two seminars to be implemented within a 3 year cycle, beginning with fiscal year 1994/1995. Selected topics for writing papers to be discussed during the main conference and the seminars are as follows.

The main framework for the project will concentrate sequentially on 1) fundamental questions; 2) the range of internal and external pressures faced by ASEAN countries, and 3) the necessary developments in the fields of culture as the ASEAN nations move towards the 21st Century.

The clusters of topics agreed upon for discussion during the conference, the first and the second seminars to be held in Singapore and Malaysia during 1995 and 1997 respectively are:

1) The Making of National Culture.

2) Cultural Forces and Counter-forces in Contemporary...(name of country)

3) Cultural Development towards the 21st Century
   First Seminar
   i) Culture and Family Values.
   ii) Culture and Education.
   iii) Culture and the Arts.
   Second Seminar
   i) Culture and Urbanization.
   ii) Culture and Mass Media/ Consumption.
   iii) Culture and Tourism.
   iv) Culture and Community

The panel discussion at the First and the Second Seminar will be on "Cultures in ASEAN: Shared Values and Differences" and "Networking of ASEAN Cultures" respectively.

The participants of the conference as well as the seminars are experts in cultural fields, academic as well as practitioners. Four persons will be invited from each ASEAN member country. They will prepare papers on selected topics and present them during the conference and the seminars. Interested scholars can participate as observers. After the presentation of the papers, general discussion will follow in order to brain storm for different view points and exchange of experience.

The main conference is scheduled to take place in Singapore, on August 1995. Announcement will be circulated to ASEAN member countries through the ASEAN National Committee for Culture and Information.

SEAMEO-SPAFA Joins Internet

On September 9, 1994 SPAFA joined the information superhighway, when SPAFA information was uploaded to the SEAMEO-AIT database.

SPAFA general, programme and library information, as well as news, is uploaded to the SEAMEO-AIT database, which can be accessed by 20 million users on the Internet.

The SEAMEO database can be accessed through gopher or lynx, and in the future, these data can be searched through other tools such as Mosaic, WWW and ftp.

At present, to search the information, type the command:

gopher emailhost.ait.ac.th

or

gopher 202.0.79.1

from the gopher main menu select Asia-Pacific Info, then SEAMEO.

SPAFA's e-mail address is:

exspafa@mailhost.ait.ac.th

Installation of the SPAFA internet system was finalized by Dr. Jaroon

of AIT. Dr. Jaroon is currently developing a SEAMEO MIS programme to be used by all the SEAMEO centres. This programme will be tested in December and operational in the centres by early 1995.

15th Malaysia Chinese Dance Festival, Pinang

For 4 days from the 2nd to the 5th of November, over a thousand young dancers gathered in the scenic island in northwest penisular of Malaya, Pinang, to compete for awards in the annual Malaysia Chinese Dance Festival. Since its inception in 1979, the festival has attracted many aspiring dancers and choreographers to participate as the event gives artistes who have achieved high standard due recognition awards.

Although there is no monetary gain, many participants are empowered by the experience when their works are cheered and endorsed by the enthusiastic audience and panel of adjudicators. The solidarity expressed and ideas exchanged at the workshop, performance and informal gatherings give them the rare chance of knowing what their counterparts in other states are doing. They gain greater confidence in their difficult creative work in an environment where there is little public support for their arts.

This year, 16 items from the primary schools and 13 from the secondary schools were presented in the festival. For the open section, 19 items competed. The three adjudicators were Mr. Hu Zhi Qiang, Madam Yun Hui Ni and Madam Zheng Bing Wei. According to the three adjudicators, the standard of the primary schools were higher than those of the secondary schools. While they were moved by the enthusiasm of the participants they felt that there was not a single item deserving The Best Production Award for the open section. However, they were rather pleased with the costume design of two groups and gave both of them the Best Costume Design Award. They were Chong Yoon Keong from Melaka and Zheng Ting Ling from Kuala Trengganu. The Best Decor went to Zhang Lin Bao who choreographed for the Phor Tay Alumni Association. The adjudicators felt that there was not a single item outstanding enough to receive the Best Creative Work Award this year. As compared to last year's competition, the standard of dancing has improved visibly but choreographically it was, with a few exceptions less impressive. It might be due to the fact that fewer groups decided to participate in this year's festival.

The groups that did make greater impact were the veterans. The Phor Tay Alumni Association's "The Thousand-year Chryalis," choreographed by Zhang Lin Bao, a graduate of the Hong Kong Performing Arts Academy, was considered by the critics as the most impressive item of the festival. Using the technique of the traditional scraf dance in a creative way, she managed to express the anxiety of one being washed away by the tide of globalisation: the loss of cultural identity. Chinese fans, were painted by disorganised black strokes, symbolsing the pollution of modernity. The dancers gracefully manipulated the fans and the elegant gown they wore made interesting moments with dramatic effect. The dance was well rehearsed and moved the audience to resopond to the question asked by the choreographer: how one should react to the massive change of currents in today's society.

The well known group form the state of Malacca led by Chong Yoon Keong staged a "Wedding Dance of the Miao Minority" of China. Performed by the disciplined cast, it captured the atmosphere of the festivity of a remote village. The romantic pas de deux and the high spirited corp de ballet made the celebration so convincing.

The Selangor Chinwoo Dance Company's "Wooden Path of the Fishing Village" was another piece that received loud applause from both the audience and the adjudicators. The choreographer Pan Shao Peng, imaginatively intertwined the sound of hawkers and clogs to capture the atmosphere of the old time fishing village. No music and no typical ethnic dance movements were used in the dance, yet the familiar sounds made by the ensemble so resemble village life and are easily identified by the audience. It stroke their emotional strings.

Like the previous festivals, some familiar historical stories were narrated

as dance drama. Wang Zhao Jun, the consort of peace of the Han Dynasty, was the central figure of the dance drama staged by Hainan Clan Association of Selangor, choreographed by Huang Tian Cai. He combined Chinese classical sleeve dance with ballet to portray the frustration of the beauty who was sent to an unknown frontier by the court. Although the poorly attired lead dancer was seen too many a time doing the grand jete, the dramatic music chosen by the choreographer managed to enhance the emotional intensity of the piece.

The good thing about the festival was its ability to encourage the young and the less experienced to try out and to test their creativity. Some of the items might not be up to the standard expected, but their sincere search for an expression using their bodies is touching. For example, the dance created by the 21 year old Huang Tain Bao from the dance group of the Sabah Institute of Art, Kota Kinabalu, East Malaysia, called "Loss of Truth" might lack choreographic clarity, but his concept, costume design and imageries were innovative. There were moments of creative sparks in a piece where the enthusiasm of the young dancers was so vividly shown on stage. Given appropriate training and guidance, these artistes will certainly be able to produce works of greater impact. The beauty of this event is that it once again provides a chance for dance lovers to celebrate their creativity and cultural identity in a programme where choreographic ideas and dance experiences are exchanged on stage.

Next year, the Malaysian Chinese Dance Festival will be held in Malacca, a historic town in the west coast of penisular Malaysia. For details, Please write to:

Mr. Chong Yoon Keong,
322, Jalan Parameswara,
75000 Malacca,
Malaysia.
tel 606-239988, 232212

SPAFA Workshop on the Identification and Classification of Trade Ceramics

From December 4–18 SPAFA organized a Workshop on the Identification of Trade Ceramics at the Brunei Museum, Brunei Darussalam. This workshop was most effectively organized by the Brunei Museum on behalf of the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports, Brunei Darussalam. It was designed to provide training in the identification of Chinese and other Asian trade ceramics. It consisted of a number of components: country reports which covered notable finds of trade ceramics in the participating countries, site visits to Terusan Kupang, Kota Batu, and Pulau Cermin, work with the type collections from these sites as well as those from Tanjong Batu, comparison with the Brunei Museum reference collections and published sources, and lectures and discussions of thin section analysis of ceramics. Eighteenth and nineteenth century ceramics in the Malay Museum of Technology were also handled and discussed by some of the participants. In addition the two consultants lectured on the anthropological and historical significance of trade ceramics. The workshop stressed the sharing of knowledge among the participants, who ranged from expert curators to non-specialists.

The Brunei sites cover a time span from the 10th century to the 19th century, being particularly rich in Chinese ceramics of the Song (Sung) (960–1279), Yuan (1279–1368) and Ming (1368–1644) Dynasties and Thai and Vietnamese products from the 14th–16th centuries. When Brunei entered history in 1521 (Nicholl 1990), it was one of the most powerful sultanates in insular Southeast Asia. It was a trading entrepot, exacting tribute from a varied mixture of tribal and Moslem populations all the way from the Kapuas River in northwestern Kalimantan to the islands of the southern Philippines. The largest site, at Kota Batu, was surrounded by a stone wall and and had other important features such as the sultan's graves, marked by ornate imported tombstones. There was also an earthen causeway. Excavations in 1989 uncovered the cut stone foundation of a large residential structure 25.4 m. square, thought to have supported a three tiered roof on posts. Adjacent to Kota Batu is a man made island with an area of more than 250 square meters which appears to have been connected to the mainland at Kota Batu by a wooden bridge (Karim Osman 1992). The island may have functioned as a

customs house/warehouse, and a waiting station for small ships. A fortified island with later settlement, Pulau Cermin, lies several kilometers to the east, in the river mouth.

A second site, Kupang, was mainly a Song (Sung) period settlement, one of the major centers in Brunei in its time. It appears to have been abandoned for some time in the Ming, when Kota Batu was at the height of its importance. However it was resettled in the Qing (Ch'ing) while Kota Batu gradually declined in importance, probably after the attack of the Spanish in the late 16th century (Matussin Omar 1981). While olive green celadon bowls from Kupang have been identified as Yue (Yueh) type wares of the 10th or 11th century, some of them might be products of the Tongan (T'ong-an) kilns of Fujian, dating from the late 12th to the early 13th centuries. Hallmarks of this type are parallel comb marks on the exterior, with curved incised lines and comb marks in the interior.

A third site, Tanjong Batu, is a rocky headland on the northern tip of the Muara Peninsula. Sherds from this site, primarily of bowls, are all of one ware, it has been proposed that there must be a wreck somewhere in the vicinity.

Given the relatively brief duration of the workshop, priority was given to the identification of the most common types, such as celadon, underglaze blue and white, and iron painted wares. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to work with white wares or large jars, despite the fact that the Brunei museum has collections of both, and both have been the subject of much recent study (for example, Oriental Society of the Philippines 1993, Valdes et al 1993). Simple points of comparison were established, focusing on the following areas: form, glaze, decoration, and paste, and means of distinguishing between different wares were discussed. Distinctions between Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese products were reviewed. Participants recorded the attributes of ceramics under the above headings, practiced taking basic measurements and making drawings, and described the motifs of the underglaze decoration. Although the workshop was of short duration, it introduced the members to the major dimensions along which ceramics are currently studied—technological, stylistic, functional, and economic.

Participants included:

Mr. Haji Amad bin Shaari, Brunei Museum; Mrs. Ekowati Sundari, National Museum of Indonesia; Mr. Thonglith Luangkoth, Dept. of Archaeology and Museums, Lao PDR; Mr. Junaidi bin Abdul Rashid, Dept. of Museums and Antiquity, Malaysia; Mr. Alfredo Orogo, National Museum of the Philippines; Ms. Mary J. Louise Bolunia, National Museum of the Philippines; Mrs. Millicent Yeomei Lin, National Museum of Singapore; Mrs. Rakchanok Tosuphan, Fine Arts Dept., Thailand; Mr. Phnombootra Chandrajoti, Fine Arts Dept., Thailand; Dr. Nguyen Quoc Hung, Ministry of Culture and Information, Vietnam.

Consultants were Prof. Aurora Roxas Lim, University of the Philippines and Prof. Richard Pearson, University of British Columbia. The invited lecturer was Mr. Abdul Halim Quazi, Ministry of Development, Brunei Darussalam.

Highlights of the brief country reports, and some of the archaeological discussions, included the following:

—an introduction to ceramics found in sites in Brunei Darussalam

—an overview of the ceramics in the collections of the National Museum, Indonesia

—an introduction to kiln excavations at Watnak village, Vientiane, which have yielded sherds of jars, plates, lamps, and pipes dating from 300 to 400 years ago

—the chronology of trade ceramics found in peninsular Malaysia

—an outline of ceramics and shipwrecks found recently in the Philippines. In addition to a review of excavations on land, four ship wreck sites were referred to: the Butuan buried ships of Mindanao, the 16th century shipwreck from near Marinduque, the Puerto Galera shipwreck of Ming date and the San Diego shipwreck of 1600. The Butuan ship site has yielded Song ceramics dating to the 12th century. Carbon dating of the wood of one of the ships yielded a 4th century date.

—an overview of the ceramics galleries of the National Museum of

Singapore, and their goals

—a description of ceramics and kiln sites from Buriram province, northern Thailand, often known as "Khmer type" ceramics. Excavations of kiln sites in La Han Sai and Ban Kruat districts yielded cross-draft slab kilns made of bamboo and sandy clay, in which wares were fired at a temperature of 1200–12500 Celcius. Subsequent excavation at the Nai Chian kiln site yielded dates of the 8th to 10th centuries.

—an account of the ceramics from the Vong Tau shipwreck near Hon Cau Island, southern Vietnam. The Vong Tau ship, of Kangxi (K'ang-hsi) date (late 17th century), excavated between 1990 and 1992, was 32.71 m long and 9 m wide. It yielded 60,000 artifacts, a portion of which were auctioned off under the auspices of the Vietnamese government.

The oldest finds reported in the country reports for Indonesia, Peninsular Malaysia, and the Philippines were all dated to the 9th century. A similar date has been given for early finds in the Ryukyus. The typical find of this early period is an earthenware dish with areas covered by colored lead glaze.

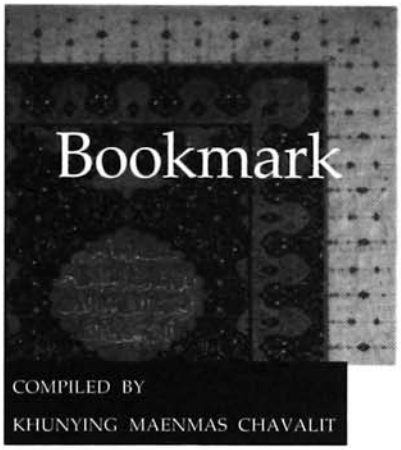
Consultant Dr. Aurora Roxas Lim discussed Chinese influences in the Philippines, viewed from the porcelain trade. In her detailed survey of many of the issues of early trade in the Philippines, Professor Lim documented the way in which marine oriented coastal and lowland communities became internally stratified, through the examples of the Sulu and Magindanao sultanates. Some groups, such as the Tausug, became ruling elites in the Sulu archipelago, even though they were recent arrivals in the area. They came to dominate coastal groups, who were dislocated to other islands or to the interior.

Consultant Dr. Richard Pearson reviewd the typologies of trade ceramics for the Ryukyus provided by Japanese scholars, and attempted to distinguish the types of ceramics brought to the Ryukyus by private, tributary, and relaying trade. It appears that the earliest wares of the late Tang (T'ang) and Song (Sung) were brought by private Chinese traders, and that by the early 14th century Okinawans were attempting to sail to China and Southeast Asia on their own. A huge quantity of Yuan celadon reached Okinawa in the period of contending chiefdoms in the 14th century before the establishment of Ming tributary trade with the three competing states of Sanhoku, Chuzan, and Sannan from the 1370's. With the ascendancy of the Chuzan Kingdom in 1429, relaying trade, which began by the middle of the 14th century, became important for the transport of ceramics to Southeast Asia in exchange for valuable woods and tropical products which were sent on to China. Thus some Southeast Asian ceramics may have come to the Ryukyus before the political consolidation in the early 15th century, depending on whether they are dated to the 14th or 15th centuries. (The workshop participants found that opinion is divided on the degree of development of underglaze painting in Thai and Vietnamese wares in the 14th century). However certain official presents, such as the large Yuan blue and white jar found at Yomitan, Okinawa, were never circulated as trans-shipped objects. Kamei (1986: 339–354) notes that small lead glazed three colored water droppers and incense containers may have been traded to Okinawa from the Quanzhou (Ch'uan-chou) area of China in the middle of the 15th century and later exported to Japan and the Philippines. They appear to have been of ritual use, judging from their the fact that they are found in a ritual area within Shuri castle and in burials in the Philippines.

Participants were exposed to the basics of optical mineralogy and thin sectioning of ceramics. While it has yet to be demonstrated how useful thin sectioning will be in sourcing ceramics in this region, it will definitely be useful in grouping sherds and exploring the ranges of variation in categories such as brown wares.

The workshop identified a number of issues, leading to a series of recommendations. Networking, at both the informal and formal level, was advocated, so that detailed news of recent discoveries may be circulated. New discoveries from Vietnam, Myanmar and the Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong were identified as extremely important. Recent publications have provided some coverage of

excavations and surface collections (Southeast Asia Ceramic Society, West Malaysia Chapter 1985, Yeh 1988, Ho 1988) but more details are needed. Existing archaeological newsletters should be used where feasible. The exchange of small collections of type sherds and field quality video footage of sites and excavations was thought to be useful as well. Shipwreck sites were singled out as being of particular significance. It was recommended that a list of shipwreck sites and related bibliography might be prepared in future. The workshop participants also stressed the importance of protecting sites from looting and removal of objects from the region. They stressed the importance of existing legislation and urged that joint ventures to salvage ships should be approached with extreme caution, to ensure that important objects and information are protected.



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