

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

An Introduction to the Convention and the World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia

"UNESCO seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972". (excerpt: Mission Statement, UNESCO World Heritage Centre). By 1997, the World Heritage Convention has been signed by 147 countries worldwide, 29 in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Convention defines the kind of natural and cultural sites which can be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List, and sets out the duties of State Parties in identifying potential sites, and their role in protecting and preserving them. By signing the Convention, each country pledges to conserve not only the World Heritage sites situated on its territory, but also to protect its national heritage. In addition, the responsibility to maintain and protect the heritage for future generations is shared by the international community.

Richard Engelhardt, UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific emphasises that it is important to understand that the World Heritage Convention is not "an instrument to single out certain sites, crown them as somehow more important than others and leave the rest to an

uncertain, ignominious fate. On the contrary, the World Heritage Convention is an instrument to promote heritage conservation on as wide as possible a scale, imbedding it into the social and economic development plans of nations, states and communities everywhere".



Angkor Wat, Siem Reap, Cambodia

To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of "outstanding universal value" and meet certain criteria which are explained in the Operational Guidelines. Every year, sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List at the annual meeting of the World Heritage Committee. By 1997, 506 World Heritage Sites have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. Several of these sites are located in Southeast Asia:



Prambanan Temple Compound, Indonesia

(UNESCO)

CAMBODIA

Angkor

Angkor is the main archaeological site of South-East Asia. Stretching over some 200 square kilometres overrun by forest, it contains the splendid remains of the different capitals of the Khmer Empire, from the 11th to the 15th centuries, including the famous temple of Angkor Wat and, at Angkor Thom, the Bayon temple with its countless sculpted decorations and the 'Terrace of the Leper King'. UNESCO has set up a wide-ranging programme to safeguard this symbolic site and its surroundings.

INDONESIA

Borobodur Temple

Compound

Restored with UNESCO's assistance, this famous Buddhist temple is built in three layers - a pyramidal base with five concentric square terraces, a cone with three circular platforms and at the top, a monumental stupa. The walls and balustrades are decorated with bas-reliefs, covering a total surface of 2,500 square metres. Around the circular platform are 72 openwork stupas, each containing a statue of Buddha.

Komodo National Park

These volcanic islands are inhabited by a population of around 7,500 giant lizards, whose appearance and aggressive behaviour have led them to be called "Komodo dragons". They exist nowhere else and are of great interest for scientists studying the theory of evolution.

Prambanan Temple

Compound

Built in the 10th century, this is the largest Shiva compound in Indonesia. Rising above the centre of the last of these concentric squares are three temples decorated in reliefs illustrating the epic of the Ramayana, dedicated to the three great Hindu divinities (Shiva, Vishnu and Rama) and three temples dedicated to the animals who serve them.

Sangiran Early Man Site

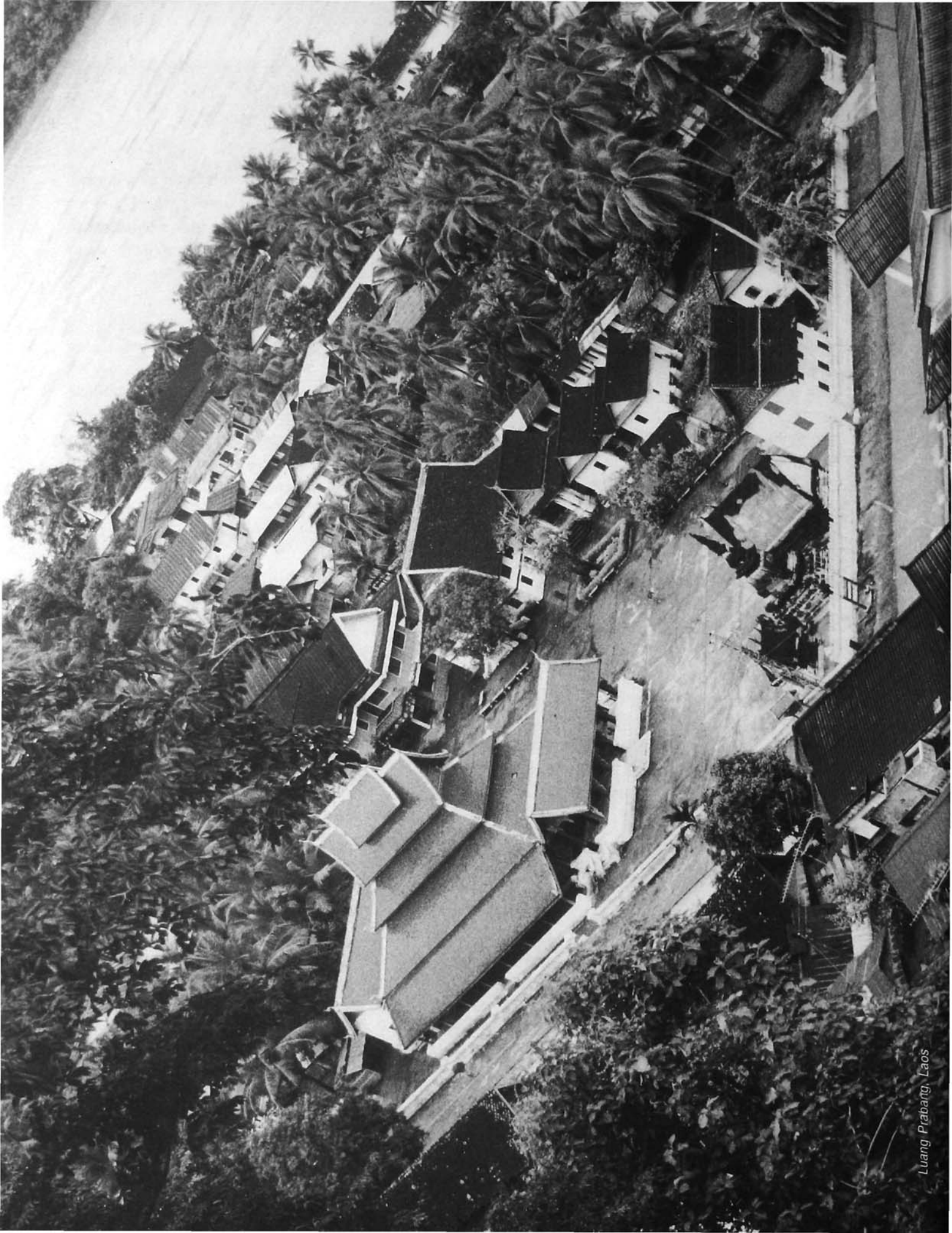
This site saw excavations from 1936 to 1941 which led to the discovery of the first hominid fossil at this site. Later, 50 fossils of *Meganthropus Palaeo* and *Pithecanthropus Erectus/Homo Erectus* were found - half of all the world's known hominid fossils. Inhabited for the past one and a half million years, Sangiran is important to understanding human evolution.

Ujung Kulon National Park

Located in the extreme southwest tip of Java on the Sunda Shelf, this national park includes the Ujung Kulon peninsula and several offshore islands, and it encompasses the natural reserve of Krakatoa. In addition to its natural beauty and geological interest - especially for the study of inland volcanoes - it contains the largest remaining area of lowland rainforests in the Java plain. Several species of endangered plants and animals can be found there, the most threatened of all being the Javan rhinoceros.



*Borobodur Temple,
Indonesia*



Luang Prabang, Laos



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The Town of Luang Prabang

This town reflects the exceptional fusion of traditional architecture and urban structures built by 19th and 20th century European colonial rulers. Its unique urban landscape is remarkably well-preserved, illustrating a key stage in the blending of these two distinct cultural traditions.

PHILIPPINES

Four Baroque Churches of the Philippines

These churches, located in Manila, Santa Maria, Paoay and Miag-o, the first of which was built in the late 16th century by Spain, are unique. They represent the fusion of European Baroque as re-interpreted by Chinese and Philippine craftsmen.

The Rice Terraces of the Philippines Cordilleras

For 2,000 years, the high rice fields of Ifugao have followed the contours of the mountain. The fruit of knowledge passed on from one generation to the next, of sacred traditions and a delicate social balance, they helped form a landscape of great beauty that expresses conquered and conserved harmony between humankind and the environment.

Tubbatha Reef Marine Park

Covering 33,200 hectares, including the North and South Reefs, this park is a unique example of an atoll reef with a very high density of marine species. The North Islet serves as a nesting site for birds and marine turtles.

THAILAND

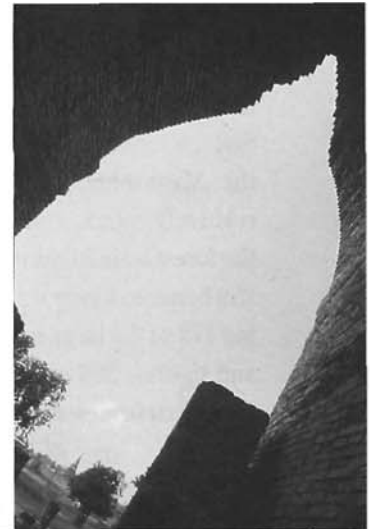
Ban Chiang Archaeological Site

Considered the most important prehistoric settlement so far discovered in Southeast Asia, Ban Chiang was the centre of a remarkable phenomenon of human cultural, social and technological evolution. The site presents the earliest evidence of farming in the region and of the manufacture and use of metals.

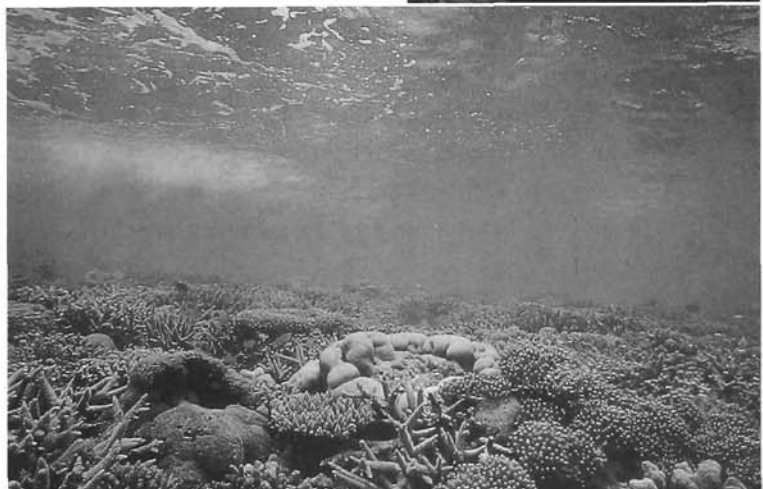
Historic City of Ayutthaya

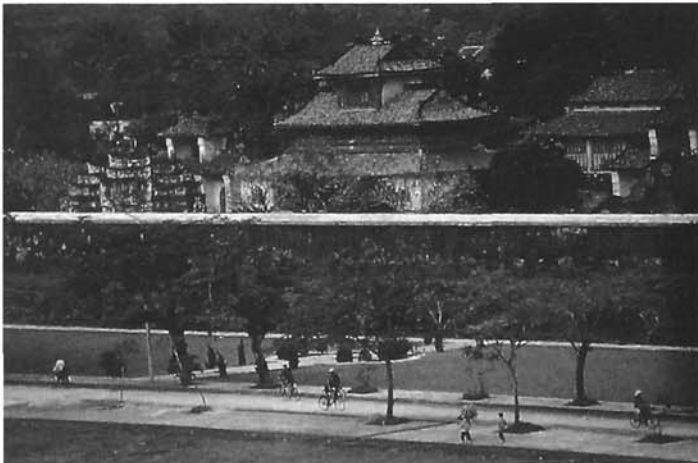
Founded in about 1350, Ayutthaya became the second Siamese capital after Sukhotai. It was destroyed by the Burmese in the 18th century. Its remains, characterised by its *prang* or reliquary towers, and gigantic monasteries, give an idea of its past splendour.

Ayutthaya, Thailand



Tubbatha Reef, The Philippines





Hue, Viet Nam

Historic Town of Sukhotai and Associated Historic Towns

Capital of the first Kingdom of Siam in the 13th and 14th centuries, with a number of notable monuments which illustrate the beginnings of Thai architecture.

Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuaries

Stretching over more than 600,000 hectares along the Myanmar border, the sanctuary, which is relatively intact, contains examples of almost all the forest formations of continental South-East Asia. It is home to a very diverse array of animals, including 77% of the large mammals (especially elephants and tigers), 50% of the large birds and 33% of the land vertebrates to be found in this region.

VIET NAM

Ha Long Bay

The bay, located in the Gulf of Tonkin, includes some 1,600 islands and islets forming a spectacular seascape of limestone pillars. Because of their precipitous nature, most of the islands are unin-

habited and unaffected by man. The exceptional aesthetic values of this site are complemented by its great biological interest.

The Complex of Hue Monuments

Hue is a striking example of the urban planning and architecture of a completely fortified capital city, as well as a symbol of the Vietnamese feudal empire at its height in the early 19th century.

For more information or contribution, please contact:

Richard Engelhardt
UNESCO Regional Advisor For Culture in Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
920 Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Tel: (662) 391-0879
Fax: (662) 391-0866
E-Mail: Culture@mozart.inet.co.th

or

The World Heritage Centre
UNESCO
7 place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP
FRANCE
Tel: (33-1) 45 68 15 71
Fax: (33-1) 40 56 95 70
E-mail: wh-info@unesco.org
Internet site: <http://www.unesco.org.whc>

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Beatrice Kaldun (UNESCO Consultant for Culture, UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific) assisted in compiling information for the above article

Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia

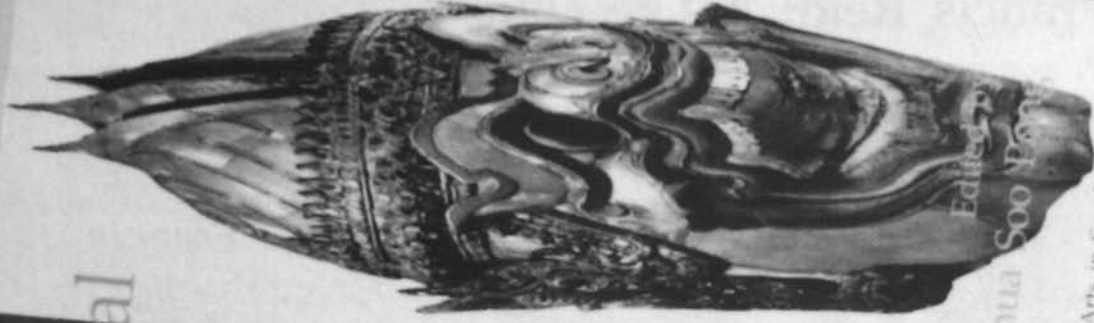
Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia introduces many traditional forms of theatre that are not widely known outside their countries of origin. Edited by Dr Chua Soo Pong, Currently the Director of the Chinese Opera Institute in Singapore, the book discusses how traditional forms of theatre should be revitalised in the rapidly changing socio-economic environments of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia (US\$ 10 excluding postage cost) can be obtained from:

Regional Centre for Archaeology
and Fine Arts
SPAFA

81/1 Sri Ayutthaya Road
Samsen, Theves
Bangkok 10300, Thailand
Tel : (66-2) 2804022-9
Fax : (66-2) 2804030
Email : spafa@ksc.th.com

Traditional
Theatre
in
Southeast
Asia



Chua Soo Pong
Editor
Forming Arts in Southeast Asia