

# JSS

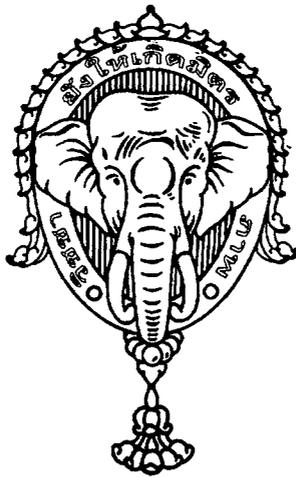
## The Journal of the Siam Society



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Front cover : Stucco image of the Walking Buddha at Wat Mahathat, Old Sawankhalok.

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## Editor's Notes

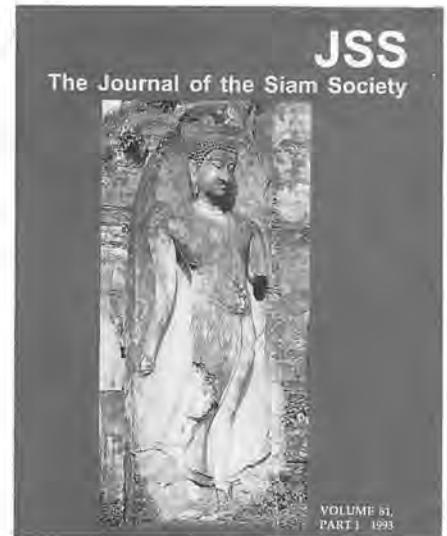
The Honorary Editor welcomes the advent with this issue of Acharn Pitya Bunnag as Honorary Deputy Editor of the *JSS*, and, as supporting editors, Dr. Howard Graves, Mr. Michael Notcutt, and Dr. Hans Penth. The assistance afforded by these distinguished gentlemen has been noteworthy in helping to ensure the timeliness of the publication of the *JSS*.

Editorial support was provided as follows: Dr. Graves, "Robert Challe and Siam" and "Beads of Burma;" Mr. Notcutt, "Other Peoples' Pasts," "Ancestors and Christians," and "New Light on Shadows;" and Dr. Penth, "The Mangrai Buddha Image."

All typesetting and page layout for this issue was carried out with Siam Society resources. Thanks are due to Khun Kanitha Kasinabul, Publications Coordinator, and her staff for production assistance. Nyle Spoelstra assisted with the page layouts. Euayporn Kerdchouay prepared the cover.

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# In This Issue

Figuring out what actually happened in history can be a formidable challenge—how events happened, a greater one. Analyzing why they happened brings research and discussion to a new level of complexity. Determining *when* things really happened, however, can sometimes be more vexing than any of these problems, especially in fields such as art history, where firm evidence is frequently sparse, confusing, or nonexistent.

One of the major present projects of PIRIYA KRAIRIKSH is to review the chronology of Thai art history anew, bearing in mind the traditional conclusions and conjectures but putting all to the objective test of a rigorous fresh analysis, setting all preconceptions aside. Readers of the *JSS* are familiar with Dr. Piriya's rethinking of the dates of the architecture of Ayudhya as presented in Volume 80, Parts 1 and 2—a study whose further results will be published in subsequent issues.

Now Dr. Piriya turns his attention to the art of Sukhothai. He begins with a detailed review of the historiography of the subject, seeking out the chief sources of the concepts and interpretations which have prevailed—unchallenged—to the present day. These he finds in the intensive consideration of Sukhothai by King Rama VI, based upon His Majesty's visit to the cities of the north in 1907, when he was still Crown Prince Maha Vajiravudh.

The Prince attempted to date the monuments and to place them in the proper perspective on the basis of the knowledge available to him in his day and his own thoughtful interpretation of what he had seen and read. However, he urged his readers not to accept his findings as a textbook, but to use them as a framework for future research. "... [I]f anyone who does not agree with me on any point can clarify it for me, I should be delighted and be thankful to him," he wrote.

Dr. Piriya begins his response to the Prince's invitation in this issue.

J.C. EADE is also one of those scholars now active in attempts to make historical dating more precise. He is a specialist in the application of computer techniques to these efforts. In his contribution to this issue he analyzes the calendrical and planetary detail contained in the inscriptions on a Buddha image cast in celebration of Chiang Mai's famous founder, King Mangrai. He establishes the dates on the pedestal with more confidence than before, is able to read the unusually copious data with greater comprehension, and can fill out several lacunae in the reading.

Patriotism, nationalism, and even chauvinism have sometimes tended to color a given country's attitudes toward foreign specialists who have come to assist local personnel in various technical fields. One of these fields is archaeology. IAN GLOVER examines the role of foreign archaeologists in

developing a prehistory specifically for Thailand, and raises the question as to whether the research of Western archaeologists working in Southeast Asia can be considered the legitimate application of universally valid scientific methods, or is no more than a form of cultural imperialism which may tend to control a people's knowledge of its own past.

ELIZABETH MOORE and U AUNG MYINT focus their attention on the relationship between line-decorated Pyu and Chin beads of Burma, found in Pyu and Mon sites dated to the early first millennium. The types and decorations of the beads are discussed in detail. The article is copiously illustrated; a database of ancient Pyu beads is presented in an appendix which constitutes an annotated survey of design categories.

Generally forgotten for years, the French writer Robert Challe has recently become something of a cult figure. His lively *Journal d'un Voyage fait aux Indes Orientales*, containing his sharp comments on the French adventure in Siam in the 1680s, has attracted the attention of historians of that turbulent period even though Challe never set foot in Siam. MICHAEL SMITHIES describes Challe's rise as a man of letters and his experiences as a widely-traveled observer, and then presents a detailed examination of the voyage, particularly as it relates to Siam. Well educated, a skeptic, author of several novels, Challe fished and hunted in Canada, wandered off to Rome, Stockholm, Jerusalem and Burma among other places, and in the journal of his visit to Southeast Asia made numerous cutting comments about the key French personalities active in Siam at the time. Although he based his work largely on the previous account by the Abbé de Choisy, he freely challenged the earlier writer, and came up with a spicy, anecdotal and gossipy narrative.

One of the mysteries of Lao history is the question of who the woman referred to only as Maha Devi, the Great Queen, really was. MARTIN STUART-FOX addresses the problem of identifying this personage, whose image is that of a murderous, scheming crone. He reviews the chronology of royal succession in Laos in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, describes Maha Devi's ascent to power, and analyzes the conflicting evidence and various theories as to her identity. He concludes that she may actually have been Keo Lot Fa, the venerable queen of King Fa Ngum. Machiavellian, with blood on her hands? Perhaps, but just as likely a querulous old lady who became the unwitting focus of factional hatred.

Drawing on his findings during one of his regular visits to areas of Christian missionary activity among the Hill Tribes of Thailand, R.A.F. PAUL WEBB describes the efforts of the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions in Lampang to care

not only for the spiritual needs of the people to whom they minister but also to improve their socioeconomic condition and raise them from poverty to a less difficult practical existence. Problems generally include resistance to new ways, opium addiction, and the burdens imposed by the need to placate evil spirits. Freedom from propitiation of these last constitutes one of the reasons why some of the Hill Tribes turn to Christianity.

GRAHAM FORDHAM analyzes the persistence of the annual ritual of homage to ancestors among the descendants of the first Northern Thai converts to Christianity. He traces the ancestor cult to the transformation in the nineteenth century of Buddhist mortuary rites and rituals connected with the old matrilineal spirits, synthesized with rudimentary Christian understandings about death and the person of the deceased. He sees these syncretic ritual practices as creative cultural responses to a broader social context rather than merely as assimilation into Thai cultural patterns.

The artistic creativity of Thai royalty is well known. Therefore it is perhaps not too surprising that the cosmopolitan Thai monarchs King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh were both captivated by the wit, satire and music of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. Historian DAVID K. WYATT, himself a card-carrying Savoyard, tells the story. Even King Chulalongkorn's children were involved; they translated the libretto of *The Mikado* into Thai. His Majesty looked at their

translation and said, "The English original was a drama; this translation is almost like a sermon." Amused, the monarch rewrote it as a *real* sermon. Later King Vajiravudh, an experienced dramatist, translated *The Mikado* himself, actually in two versions, one following the original fairly closely and the other changing its title and renaming the characters and the setting. The royal translator actually went Gilbert one better by improving the weak ending of the original.

BONNIE BRERETON contributes a note on a palmleaf manuscript acquired by Chiang Mai University in recent years that may be one of the oldest books written in a Tai language. The text, a copy of the *Malai Plai*, is the second of a pair of Malai texts containing the story of the compassionate monk who went to hell to bestow mercy on the beings there, and who upon his return to the human realm persuaded their relatives to make merit for them so that the hell beings were reborn in heaven. It constitutes an important landmark in the development of the Phra Malai story. Dr. Brereton includes a summary of the basic narrative.

DEREK P. BRERETON is an individual and family psychotherapist who has traveled extensively in Southeast Asia and has studied ritual drama and shamanistic curing. Putting to use his experience with shadow-play techniques in Thailand, Malaysia and Java, he originated the use of shadow-drama as an aid in family therapy in the United States. He describes the methods and results of this innovative therapeutic approach.