



NEWS

Bangkok No. 3 March 2010

National Museum Volunteers





National Museum Volunteers

The National Museum Volunteers (NMV), under the auspices of the Department of Fine Arts, is a recipient of the Thai National Heritage Preservation Award 1989, 2001 and 2004. The group is also a Member of the Council of the World Federation of Friends of Museums.

The National Museum Volunteers is an organization with Thai and international members whose purpose is to serve the National Museum Bangkok and the public through a variety of activities.

The NMV Newsletter

A monthly publication of the National Museum Volunteers, distributed free to members.

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Cover photo:

"Portrait of Khun Chira" by Chamrat Kietkong (courtesy of the National Gallery)

Ed: See article on page 8

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NATIONAL MUSEUM BANGKOK

Hours of Operation

Wednesday to Sunday:

9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Monday and Tuesday:

Closed, except on public holidays

Thai New Year and 1 January:

Closed

Entrance fee: baht 200

NMV Library

The library is located at the rear of the Museum grounds behind the Palace building.

Hours of opening:

Wednesdays: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Thursdays: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Membership cards must be shown when borrowing books.

E-mail: nmvlibrary@gmail.com

Guided Tours

English: Thai Art, History and Buddhism
Wednesday & Thursday

French: Pre-Thai and Thai Art
Wednesday & Thursday

German: Thai Art and Culture
Wednesday & Thursday

**Japanese: Buddhaisawan Chapel
Buddhism and Thai Art**
Wednesday & Thursday

Time: 9:30 am

Meet at: Museum ticket office

Fee: Free (*Museum entrance fee must be paid.*)

For information call:

Guide Chairperson (Guiding and Special tours):

Berni Sabatini 083 302 5005

Tour Leaders:

English: Lynda O'Callaghan 02 285 6162

French: Isabelle Depaty 02 261 1964

Jean-Pierre Joly 02 271 1249

German: Barbara Frank 080 088 3962

Japanese: Kumi Ishii 02 662 2179

Naomi Nomoto 02 664 3640

NMV Website address:

<http://www.museumvolunteersbkk.net>



IN THIS ISSUE

CONTENTS

| | |
|----|----------------------------|
| 2 | Calendar |
| 3 | Notices |
| 6 | Message from the President |
| 8 | NMV@40 |
| 10 | From the Library |
| 13 | Monthly Lecture |
| 15 | At Home |
| 17 | Study Group |
| 20 | Feature |
| 29 | Excursion |
| 31 | Excursions Policy |
| 32 | Membership Application |

This issue edited by:

Devin Brougham

CALENDAR



- Mar 8 Study Group – **“Thai Temple Murals”**
- Mar 15 Study Group – **“Thai Temple Murals”**
- Mar 22 Study Group – **“Thai Temple Murals”**
- Mar 23 At Home – **“Collectible Arts of Thailand”**
- Mar 25 Lecture – **“India’s Northeastern Frontier”**
- Mar 27 Excursion – **“Hidden Architectural Gems”**
- Mar 29 Study Group – **“Thai Temple Murals”**
- Apr 5 Study Group – **“Thai Temple Murals”**
- Apr 19 Study Group – **Orientation: “Southeast Asian Ceramics”**
- May 3 Study Group – **“Southeast Asian Ceramics”**
- May 10 Study Group – **“Southeast Asian Ceramics”**
- May 17 Study Group – **“Southeast Asian Ceramics”**
- May 24 Study Group – **“Southeast Asian Ceramics”**

For further details regarding upcoming NMV events, please see announcements in this newsletter or check the NMV website: www.museumvolunteersbkk.net



NOTICES

Touching Thailand Guiding

Are you interested in guiding with a difference? If so, the Touching Thailand project team would like to hear from you!

The NMV invites all visitors to the National Museum Bangkok to learn about Thailand through Touching Thailand Tours. During these Tours, visitors are able to touch specially selected Buddha statues, architectural items, ceramics and other pieces while they learn about Thai art, history and culture.

Developed in conjunction with the National Museum Bangkok (NMB), the Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB) and the NMV, these hands-on programs have been designed so that blind and visually impaired Thais and foreigners can learn about Thai history, art and culture through their fingers.

We are very interested in expanding the Touching Thailand team so that we can meet future demand for tours. We are looking for people who wish to train as guides as well as those willing to help with the organisation of the tours.

If you are interested in getting involved in this very special of NMV activities, then please contact Bo Mazur on email address: information@museumvolunteersbkk.net.

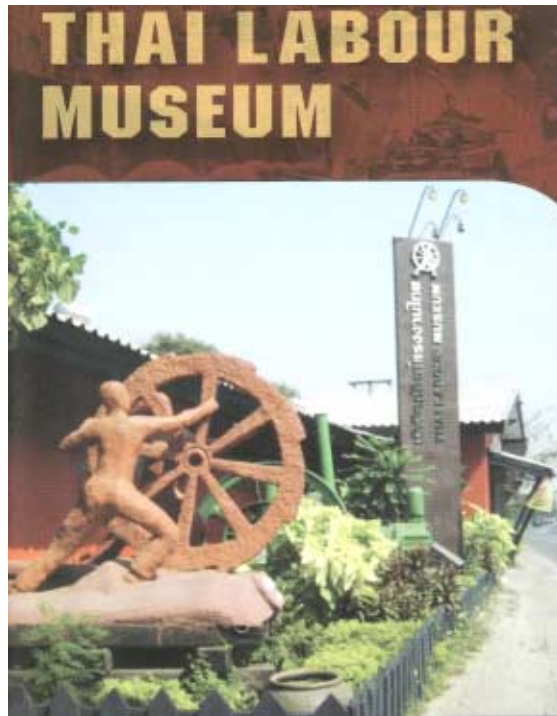
Thai Labour Museum

By Jean-Pierre Joly

The new rail link to Suvarnabhumi Airport is progressing and the main station in the city will be Makassan. Before the line opens for service, you should rush to visit the Thai Labour Museum, as it is not certain whether or not this museum will be maintained later.

The Thai Labour Museum came into existence because labour leaders, NGO representatives, scholars and historians, gathering at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, felt that such a museum should be established to cover a missing chapter of Thailand's history. It was agreed the museum would serve as an information centre and a showcase of the Thai labour movement.

The one-story building was once home to the Railway Labour Union Headquarters and was turned into the museum, guarded by a stone sculpture of male and female workers pushing forward the wheel of history with all their might. There are six exhibition rooms.



Room no. 1 is devoted to illustrating the life of the Thai slaves and in what was formerly slavery in Siam.

Room no. 2 gives visitors an insight into the Thai workers' involvement in the modernisation of the Kingdom during the reign of King Rama V.

Room no. 3 shows the plight of Thai labour prior to the 1932 political reform. A number of documents show that workers had already attempted to unite in the form of associations. A copy of a leaflet distributed by workers demanding fair treatment and a copy of a labour newspaper, the first newspaper that spoke for the working people, provide firsthand information about the labour movement during this period.

Room no. 4 displays the labour movement after the political reform in 1932 up to the coup d'état by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat.

Room no. 5 showcases photographs and accounts of the fate of labour leaders under the rule of Field Marshal Sarit. At that time, the labour movement was regarded as a threat to economic development and ruinous to the investment climate.

Room no. 6 shows the records on the recent Thai labour movement. On view are accounts of the rally for the Social Security Act, the rally for 90-day maternity leave and work of Thanong Phoarn, a union leader who challenged the dictatorial National Peacekeeping Council and mysteriously disappeared in 1991. In addition, there is a participation of the workers in the fight for democracy in May 1992. In one corner of the room stands a showcase of remains from the burnt down Kader factory where hundreds of workers died in a fire, caused by greed for profit. Another showcase exhibits the conditions of enslaved children working for the manufacture of paper glasses before their delivery in 1991.

The main hall houses a souvenir shop and a shop where you can find some interesting books and DVDs in English on the social subjects in Thailand.

Located on Makkasan Road, Ratchathewi, Bangkok

Tel : 0-2251-3173

Open : Wednesdays – Sundays, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Admission is free. If the door is closed, just ring and wait, someone will open the museum for you.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Members,

One year ago, on the 14th of March, we launched the NMV's 40th Anniversary with a colourful party on the Museum grounds, crowned by the reopening of the Textile Gallery. Over the last 12 months we celebrated this special occasion with different events and highlights.

Now we enter a new decade in the history of the National Museum Volunteers. Our organisation has grown since it was established in 1969 and the Steering Committee is working on new strategies and approaches to improve our impact. We need more active members to develop new programs and support the Steering Committee. We need you and your skills, your fresh ideas and your energy to keep NMV as a vibrant and exceptional organization. You are a part of the NMV's history and you are responsible for the NMV's image. I invite all of you – experienced, 'long-term' members as well as all newcomers (with 'newcomers' I mean especially the Guiding Workshop participants) – to contact us with your suggestions and ideas at information@museumvolunteersbkk.net. My message to you: Just take off and enjoy being an active member of the NMV!

The French Workshop continues, while the English-German Guiding Workshop 2010 welcomed many young members on the 17th of February; we are looking forward to enlarging our group. We need more active guides! The economic situation seems to have changed positively also for the tourism branch and we have been guiding big groups every week. We need you to offer high class tours with soul.

More about the soul of NMV? Our beautiful publication "Through Our Eyes" is now available. If you don't know this book, you now have the chance to enjoy the terrific photos taken by our members and published in a book to

commemorate the 80th birthday of HM the King in 2007. Don't miss the opportunity to purchase the reprinted publication. Please contact Fred at nmvproducts@gmail.com or have a glimpse of it at coming NMV events (for the event's calendar please check this News issue and watch the updated information on our web site: <http://www.museumvolunteersbkk.net>)

The National Museum Bangkok has a new Director: Khun Patchanee Chandrasakha. Khun Patchanee was the National Gallery Director and she already knows our organisation well. Khun Patchanee kindly expressed her gratitude and support for the NMV's presence at the Museum. Welcome Khun Patchanee! Dr. Amara Srisuchat, the previous NMB Director, took up new responsibilities at the Head Office, but she promised to stay our friend and to join in future NMV events. We wish Khun Amara all the best in her new position.

And more changes: we are very happy to announce that Berni Sabatini, the previous German Guides Leader and Excursion Team member, agreed to take over the position as the Guide Chairperson. Welcome Berni! Barbara Mac Neill from now on is Library Co-Chair; her long experience at the library helps us to feel comfortable searching for study materials. Welcome Barb! Danielle Bertoneche, our French librarian, is leaving Thailand and the Library. Thank you Danielle for your excellent support and we wish you all the best, wherever you are!

I wish all of you a good start in to the NMV's new decade and see you soon at the Museum!

With my best wishes

Bozena Mazur



This is our final article in celebration of the NMV's 40th anniversary year. We thought it fitting to conclude this series by republishing this tribute to Khun Chira who was the founder and the inspiration for many years of the National Museum Volunteers, written by long-time supporter and friend of the NMV Khun Somlak.

KHUN CHIRA CHONGKOL

By Khun Somlak Charoenpot

The National Museum Institution and its people owe much of their existence to this wonderful lady: Mrs. Chira Chongkol, for her farsighted vision that had led Thailand's national museums to the present standard, and one could say, international standard during her time. It would also not be an overstatement, if one would say that the NMV might not be celebrating its 40th anniversary today had it not been for her.

"Khun Chira", as every volunteer called her, was the founder, advisor and supporter and the inspiration to the National Museums Volunteer Group from the beginning until the end of her days in 1987.

Khun Chira began her career as a curator in the Fine Arts Department and was sent to study Education at Sydney University, Australia from 1960-1963. As fulfillment for her Master's Degree, she wrote her thesis on "Educational Service in Museums." Upon returning to Thailand, she tried to incorporate the educational program into the Bangkok National Museum system. The program was so successful that the idea of extending the service to foreign visitors blossomed. It was she who met with a group of American women resident in Bangkok in 1969 to invite them to participate in the museum's programs by being leaders of guided tours in English at the National Museum Bangkok on a volunteer basis.

However, in order to equip the volunteers with sufficient knowledge on the history and culture of Thailand through the large collection of the museum artifacts as well as the museum's historical buildings itself, experts knowledgeable on the subject had to be engaged. It was she who introduced the group to many scholars for their assistance. Foremost among them was Prince Subhadaradis Diskul, Dean of the Faculty of Archaeology at Silpakorn University, who soon became the mentor of the Museum Volunteers in conducting many ground-building lectures and scientific research programs.

In 1975, when the National Museums Division was established under the auspices of the Fine Arts Department, Khun Chira became the first director of

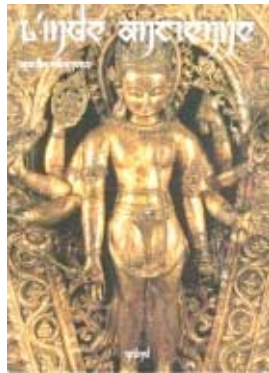
the organization. Thence on, her interest in the museum educational programs energized “The National Museum Work-Study Group” and the name was changed to “The National Museum Volunteer Group.” From then on, the group worked hand in hand with the Museum Education subdivision, under her supervision. Guided tours were given in many different languages as a result of the growing numbers of volunteers from many different nationalities. Various educational programs were created for the members in order for them to guide properly and efficiently, and at the same time to learn more about Thailand and its people, but most of all, to be representatives of the National Museum, Bangkok in the expatriate community.

Khun Chira’s devotion to museum works had helped to enrich many new national museums in the country but never, did she forget the importance of the National Museum Bangkok. Moreover, she always reminded her followers of the importance of the relation between the National Museum Volunteer Group and the National Museum because only with the two organizations working closely together could there be true success.

Editor’s Note: our cover this month features a portrait painting of Khun Chira by the famous Thai painter Chamrat Kietkong. It can be viewed in the National Gallery at 4, Thanon Chao-Fa (walking distance from the NMB). The website is: www.thailandmuseum.com/thaimuseum_eng/artgallery/main.htm. We are grateful to the National Gallery for granting permission to reproduce this image.



Book Review



L'Inde Ancienne

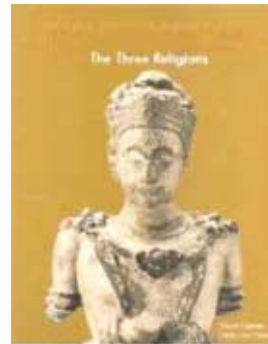
par Marilia Albanese

En Inde, le passé continue d'influencer le présent : la connaissance de cette antique civilisation permet donc de mieux comprendre la situation actuelle d'un des pays les plus étendus et les plus peuplés de la planète. Ce magnifique ouvrage, consacré aux plus anciennes civilisations du sous-continent indien, s'intéresse à trois aspects distincts de cette culture: il retrace en premier lieu l'évolution historique de cette région du monde, depuis le III^e millénaire av. J.C. influencée par les préjugés et jusqu'à l'arrivée des musulmans, au XII^e siècle; il décrit en second lieu la vie quotidienne, l'organisation sociale et politique, le paysage rural et urbain, le domaine des dieux, les pratiques religieuses et les différentes formes d'expression artistique; il propose en outre des itinéraires qui permettent de découvrir quelques-uns des sites historiques, géographiques et culturels les plus emblématiques de la civilisation indienne. De superbes photographies, accompagnées de légendes détaillées, ouvrent les portes d'un monde d'une beauté raffinée qui prend souvent ses racines dans les dimensions symboliques et ésotériques.

Thai Ceramic Art: The Three Religions

by Nicol Guerin and Dick Van Oenen

Thai ecclesiastical ceramic wares from the 14th to the 16th centuries are analyzed from a historical and cultural perspective in this study. A systematic analysis of the pieces and their role in local Buddhist and animist religious ceremonies is contextualized with background on Thailand's history, politics, and cultural practices. Various cultures that influenced the form, function, and design of these wares are discussed with comparisons made to similar products from other Asian cultures, including Cambodia, China, and India. This book focuses on Sawankhalok ceramics. NMV Guides will find information and pictures of ceramics from the Sukhothai Kingdom.



New Titles

Absolute Dreams. Thai Government under Rama VI, Greene S., White Lotus ed, Bangkok, 1999.

The Art of Gandhara in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Behrendt K., New York, 2007, MET Publications.

Guide of Nakhon Si Thammarat Museum, Department of Fine Arts, Bangkok, 2007.

Keeping the Faith. Thai Buddhism at Crossroads, Sunitsuda Ekachai, Bangkok, Post Books, 2002.

Dvaravati. Catalogue of exhibition National Museum Bangkok, Bangkok, Department of Fine Arts, 2009.

The Archeology of Môn Dvaravati (2vol), Dupont Pierre translated by JoyantoK. Sen, Bangkok, 2007, White Lotus Ed.

Violence and Serenity. Late Buddhist Sculpture from Indonesia, Reichle N., University of Hawaii's Press, Honolulu, 2007.

The Malay Peninsula: Crossroads of the Maritime Silk-Road (100 Bc-1300 Ad) Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'H – Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden, 2001.

Thai ceramic art : the three religions, Nicol Gueérin, Dick van Oenen, Singapore, Sun Press, 2005.

In the Footsteps of Buddha: An Iconic Journey from India to China by Rajeshwari Ghose, Puay-Peng Ho, Yeung Chun-Tong, University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong, 1999.

India. History and Treasures of an Ancient Civilization, Angellilo M, White Star Pub., Vercelli 2007.

Livres Français

Traité des temples indiens, Dagens B. Traités, temples, et images du monde indien: études d'histoire et d'archéologie, Dagens B, Barazer-Billoret M-L, PU Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, 2005.

Trésors de l'Art du Vietnam. La Sculpture du Champa, Catalogue exposition du Musée Guimet, Ed. Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 2006.

L'Inde Ancienne, Albanese M. (traduction Duverne MP), Ed. Grund ,Paris, 2001.

Jésus et Bouddha, Destins croisés du christianisme et du bouddhisme, Vallet O., Ed Albin Michel, Paris, 1999.

Le Palais du Roi du Cambodge, Béatrix Latham, Julio A. Jeldres, Editions du Mekong, 2004.

Temples d'or de Thaïlande, Peintures bouddhiques XVème-XIXème siècle, Santi Leksukhum, Gilles Mermet, Gérard Fouquet, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 2001.

L'épopée de l'art indien en Asie du Sud-Est, Delahoutre M.,Crombé V.,Vautier M, Ed. Citadelles et Mazenod, Paris, 2008.



MONTHLY LECTURE

India's northeastern frontier – Arunachal Pradesh

By Peter Sayle, Ann Helen and Walter Unger

- Date:** Thursday, March 25
- Time:** 10:00 a.m.
- Location:** National Museum Auditorium
- Donation:** 100 baht members/200 baht non-members

When the Raj, the British colonial administration in India, governed the subcontinent from the 18th to the 20th century, they took pains to stay away from the peoples in the far Northeast. They considered the tribes living at the foothills of the Himalayas (the states that are called today 'The Seven Sisters') as savage headhunters, hostile and uncontrollable. And even today, more than 60 years into Indian self-rule, the inhabitants of this mountainous region are considered fiercely independent.

This monthly lecture will take us to the most northern of the Seven Sisters, to Arunachal Pradesh which was declared the 27th state of the Indian Union in 1987. It borders Bhutan to the West, Tibet in the North and Burma to the East. The Sanskrit name means "mountains located at dawn", and in Hindu mythology Aruna was the name of the charoteer of the sun god Surya. Most of the tribes living in the center and the eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh are animists, worshipping gods and spirits from the natural realm. Only the western part is populated by Buddhists.

In this morning's talk by Peter Sayle and through video clips and photographs by Ann Helen and Walter Unger we'll enter a fascinating and exotic region, rich in its ethnic and cultural diversity. The highlight will be a visit with the Apatani whose clans celebrate at this time of the year, at the beginning of the planting season, their most important Myoko festival. Its aim is to pacify the spirits and stimulate the reproductive energies of nature by offering a multitude of animal sacrifices.

Peter Sayle holds a PhD in Indology. He spent 12 years in India, studying the country's history and religion. Several research trips took him to Arunachal Pradesh. Living now in Bangkok, Sayle owns of the travel agency Infinitasia and organises cultural expeditions throughout Asia.

Ann Helen and Walter Unger have been NMV members since the mid-80s and are well known for their books and lectures on Southeast Asian topics. The latest of their trips to India's Northeastern frontier led them to Arunachal Pradesh.



Apatani woman with nose plugs and face tattoo



AT HOME

'At Home' with Khun Chomporn Dhanesnittaya Collectible Arts of Thailand: A Wealth of Treasures to Discover and Enjoy

- Date:** Tuesday, 23 March 2010
- Time:** 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.
- Place:** "Ayoraya"
7/4 Soi Soonvijai, (Petchburi 47) New Petchburi Road, a pink building on left side, 100 meters before Bangkok Hospital. Entrance at Chateau De Loei. See www.ayoraya.com for map and details.
- Donation:** 200 Baht member; 400 Baht non-member
- Deadline:** When all places are filled. Latest Friday 19 March 2010
- Contact:** nmvathomes@gmail.com
Please include mobile phone contact details and membership status.
- Note:** Due to space restrictions, numbers are limited and places fill quickly. NMV Members will get priority. Reservations can be made by email only and each email will be acknowledged. Only those who have confirmed email reservations may attend the At Home presentation. Thank you for your understanding.

This month our At Home presentation takes us to visit respected NMV member Khun Chomporn Dhanesnittaya at her Gallery of Thai and Southeast Asian antiques textiles and other decorative arts. Khun Chomporn grew up in a family that instilled in her a deep knowledge and appreciation of the Thai arts. This love of collecting fine things stayed with her and her earlier professional training as an architect grounded her experience in composition, colour, texture and design. She continued with further studies in Thai history especially the ancient Mon peoples – ancestors of the modern day Thai – to add to her knowledge of the collections she developed.

Khun Chomporn will show us a variety of textiles, ceramics and Benjarong pottery, unique bronze wares, lacquer ware, silverware, jewellery and Hill tribe arts. She will explain a little of the background of each of the representative pieces, explaining how the influence of the moving populations of craftsmen in the Southeast Asian region influenced artistic styles over time. She will advise on what to look for and where to go to deepen interest in collecting Thai art pieces and artifacts.

Above all, she says: "Collect beautiful things, collect what you love, don't worry about what others think. Collect what you will want to enjoy looking at over and over again."

Please join us – At Home with the Khun Chomporn at **Ayoraya**





STUDY GROUP



THAI TEMPLE MURALS

Dates: March 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5th

Leaders: Joyce Meer and Bill Lipsey

Place: To be announced

The Thai temple was not only elaborately decorated externally; the interior walls also were exquisitely painted, mainly by anonymous artists. These murals were not merely decorative but served as instructions to make the teachings of Theravada Buddhist scriptures, which were always written in the Pali language, more accessible to all.

Besides exploring the technical, aesthetic, and narrative aspects of Thai murals, we will study the different schools of painting and the sources of inspiration, such as the ten great Jatakas, the life of the historical Buddha, and the Traiphum or the Three Worlds. We will also include the Lanna, Isan, and the southern styles and contemporary murals in our study as well; and we will enrich our experience with two field trips to examine murals *in situ*.

NMV members who wish to participate in this study group must sign up by sending an e-mail to Else Geraets: else@asianet.co.th.



Southeast Asian Ceramics

- Orientation:** Monday, April 19th,
Dates: Mondays, May 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Leaders: John J.Toomey and Siew-Eng Koh
Place: South East Asian Ceramics Museum, Bangkok University,
Rangsit Campus

Following the very successful tour of the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum last July, we are very pleased to announce that our next Study Group will be on Southeast Asian Ceramics. We are especially fortunate that the Museum has kindly agreed to host our meetings at their premises.

Participants will have the chance to examine the Museum's vast and wonderful collection of shards, view at close range its rich and exquisite collection of ceramics from Thailand and neighboring countries, and gain access to its library resources. Additionally, participants will hear experts K. Burin, Curator of the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum, and Walter Kassela, Researcher and Museum Volunteer speak.

Don't miss this very special "hands-on" opportunity to study, identify and appreciate Southeast Asian ceramics. The size of this group is limited. Please contact the study group co-ordinator Else Geraets at else@asianet.co.th to sign up.



*Under glaze black stem dish, 15th C Sukhothai-town
kiln, Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum
(photo by John Toomey)*



What is Mahayana?

by John J. Toomey

INTRODUCTION

A. Background--The earliest known mention of "Mahayana" occurs in the *Lotus Sutra* between the first century BCE and the first century CE, but the origins of Mahayana are still not completely understood. Although the Mahayana movement traces its origin to the historical Buddha, scholars believe that it originated in South India between the first century BCE to first century CE, though some say it was in North-west India in the 1st century CE or in the south-east as a non-monastic tradition, and that later it underwent a process of monasticization and emerged in the north-west of India as a monastic movement. Whatever the theory of the origins, it would appear that a Parthian missionary Lokaksema took Mahayana to China and translated the scriptures into Chinese in the second century CE.

B. But the question arises, "What is Mahayana?"--Most of our NMV members have some familiarity with Theravada, which is one of the Hinayana sects, but for many of us Mahayana might still be an unknown.

Perhaps it would be helpful to think of Theravada (Doctrine of the Elders) as analogous to the *Old Testament* and Mahayana as analogous to the *New Testament*, with some of the Gnostic gospels and a bit of the Protestant reformation mixed in. Few things can be said with certainty about Mahayana Buddhism, other than to describe it as a loosely bound bundle of many teachings, which was thus able to contain the various contrasting ideas found among those differing teachings. Mahayana is a large religious and philosophical structure, characterized by



Avalokitesvara

two new elements that differentiate it from older forms of Buddhism: 1. the adoption of **new Mahayana sutras**



Heavenly Guardians

and 2. its emphasis on the state of **bodhisattva**. It is then these two phenomena, the sutras and the bodhisattva that we should look into to try to begin to learn about the differences among the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana ways of Buddhism.

1. The Sutras--In addition to accepting the earlier canon of texts, each Mahayana sect wrote its own sutra or body of sutras that it worshipped, bringing about shifts in emphasis. Mahayana sees itself as penetrating further and more profoundly into the Buddha's teaching. There is a tendency in Mahayana sects to regard adherence to Mahayana sutras as generating spiritual benefits greater than those which arise from being a follower of the earlier approaches to Dharma. The fundamental principles of Mahayana doctrine were based around the possibility of universal liberation from suffering for all beings (hence "great vehicle", the literal translation of "Maha" = great and "yana" = cart) and the existence in this life of buddhas and bodhisattvas embodying buddha-nature. This is in contrast with the Smaller Vehicle

Hinayana's (in Thailand, Theravada) emphasis on the historical Buddha and individual salvation through repeated incarnations rather than communal salvation. Some Mahayana schools simplify the expression of faith by positing that salvation can be alternatively obtained through the grace of the Amitabha Buddha by having faith and devoting oneself to chanting to Amitabha or the name of the Sutra that the sect worships. This devotional lifestyle of Buddhism is most strongly emphasized by the *Sukhuvati* (Pure Land, Jp. *Jodo*) schools and has greatly contributed to the success of Mahayana in East Asia, where spiritual elements traditionally relied upon chanting of a buddha's name, of mantras or *dharanis*; reading of Mahayana sutras, and mysticism. In Chinese Buddhism, most monks and lay people practice Pure Land, some combining it with Ch'an (Zen).

2. The Bodhisattvas--Most Mahayana schools believe in a pantheon of quasi-divine bodhisattvas that devote themselves to personal excellence, ultimate knowledge, and the salvation of humanity and all other

sentient beings such as animals, ghosts, and demigods. Ch'an (Jp. Zen, Kr. Seon) is a school of Mahayana which often de-emphasizes the role of the bodhisattva and instead focuses on the meditative aspects of the religion. In Mahayana, the Buddha-nature is seen as the ultimate, highest being, present in all times, in all beings, and in all places, and the bodhisattvas come to represent the universal ideal of altruistic excellence.

I. THE SUTRAS

A. Background, transmission

The first of the Mahayana, sect-specific sutras were written probably around the 1st C BCE or 1st C CE. From the 4th century onward, Chinese pilgrims also started to travel to northern India, the origin of Buddhism, by themselves, in order to get improved access to the original scriptures, with Faxian's pilgrimage to India (395-414), being the first significant one. He left along the Silk Road, stayed six years in India, and then returned via sea.

Later Xuan Zang made his pilgrimage from 629-644. The transmission

of Buddhism via the Silk Route essentially ended around the 7th century with the rise of Islam in Central Asia, though in later centuries Korean and Japanese monks travelled to China to study and copy the sutras. The first documented transmission

of Buddhist scriptures to China occurred in 148 CE, with the arrival of the Parthian missionary An Shih Kao in China, probably on the heels of the Kushan expansion into the Tarim Basin, roughly present-day Xingjiang Province's Turfan Depression. An Shi Kao established Buddhist temples in Loyang and organized the translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, testifying to the beginning of a wave of Central Asian Buddhist proselytism that was to last several centuries. One of the most important missionaries, Bodhidharma (Ch. Dá Mó, Jp. Daruma, Kr. Dalma) (440-528), founded

the Ch'an school of Buddhism.

B. Arts and Periods

Central Asian missionary efforts along the Silk Road were accompanied by a flux of artistic influences, visible in the development of Serindian art from the



Korean Amithaba

2nd through the 11th century CE in the Tarim Basin. Serindian art often derives from the art of the Greco-Buddhist art of the Gandhara district of what is now Pakistan, combining Indian, Greek and Roman influences.

Overview of Journey of Development of Mahayan Arts from China to Korea to Japan

Highly sinicized forms of this syncretism in the arts can also be found on the eastern portions of the Tarim Basin, such as in Dunhuang. Silk Road artistic influences can be found as far as Japan and Korea to this day, in architectural motifs and sculptural and pictorial representations, as the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyongju were the two eastern termini of the Silk Road.

C. The Texts Mahayana sects, of course, accept, in general, the corpus of the more ancient Buddhist canon; but, unlike the older sects, Mahayana sects tend to emphasize the salvific efficacy of the message contained within their own new sutra or collection of sutras. Scholars have long speculated that Gandhara, located in northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan, was the area from which Buddhism flowed into east and central Asia beginning around 100 CE. Temples and shrines

there date back to that period and the region was near the Silk Road, providing the opportunity to travel and proselytize. But this theory had been, until recently, unsubstantiated because there was scant written evidence of Buddhists in the area. The recent discovery of palm-leaf texts written in Gandhari script provides more proof that there was greater variety in the doctrinal, scholastic world than we knew about previously, forcing us to examine assumptions

based on other documents. We're no longer looking at early Buddhists as transmitting a single body of material that came to be different over time, but rather many differing forms of Buddhism from the start that were contained in a variety of doctrines expressed in (at that time) new Mahayana sutras. Like the Nag Hamadi Gnostic gospels and the Dead Sea scrolls, these were also found



Korean Vairocana

sealed for centuries in clay jars in caves. But unlike the Emperor Constantine's Council of Nicea which suppressed the Gnostic gospels and made Bishop of Lyon Irenaeus' choices the only ones acceptable to the Christian canon, Kanishka's Fourth Buddhist Council, did not censure the Mahayana sutras.

The **Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras** are a genre of scriptures dealing with the

subject of the *Perfection of Wisdom*. The term *Prajñāpāramitā* alone never refers to a specific text, but always to the class of literature.

The earliest sutra in this class is the *Perfection of Wisdom*, which was probably put in writing about 100 BC and is one of the earliest Mahayana sutras. Its shorter versions include the *Heart Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra*. These two are widely popular and have had a great influence on the development of Mahayana Buddhism. The thousands of lines of the *Prajñāparamita* can be summed up in the following two sentences:

1. One should become a bodhisattva, or buddha-to-be, *i.e.*, one who is content with nothing less than all-knowledge attained through the perfection of wisdom for the sake of all beings.
2. There is no such thing as a bodhisattva, or as all-knowledge, or as a *being*, or as the perfection of wisdom, or as an attainment. To accept both of these contradictory facts is to be perfect.

The central idea of *The Perfection of Wisdom* is complete release from the world of existence. *The Perfection of Wisdom* goes beyond earlier Buddhist teaching that focused on the rise and fall of phenomena to state that there is no such rise and fall—because all phenomena have no inherent nature, but arise from projections of the mind.

The Perfection of Wisdom states that there is no multiplicity: all is one. Even existence (*samsara*) and *nirvana* are essentially the same, and both have no inherent nature, but arise from the projections of one's mind. The view of *The Perfection of Wisdom* is that words and analysis have a practical application in that they are necessary for us to function in this world but, ultimately, all that we experience is a dream painted on a surface with no inherent nature.



Kshitigarbha

Within this context of lacking inherent nature, *The Perfection of Wisdom* offers a way to enlightenment. It represents the formal introduction to Buddhist thought of a practical ideal, that of the bodhisattva. Unlike an arhat, a being who achieves enlightenment but cannot teach the way to others, a bodhisattva should and does teach. A bodhisattva must

practice the six virtues of giving, morality, patience, vigour, contemplation and wisdom. Wisdom is the most important of these because it dispels the darkness of sensory delusion and allows things to be seen as they really are." For example, the **Diamond Sutra** concludes with:

*As stars, a fault of vision, a lamp,
A mock show, dew drops, or a bubble,
A dream, a lightning flash, or a cloud,
So should one view what is conditioned.*

Stars disappear with the light of morning. Things seen through faulty vision do not really exist. Lamps burn only as long as they have fuel. A mock show is a magical illusion and not as it seems. Dew evaporates in the heat of the sun. Bubbles are short-lived. We wake from dreams, even when they seem to have been so real. Lightning disappears as soon as we see it. Clouds are ever changing shape. By realising the transient nature of things, it is easier to detach from them and to attain *nirvana*.

The Heart Sutra describes the experience of liberation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokitesvara, as a result of insight gained while engaged in deep meditation to

awaken the faculty of *prajna* (wisdom). The insight refers to the fundamental emptiness of all phenomena, the five aggregates of human existence: form, feeling, volitions, perceptions, and consciousness.

Avalokitesvara, as the archetypal Mahāyāna Buddhist, relies on the perfection of wisdom, defined to be the wisdom that perceives reality directly without conceptual attachment. This perfection of wisdom is condensed in the mantra with which the sutra concludes:

- "The noble bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara, engaged in the depths of the practice of the perfection of wisdom, looked down from above upon the five aggregates, and saw that they were empty in their essential nature."

- "Hear, O Sariputra, emptiness is form; form is emptiness. Apart



Mahasthamaprapta

from form, there is no emptiness; apart from emptiness, there is no form. Emptiness is that which is form, form is that which is emptiness. Just thus are perception, cognition, mental construction, and consciousness.”

“Hear, O Sariputra, all phenomena of existence are marked by emptiness: not arisen, not destroyed, not unclean, not clean, not deficient nor fulfilled.”

II. BODHISATTVAS

In Mahayana Buddhism life in this world is compared to people living in a house that is on fire. They take this world as reality pursuing worldly projects and pleasures without realising that the house is on fire and will soon burn down (the inevitability of death). A bodhisattva is the one who has determination to free sentient beings from *samsara*, the cycle of death, rebirth and suffering. This type of mind is known as *bodhicitta*, Sanskrit for mind of awakening. Bodhisattvas take bodhisattva vows in order to progress on the spiritual path towards buddhahood.

According to Mahayana doctrine, **Avalokiteśvara** (Ch. Kuan Yin, Jp. Kannon Bosatsu, Kr. Kanzeon Bosal) is the bodhisattva who has made a great vow to listen to the prayers of all sentient beings in times of difficulty, and to postpone his own buddhahood until he has assisted every being on earth in achieving nirvana. Mahayana sutras associated with Avalokiteśvara include the *Heart*

Sutra (as disciple of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni) and the *Lotus Sutra*, particularly the 25th chapter.

Maitreya (Ch. Miluo Fo, Thai Metteya, Jp. Miroku Bosatsu, Kr. Mireuk Bosal) will be a successor of the historic Shakyamuni Buddha. Maitreya currently resides in the Tushita heaven said to be reachable through meditation. Shakyamuni also lived there before he was born into the world, as all bodhisattvas live in Tushita before they descend to the human realm to become buddhas. Although all bodhisattvas are destined to become buddhas, the concept of a bodhisattva differs slightly between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. In Theravada Buddhism, a bodhisattva is one who is only destined to one day become a Buddha, whereas in Mahayana Buddhism, a bodhisattva is one who has already reached a very advanced state of grace or enlightenment but holds back from entering nirvana so that he may help others.

Maitreya's coming will occur after the teachings of this current world's buddha, the Dharma of Shakyamuni, are no longer taught and are completely forgotten. In the Graeco-Buddhist art of Gandhara, in the first centuries CE in northern India, Maitreya was the most popular figure to be represented, together with the Buddha. In China, in the 4th-6th Centuries, Buddhist artisans used the names Shakyamuni and Maitreya interchangeably, indicating both that the distinction between the two had not yet been drawn and that their respective iconographies had not yet been firmly set. The cult of Maitreya

seems to have developed around the same time as that of Amithaba, the 3rd century CE. Put'ai (in Chinese, Jp. Hotei, Kr. Potaisan) is regarded as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. A sagely Zen monk appeared in China around 850 CE and died in 916 CE. He said his name was "Knowing This" (ChiChe). No one knew where he came from, and he carried a big fat bag, filled with candy for the children he played with in the market place, and was quite fat himself. When asked how to obtain *nirvana* (or the meaning of Zen) he would lay down the bag, not saying a word. When asked about what happened after reaching *nirvana* (or how to attain Zen), he would pick up the bag and walk away, still not uttering a word. He represented many important teachings and messages, including contentment, generosity, wisdom and open kindheartedness.

Manjusri (Ch. Wen Shu, Jp. Monju Bosatsu, Kr. Munsu Bosal) is the bodhisattva associated with wisdom, doctrine, and awareness; and he came to symbolize the embodiment of *prajñā* (wisdom). Together with the Buddha and fellow disciple Samantabhadra he forms the Shakyamuni trinity (Jp. Sanzon Shaka). In Tibetan Buddhism he sometimes is depicted in a trinity with Avalokitesvara and Vajrapani, wielding a sword tipped with the flames of enlightenment in his right hand, representing his realization of wisdom, which severs the conflict of duality. The scripture supported by the flower held in his left hand is the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, representing his attainment of ultimate realisation and enlightenment. Manjusri is fre-

quently depicted in Chinese traditions as riding on the back of a lion, whose roar is the voice of the Buddhist law. Manjusri is identified with Theravada's Shariputra.

Samantabhadra (Ch. Pu Hsien, Jp. Fugen Bosatsu, Kr. Bohyeon Bosal), the Bodhisattva of Great Conduct and Action, praxis coupled with meditation, as opposed to meditation only, is a key figure in the *Flower Garland Sutra*, particularly the last chapter, the *Gandhavyuha Sutra*, in which the student Sudhana meets the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, who teaches him that wisdom exists only for the sake of putting it into practice; that it is good only insofar as it benefits all living beings. Samantabhadra made ten great vows in his path to full Buddha-hood:

1. To pay homage and respect to all buddhas.
2. To praise all the buddhas.
3. To make abundant offerings (*i.e.*, give generously).
4. To repent misdeeds and evil *karmas*.
5. To rejoice in others' merits and virtues.
6. To request the buddhas to continue teaching.
7. To request the buddhas to remain in the world.
8. To follow the teachings of the buddhas at all times.
9. To accommodate and benefit all living beings.
10. To transfer all merits and virtues to benefit all beings.

The ten vows have become a common practice in Mahayana Buddhism, particularly the tenth vow, with many Buddhists traditionally dedicating their merit and good works to all beings during Buddhist liturgies.

Unlike his more popular counterpart Manjusri, Samantabhadra is only rarely depicted alone and is usually found in a trinity on the right side of Shakyamuni, mounted on a white elephant, symbolizing his power to accomplish any action. In those traditions that accept the Avatamsaka Sutra as its root instruction, Samantabhadra and Manjusri flank Vairocana Buddha, the central Buddha of this particular sutra.

Samantabhadra is sometimes shown in Chinese art with feminine characteristics, riding an elephant with six pairs of tusks (overcoming the six senses) while carrying a lotus leaf parasol (Sanskrit:chhatra), bearing dress and features similar to some feminine depictions of Kuan Yin. It is in this guise that Samantabhadra is revered as the patron bodhisattva of the monasteries associated with Mt. Emei in western China.

Ksitigarbha (Ch. Tits'ang, Jp. Jizo Bosatsu, Kr. Chijang Bosal) is also one of the four principal bodhisattvas primarily revered in Mahayana, usually depicted as a monk. The name may be translated as "Earth Treasury", "Earth Store", "Earth Matrix", or "Earth Womb." Ksitigarbha is known for his vow not to achieve buddhahood until all hells are emptied; therefore, he is regarded as the bodhisattva of hell beings. Usually depicted as a monk with a halo around his shaved head,

he carries a staff to force open the gates of hell and a wish-granting jewel to light up the darkness.

At the pre-Tang grottos in Dunhuang and Longmen, he is depicted in classical bodhisattva shape. After the Tang Dynasty, he became increasingly depicted as a monk, carrying rosaries and a staff. This is a reference to his pledge, as recorded in the sutras, to take responsibility for the instruction of all beings in the six worlds, in the era between the death of Gautama Buddha and the rise of Maitreya Buddha. Because of this important role, shrines to Ksitigarbha often occupy a central role in Mahayana temples.

In Japan, Ksitigarbha, known as *Jizō*, is one of the most loved of all Japanese divinities. His statues are a common sight, especially by roadsides and in graveyards. Traditionally, he is seen as the guardian of children. His monk's staff called in Japanese a *shakujo* (錫杖) (jingle staff) is used to alert insects and small animals of his approach, so that he will not accidentally harm them. Such a staff is traditionally carried by high ranking monks of Chinese Buddhist temples. Ksitigarbha will sometimes be seen wearing a crown representing the Five Dhyani Buddhas.

Like other Bodhisattvas, Ksitigarbha usually is seen standing upon a lotus base, symbolizing his release from the wheel of rebirth. Ksitigarbha's face and head are also idealized, featuring the third eye, elongated ears and the other standard attributes of an enlightened being.

(all photos by John Toomey)



EXCURSION

HIDDEN ARCHITECTURAL GEMS IN BANGKOK

- Date:** Saturday, 27 March 2010
- Time:** 8:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- Leader:** Khun Chomporn Dhanesnittaya
- Location:** Meet at the Saphan Taksin Pier at 7:45 a.m. and travel by boat to Chom Thong district. Our visit will include Wat Apsornsawan, Wat Racha Orot and Wat Kalayanamit, as well as a visit to a local Education Museum to reflect the Thai life at Wat Nang Nong. The one day tour will include lunch at a local restaurant on the river.
- Donation:** Members Baht 1,200. Please confirm your status when you book.
- Reservations:** vbrougham@aol.com Please advise your mobile phone number when booking. Pre-payment required.
- Deadline:** 20th March or when filled. Please note seats are limited.
- Note:** As these venues are located on the river, we will be travelling by a large long-tail boat up the Chao Phraya. Appropriate attire is required for the visit.

During the reign of King Rama III a sustained effort was directed towards the building, upkeep and renovation of Buddhist temples.

The tranquility of **Wat Apsornsawan** is enhanced by the unique group of 28 Buddhas presiding over a Chinese-influenced ubosoth, with its doors and windows adorned with gold lacquer paintings of apsaras and flowers. The temple incorporates a beautiful wooden Tripitaka house, built during the reign of King Rama IV in Bangkok style.

Wat Ratchaorasaram, originally called **Wat Chom Thong** dates back to the Ayutthaya period. Renovation began during the reign of King Rama II. It was renamed upon being designated the royal temple of King Nangklao (King Rama III) who completed the restoration, as well as the construction of the tall Phra Prang (Cambodian style Pagoda). This famous temple is unique due to the blending of Chinese architecture and art into the classical design of Thai Buddhist temples. It features intricate murals and mother-of-pearl inlay doors, while the outside decoration incorporates colourful tiles and ceramics imported from China.

On our way back, we will visit **Wat Kalayanamit** on the Thonburi side. Built by King Rama III in the first half of 19th century, it incorporates a huge viharn built in Thai style, while the adjacent buildings (*ubosot*) employ Chinese architecture. This blended architectural style reflects the social fabric of the society when trade with China was at its peak while the influence of foreign European powers in Southeast Asia was growing.

Our leader will be Khun Chomporn, an architect by profession and an avid promoter of Thai art and culture. She is a longstanding NMV member and has extensively researched the background of these temples.





EXCURSIONS POLICY

Participating in NMV excursions is a benefit of being a member. An NMV member may be accompanied by a non-member if they are family or a house guest (maximum of 2), space permitting.*

Bookings

- Always make reservations by email to the organiser listed in the announcement.
- Please provide your name, mobile number plus membership status of you and guest(s).*
- You are not registered until your request has been received by email and an acknowledgement has been sent to you in writing.
- Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis.
- By making a booking, you are committing to pay in full for your place.
- If full payment is requested prior to an excursion and has not been received, the organisers retain the right to pass your place to another person.
- Often an excursion announcement will give a booking deadline. If full, the trip may close and be finalised before this date.
- Until the excursion organiser is actually in receipt of your payment, you are not considered to have paid.
- The NMV reserves the right to cancel an excursion if enough members do not sign up.

Cancellations

- Your payment indicates your intention to travel. If you cancel, there will not be a refund.
- If you cannot attend an excursion, please notify the organiser immediately.
- If you cancel your booking, unpaid fees are considered a debt owed to the NMV. We regret that no further bookings can be made until this debt is cleared.

WAIVER OF LIABILITY

The NMV will not provide personal insurance for excursion participants. The Museum Group's Excursions are an activity of the National Museum Volunteers, which is a non-profit organization and is not a professional travel service. It cannot be held responsible for any injury, loss, or damage that may occur during any excursion, although the Museum Group's Excursions will make reasonable efforts to provide for the safety of participants.

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Please complete all details on this form and mail to the address below with a crossed cheque of 1,200 Baht for residents in Thailand (1,800 Baht for couple) or **2,000 Baht** or **US \$60** (for cheques drawn on a US bank) for an overseas subscription, made payable to **NATIONAL MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS**. *We regret Postal Orders cannot be accepted.*

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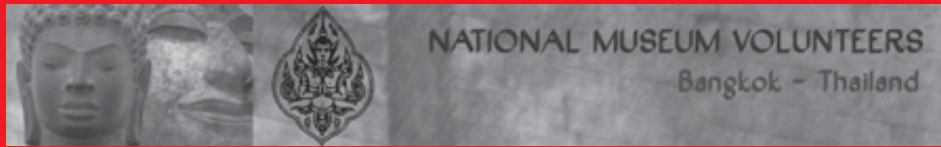
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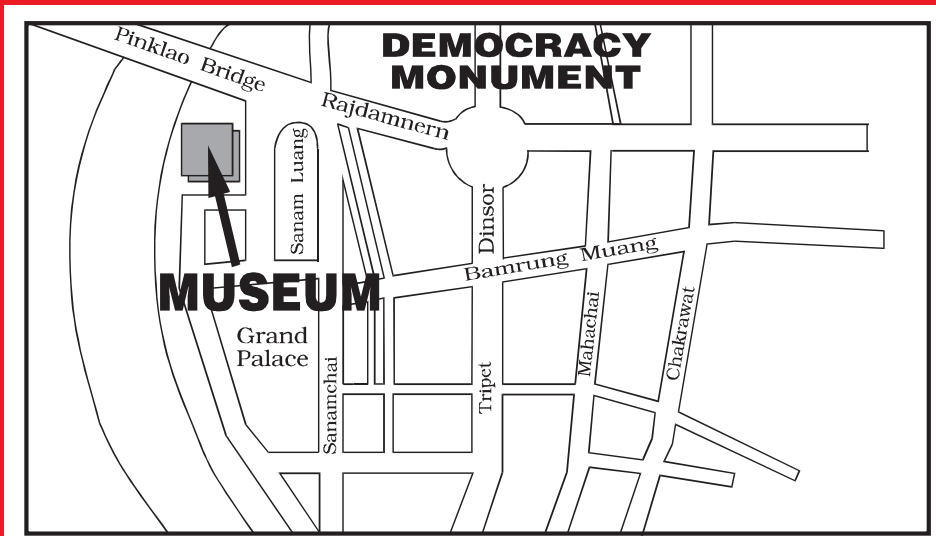


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