

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

# Show Me Thai

มิตรจิตร·มิตรใจ  
มิตรภาพ ไทย-ญี่ปุ่น

みてみ★タイ

# Show Me Thai

สมเด็จพระนางเจ้าสิริกิติ์ พระบรมราชินีนาถ  
มหาราชินีแห่งไทย  
สมเด็จพระนางเจ้าสิริกิติ์ พระบรมราชินีนาถ  
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Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

日タイ友好120周年記念事業 タイ王国・現代美術展

「Show Me Thai 〜みてみタイ〜」  
Contemporary Art Exhibition "Show Me Thai"  
On the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Japan -Thailand Diplomatic Relations

会場 東京都現代美術館  
Venue: Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo

会期 2007年4月18日(水)〜5月20日(日)  
Date: April 18 (Wed) - May 20 (Sun) 2007

入場無料/No Admission Fee

主催  
財団法人 東京都歴史文化財団 東京都現代美術館  
タイ王国文化省 現代芸術文化委員会  
Organizers:  
Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo  
Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, Thailand

協力/協賛  
タイ王国知識管理開発委員会  
タイ王国外務省 東アジア局  
タイ王国外務省 情報局  
在京タイ王国大使館  
在タイ日本国大使館  
セントラル・バタナ社  
ジム・トンプソン財団  
タイ国際航空  
サイアム島菜園行  
With support by:  
Office of Knowledge Management and Development, Thailand  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand  
Department of East Asia Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand  
Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand  
Royal Thai Embassy in Japan  
Embassy of Japan in Thailand  
Central Pattana Public Company Limited  
The James H.W. Thompson Foundation  
Thai Airways International Public Company Limited  
Siam Commercial Bank Public Company Limited

企画  
アピサン・ポーサーナン  
タイ王国文化省 現代芸術文化委員会 総合ディレクター/現代美術展「Show Me Thai」実行委員長  
Initiated and organized by  
Prof. Dr. Apinich Pongsavanand  
(Director-General, Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture and  
Chairperson of the committee of contemporary art exhibition "Show Me Thai")

コーディネーター/Coordinator  
Veerabuck Chuchai  
(Art Center Director, Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, Thailand)

制作協力/Management Support  
SOF MUSIC

広報協力/PR Support  
Public Relation Support  
Tosiyem Sawats

デザイン/Design  
Santi Laksachaiwong  
Ekasit Pongparawate  
Montree Sundares  
Srinidhi Hirata

フォントデザイン/Typefaces Applied  
Known by Ekasit Pongparawate  
Hiragino Kaku Gothic

## Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

มูลนิธิ  
หอศิลป์แห่งราชภัฏ  
RAMA IX ART MUSEUM FOUNDATION

Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo  
Japan 2007

## Message from Minister of Culture

## メッセージ

It is an honor for the Ministry of Culture, Thailand to take part in organizing the Contemporary Art Exhibition "Show Me Thai" to celebrate the two auspicious occasions of His Majesty King Bhumibol Aduladej's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007 and the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between Thailand and Japan.

It is a well known fact that relations between both countries date back hundreds of years to the Ayutthaya period. From the past until present, the long relationship has been developed in various aspects and on multiple levels, which has enabled the strong ties that bind the two countries together.

Arts and culture is one area which has significantly contributed to better understanding through different levels of collaboration especially one-to-one relationships. However, there is still a lot of space to accommodate increased exchanges and the subsequent sharing of benefits, particularly in the area of contemporary arts.

As part of the celebration for both auspicious occasions, the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture and the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo held the Contemporary Art Exhibition "Show Me Thai" from 17<sup>th</sup> April to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The exhibition consisted of works by more than renowned Thai and Japanese artists, the exhibits reveal the long relationship between both countries through aspects of contemporary art from past to present. In addition, the exhibition aims to promote interaction among all participants and to promote interaction with audiences from all walks of life.

I hope that this exhibition will serve as a source of knowledge for Thai and Japanese contemporary art and a channel to strengthen the existing friendship between the people of our two countries.

On behalf of the Ministry of Culture, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, the Royal Thai Embassy in Tokyo, the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the participating artists, private organizations and those who have contributed to the success of the exhibition.

Khunying Khaisri Sri-aroon  
Minister of Culture  
Thailand

今年は、来る12月5日にプミポン国王陛下が満80歳をお迎えになる祝賀の年ですが、また同時に日タイ友好120周年を記念する年でもあります。タイ文化省にとって、2007年という特別な年にタイ現代美術展を開催する役目の一端を担うことができ、非常に光栄に思っています。

日タイ両国の関係が数百年前のアユタヤ時代に始まったことは、いまやよく知られておりますが、過去から現在に至るまで、長く培われてきた両国の関係は多岐に渡っており、様々なレベルでの交流が両国の関係をより一層深めてきました。

中でも文化と芸術という分野は、人々の間に異なるレベルでのコラボレーションを実現させ、両国民ひとりひとりの、相手国に対するより深い理解に貢献してきました。しかしながら、現代美術という分野においては、日タイ相互の文化交流と文化共有を進めていくにあたり、まだ将来的な可能性を残しております。

この特別な年を記念する行事の一環として、タイ文化省・タイ現代芸術文化委員会は、東京都現代美術館とともに「タイ王国・現代美術展 Show Me Thai 〜みてみ☆タイ〜」を2007年4月17日から5月20日まで開催します。今回の展示では、60名以上ものタイと日本の著名なアーティストの作品の展示を通して、過去から現在に至るタイと日本の現代美術における交流を俯瞰するだけでなく、出展者同士の相互作用を促進し、来場者にとっても人生における満足を見出す機会となることと思います。

本展が、日タイ相互の現代美術に関する情報の発信源となり、また両国の人々の友好を深めるチャンネルとなって、より広い視野の中でさらに二国間交流が堅持されますよう心から希望いたします。

タイ文化省を代表して、本展開催のためにご協力くださった東京都現代美術館、タイ王国大使館、タイ外務省をはじめ、参加アーティストと諸団体、ならびに本展の成功にご貢献いただいた関係各位のみなさまに厚く感謝申し上げます。

タイ王国文化省大臣  
カイシー・シーアルン

## Message from The Ambassador of Thailand to Japan

Welcome to the "Mite Mi Thai" or "Show Me Thai" contemporary art exhibition. Mite Mi Thai is a prominent feature among activities to celebrate the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Thailand-Japan Diplomatic Relations.

In modern day diplomacy, few countries could proudly celebrate a relation of more than a century long. From 1887, during the Reign of Rama V, corresponding to the Meiji Era, to present day, this relationship is unbroken and has always grown stronger in all fields and at all levels. This has been possible thanks to the contribution from the two peoples who share common nature and values of compassion and understanding. Besides the political and economic relations, the ever growing multifaceted relationship between the peoples of Japan and Thailand has evolved incessantly through arts, culture, ways of living, etc, of which contemporary art is an outstanding aspect.

With pride and pleasure, the Royal Thai Embassy therefore wishes to present to our Japanese friends the "Mite Mi Thai" exhibition which is jointly organized by the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture of Thailand and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, from 17<sup>th</sup> April to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

"Mite Mi Thai" offers varieties of exhibits: paintings, sculpture, mixed-media, video art, installation art, films, cartoon animation and music, which are the work of more than 70 Thai artists who had lived, studied or exhibited in Japan and Thailand.

The abundant heritage of the Thai and Japanese culture and traditional arts have provided for sound and broad basis of our cooperation during the past 120 years. It is our hope that, amidst of the fast paced globalization, contemporary art, appreciated through imagination and by its innovative nature would inspire our common search of novel avenues for every field of cooperation in the ever growing bilateral relations between Thailand and Japan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Suvidhya Simaskul  
Ambassador of Thailand

## メッセージ

「みてみ☆タイ」または「Show Me Thai」タイ現代美術展へようこそ。この展覧会「みてみ☆タイ」は、数ある日タイ修好120周年記念事業の中でも、重要なイベントのひとつです。

近代外交において、1世紀以上続く外交関係を誇れる国は、非常に稀であります。日本の明治時代、もしくはタイのラーマ5世の治世であった1887年より、両国の関係は途絶えることなく、常にすべての分野、様々なレベルにおいて成長を続けてきました。この長年に渡る日タイ関係は、両国の人々に共通する思いやりという価値観や、お互いに分かちあってきた理解の心の賜物です。政治上や経済上の関係だけでなく、タイと日本の人々が織りなす多様で発展的な関係は、芸術、文化、生活様式などを通して常に進化を続けてきましたが、特に現代芸術の分野には際立った側面があります。

タイ現代芸術文化委員会と東京都現代美術館が主催し、2007年4月17日から5月20日まで開催される展覧会「みてみ☆タイ」を、タイ王国大使館に、誇りと喜びを持って日本の皆様にお届けします。

今回の展示では、タイと日本で活躍してきた70人以上のアーティストによる絵画、彫刻、ミクストメディア、ビデオアート、インスタレーションアート、映像、マンガやアニメ、音楽などバラエティに富んだ作品が紹介されます。

両国における豊かな伝統芸術と文化の遺産は、120年にわたるタイと日本の協力関係のしっかりとした土台作りに貢献してきました。急速なグローバル化が進む今日、想像力と進歩的な切り口を強みとする現代美術が、さらに新しい手法を試みようとする21世紀の日タイ関係の中で、協力を促進する新たな刺激となることを心から希望します。

タイ王国駐日大使  
スウィット・シマサクン

# Foreword from Director Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo

Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (MOT) and Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, Thailand are proud to present "Show Me Thai", an exhibition commemorating the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan-Thailand Diplomatic Relations. This exhibition is the first attempt in Japan to present an overview of Thai contemporary art history through the works of both Thai and Japanese artists.

"Show Me Thai" consists of works by more than 70 Thai artists as well as some Japanese counterparts who have had close association with Thailand. Since the prewar period through the time of Japan's high economic growth, Thai culture has received and absorbed great influence from Japanese culture. The exhibition aims to introduce such early encounters between the two cultures, together with the recent influence of Japanese popular culture including Manga, music, TV, and fashion by presenting various artistic expressions such as painting, sculpture, video, installation as well as music.

We sincerely hope that this exhibition would aid mutual understanding of art history and relationships between Japan and Thailand, while also laying the foundation for further development and friendship between both countries.

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our deep appreciation to the many individuals and organizations whose efforts and invaluable counsel have made this exhibition possible.

April 2007

Seiichiro Ujiie  
Director  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo

ごあいさつ

東京都現代美術館とタイ王国文化省現代芸術文化委員会は、このたび日タイ友好120周年を記念して「Show Me Thai 〜みてみ☆タイ〜」を開催いたします。この展覧会はタイと日本のアート作品を通してタイの現代アート史を俯瞰する日本で初めての試みです。

本展は、70組以上のタイ人アーティスト、ならびにタイにゆかりの深い日本人アーティストの作品で構成されています。戦前から高度経済成長期にかけての日本文化との出会いに始まり、近年の漫画や音楽、テレビ、ファッションなどの日本のポップカルチャーの影響を受けたタイのアートと文化を絵画、彫刻、映像、インスタレーション、音楽など多様な作品を通してご紹介します。

本展により、日タイ両国のアートの歴史と関係性についての理解が深まり、またさらに今後、両国の更なる発展と友好の礎となることを期待しております。

以後にこの展覧会を開催するに当たり多くの方々にご協力いただきました。ここに厚くお礼申し上げます。

2007年4月

東京都現代美術館  
館長 氏家 賢一郎

## Message from Director-General Office of Contemporary Art and Culture

On the occasion of the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Japan and Thailand Diplomatic Relations on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2007, the day Japan and Siam signed the Declaration of Amity and Commerce in 1887, both governments have agreed to organize special events and cultural activities to mark the auspicious occasion throughout the year. The Japan-Thailand Festival in various aspects include traditional performances, concerts, films, art exhibitions, culinary presentations, seminars and conferences on diplomatic exchange.

Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, Thailand in corporation with Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (MOT) are responsible in organizing the contemporary art exhibition "Show Me Thai" from 17<sup>th</sup> April to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The exhibit includes more than 70 Thai and Japanese artists whose works reflect rich cultural exchange between the two nations, which has covered a period of more than seven decades.

Due to time constraint in preparation of this exhibition emphasis has been placed on Thai artists who received outstanding recognition from prestigious art competitions, major international exhibitions and fellowships in Japan. This contemporary art exhibition from Thailand which is the largest to take place in Japan include major works ranging from National Artists Jitr (Prakit) Buabusaya, Khien Damrong Wong-Uparaj, Pichai Nirand and Pratuang Emcharoen to outstanding artists Preecha Thaotrong, Panya Vijnthanasarn, Thavorn Ko-Udomvit, Montien Boonma, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Chatchai Puipia, Pinaree Sanpitak, Yanawit Kunchaethong, Kamin Lertchaiprasert, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Surasi Kusolwong and Navin Rawanchaikul. Included in the show are emerging Thai artists such as Montri Toemsombat, Thaweesak Srithongdee, Porntaweesak Rimsakul, Wisut Ponnimit and Wit Pimkanchanapong.

In addition, in order to highlight the various contemporary art exchange programs, between Thailand and Japan, a selection of Japanese artists whose works have been displayed in Thailand were selected to participate in this exhibition. Some of the Japanese included in "Show Me Thai" are Mounet Satomi, Niro Yokota, Nobuyoshi Araki, Yasumasa Morimura, Ichi Ikeda, Yoshitomo Nara, Ryuta Endo, Hisashi Kurachi, Keisei Kobayashi, Toshiya Takahama, and Hirokazu Yamaguchi

"Show Me Thai" aims to give Japanese audience new perception and knowledge of Thai ways of life and expression through contemporary art. Japanese and Thai artworks subject and content mirror the way both societies share and assimilate information in order to produce works that surpass stereotypical national characteristics. Moreover, this project aims to collect data, timeline and exhibition records of Japanese and Thai artists who have been involved in bilateral art exchange programs over the years. Such accumulation of knowledge will be extremely important for future archival study and bilateral research.

"Show Me Thai" has been made possible through tireless effort and support from Japanese and Thai collaborators. Many organizations and individuals from both countries have made this endeavor come to fruition. Special thanks should be extended to the Department of East Asia; Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; The Embassy of Japan, Thailand; The Japan Foundation; The Embassy of Thailand, Japan; Office of Knowledge Management and Development; The Jame H.W. Thompson Foundation; Central Pattana Public Co. Ltd.; THAI Airways International Co. Ltd.; Siam Commercial Bank PCL. and Soi Music.

Prof. Dr. Apinan Poshyananda

Director-General

Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, Thailand  
Chairperson, Office of Knowledge Management and Development, Thailand  
and Chairperson of the committee of contemporary art exhibition "Show Me Thai"

## こあいさつ

日タイ友好通商条約が1887年9月26日に締結されてから120年を迎える2007年、日タイ両政府は「日タイ友好120周年」という喜ばしい機会を記念して、一年間にわたり特別なイベントや文化活動を行なう予定です。この日タイ友好120周年記念事業には、伝統芸能、演奏会、映画、美術展、料理、セミナーや会議といった幅広い分野での交流が企画されています。

タイ王国文化省現代芸術文化委員会では、このたび2007年4月17日から5月20日まで、東京都現代美術館(MOT)との共催による「タイ王国・現代美術展 Show Me Thai 〜みてみ☆タイ〜」を開催します。60人以上の両国のアーティストが参加し、70年以上に渡る両国間の豊かな文化交流を反映した作品をご紹介します。

今回の展覧会では国際的なアートコンペや、主要な国際展、日本へのフェローシップと提携機会を通じて知名度のあるタイ人アーティストに注目を集めており、タイ王国の美術展としては日本国内で今までに開催されたもの中最多のアーティストを招き、芸術界へ貢献から人間国宝の称号を持つチット・ブアブット、キエン・イム・スイリ、ミシム・イブ・イン・ブーイ、チャルム・ナーキラク、チャルト・ニムサム、サワット・タンティック、タワン・ダックチャニー、ダムロン・ウォンウバート、ピチャイ・ニラン、プラトゥアン・エムチャローンなどが、優秀な芸術家であるプリチャ・タートン、バンヤー・ウィチャンクナサーン、タウオン・コーウドムウィット、モンティエン・ブンマー、ト、アビチャッポン・ウィーラセタクン、スラシ・クソンウォン、ナウイン・ラウンチャイクンといったアーティストの作品が展示されます。また最近目覚しく活躍する、モントリー・トエンソンバット、タウィー・サック・シードンディー、ポンタウィー・サック・リムサクン、ウィット・ポンニミット、ウィット・ピムカンチャナポンといった若手アーティストの作品も含まれております。

さらに、様々な現代アート交流プログラムを通して築かれた両国間の関係に注目し、タイで展示経験がある日本のアーティストも選ばれています。実に多くの日本人アーティストがタイ国内で展示を行っています。本展では、里見宗次、横田仁郎、荒木健惟、森村泰昌、池田一、奈良美智、遠藤竜太、倉地比沙、小林敬生、高沢利也、そして山口博一といったアーティストの作品を展示します。

「タイ王国・現代美術展 Show Me Thai 〜みてみ☆タイ〜」は現代美術を通して、タイの生き方や表現をより深く理解いただくことを目指しております。両国のアーティストの作品は、いずれも既存のステレオタイプのイメージを凌駕したテーマや内容を提示しているという点において、日タイ両国の社会の共通点を反映しています。さらにこのプロジェクトは、長年の芸術交流プログラムに関わってきた日タイのアーティストのデータ、年表、展示会記録を収集することも目的のひとつとしており、こういった情報の蓄積が、今後の公文書研究や両国間の研究にとってきわめて重要なものとなることでしょう。

「タイ王国・現代美術展 Show Me Thai 〜みてみ☆タイ〜」は日本とタイ、両国の絶え間ない努力と協力によって作り上げられ、また両国の多くが、両国および個人の尽力のお陰で実現することができました。東京都現代美術館をはじめ、タイ外務省東アジア局および情報局、在タイ日本国大使館、国際交流基金、在タイ王国大使館、タイ王国知識管理開発委員会、ジム・トンプソン財団、セントラル・バタナ社、タイ国際航空に、厚く御礼申し上げます。

タイ王国文化省 現代芸術文化委員会委員長  
アビナン・ポーサーナン

## Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD) and the Thai Contemporary Art Exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo

As part of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Thai-Japanese diplomatic relations in modern time, the Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD), in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, the Ministry of Culture, organized a large exhibition of works by Thai and Japanese artists in Tokyo from 17<sup>th</sup> April to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The venue is the famous Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (MOT), large exhibition were given exclusively to the exhibition "Show Me Thai". Altogether over 100 art works, from painting, sculpture to film, installation and interactive art, were sent from Bangkok accompanied by a group of Thai artists who mounted and installed the art works at the museum.

The exhibition was also a two-way programme: it includes works by Yoshitomo Nara, the renowned Japanese artist who has had a long working relationship with Thai artists, and conversely Navin Rawanchaikul, now married to a Japanese and living in Fukuoka, who organized his tent installation with film on Navin Party.

The star of the opening event was National Artist, Thawan Duchanee who staged a "live show" by executing four large paintings on the stage in front of a huge and excited audience, on the average of one minute per canvas. This was followed by a short presentation from a select group of artists.

For the past three months, OKMD has been mulling the possibility of setting up the Thai Foundation along the line of the Japan Foundation, the Goethe Institute, Alliance Française and the British Council, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Ministry of Culture. The aim is to fund Thai artists to formulate and stage cultural programmes both on the home front and on the world stage. From OKMD's point of view, the latter would complete the new experience and know-how in the cultural field for the new generation of artists whose works, being contemporary by nature, know no national boundary.

Thai Foundation would encourage exchanges of such cultural events with other countries and in the process "export" the cultural "brand-name" of the country. For the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, using culture as the vehicle would help with their "cultural diplomacy" which they have been planning for some time. The art exhibition "Show Me Thai" supported by OKMD at MOT acted as the first trial for the planned Thai Foundation. It proved to be a great success and it was hugely acclaimed by the Japanese mass media who attended its opening.

Sumet Jumsai  
National Artist and Board Committee of OKMD

## タイ知識管理開発委員会(OKMD)と、 東京都現代美術館におけるタイ現代美術展

日タイ友好120周年記念事業の一環として、タイ知識管理開発委員会(OKMD)は、タイの外務省、タイ現代芸術委員会、文化省と共に、タイと日本の作家の作品を集めた大規模な展覧会を企画しました。そして東京都現代美術館(MOT)にて、「Show Me Thai〜みてみタイ〜展」が2007年4月18日から5月20日まで開催されました。

この展示のために、絵画、彫刻、映像、インスタレーションやインタラクティブ・アートなど100点以上の作品が届けられると共に、大勢のタイ人作家が、タイのバンコクより東京の会場へとやってきました。

今回の展覧会は、双方向的な形式を持っています。例えば、タイ人作家と親しく交流している著名な奈良美智の作品や、日本人女性と結婚して福岡に住んでいるタイ人作家のナウ・ラウン・チャイコンの、「ナウ・パーティ」と題した映像を扱ったプロジェクト・インスタレーション・アート作品などが展示されています。

初日のオープニングでは、タイの人間国宝であるタワン・グッチャニーが、およそ1分に1枚仕上げるというペースで大きな4枚のキャンパスの上に絵を描くパフォーマンスを行い、多くの観客を魅了して華を添えました。他にも、幾人かの作家がプレゼンテーションを行いました。

ここ3カ月ほどの間、タイ知識管理開発委員会は、日本の国際交流基金や、ドイツのゲーテ・インスティテュート、フランスのアリアン・フランセーズ、イギリスのブリティッシュ・カウンシルのような形を持った、タイ交流基金(The Thai Foundation)設立の可能性について、タイの外務省、スポーツ観光省、文化省と共に検討してきました。その目的は、タイのアーティストが、国内外において活動できる文化プログラムを編成・実行する資金を供給することです。タイ知識管理開発委員会としては、特に国外における活動は、アーティストにとって新しい体験となるだけでなく、もともとコンテンポラリーな作品を生み出している若い世代の作家たちが、国家の枠組みのない文化的なフィールドにおけるノウハウを身に付けることに貢献するのではないかと考えています。

また、タイ交流基金(The Thai Foundation)は、海外との文化交流イベント開催を促進し、国の文化的な「ブランド」イメージの「輸出」を振興するでしょう。外務省においても、文化により「文化外交」を実施することは、これまでも度々計画されてきました。タイ知識管理開発委員会が東京都現代美術館において支援している「Show Me Thai〜みてみタイ〜展」は、タイ交流基金設立計画における最初の一步という意味合いも持っています。そして、初日のオープニングに参加した多くの日本のマスメディアによる高い評価が、私たちの試みの成功を示しています。

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## Fruits of Thai-Japanese Friendship in the Visual Arts

DR. CHITTITA AMORNPICHETKUL

Although the diplomatic relationship between the Kingdom of Thailand and Japan was officially established in 1887, contacts between the two countries could be, in fact, dated as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century. From the initial maritime trade between Ayutthaya and Ryokyo (now Okinawa) over 600 years ago, the bilateral ties have immensely developed in various aspects.<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that both countries have many things in common particularly in politics and culture. One may perhaps note the intimate and long-standing contacts between the Royal Families of Thailand and Japan. For instance, in 2006 on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's (Rama IX, r. 1946) accession to the Throne, H.I.H. Emperor Akihito and H.I.H. Empress Michiko graciously participated in this historic celebration amid the eminent monarchs and dignitaries from all over the world (Plate 1). Moreover, frequent visits either official or personal by the members of the two Royal Families have been made beyond the protocol practice over so many decades to foster the fruitful co-operations towards the prosperity and happiness of their people.<sup>2</sup>

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Looking back to almost a century ago in the year 1911, one is again cherished by another similar historic event, the coronation of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r.1910-1925) at Dusit Maha Prasart, Grand Palace. Apart from the European dignitaries and representatives from the United States, H.I.H. Prince Hiroyasu Fushimi, as a representative of H.I.H. Emperor Mutsuhito, also attended the ceremony<sup>1</sup> (Plate 2). As a matter of fact, King Vajiravudh (then as the Crown Prince), had earlier met the Japanese Prince in 1902 on his visit to Japan during his journey back to Siam upon his completion of study in England (Plate 3). It is worth noting that in his one-month sojourn in Japan, the Siamese Crown Prince' visits for instance to the weaving factory in Nagoya, exhibition of the renowned Japanese artificial flower making, the Japanese convent in Nara, and a school for the blind, deaf and dumb in Kyoto<sup>2</sup> marked a new chapter in the formation and development of Thai public education. Moreover, fervid cultural and artistic engagements with Japan have been continuously increasing. On the occasion of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thai-Japan relations, the present study thus focuses on the long-existing, mutual collaborations in the visual arts in the light of political, economic, social and cultural context.

### Wind from the East Has Drifted Along

After the opening of the country by Commodore Mathew Perry in 1854, Japanese art and culture was enthusiastically embraced not only by the Westerners but also by the Siamese court. When *the Mikado*, a comic opera with music by Arthur Sullivan and libretto by W.S. Gilbert, was first performed at Savoy theatre in England in 1885, it became so popular that it ran countless performances worldwide. At the age of ten the Crown Prince Vajiravudh was also introduced to this highly acclaimed play by his English tutor, Robert Marrant. He was further asked to translate this musical play but the work was not carried out until 1910.

To welcome King Chulalongkorn at Geneva during his first European visit in 1897, the Crown Prince Vajiravudh also took part in a Japanese dance with a Japanese fan,<sup>3</sup> an indispensable and well-known prop in *the Mikado* in which the characters fascinated the audience by their dexterity of manipulating the fans like native Japanese<sup>4</sup> (Plate 4).

Furthermore, on his second European visit ten years later, King Chulalongkorn saw Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* story in Paris. Based on John Luther Long's novel and Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887), this successful opera was a tragic love story between a Japanese geisha named Cio-Cio-San and an American sailor. Having been informed by King Chulalongkorn, Prince Narathipongprapan promptly produced a Siamese adaptation of the play which was known as "*Sao Krua Fah*." All the characters and the setting were moved to Siam. Cio-Cio-San was replaced by a Siamese girl in Chiangmai (a province in the north) who fell in love with a sailor from Bangkok. Interestingly, such a theme of unfulfilled romance as found in *Madame Butterfly* will be recurrent and rarely fail to gain immense success in contemporary Thai novels.<sup>5</sup>

At this point, it is worth noting that Siamese arduous fondness of Japanese subjects as recounted here were instigated from an accidental viewpoint. However, Japan would gradually step into the forefront for Siamese direct attention and lead to a beneficial partnership. In the Second World War Thailand (a new name adopted in 1939 in place of Siam) became an ally with Japan. A glimpse into history is appropriate here in order to understand the Siamese stance in foreign affairs and the shift of interest from the west to the east.

Around the time that Siam signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with Japan, Asia especially South East Asia, had been confronting the critical political crisis of the encroachment of European powers. In 1886, one year before the signing of the Treaty with Japan, Burma became a British colony while Cambodia and Vietnam were under French control. To maintain the Kingdom's sovereignty and independence, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, r. 1868-1910) launched modernization programs to reform the administrative, social and economic system. Consequently, a great number of foreign experts were recruited to work on the soil of Siam.<sup>6</sup> Though the and contributions to the court of Siam had long been recorded, Japanese accomplishments

For instance, Masao Tokichi was appointed Phraya Mahithorn Manupakornkosolkul in 1912 for his outstanding service to Siam from 1898 to 1913. As a legal adviser, he played an important role in negotiating with major powers to relinquish treaties which put Siam at a disadvantageous position (eg. the extraterritoriality, custom taxation, etc.). Earlier in the Ayutthaya period, Yamada Nagamasa, a head of the Japanese community in Ayutthaya was bestowed a Siamese high ranking position as Okya Sena-Phimuk in 1628. Yamada Nagamasa was later a governor of a Siamese province in the South.<sup>7</sup> Japanese presence in Ayutthaya has been

known to us through a copy of a remnant scene from the mural at Wat Yom (Plate 5) which was built in the reign of King Narai in 1681. Its mural painting no longer exists because it had been gradually effaced by the rainwater through the ceiling in the old days. However, certain parts of the mural painting were fortunately copied in an ancient picture album in 1897. The copy still vividly depicts Japanese regiment lining in a row and dressed in Japanese costume with a variety of colorful patterns, guarding a royal procession of religious merit via the royal barge.<sup>8</sup> This valuable piece of evidence firmly testifies Japanese service to the Ayutthaya kings as hired soldiers.

This period that saw Japanese soldiers help Ayutthaya kings to fight against successive Burmese invasions, finally came to a close in the seventeenth century. Siam encountered new political enemies in the nineteenth century. Gradually, she witnessed the great wave of western colonization sweeping away her neighboring countries as the fell under occupation. To cope with the kingdom's critical situation, one of the most appropriate solutions recommended to King Chulalongkorn must have been to refresh friendship with Japan because Japan became a sole model in East Asia who could escape such an imperialistic disaster and maintain her independence.<sup>9</sup>

Coinciding with King Chulalongkorn, Japan led by Emperor Meiji (r.1868-1912) also entered a similar phase of modernization after the century-long isolation policy was abandoned. It is interesting to point out the similarities between the two monarchs. Being one year apart in age, ascending the throne in the same year, ruling the countries for more than forty years, both the Japanese Emperor and the Siamese monarch have laid the firm foundation through which the national administration is still based upon today.<sup>10</sup> As we will see, when the wind from the East drifted along, it carried certain favorable seeds to disseminate and bloom on the suitable soil of Siam.

### Nationalism Germinated in the Soul of the Nation

Succeeding his father, King Vajiravudh was well aware that he faced an immense burden. The incident of foreign seizure of certain parts of Siamese territory by force as experienced in the Pak Nam blockade incident in 1893 was hardly obliterated from the memory of the Siamese people. As a result, the ideology of nationalism based on Nation, Religion and King was successfully inculcated by King Vajiravudh. These three components were symbolized by red, white, and blue respectively. They became the three emblems in the new national flag which were portrayed in five horizontal bands of three colors, and replaced the old flag with a white elephant on a red background in 1917.<sup>11</sup> They also served as the solid foundation of Thai politics and society, the national ideology has been further impregnated in his highly-gifted literary works too. Many of his patriotic poems are still cited, learnt by heart and sung today. As King Vajiravudh who was later extolled as the scholar monarch wrote:

Love the king with complete loyalty,  
Love the nation with unswerving duty,  
Love the Buddhist Trinity faithfully,  
Love honor to merit the world's praise.<sup>12</sup>

Such themes as monarchy, national identity, and Buddhism will, therefore, play a significant role in present-day Thai politics and the visual arts. To lead Siam onto an equal footing with the western powers and gain recognition from the international community was the foremost agenda that preoccupied King Vajiravudh throughout his reign. His determined will and wish was clearly expressed in his English letter to his brother Prince Chakrabongse on the day of his coronation on December 2, 1911:

...We are living in a difficult time, a time when antiquated traditions are struggling against change. But I do not despair. I still hope to live long enough to see the time when Siam shall have truly entered and be honoured in the Family of Nations as an equal in every sense of the world.<sup>13</sup>

### The Foundation of Art Education Laid

King Vajiravudh not only carried on the works of his father, but he also vigorously modernized Siamese education. As

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