

***Debating Southeast Asian Art and History:
A Special Panel in Honor of Prof. Piriya Krairiksh***

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Dates and Venue: 28 June–1 July 2022, Paris

Convener: Asst Prof. Nicolas Revire (Thammasat University, Bangkok)

Synopsis: This panel aims to celebrate the extraordinary scholarship of Professor Piriya Krairiksh, the distinguished Thai art historian, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday in July 2022. A festschrift in his honor is also under preparation for the occasion.

The most fitting way to celebrate our esteemed mentor and colleague, who has dedicated himself to teaching and fundamental research on Thai and Southeast Asian art and history is to support further scholarship and debate on the issues in these fields. The panel seeks to gather scholars of all ages, nationalities and backgrounds from the intersecting fields of art history, archeology, anthropology, and history for a discussion of specific areas in which Achan Piriya has pioneered and greatly contributed to.

We look forward to an active panel discussion and paper presentations with lively intellectual exchange on some of the central questions related to the art and early history of Thailand and Southeast Asia.

Professor Piriya Krairiksh is a prolific Thai author and scholar of Southeast Asian art and history. He obtained his doctorate in Fine Arts from Harvard University in 1975. After serving as a curator of Asian art at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra (1976–1977), he became a lecturer in Thailand, first at Silpakorn University (1977–1978), and subsequently at Thammasat University (1978–2002). In Bangkok, he was President of the Siam Society (1989–1992), and Director of the Thai Khadi Research Institute at Thammasat University (2003–2006). He has published extensively on the early history and art history of Thailand and Southeast Asia, including most recently *The Roots of Thai Art* (2012). He founded the Piriya Krairiksh Foundation in 2012, where he currently serves as chairman, to promote the study of Thai art history and to encourage students to undertake research in Thailand and its neighboring countries.

Guest of honor: Prof. Piriya Krairiksh (to be confirmed)

Panelists:

1. Prof. Leedom Lefferts (Drew University, emeritus) & Louise Cort (The Smithsonian Institution): “Tai Stoneware in Mainland Southeast Asia: From Present to Past”.
2. Prof. Elizabeth H. Moore (SOAS, emeritus): “Mon Relic Traditions: Bagan and Beyond”.
3. Asst Prof. Nicolas Revire (Thammasat University): “Dvāravatī and Si Thep Revisited”.
4. Dr Michel Lorrillard (EFEO): “Luang Prabang and Khmer Influence in Laos”.
5. Dr Sofia Sundström (Leiden University, alumnus): “The Tiger Skin—An Iconographic Feature of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara”.
6. Prof. ML Pattaratorn Chirapavati (California State University): “Phra Mae Thorani: The Earth Goddess in Modern Thai Buddhism”.

Tai Stoneware in Mainland Southeast Asia: From Present to Past

Leedom Lefferts & Louise Allison Cort

High-fired, non-porous stoneware ceramics are closely linked to Tai settlements throughout mainland Southeast Asia. Large rainwater-storage jars, double-rim jars for fermenting fish, and mortars for food preparation exemplify Tai stoneware products. Therefore, a close consideration of the distribution of stoneware production sites and the uses of stoneware products offers a sensitive reading of how Tai people settled the region and shaped its ecologies. This study focuses on stoneware ceramics made and used by Tai populations along both sides of the Mekong River between Vientiane, capital of the Lan Xang kingdom (modern Laos), and the Buddhist center of That Phanom (the so-called “Middle Mekong” region) in northeast Thailand. It draws upon informative commentaries about Tai stoneware in this area left by Dutch travelers in the seventeenth century and French explorers in the mid-nineteenth century. The paper demonstrates that ceramics serve as a lens for discovering history and cultures.

Mon Relic Traditions: Bagan and Beyond

Elizabeth H. Moore

This paper considers elements of memory and time in two bodily relic traditions (*sarīka*) of the Buddha—the *hsan-daw-shin* and *shwe-mote-htaw*—initially connected to the Mauryan King Thiri-dhamma Aśoka. These traditions are contextualized in relation to the institutionalization of Theravāda Buddhism at Bagan instigated by the eleventh century CE Mon monk Shin Araham as well as the present sustenance of the *hsan-daw-shin* and *shwe-mote-htaw* stupas. Myanmar chronicles frame the entrenchment of Theravāda Bagan around Shin Araham but the material remains in Upper and Lower Myanmar point to Aśoka. His instantaneous erection of the 84,000 stupas and the promise of the 5,000 years of the *Sasanā* continue in popular traditions evoking the living presence of the miraculous past.

Dvāravatī and Si Thep Revisited

Nicolas Revire

What do we really know about Dvāravatī and Si Thep, two early historical polities in central Thailand, stretching from approximately the late sixth century CE onwards? Dvāravatī and Si Thep are often referred to in the literature as two elusive and independent “kingdoms” or polities of mainland Southeast Asia. Dr Piriya Krairiksh has even proposed more recently that Si Thep may be the center of the Dvāravatī polity. But what does the material and epigraphic evidence support? This paper presents an overview of recent findings and compares different interpretations as well as reassesses commonly held assertions about Dvāravatī and Si Thep.

Luang Prabang and Khmer Influence in Laos

Michel Lorrillard

The Lao historiographical tradition places the introduction of Buddhism to the newly created Lan Xang kingdom in the middle of the fourteenth century CE, through a religious mission that travelled from Cambodia to Luang Prabang. Some Angkorian sculptures preserved in the first Lao royal capital seemed to give reason to this tradition—this was at least the opinion of specialists at the beginning of the twentieth century. Critical analysis of the chronicles, as well as the recent awareness, thanks to the progress of archeological surveys, of the extent of the influence of the Pre-Angkorian, Mon and Angkorian civilizations in the Middle Mekong Valley, however, lead us to profoundly revise this opinion. While many archeological remains have indeed proved the establishment, from a very ancient period and for several centuries (prior to the creation of the Lao kingdom), of Buddhist and Hindu sites in the southern and central plains of present-day Laos, the art and archeological evidence found in Luang Prabang appear to be singularly isolated, and their presence in the northern part of the country requires further explanation.

The Tiger Skin—An Iconographic Feature of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara

Sofia Sundström

The tiger skin is an iconographic feature that can be seen wrapped around the hips of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in standing images from Insular Southeast Asia. In general, there are two styles of depictions, one originating from Southeast Asia and the second considered to originate from Sri Lanka. These depictions began with the ascetic Avalokiteśvaras found across the region and continued until the final Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara images associated with Candi Jago in East Java towards the end of the thirteenth century CE. The tiger skin is considered to be one of the ascetic symbols and has been linked to the ascetic form of the Hindu god Śiva. It is used in connection with different iconographic forms including the standing four-armed Avalokiteśvara and the Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara. This paper explores the regional differences in how the tiger skin is depicted, including the placement and orientation of the head.

Phra Mae Thorani: The Earth Goddess in Modern Thai Buddhism

M.L. Pattaratorn Chirapravati

At the moment before Śākyamuni Buddha attained Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, the God of the Dead, Māra, sent his troops to prevent this achievement. According to Buddhist texts, the Buddha reached out his hand requesting the Earth Goddess, Bhūmidevī or Pṛthivī (Phra Mae Thorani), to witness his Enlightenment. This action became part of the iconographic representation

of the Enlightenment scene in Indian Buddha images. The goddess is commonly depicted in small scale on the base of a Buddha image holding a container of water as an act of offering. In Southeast Asia, however, by around the twelfth century, Bhūmidēvī had developed a more prominent role; she is depicted in larger scale in both standing and sitting postures. She holds her long hair in a gesture of wringing water and flushing out Māra's troops. She is the one who conquered the God of the Dead. This paper investigates the role of Phra Mae Thorani and the transformation of her forms in modern Thai Buddhism.