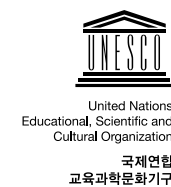


Cultural Understanding through Paintings of Southeast Asia and Korea





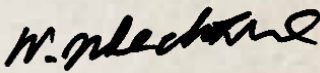
FOREWORD

Another three-year collaborative project among Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO SPAFA) was initiated in early 2013 under the title of ‘2013 SEAMEO-APCEIU Collaboration on Educational Material Development for Cultural Understanding through Paintings of Southeast Asia and Korea.’

This time, we specifically have put the emphasis on genre paintings that depict distinct local festivities for the purpose of increasing cross-cultural awareness in Southeast Asia and Korea. As you may agree, genre paintings that we come across are a valuable treasure chest that holds the wonders of traditional customs and norms of our ancestors. Not only do they cast an aesthetic light on what we see, but they transport us to the world in which they were painted. By getting to know the lives of our grandfathers and grandmothers, we shall have a better understanding of the historical and social background embedded in the paintings.

Compiling a total of 21 genre paintings from 7 different countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Korea, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam into a book, we are hopeful the book will be used in secondary schools across the region as a supplementary material. Educators, in particular, are encouraged to deliver stories covering diverse topics in history, culture and religion extracted from the genre paintings we have collected. Each and every one of them can fit into art, history, social studies, etc., class depending on where they decide to place the emphasis, but eventually all the lessons and activities involved will result in mutual understanding and appreciation of different cultures and faiths in Southeast Asia and Korea. We hope both educators and students across the region will enjoy the genre paintings as much as we do.

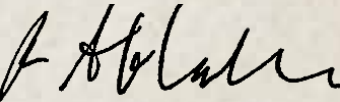
Lastly, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the participants who demonstrated a great deal of expertise in and enthusiasm for genre paintings. Without their input, this project would not have been possible. Thank you all.



Dr. Witaya Jeradechakul

Director

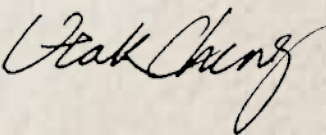
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Introduction

As one of the collaborative activities with regional institutes, Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) has cooperated with the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) in order to develop educational materials for multicultural education. Since 2005, the collaborative efforts between APCEIU and SEAMEO have produced various materials, such as an offline card game, a CD game, as well as educational resource materials on folktales, with the aim of cultivating higher thinking and creativity to promote international understanding.

In 2013, APCEIU invites SEAMEO Secretariat and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO SPAFA) to plan and implement a project entitled “2013 SEAMEO-APCEIU Collaboration on Educational Material Development for Cultural Understanding through Paintings of Southeast Asia and Korea”. The project aims to present paintings of different types of festivities from the countries of Southeast Asia and Korea, compiled into a book as an additional teaching and learning resource for secondary school students.

The project's objectives are:

- To produce a teaching and learning resource that will raise cultural understanding on local festivities, traditional arts and practices among secondary school students through genre paintings of different types of festivities collected from Southeast Asian countries and Korea.
- To increase the level of artistic and cultural literacy and develop art appreciation among students and teachers in Southeast Asia and Korea.
- To devise an educational resource that teaches students and teachers how to discuss, analyse and draw conclusions from works of art that are representative of history, tradition and culture, utilizing visual thinking strategies.
- To establish a network of sharing and cooperation among curators, historians, anthropologists and art educators among Southeast Asian countries and Korea.

With these objectives in mind, the project's organizers approached arts and culture governmental agencies of the countries of Southeast Asia and Korea, requesting them to each select an expert to help identify paintings and write the explanatory texts. Expertise was also sought from resource persons in the fields of anthropology, history and art education.

In order to create a platform of exchange and to bring together the selected experts and project organizers, the “SEAMEO SPAFA – APCEIU Regional Forum on Cultural Understanding through Paintings of Southeast Asia and Korea” was held at SEAMEO SPAFA in Bangkok on 12-13 September 2013. This successful event was an opportunity for its participants to share information and learn about each other's practices and culture, and was in itself a manifestation of the project's aim to promote cultural diversity and mutual understanding.

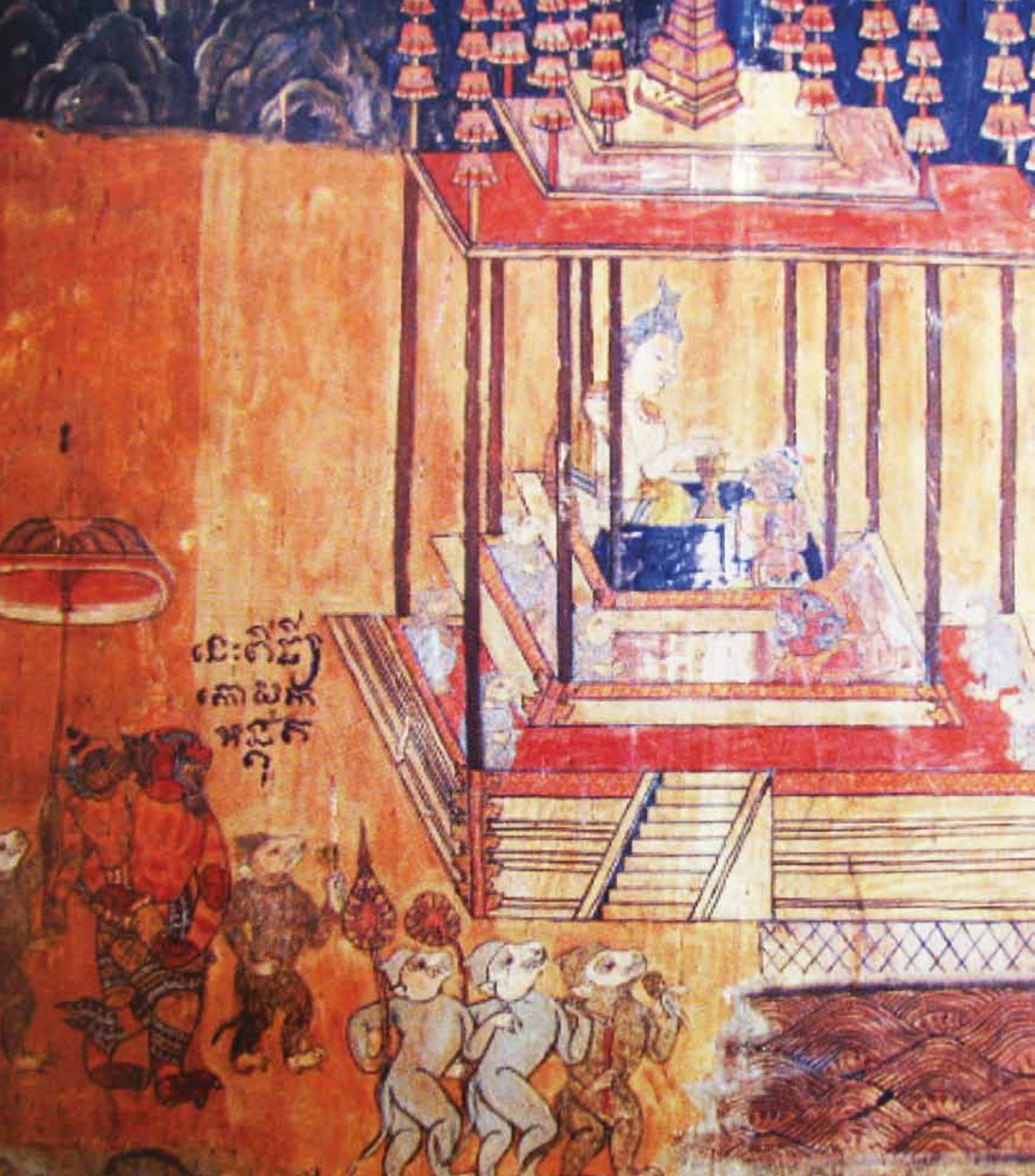
The success of this project is the result of the participants' collaborative efforts. Their dedication and passion for the arts and education have been the driving force behind this project, and for this their work needs to be acknowledged:

- Mr. San Phalla (Department of Archaeology and Prehistory, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, Cambodia)
- Dr. Rosalia Sciortino (Director, International Development Research Centre Regional Office for Southeast and East Asia)
- Mr. Dongsoo Moon (National Museum of Korea, Republic of Korea)
- Mr. U Myint Oo (National University of Arts and Culture, Myanmar)
- Ms. Corazon S. Alvina (Metropolitan Museum of Manila, the Philippines)
- Ms. Kanokwalee Suriyatham (Head of Roi-Et National Museum, Thailand)
- Ms. Vuong Le My Hoc (Department of Exhibition and Education, Vietnam Museum of Fine Arts, Vietnam)
- Dr. Vo Quang Trong (Director of the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Vietnam)
- Ms. Vu Phuong Nga (Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Vietnam)
- Dr. Arsenio Nicolas (Department of Anthropology, University of the Philippines, Philippines)
- Ass. Prof. Somporn Rodboon (Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University, Thailand)
- Ms. Yossaya Aisiri (Division of Children's Literature, Library and Information Science, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand)

APCEIU, SEAMEO Secretariat and SEAMEO SPAFA are grateful for the time and dedication that the aforementioned participants have put into this project and are positive that strong links have been forged to move towards a better understanding of each other's cultures. It is in this spirit that the collaborating organizations will continue to work together in the future in the aim to promote cultural diversity and international understanding.

CAMBODIA





Name of the Festivity: *Pithi Koar Chuk* (the Cutting of the Topknot Ceremony)

Title of the Artwork: Untitled (a [hermit](#) is cutting the topknot of Angkut, a character in the Ramayana epic)

Artists: Ta Peul with the help of his nephew, Kong Dith

Year of Creation: Between 1920 and 1924

Materials: Natural colour pigments on [stucco](#) wall

Mural painting from Wat Bo, Siem Reap Province, Cambodia

Pithi Koar Chuk

The Cutting of the Topknot Ceremony

Among Cambodian rites of passage that mark an important stage in the life of each person, there is the *Pithi Koar Chuk*, the ‘topknot cutting ceremony’ for children or preadolescents. In this tradition, children between the ages of 5 and 13 keep a topknot around the top of their head that they let grow since the age of three, while the rest of the head is shaved. The resulting long strand of hair, the ‘topknot’, is cut in a solemn rite, which marks puberty.

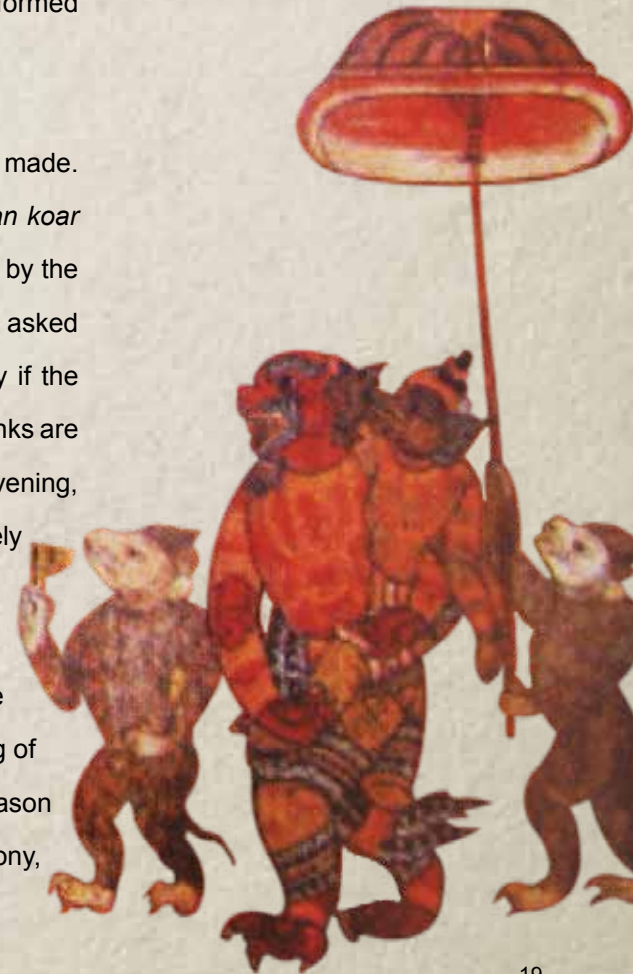
The ceremony should only be performed for one boy or one girl. However, since this important ceremony requires a lot of resources, villagers often share the ceremony with their neighbours whose children keep the topknot. Girls and boys can be put together in one ceremony. The number of children has to be an odd number (normally five).

This festivity is generally performed during the first, second or fourth month of the lunar year (corresponding to January-February, February-March or April-May). Among the ordinary people, the rite is held for three days, while the royal family’s ceremony could last up to seven days.

It is believed that this ceremony originates from ancient times when Khmers (Cambodians) practised **Brahmin** rituals. The cutting of the topknot is performed in a raised edifice built specifically for this purpose, separately constructed from the house.

It is called the *rean koar*. The structure itself symbolizes the cosmology of the central mountain surrounded by other mountain chains. This building is connected to the house by a bridge. In the royal tradition, this edifice is called ‘Mount Kailasa’, the palace of the Hindu god Śiva, and the person for whom the rite is being performed is called Preah Ganes, after Śiva’s son Gaṇeśa.

On the first day of the ceremony, many kinds of local traditional sweets are made. Food is also prepared for guests and villagers who come to help. The *rean koar* is colourfully adorned with banana stalk carvings. The first ritual performed by the **achar**, the master of ceremony, is *Krung Poli*, a ritual in which permission is asked to build a ceremonial structure prior to an important ceremony, especially if the ceremonial structure is built on the ground. Then, five or seven Buddhist monks are invited to give a sermon to the participants, including the candidates. In the evening, offerings are given to their ancestral spirit and many rites are performed, namely the ritual of *Pithi Bangvil Popil* (the turning of the *popil*, in which three ritual objects known as *popil* are passed from one person to the other in a circle, in order to ensure that the soul stays in the body of the person for whom the ceremony is being performed). With some exceptions, the general meaning of this ritual is to ensure happiness, plenitude, and fecundity. It is for this reason that the passing of the *popil* is an essential element of the marriage ceremony, as well as various other ceremonies.





On the second day, different kinds of traditional Khmer desserts are made. On the third day, before sunrise, the children are woken up to select an object wrapped in white cloth out of different prepared objects, in a ritual called *angkar reap* (the rice ritual). The *achar* would then predict the future of each child according to the object that they took. The children are then dressed up again, with their topknots decorated, before starting the ritual of 'teeth making'. During the 'teeth making' ritual, the *achar* pretends to rub and clean the candidates' teeth with specific materials and then applies their teeth with traditional medicine made from medicinal plants. This ritual is believed to make the candidates speak using beautiful words and to weaken the poison of the *naga*, a mythical serpent-like animal that is believed to be the ancestor of the Khmer people.

After this ritual, the *achar* leads the children to the *rean koar* and asks them to walk around it three times before sitting. The monks are then invited to shave their topknots and to pour holy water, which represents water falling from the heavens, on the children. Finally, food and gifts are offered to the monks, which is an act that takes place for every Buddhist ceremony in Cambodia.

Today, the rite of cutting of the topknot is still observed in certain regions of Cambodia. In earlier times, its practice was widespread.

Description of the Artwork

This painting specifically depicts the topknot-cutting ceremony performed for Angkut, the son of the Monkey King from the story of the *Reamker* (a Cambodian version of the Ramayana epic). At the bottom left corner, we can see Peali in red, carrying his son, Angkut. They are walking towards the *rean koar*, surrounded by other monkeys, one of whom is carrying an umbrella for them. In the *rean koar*, while it is usually a monk who shaves the topknot, this mural painting shows a *hermit* performing the rite of cutting the topknot instead of a monk (we know it is a hermit, because they are always depicted wearing a tiger-skin cloth with a fish-tail headdress), which suggests that the ritual is a *Brahmanic* tradition.

Interestingly, the cutting of the topknot depicted in this mural does not occur in the texts of the *Reamker* or the Ramayana. This shows that the ceremony was popular during the time the painting was created, as murals depict events from the everyday lives of the people.

The artists used the same techniques as for the painting depicting the coronation ceremony. They used plant extracts to create colour, and applied them to the stucco wall, using fine lines and no *perspective*.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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Name of the Festivity: *Pithi Mangkul Kar* (the Wedding Ceremony)

Title of the Artwork: Untitled (the painting depicts the *Pithi Sampeah Phtem* ritual, part of the wedding ceremony, of Preah Sithat and Neang Pimpear from the History of the Buddha)

Artist: Unknown

Year of Creation: 1990s

Materials: Oil painting on stucco wall

Mural painting from Wat Ang Simpili, Kandal Province, Cambodia

Pithi Mangkul Kar

The Wedding Ceremony



According to Cambodian tradition, the wedding ceremony is an important rite of passage – a tradition that establishes the relationship between a man and a woman to become husband and wife. There are many rituals involved in the wedding ceremony. As a result, the ceremony takes a long time. It is believed that performing the necessary rituals properly and solemnly guarantees the future of the couple and their prosperity. Thus, this ceremony is considered as an act of *mangkul* (meaning ‘good fortune’; thus the ceremony is called *mangkul kar*, ‘the ceremony of good fortune’).

In Cambodia, the wedding ceremony process differs from one place to the other. In some places, the ceremony lasts longer than in others. Some rituals take place at different times, while some are not observed, depending on the area where the wedding takes place. Despite these differences, there are common rituals that are widely practised. In rural areas, a temporary tent to perform rituals for the groom is installed near the bride’s house, as, according to Cambodian tradition, the wedding takes place at the bride’s house. Rituals are performed to build the groom’s tent and to allow the groom to enter the bride’s house.

Description of the Artwork

Many important rituals have to be performed so that the groom may enter in the bride’s main house. One of these rituals is called *Pithi Sampeah Phtem*, shown in this painting. For this ritual, the couple sit together joining hands, while the ritual of *Pithi Bangvil Popil* (the ‘turning of *popil*’) is performed for the couple, in which candles are lit and passed around married couples who are present for them to give the bride and groom a silent blessing. The *achar* (master of ceremony) then blesses the couple, ties their wrists with white thread and gives a sword for them to hold. This ritual is followed by *Bach Phka Sla* (‘throwing the *areca flower*’), in which areca flowers are given to participants to throw on the couple, blessing them with fecundity and prosperity. Relatives tie their wrists with three rounds of white thread. After blessing them, at the end of the ceremony, the *achar* asks them to walk to the room, while the groom holds the edge of the bride’s breast cloth.

In this scene, the *achar* presents a sword in its sheath as a symbol of the union between husband and wife. Interestingly, the groom and bride are a prince and princess, but the wedding is performed following folk tradition. This shows that the artist was familiar with folk traditions.

This style of painting is known as modern painting, in which techniques in **perspective** and shading are used to recreate dimension and distance. This style of painting was developed between the late 1940s and early 1950s, when a Japanese painter, named Suzuki, came to teach at the School of Cambodian Arts to develop a ‘new’ and ‘modern’ style of painting. It is also possible that this style of painting was influenced by the French during the colonial period.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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Name of the Festivity: *Preah Reach Pithi Reachea Bhisek* (the Coronation Ceremony)

Title of the Artwork: Untitled (the painting depicts the coronation ceremony of Preah Vessandor, from the Vessantara **Jataka**, a story of one of the Buddha's previous lives)

Artist: Unknown

Year of Creation: Early 20th century

Materials: Natural colour pigments on **stucco** wall

Mural painting from Wat Kompong Tralach Leu, Kampong Chhnang Province, Cambodia

Preah Reach Pithi Reachea Bhisek

The Coronation Ceremony

The coronation ceremony is a formal ceremony to crown a sovereign. This ceremony is always performed in the Royal Palace, specifically in the Throne Hall. Among royal traditions, it is the greatest, longest, most solemn and important ceremony. The coronation ceremony of King Sisowath Monivong in 1928 and King Norodom Sihanouk in 1941 each lasted six days. While it is a royal tradition, people from all over Cambodia gather around the Royal Palace in the capital, Phnom Penh, to take part in the celebrations.

Performing arts take place every day of the coronation ceremony to entertain guests. On the first three days, many important festivities can be observed, such as the ritual of bringing the new King to the bedroom, paying homage to his ancestors, listening to the monks' sermon, giving alms, practising meditation, and appointing and honouring court officers.

The most important ritual of the coronation ceremony takes place on the fourth day, shown in the mural painting here, during which the King is crowned, dressed in the attire of a sovereign (wearing a coronation ceremony gown) after taking a holy bath with water from the Kulen mountains in Cambodia. In the morning, the new King offers food and gifts to monks as an act of **merit-making**. After performing

religious rituals led by **Brahmins**, a minister announces the formal title of the new King. Then, the chief minister announces the offering of the royal crown, wealth, armed forces, royal families, all level of country officers, and the entire country's agricultural fields, territory, forests and mountains to the new King. In return, the King gives out official seals to officials according to their position, as well as land, forests and mountains to his people. The King is then invited to sit on the Diamond Throne under the Great White Umbrellas – the symbol of kingship – while royal regalia, including the royal crown, the sacred sword, the royal slippers, etc., are offered to His Majesty. All participants bless the new king before they leave.

On the fifth day, the King dresses up in the sovereign's gown and parades around the city. On the sixth day, the King takes an 'oath of allegiance' (a solemn promise from the new King, invoking a divine witness in regards to his future actions and behaviour towards his people and country) and puts out the light of the 'victory candle' (on the first day of the coronation, the crowned King lights the 'victory candle', a representation of invoking and inviting gods to witness and inaugurate the ceremony). Finally, the King ends the ceremony by giving alms and gifts to monks at the end of the ceremony as an act of **merit-making**.





Description of the Artwork

The activities depicted in this painting are the most important event of the coronation ceremony, during which the royal regalia is given to the new King. In the painting, the building in the centre is the Throne Hall, built in traditional Cambodian architectural style. This single edifice is a representation of the entire royal palace with its surrounding walls. Inside the Throne Hall, the new King, who is dressed in traditional Khmer (Cambodian) monarch attire, sits on the throne, joining his palms together, holding a sacred sword. To his right and to his left are the King's family and court ladies, who are carrying fans.

In front of the Throne Hall, there is an altar flanked by **Brahmins**, who are blowing conch shells to accompany the festivity, while an ensemble of *pinpeat*, Cambodian traditional music, is being played to the left. To the right and to the left, guests, officers, relatives and court ladies are witnessing the ceremony.

In the **background**, there are several kinds of art performances to entertain people outside the royal palace (on the other side of the palace walls). On the left, acrobatic and wrestling performances are shown. On the right, in addition to the circus performance, women are performing a Cambodian classical dance, accompanied by *pinpeat* music and two men are fighting each other with long sticks, a kind of martial arts performance.

The Cambodian painting presented here is in the style of **mural** paintings found on the interior walls of Cambodian Buddhist temples. These paintings are thus seen within a religious context, more specifically Buddhist. The main function of paintings on the walls of Buddhist temples is to display religious stories. In addition, these murals can provide a glimpse into the every day lives of the people, showing various elements such as clothing, performing arts, music, architecture, as well as social events and festivities that were practised in Cambodia during or prior to the context in which the artists lived.

The art form of this Buddhist monastery murals is known as 'traditional painting', whether referring to an ancient painting or a recent one. The common trait of this art form, particularly in depicting high-ranking people and divinities, is that the people's costumes and **poses** resemble those of Cambodian classical dance, combining grace and majesty. All characters are shown in small scale and are always depicted in the same size regardless of the distance from the viewer. Generally, for this style of painting, there is no **perspective**, no vanishing point on the horizon. The **composition** is a combination of mass and lines. The figures are drawn with an even, flowing contour, and are then filled in with flat colour, after which the details and ornaments are applied. Buildings, furniture, chariots, and other elements are done in the same way. The paint comes from vegetable dyes, which are colour pigments obtained from natural plants.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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INDONESIA





Name of the Festivity: *Aduan Sapi* (Bullfight)

Title of the Artwork: "Aduan Sapi"

Artist: Ilham

Year of Creation: 1994

Materials: Synthetic paint and glass

O'ong Maryono and Rosalia Sciortino Collection

© Vietnam Museum of Ethnology

Aduan Sapi

Bullfight



A*duan Sapi*, or bullfight, is a traditional recreational activity and sport practised in Indonesia, notably among the Madurese, an ethnic group of Indonesia who live on the island of Madura off the northeastern coast of Java, and who have spread across the Indonesian archipelago. As the soil of their native island of Madura is too poor to farm rice and other crops, the Madurese became skilled cattle herders. As a result, cattle play an important role in the practical and spiritual lives of the Madurese, the bull being a symbol of power and prosperity.

In the past few years, Madura has become renowned for its bull races (*kerapan sapi*). As for bullfighting, it remained a strong tradition among the Madurese who lived elsewhere, especially in Bondowoso in eastern Java, where bullfights would often be staged. It is believed that before the influence of Buddhism and Islam in the archipelago, bullfights were part of a set of rituals aimed at ensuring a good harvest. They were also organized on important occasions, such as rites of passage like marriage and circumcision, and religious holidays. However, due to the betting associated with bullfighting, it is no longer practiced. Recently, there have been cultural preservation efforts to re-establish the tradition of *Aduan Sapi* in Bondowoso.

While the bullfight is a competition involving two opponents (the owners of the bulls), the festivity itself is a manifestation of unity and solidarity, bringing together the community and strengthening Madurese identity. *Aduan* means 'fight' and *Sapi* means 'cattle'. When the two words are combined, *Aduan Sapi* refers as much to the word 'bull' as to the word 'bullfight', which is also called *tok-tok* among the Madurese.

Traditionally, the bulls are raised like a member of the family and undergo extensive training. Given the importance of bulls in their social, economic and spiritual lives, the Madurese take great care in raising bulls and are very knowledgeable on breeding and training. The bulls are under constant watch and are kept in sheds. The animal itself is washed twice a day and gets a massage each morning. In regards to training, the bull is made to walk uphill, sometimes with a 50kg bag of sand on its neck.

Before the official fight begins, the bulls are given large meals of eggs, tonics and herbs that are usually reserved for human consumption. The *dukun* (ritual specialist) is asked to ward off hostile magic spells and to make offerings, while the *kiai* (religious leaders) are requested to bless the animal for the fight. The bull also has to eat a palm leaf upon which religious texts are written in Arabic and is guarded by a special lamp to ward off evil spirits. Moreover, a ritual feast is organized in honour of the bull to which the entire neighbourhood is invited.

The fight usually starts at eight in the morning with an offering of incense sticks and the beat of a drum, and ends at sunset. It is accompanied by a *gamelan*, a traditional Javanese music ensemble. The fight ends when the losing bull stands with its rear facing the winning bull.

After the fight, the winning bull is celebrated and dressed with a sash, scarf or shirt tied to its horns and a flowered necklace around its neck, as the bull and its followers parade to the sound of *gamelan* music accompanied by a *pesinden*, a female dancer. Men dance around the *pesinden* as news of the victory spreads across the neighbourhood.



About the Artist

Mr. Ilham is a native of Bondowoso. He is about 60 years of age and is skilled in the production of handicrafts. He is also a *pencak silat* (martial arts) master at the Elang Putih martial arts school. This particular painting was done at the request of O'ong Maryono, one of the painting's owners, also a native of Bondowoso and *pencak silat* expert who was aware of the artistic capacity of Mr. Ilham. With this in mind, O'ong Maryono invited Mr. Ilham to experiment with glass paintings, which is not an art he commonly practiced.

Description of the Artwork

At the centre of this contemporary style painting, two bulls are fighting each other head-on, with their horns intertwined. Standing between the bulls and arbitrating the fight is the fight's referee. Standing behind each bull are the *tokang selir*, the bulls' keepers, shouting and trying to control the animals during the fight. Behind them is a man, a member of the bull's following, with one foot in the air, holding what looks like a long red scarf around his neck and over his arms, which are the reins belonging to the bull he supports. Usually, there is also a supporter ringing the bull's bell and calling its name, and third man who holds the nose-rope between his teeth while he slides his hands along the rope. It is believed that the three men holding these objects belonging to the bull help to establish a connection with the bull and maintain its fighting spirit.

In the **foreground**, a musical ensemble is playing *gamelan* music. On the left, there is a man beating a drum (*kendang*) and another playing a set of three small **gongs**, while on the right, another is playing *the selompret* (a type of oboe), while the other is beating a pair big suspended **gongs**. *Gamelan* music plays an important role in the ritual life of the community, as *gamelan* ensembles are required to play during rituals and ceremonies, as well as to accompany dance and puppet performances.

This artwork is an Indonesian glass painting, which requires much skill and attention to detail. There are five stages involved in producing a glass painting. The first step is producing a *plek*, which is a sketch or a pattern made on tracing paper. This *plek* can be a copy of a previously sketched *plek*, or can be a new work, the fruit of the artist's imagination. Secondly, the artist places the *plek* behind a pane of glass and draws the contours with a **rapidograph** or a **dip pen**, depending on the artist's preference and level of expertise. This step is called *rengreng*. Alternatively, the artist can draw the outline free-hand. Once the outlining is complete, the third step is called *isen-isen*, which consists of filling the contours with dots or lines. The fourth stage, *natar*, is when the artist can start painting the background and the space between the contours. This can take several days because the artist needs to wait for the paint to dry for one or two days between different layers. The final step is the framing of the glass painting. The painting is reversed, with the painted surface at the back. As a result, what the viewer sees is the reverse side of the original painting.

It is believed that the first glass paintings were made under the rule of **Sultan** Panembahan Ratu II (1568-1646) in Kraton Pakungwati (Pakungwati Palace), on the north coast of Java. The first glass paintings were made using paint from natural colour pigments. Nowadays, artists use synthetic paint.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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Name of the Festivity: *Tarian Ledek* (Ledek Dance)

Title of the Artwork: "Ledek" (Tarian Ledek)

Artist: Unknown

Year of Creation: About 1990

Materials: Synthetic paint and glass

O'ong Maryono and Rosalia Sciortino Collection

© Vietnam Museum of Ethnology

Tarian Ledek

Ledek Dance



The *ledek* dance is a widespread practice and ancient tradition in Central Java, East Java and Bali, where female dancers are engaged to dance in public during various festivities to the music of bamboo musical instruments (like *angklung* and *calung*) and in other places, bronze *gamelan* instruments. It is also commercially performed by female dancers who peddle their dances along the streets and in the markets. Men who join in on the *ledek* dance have to pay the dancer, the money of which is collected and distributed to the members of the group after the night's performance. In southwest central Java, the dancers are called *lengger*, and in Bali, *joged*. The *ledek* sings while she dances. And in West Java, as well as in Sumatra, the *ledek* dance still uses its original name, *ronggeng*. The dancers are endowed with certain spiritual powers, some can cure the sick, bless young babies to protect them from any harm and to have healthy lives.

In some villages in southwest central Java, in the districts of Banyumas, and Cilacap, the *lengger* is a young boy who has not reached puberty. He is engaged as a female dancer and sings imitating female singers. The ancient tradition of male dancers performing female roles is not confined to the villages. In the courts of central Java, young boys were also trained to dance the role of women, as a form of aesthetic education, where the idea of refinement is cultivated, one method of which was dancing in a very refined, slow style (*halus*).

Description of the Artwork

While the painting's title is "Ledek", the name of the dance, it is the musicians who are highlighted in this painting. In the front row, there is flute (*suling*) player, a *rebab* (two stringed lute), and two singers holding books or texts. In the back row, we can see a small *gong*, and two bamboo xylophones (called *calung*).

While the previous Indonesian glass painting, "Aduan Sapi", is a contemporary artwork, the style of this one is a blend of classical and contemporary glass painting, as the people depicted are painted in classical style, similar to *wayang* puppets, with only their profiles showing. Just like *wayang* puppets, their arms and legs look like they can be manipulated by a puppeteer. What is contemporary about this painting is the background, as it is plain. In classical Javanese painting, no space is left blank. The sky, the ground, the walls, or any other space that would normally be empty or painted in a uniform colour would be full of motifs.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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Name of the Festivity: *Upacara Pernikahan Adat Jawa* (Traditional Javanese Wedding)

Title of the Artwork: "Javanese Wedding Couple"

Artist: Unknown

Year of Creation: About 1990

Materials: Synthetic paint and glass

O'ong Maryono and Rosalia Sciortino Collection

© Vietnam Museum of Ethnology

Upacara Pernikahan Adat Jawa

Traditional Javanese Wedding



Like most weddings across Asia, Javanese weddings include many rituals and undergo various stages. They can take up to three days and are most often organized by the family of the bride.

Javanese weddings are accompanied by a *gamelan* (traditional Javanese music) ensemble. The wedding is supervised by the *pemeas*, a beautician who is responsible for the bride's makeup, the couple's clothing, and for leading the rituals during the ceremony, providing the *sesaji* (offerings) that are necessary for each part of the ceremony.

Given the many rituals (there are usually more than ten rituals) that take place at a wedding ceremony, there are many preparations involved. In order to ensure that the wedding runs smoothly, the bride's family and close friends form a committee, assigning different tasks to each member. This is a very important aspect of the wedding, as this process of mutual assistance and shared responsibility strengthens family relationships, friendship and business ties, which is in keeping with the Javanese tradition of *gotong royong* (mutual assistance).

On the day before the wedding, *sesaji* (offerings) of various fruits, dishes, flowers, drinks and sweets are given to receive God's blessing, to win the approval of their ancestors, and to ward off evil spirits, before installing a structure in front of the gate of the bride's house, consisting of an arch made of plants with a banana tree on either side. This structure is called *bleketepe* or *tarub*.

On the same day, the *siraman* (shower) ritual takes place, which involves a ritual bath to cleanse the bride and groom's bodies and souls. The ritual takes place in their respective family homes, and the bride's family must send a bowl of water containing various flower petals to the groom's family's house. This ritual also requires many offerings.

The *siraman* is then followed by the *ngerik* ritual, during which the *pemeas* takes care of the bride's hair, makeup and clothing until she is as beautiful as a goddess. This ritual also requires a set of various offerings. After this, the bride must wait from sunset to midnight, as it is believed that, during this time, she is visited by goddesses. The elder women stay with her to share their wisdom, and offerings of food, medicine, flowers and clothes are placed inside the bride's room. During this time, the groom's family visits the bride's house in order to get to know each other. However, only the women in the groom's family may enter bride's room, but the groom cannot enter the bride's house. He must stay in front of the house as a sign of patience. This get-together between the bride's and groom's families is called *midodareni*. It is an important ritual during which they exchange gifts, such as textiles, jewellery, food, and various other items.

The most important ritual, *ijab*, takes place on the following day and officially binds the couple in marriage according to localised Islamic practices. This official religious ceremony is then followed by the *panggih* ceremony, which takes place at the bride's house. This is when the bride and groom really meet. Upon arrival at the bride's house, a female member of the groom's family makes an offering of bananas and flowers to the bride's mother to show appreciation for the bride's family's hospitality.

After this, the *belangan suruh* may take place, which involves having the bride and groom face one another and throw **betel** leaves at each other, the purpose of which is to ward off evil spirits.



The *belangan suruh* ritual is then followed by the *wiji dadi* ritual, during which the groom breaks a chicken egg with his right foot and the bride washes his right foot with water and flower petals, while the *pemeas* touches the bride and groom's foreheads with a chicken egg held with her right hand. The *pemeas* then breaks the egg over the flower petals that are laid between the bride and groom.

This is followed by the *kacar kucur* ritual, when the bride and groom hold each other by their little finger and walk to the *krobongan* (a room located in the centre of the house where offerings are made), in front of which wooden statues of *Loro Blonyo* (a pair of inseparable deities that symbolize prosperity) have been placed. The couple sit in front of the *krobongan*, and the groom places gifts of food, flowers and an even number of coins on a white cloth placed on the bride's lap.

After this ritual, the groom feeds the bride with three balls of yellow rice (rice flavoured with turmeric) mixed with other ingredients, then the bride feeds the groom, after which they both drink sweet tea from the same cup. This ritual is called *dhahar klimah*.

Once the *dhahar klimah* ritual is complete, the groom's parents meet with the bride's parents in front of the house, during a ritual that is called *mertui*. Once this has taken place, the parents of the bride and groom are then led to the house where the following ceremony, the *sungkeman* ritual, takes place. The parents are seated in chairs and the married couple kneel in front of them, join their palms together and bow to their parents, placing their heads on their parents' knees, in order to pay their respect to their parents and receive their blessing.

The description above is an outline of the sequences of events during a wedding held in villages and in cities today. In the royal courts of Surakarta and Jogjakarta, elaborate and grand celebrations are held for several days, involving the whole city and the court, with guests from the national government and abroad attending.

Description of the Artwork

In this painting, the bride and groom are seated in the middle, dressed in traditional attire, including *batik* cloth wrapped around their waist. *Batik* is a very special and beautiful cloth that is made by applying wax to the fabric, following specific designs, before dyeing it, so that the parts covered with wax are not dyed in the process. The result is often a beautifully patterned textile. Batik is an important aspect of Javanese culture, which has become a national heritage. Batiks, as well as other textiles, play an important role in the ritual life of the peoples of the Javanese. Some patterns are reserved for certain rituals, while others can be reserved for people of a certain status. The bride and groom are also adorned in jewellery and are wearing flowers in their hair.

The two other figures are part of the wedding retinue. The man on the groom's side holds an umbrella, a symbol of protection. The woman beside the bride attends to the bride's needs.

For this contemporary-style glass painting, the artist followed the same technique described in the first painting. The artist included many details in the accessories and clothing that the people in the painting are wearing, such as the patterns of their clothes and their jewellery, which stands out against the plain background, drawing the viewer's attention straight to the people in the painting.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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K O R E A





Name of the Festivity: *Dano Festival*

Title of the Artwork: "Archery"

Artist: Kim Hong-do

Year of Creation: 18th century

Materials: Ink and colour on paper

Collection of the National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Dano Festival

Archery

There are many kinds of festivals in Korea. Among them, *Dano* refers to the traditional holiday celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. Traditionally, a variety of rituals took place on this day. Korea has retained several festivals related to the holiday, one of which is Gangneung *Dano* Festival, designated by UNESCO as a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”.

Archery

Archery is a traditional recreation on *Dano* Holiday, Korean New Year’s Day and Chuseok Harvest Festival. Moreover, archery was performed as a public rite during the Joseon Dynasty.

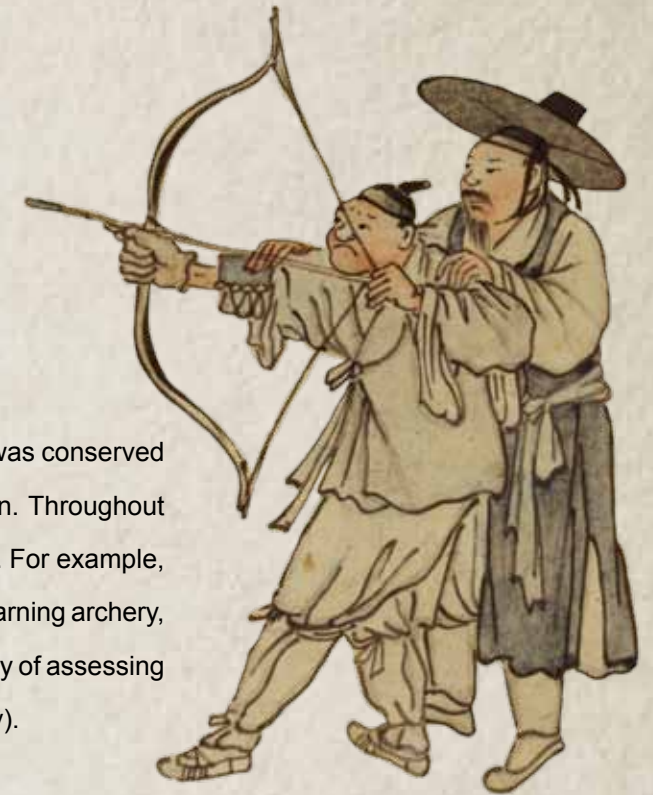
The practice of Korean Traditional Archery has undergone surprisingly little changes over the centuries. Its emphasis upon courtesy, etiquette and mental focus has endured throughout the centuries, and given an excellent representative art form distinctive to Korea.

Archery dates back to prehistoric days (mural paintings from Goguryeo tombs prove that this sport was widely practised during the Three Kingdoms Period, 1st century B.C.-668 A.D.). The founder and king of Goguryeo Kingdom left the earliest records of professional archery found to date. Originally practised for hunting and warfare, archery developed into a recreational sport. However, more importantly, archery played a significant role in Korean history.

Even after the invention of mechanized warfare weaponry, archery was conserved in Korea as a respected ritual and symbol for cultivating civilization. Throughout history, Korean kings are quoted to have defended archery practice. For example, when King Taejong was challenged as to why he supported his son learning archery, he replied by quoting teachings: “The wise have said archery is a way of assessing virtue.” (Quoted during King Taejong’s reign in the early 15th century).

Due to loyal support from many kings, archery was practised as a *Hyangsarye*, meaning community archery rite, during the Joseon Dynasty. It was performed to edify local communities in the spirit of *yeak* (rites and music), an important **Neo-Confucian** social value. The custom originated from Chinese Zhou Dynasty, when local patriarchs held archery competitions every three years to select young men for governmental positions. *Hyangsarye* and the community banquet were introduced to Korea with the arrival of **Neo-Confucianism** during the late Goryeo period (1170-1392). *Hyangsarye* emphasized neither the art of archery nor an archer’s technical mastery, but rather, more abstractly, the education and enlightenment of the people. The goal was to instil Confucian etiquette, respect for elders, and moral virtues.

Then, as recently as the 20th century, Emperor Kojong stated that archers must “meet the ritualistic requirements on entering, leaving, or making turning movements in any direction.” He was directly alluding to the mandates of the Great Archery





Ritual, which dictated the courtesy and formality in noble and royal archery. But, in this case, Emperor Kjong promoted archery to be practised by the masses, and mandated proper etiquette for everyone.

In conclusion, Emperor Kjong made the most recent effort to promote and popularize archery towards the general Korean population. Even Prince Heinrich of Prussia visited Korea in 1899, and was astonished by Emperor Kjong's traditional archery demonstration. The emperor was pleased with his efforts and success in popularizing archery, and so decreed: "Let people enjoy archery to develop physical strength." Following this decree, he also established an archery club. The Yellow Crane archery pavilion was also created on the northern mountainside of Kyounghee Palace. From this influence, the construction of archery pavilions and clubhouses became nationwide. Furthermore, bows, arrows and targets were standardized to promote and expand the traditional archery of Korea. From this effort to conserve the traditions of Korean archery, the art of constructing Korean bows was designated an 'Important Intangible Cultural Property' in 1971.

About the Artist

The painter, Kim Hong-do (1745-ca.1806), also known as Danwon, is one of the most beloved painters in the history of Korea. Born in 1745, he worked under the sponsorship of King Jeong-jo, the 22nd ruler of the Chosen Dynasty, and left behind a legacy of numerous works of art.

In 1773, he entered royal service as a member of the *Dohwaseo*, the official painters of the Joseon court, and drew the **portrait** of King Jeong-jo.

He was the most celebrated master of **genre** painting during the latter part of the Joseon dynasty. His faithful renderings of day-to-day life included all strata of society, high and low. His paintings highlighted the humour and warm heartedness of ordinary, simple and honest people.

To be more informed and for better ruling, his paintings were used as reports by kings who were too sheltered and distant from their common subjects.

Description of the Artwork

This painting is known for its focus on the people and their activities against a plain **background**. This approach helps highlight the central theme, especially when working on a small-size **surface**. However upon careful observation, the painting's **composition** also reveals an adept and efficient use of the limited space. In this series, the people and activities are arranged so that the viewer can feel like he or she is part of the paintings' scenes. This illusion is achieved in a natural and subtle manner. The brush strokes are also truly masterful. Basic outlines and forms are applied directly to the paper without any preliminary sketches. Despite this seemingly immediate process, the final painting exhibits a carefully planned **composition**. Naturally, Kim Hong-do's extraordinary artistry enabled him to produce this series of masterpieces in an effortless manner.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158





Name of the Festivity: *Dano* Festival

Title of the Artwork: "Korean Wrestling"

Artist: Kim Hong-do

Year of Creation: 18th century

Materials: Ink and colour on paper

Collection of the National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Dano Festival

Korean Wrestling



Ssireum is a form of wrestling that has been popular in Korea since ancient times. Judging from a mural found in a Goguryeo tomb, it is believed that it originated about 1,500 years ago. The word itself is an ancient one, meaning ‘competition between men’.

Traditionally, the top portion of the trousers was rolled down to provide grip. The use of the *satba* belt was invented with the birth of professional *Ssireum* in the mid-20th century. There is a movement to restore the traditional method of grip, in the spirit of maintaining its cultural and traditional roots, but it has met with some resistance as the use of *satba* has become entrenched in the modern form.

The wrestling is conducted within a circular ring, measuring approximately 7 metres in diameter, which is covered with mounded sand. The two contestants begin

the match by kneeling on the sand in a grappling position (*baro japki*), each grabbing a belt — known as a *satba* — which is wrapped around his opponent’s waist and thigh. The wrestlers then rise while retaining their hold on the other’s *satba*. The match is awarded to the wrestler who forces the other contestant to touch the ground with any part of his body at knee level or higher. Normally, professional *Ssireum* is contested in a best - out - of - three style match.

Today there are also women wrestlers. Women wrestle only among themselves but follow the same rules (except that men are topless whereas women wear tops).

There are four weight classes in professional wrestling: flyweight (*Taebaek*), lightweight (*Geumgang*), middleweight (*Halla*), and heavyweight (*Baekdu*), named after the four famous mountain peaks in Korea.



Description of the Artwork

The artist of this painting is Kim Hong-do, the same painter who created the previous painting. Some of the people depicted in the painting are very excited by the match, while others are maintaining their calm despite the sudden turnover of the game (such as the old man wearing a hat in the top left-hand corner). Some are crouching forward to get a closer look; others are leaning back with one hand behind on the ground, comfortably enjoying the match unfolding in front of them.

From looking at the shoes of the players placed on the side (right), one can tell that the two men do not belong to the same social class: leather shoes indicate that the owner belongs to the upper social class (**the literati**), while straw shoes suggest the owner belongs to the lower class (the workers). In the world of his paintings, men from different social classes could mingle with each other.

The crowd gasps in awe as one of the wrestlers is lifted high up in the air. Dangling with both feet off the ground, he desperately tries to grab onto the shirt of his opponent to stay within the match.

“Ah, ah”, whimpers the wrestler as he squeezes his face in agony. The first person to get knocked out onto the ground loses and the crowd has suddenly awakened to this unexpected explosion of action.



People from all levels of society – the young, the old, the poor and the rich – have come to enjoy this game of wrestling – an extremely popular recreational activity of the Chosen Dynasty.

But can you notice something odd about the hand of the man who is leaning back (bottom right-hand corner)? Yes, his right hand has been reversed with his left hand – a glitch in the painting that artist, whether intentionally or not, had left unattended. Ironically, this glitch has become one of the trademarks of this painting.

Finally, can you see how each member in the crowd has a different facial expression? Take a look at the painting one more time. His fast brush strokes, the absence of colour and background, yet the unique positioning of the characters and his close attention to the facial expressions of the characters have defined Kim Hong-do's artistic style.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



Name of the Festivity: *Dano Festival*

Title of the Artwork: "Dano Day"

Artist: Shin Yun-bok

Year of Creation: 18th century

Materials: Ink and colour on paper

Collection of the Gansong Art Museum, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Dano Festival

Swinging



Swinging was one of the most popular outdoor games played by young women at *Dano* Festival. A traditional Korean swing was made by suspending a wooden plank with ropes hanging from a high tree branch or crossbar of a wooden frame. Young women rode the swing by propelling their legs forward and backward like a pendulum. The earliest accounts of swinging were recorded during the Goryeo Period (918-1392). According to the *Dongguk Sesigi* (Record of Seasonal Customs in Korea), “On Dano, people present fans to each other; girls wear new red and blue clothes and wash their hair and body with *changpo* extract.” This record emphasizes that new and clean attires were worn on *Dano* Festival, suggesting that common Korean people rarely acquired new clothing.

There was no rule prescribing what kind of clothes to wear on festival days, and the choice of attire depended on the economic condition of the family. In most cases, new clothing was presented to the oldest and youngest member of the household on three major occasions: Lunar New Year, *Dano*, and *Chuseok* Harvest Festival (the fifteenth of the eighth lunar month). The festive clothing worn on *Dano* holiday was called *Danobim*. This holiday attire was usually the best item in one’s wardrobe. Normally, women wore green jackets and red skirts or white *ramie* jackets with blue

ramie skirts. As you can see in this painting, women are washing their hair and face, taking baths with *changpo* extracts, wearing red or green robes, and pinning *changpo* hairpins in their hair. On this day, people also gave their children dolls made of *changpo* leaves, or had them wear a gourd-shaped ornament as a charm against evil. According to Korean myths, washing one’s hair with *changpo* extract on *Dano* helped maintain healthy shiny hair, and prevented hair loss. Some even collected morning dewdrops from *changpo* leaves to use as skin toner.

According to the “Folk Entertainments of Korea”, swinging activity was a main source of entertainment at festivals in 216 out of 227 regions during the early 20th century. Young women enjoyed swinging during the *Dano* holidays in most parts of Korea. In some areas swinging was even practised for about a month, from the Buddha’s Birthday to *Dano*. During this month-long holiday, men would also join and participate in the events or activities. In addition, *Dano* holidays gave young Korean women the opportunity to escape the daily pressures of housework. They could participate in fun and rest with swinging and bathing. Another folk myth says that swinging on *Dano* helped to prevent mosquito bites, and protected women from intense summer heat.





About the Artist

Shin Yun-bok, a royal-court artist in the 18th century, was known to depict the everyday lives of the upper class in a refined and elegant manner. Many of his works dealt with love affairs, which stirred controversy amongst conservatives of the Joseon Dynasty. He carefully observed the comings and goings of the nobility, and accurately captured their behaviours in his paintings.



Description of the Artwork

“Dano Day” is one piece of an album of 30 paintings by Shin Yun-bok. This collection of works has been designated as National Treasure No. 135, and is housed at the Gansong Art Museum (Seoul, Republic of Korea). The “Dano Day” piece is a representative **genre** painting of the Joseon era depicting a typical activity of *Dano* holiday. This painting depicts women enjoying numerous activities happening along the mountain stream, such as playing on a swing, washing their hair, and taking a bath. Amid the festive activities, two curious young novices are sneaking a peek from an opening in the rocks.

In this painting, the artist demonstrates his refined **perspective** techniques. The use of landscape in the **background**, various postures of people, dramatic expressions of subtle emotion, and bright colouring all contribute to creating this vivid representation of real-life.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158

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MYANMAR





Name of the Festivity: *Maha Dok Festival*

Title of the Artwork: Untitled (the painting depicts a line of devotees carrying a Buddha Image)

Artist: Unknown

Year of Creation: 12th century

Materials: [Fresco-secco](#)

This [mural](#) is on the wall of a passage of Gupyauck Kyee building, located in Myinga Ba village, southern Bagan, Myanmar. *Gupyauck* means 'Temple with Decorated Ornaments' and *Kyee* means 'big' or 'great' (thus, *Gupyauck Kyee* is 'The Great Temple with Decorated Ornaments')

Maha Dok Festival

Carrying the Buddha Image



During the lifetime of the Buddha, there was a very poor man named Maha Dok who had no opportunity to perform any deed of merit. One day, some citizens invited the Buddha and his monks to the city and people were asked to help with the offering of food. Maha Dok, poor though he was, promised to feed a monk. He and his wife worked hard to earn enough to be able to participate. In the end, the lot fell to Maha Dok to offer food to the Buddha. Maha Dok then caused a shower of gold and jewels to fall in the yard of his house. As a good disciple of the Buddha, Maha Dok spent his wealth on performing good deeds.

In Myanmar, when the donor gets the opportunity to perform more deeds of merit to the Buddha image, he participates in the process of carrying the Buddha image to its destination. In this mural, the donor is the King and the Buddha Image is being carried to a monastery or pagoda.

The carrying of the Buddha image is conducted with much devotion in Myanmar, where old customs and traditions are still observed. The Buddha image is carried on a **palanquin** on the shoulders of devotees. The devotees walk in a line and have their own functions, being either carriers, donors, their accompanying family members, music players or dancers.

There may be several types of festivities involved in carrying the Buddha image. Some donors carry the image to a monastery where the image will stay forever, and other donors carry the image to offer it food, whether in their house or in a *mandat* (**pavilion**) that has been built for that specific purpose.

The other way of carrying the Buddha image may be within the context of the Maha Dok Festival. According to custom, donors are urged to prepare **alms-bowls**, either one or more each, depending on the means and will of the donor. Monks are invited to come to receive the bowls and lots are cast to decide which donor shall give his bowl to which monk. Each donor is given a number for his bowl and lots are cast for a prize to pay homage to and serve the Buddha. The lucky donor often receives a sum of money. Usually the winner, overjoyed that he is being given the opportunity to do more deeds of merit, uses the money to donate more alms.

About the Artist

As mentioned earlier, in early Myanmar culture, the painters never signed their works of art. However, some donors recorded their donation with engravings on stone tablets. Thus, we are able to cite the names of two artists who received payment in silver for creating murals: Pankhi Thamar and Ananta Pisi, whose works were recorded on stone inscriptions. Unfortunately, the artist of this particular painting remains unknown.

Description of the Artwork

In this ancient mural, the dancing women, the Buddha image and the king stand out as their position and silhouette are different from others.





In the Bagan era, there were two types of dancers: *Pantyar* and *Kachay thi*. *Pantyar* dance was a dance for *Si-thi* (the drummer) music, and the *Si* drum played was like the *Doebat* drum. In this painting, *Si* or *Doebat* drums can be seen easily. The *Pantyar* dance was a quick dance that accompanied the *Si thi* drummer music. The dance of *Kachay thi* was graceful and gentle.

Judging from their movements, the dancers in this painting may be *Pantyar* dancers. In the **foreground**, bottom left, the drummer (*si thi*) plays the drums (*Si* or *Doebat*).

In the second horizontal line, the fourth person from the left is playing the cymbals, called *Khwet Khwin*. In this era, the cymbal player was called *Khwet-Khwin-thi*. The players before and after the cymbal player are blowing the *Kha-yu-thinn* (a conch, a wind instrument). In the bottom line, we can see a flute player performing elegantly. This big flute was called *Nyinn* during the Bagan era, and the flute player was called *Nyinn-thi*. This mural thus depicts musicians and dancers.

The people at the front of the lines are carrying the white pennant, which is a flagstaff that has been tied to a bamboo stick. It is made of paper and is usually carried during a procession or a religious ceremony. In Myanmar, it is called *tagun kokker*.

The King and his company look cheerful as they walk along. Some are clapping their hands.

Some researchers say that the style of Myanmar murals was traditionally made using a plain-washed area bounded with red or black lines. All positive areas (the **subjects** of the painting) and negative space (the space around the subjects) are totally flat. Murals in Myanmar, as well as in other parts of Asia, often use **pattern** treatment, which is a painting technique through which the **background** is made to show the main subject more clearly, even though the background is a subject in itself, through the expression of flat shapes. This technique applies to paintings that have two subjects: a main subject and another subject.

After we saw the fresh painting buried in the structure of the Buddha images, researchers have changed their position regarding the style or manner of Myanmar murals.

The works of the Bagan era (11th and 13th century A.D.) were created by combining naturalistic techniques and **pattern** treatment. The ancient Bagan artists made their figures using a naturalistic technique, in order to obtain the round figures of the people, of the fruits, etc. They used a wide range of colours and values. In regards to the pattern treatment used in this mural, the flowers in the negative space are for decorative purposes. If we look at the painting, we can see that each person has a type of halo, a bright circle, around their heads, which could mean that the people depicted in this painting are **enlightened**.

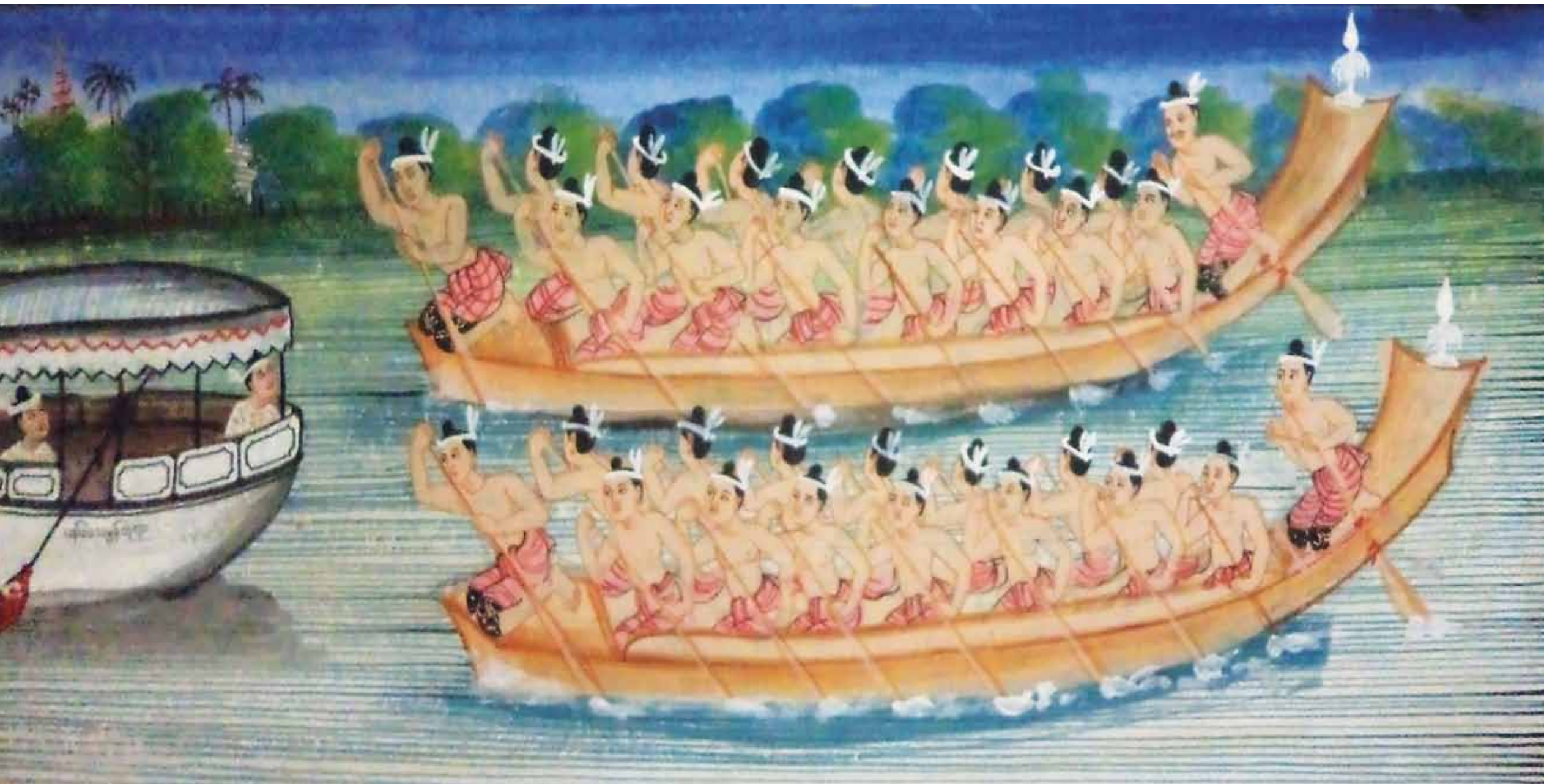
While European murals were painted with tempera in a **fresco** technique, Myanmar murals were different. They were painted with **watercolour** when the wall was dry. This technique is called **fresco-secco**.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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Name of the Festivity: *Tawthalin* Month (the Month of Boat Races)

Title of the Artwork: "Strokes of the Racing Boats"

Artist: Unknown

Year of Creation: Approximately 1850

Materials: Watercolour on *parabaik bagyi* paper (paintings on a writing paper folded like an accordion)

Collection of the National Museum, Yangon, Myanmar

Tawthalin Month

The Month of Boat Races

“**T**he monsoon is moving away and the skies are clearing. The weather is fine and the wide Irrawaddy River spreads out ‘like a smooth mat’ [as the people of Myanmar would say, comparing the stillness of the river to a mat being unrolled and spread on a surface]. Calm and tranquil, with dimpling waves, the river invites water athletes to participate in a month of boat races.” This is how writer Khin Myo Chit describes the month of *Tawthalin* (the month of boat races) in her book, *Festivals and Flowers of the Twelve Burmese Seasons*.

Tawthalin corresponds to the sixth month of the Myanmar Calendar. It falls between August and September. Nearly all of the regions near rivers, ponds and lakes in Myanmar traditionally hold regatta festivals since the ancient era of Myanmar Kings. Khin Myo Chit also wrote that the royal family used to be the royal patrons of the **regattas**. The royal family, including the king, the queen, princes and princesses had their own boats participating in the races. This was a fun and colourful event with plenty of music. Boating songs were composed especially for the occasion. The boatmen wore coloured costumes matching the banners of their boats. Music was played loud as the supporters of each boat shouted rhyming challenges at one another. It was on such an occasion that King Bodawpaya, who reigned from 1791 to 1819, won a somewhat dubious ‘victory’ over his queen. The royal **regatta** always opened with the king’s boat racing against the queen’s.



According to old songs and poems, there were several styles of boat races performed during the time of the Myanmar kings, displaying not only speed but also skill and grace. There are 37 styles of rowing on record. Each style has a name suggestive of the movement or imagery presented through a particular way of rowing, such as ‘fairy picking flowers’ and ‘fairy offering flowers’. Do the boatmen gesticulate with their oars to suggest the image of fairies revelling in an ancient forest? Strokes named ‘seagull sweep’ and ‘seagull soar’ create images of racing boats sweeping and soaring over the river’s surface.

There were several types of boats, such as *loungh hlay* (curved wooden boat) and *hlawga hlay* (boat constructed with pieces of wood joined together). For the traditional regatta festival, all types of boats were used.

The winner of the boat race would have a flower tied on a stick over the surface of water. This is called *pann swut* in Myanmar (*pann* meaning ‘flower’ and *swut* meaning ‘to get’, thus ‘getting the flower’).

The boat races were an opportunity for every region to take part in **pageantry**, but, for the Myanmar kings, it was also an opportunity for them to demonstrate the military prowess of their navy.



About the Artist

In traditional ancient Myanmar culture, the artists never signed their works. As a result, we cannot identify the artists. After the Amarapura period, the capital was moved to Mandalay. King Mindon, founder of the new city, designated royal artists and paid them a salary with silver coins. Many records *in parabaik* paper remain from this era, providing the names of some royal artists such as U Kyar Nyunt and Saya Chone.

Description of the Artwork

Usually, in Myanmar, men perform industrious tasks shirtless, as the weather of Myanmar is very warm. However, every boatman wears a *gaungbaung*, a Myanmar turban with two ends that stick out at the back. This is a sign that they are servants of the king and that this particular boat is under royal patronage. They also wear *taungshay*, a long cloth worn by men around the waist.

It could be that the smaller boat in front of the racing boat marks the end of the racing line.

Along the bank of the river, we can see *pyatthat* (a **pavilion** with a multi-tiered roof) in the **mangrove forest**. Just as there would have been in reality, there are shadows of figures supporting and encouraging the boatmen on the riverbank.

In this Myanmar traditional painting, we can see the use of **perspective** techniques. This technique was applied to artistic creations since the end of the Nyaung Yan Period or the second period of Innwa, around 1700 A.D. The painting provides a wide view, including buildings, trees and men.

The style of this painting is in the style of the Amarapura Period (1783-1859 A.D.).

Parabaik bagyi papers were kept as books. They were made of paper, notably Minegaing paper. Minegaing is a small town located in the Shan State in Myanmar. To obtain this paper, Minegaing residents collected mulberry tree bark to make wood-pulp. From this pulp, they made Minegaing paper. The paper is then prepared by being folded like an accordion, so that the royal artist can depict several themes between each fold.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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Name of the Festivity: *Thingyan* (Water Festival)

Title of the Artwork: "Thingyan"

Artist: U Ba Kyi

Year of Creation: Approximately 1960

Materials: Oil painting on canvas board

Collection of the artist Minn Wai Aung, the New Treasure Art Gallery, Yangon, Myanmar

Thingyan

Water Festival



The water festival, called *Thingyan* in Myanmar, is a merry and enjoyable festivity to celebrate the New Year. It is celebrated annually during the second week of April and lasts three days. During this time, people pour or throw water on one another, and participate in a variety of religious rituals and performing arts activities. This festival is related to a Myanmar folklore, according to which Thagya-min, king of the gods, visits the abode of humans to remind them of their spiritual life and religious duties, a responsibility bestowed upon him by the Buddha just before he attained **parinirvana**.

The New Year is a time for people to purify themselves and to look forward to a better life. To this end, people fast, give alms and do good deeds to make up for all their neglectful acts and omissions, particularly towards their elders. Those who cannot afford to buy gifts perform personal services for the elderly, like fetching water and washing their hair with a homemade shampoo of boiled soap nuts and *tayaw* bark.

The most obvious and universal custom is the ritual of sprinkling family, friends, and even strangers, with water. Among friends, this is accompanied by gentle teasing and joking, but in towns and cities this custom has become an uncontrolled event, with everyone in range being drenched in water from buckets, hosepipes, water pistols and stirrup pumps wielded by rival groups of young people.

Instead of music played on traditional instruments like drums, cymbals, oboes and flutes, as was done in the past, today, loud-speakers blare modern pop songs and rhyming chants.

Monasteries and pagodas are crowded with people of all ages who come to make offerings and to perform good deeds for **merit-making**. There is good will and kindness all around: an auspicious way to begin the New Year.

About the Artist

This painting is the creation of Myanmar's renowned artist, U Ba Kyi (1912-2000). He was born in the town of Kyaik Hto, Mon District. He studied at the University of Rangoon (Yangon, Myanmar) and also received a certificate from the Teacher's Training College (Yangon).

After studying the art of painting from the great master U Ba Nyan, he went to Paris to further his knowledge and skill at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Des Beaux Arts (School of High Studies in Fine Arts) in 1949. Afterwards, he studied murals and decorative arts at the Academy of Fine Arts of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (USA). In 1959, he was awarded the title of FRSA, becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, in London (United Kingdom).

Description of the Artwork

In this painting, young people are playing with water from cups, buckets and handheld water pumps. In the **background**, we can see a boy using a water pump (there is also the one in the bucket in the **foreground**). This scene takes place in the countryside on a rural path.

The artist used naturalistic techniques. The volumes, lighting and shading are expressed through a masterful use of **perspective**, which is achieved through the value, colour and size of the figures, trees and houses. The viewers are drawn to the centre of the painting, towards the cheerful ladies. This area of the painting is made the centre of interest by using maximum contrast in value, colour and direction.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158

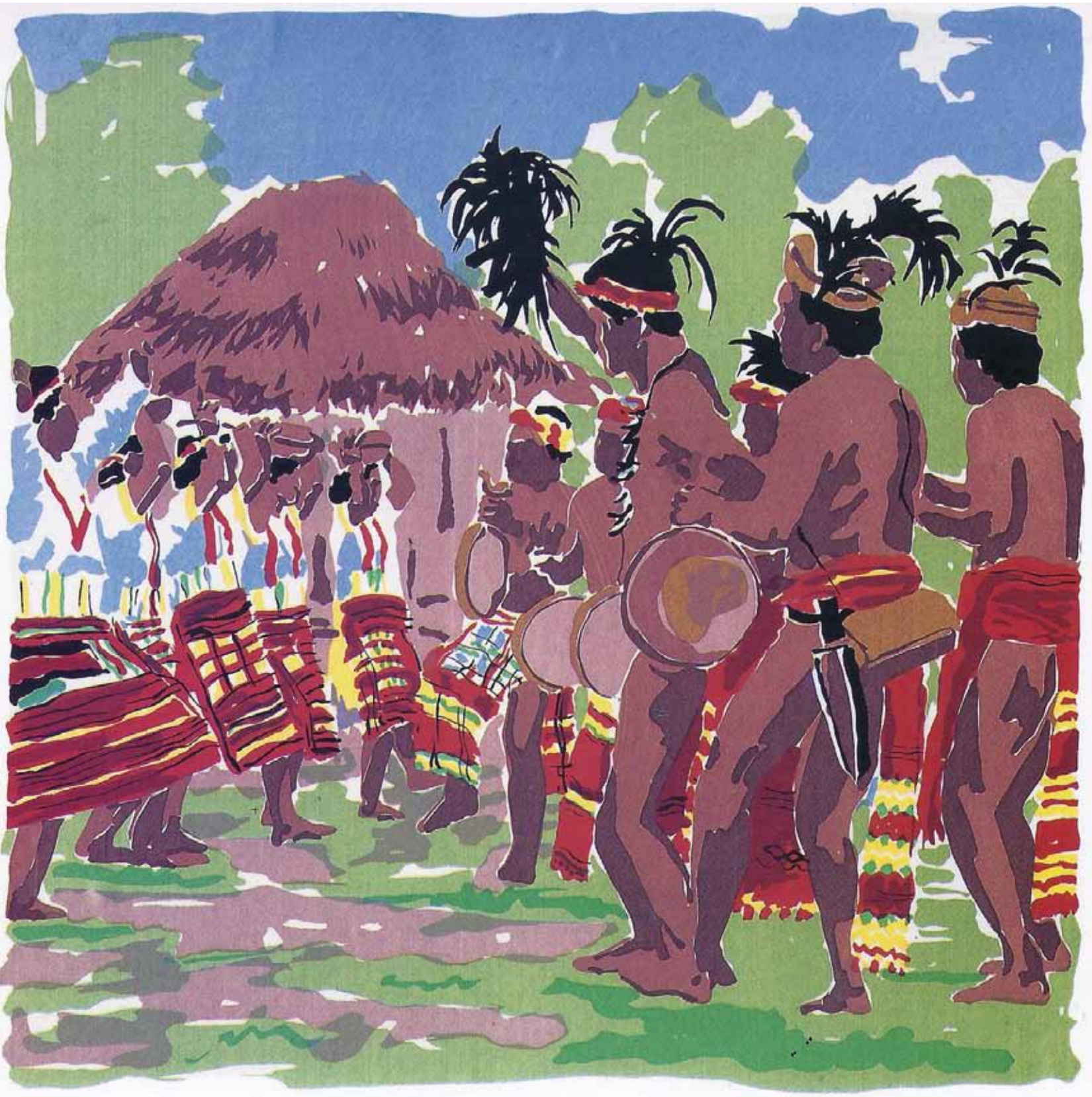


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PHILIPPINES





Name of the Festivity: *Cañao* (Prestige Feast)

Title of the Artwork: "Cañao"

Artist: Claude Tayag

Year of Creation: 1995

Materials: Serigraph on rice paper

Artist's Collection

Cañao

Prestige Feast

The **Austronesian** imprint is strong among the peoples of the rugged Cordilleras of Northern Luzon, Philippines. Among others, these are the Bontoc, Ibaloy, Isneg, Kankana-ey, Ifugao and the Kalinga. These Cordillerans (inhabitants of the Philippine Cordilleras mountain range) have sustained cultural systems for recognizing and marking individual bravery and achievement, and social standing through material and non-material manifestations: body ornamentation, dress and adornment, status objects, rituals and oral literature, and prestige feasts or *cañao*. They have deities ranging from gods and demons to spirits. They pray to their departed ancestors, among other powerful beings that must be pleased or placated in the range of earthly activities.

One of the **ethno-linguistic** groups who call the Cordilleras home are the Kalinga, known for their fearlessness and bravery. The Kalinga are known for their skills in leadership, economics and articulateness, and have produced some of the most exquisite and vibrantly coloured of the various attires (clothing) of the Philippines. They are also extensive rice farmers.

Cañao are organized for various events: planting and harvesting, betrothals and marriages, births and burials, an affirmation of status or a celebration of success in conflict resolutions or in a hunt and, in the past, in war. It is usually given by the rich of the community, though both rich and poor are welcomed to participate. These feasts include many features, such as the killing of animals (i.e pigs), sharing of the meat, rice wine drinking, and dancing to the rhythm of flat **gongs**.

Some *cañao* can last as long as 30 days and nights. Nowadays, *cañao* are hosted by some Cordillerans for auspicious occasions, or at times organized by city and municipal tourism officials for purposes of presenting and celebrating Cordillera culture.

About the Artist

Claude Tayag (born 1956, Angeles City, Philippines) is an accomplished painter, serigrapher, sculptor, furniture designer, handy chef, and food and travel columnist for a major Philippine daily.

Tayag is a self-taught artist, who studied architecture and economics at the University of the Philippines. He first entered the Manila art scene in 1978, exhibiting **watercolour** paintings of Philippine folk festivals, religious images, and Cordillera landscapes, works characterized by a forceful spontaneity and raw vigour. He has also been engaged in sculpting wood pieces.

Tayag has held exhibitions in Manila, Beijing, Washington, D.C. and Madrid. His art is part of private and prestigious public Philippine collections such as the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the Bank of the Philippine Islands, and the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

Description of the Artwork

In this **serigraph**, the artist presents a sketch of a Kalinga feast. Derived from real life subjects, but retaining only the essentials in figuration through shape and solid masses, volume and vibrant colour, and **perspective**, the exclusion of details emphasizes the energy of the event, while offering elements that invite us to learn more than the image presents.





Parts of the image reveal environmental and cultural details. Let us consider the blue of the sky and the massing of green. The Philippine Central Cordillera is often referred to as the sky-lands. In elevation, the mountains are upwards of 1,000 metres, much of which used to be covered by tropical forests of Benguet pine (*Pinus insularis*). Native to the Philippines, Benguet pine yields a resin that has been used for waterproofing **basketry**, an art form for which the Cordillerans are renowned.

In the **background**, we can see the roof of a Cordillera house, which, like many domestic structures in the Philippines, used to have thatched roofs of *cogon*, a coarse tropical grass. The old southern Kalinga house, made of hand-axed pinewood, was octagonal in shape and raised on posts. Can you imagine a floor that can be rolled? Some Kalinga houses had floors of thin bamboo reeds lashed together. It could be rolled and put on one side, especially during the rainy season, when rice pounding had to be done under a roof. The floor was unrolled and put back in place when the day's work was done and it was time to sleep. In the **foreground**, there are men and women wearing Kalinga dress and adornments. The Kalinga are known craftsmen, skilled in loom **weaving**, **basketry**, **metalsmithing**, and **pottery**.

Here, the women are shown wearing a lower garment generally known in the Cordilleras as *tapis*. It is a rectangular piece of cloth that is wrapped around the lower body, falling to just below the knee. Kalinga *tapis* display horizontal stripes, mostly in red and yellow, though sometimes stripes of blue or white occur. On their heads are *banga* (clay pots), which feature in Kalinga dances, such as *salip*, a wedding dance where friends of the bride offer these clay pots filled with fresh spring water, or the *ragsaksakan*, a dance that uses the movements of hard-working Kalinga women carrying pots of water on their heads.

The men are wearing **g-strings**, which back in the time was the most common lower garment for Cordillera males. Kalinga g-strings are generally of red cloth with yellow stripes. For the wealthy or during special occasions, the g-string is ornamented with yellow woven triangle designs, with tassels and tiny discs of mother of pearl, or fringes.

The men are playing on flat **gongs**, which are considered prestige items among Cordillerans. The beat of gongs, before a festival, signals the beginning of the feast, and is a call to participate. Gongs are of brass or bronze, and are played variously by the mountain peoples. The Kalinga either hold the gong with the left hand and strike its surface with a stick (as shown in the artwork) or it is secured to the g-string, placed on the lap and struck with an open left palm or slapped sharply. One of the men is carrying a weapon at his waist, and some of the men's heads are adorned with red headcloths, while others wear headdresses (worn especially for festive occasions), which are small woven hats (or *suklong*), or triangular headcloths, both embellished with rooster feathers.

This print was made using the **serigraph** technique, a printing process that utilizes screen prints. This means that one colour of ink is applied to the surface by pressing the colour through a woven mesh fabric, such as **silk**, upon which an image has been photographically transferred. Areas that are not meant to be printed in that particular colour are blocked with the screen cloth. The process is then repeated with a different colour and a different screen until the desired image and colours are achieved. In this painting, for example, you can see that the green was pressed onto the rice paper before the blue.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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Name of the Festivity: *Fiestas* (Philippine Festivals)

Title of the Artwork: "Maytime in Antipolo"

Artist: Fernando C. Amorsolo

Year of Creation: 1943

Materials: Oil painting on canvas

Collection of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

Fiestas

Philippine Festivals

May is the month when most Philippine festivals deriving from the Catholic faith occur. Called *fiestas*, these festivals mark special days in the Catholic calendar, and the feast day of a community's patron saint.

Fiestas were useful during the years of **evangelization** (the first of the **friar missionaries** came to work in 1565). *Fiestas* were events that drew folk who lived in the **hinterlands** or far off at coastal settlements to the town centre where the church was. *Fiestas* were occasions to take a break from the long hours and days of working in the fields, the sea or the river, to participate in religious festivities that included processions and grand masses, and in social activities that were related to religious functions. *Fiestas* thus fostered community relations.

The introduction of Catholicism brought religious imagery and the devotions that developed in the Philippines. One of the images that arrived in 1626 on board a **galleon** was the Virgin of Antipolo, a black statue of the Virgin Mary. She would then become known as Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage because the image sailed with many galleons after 1648, as sea voyages were treacherous and dangerous, and it was believed that her presence ensured safe passage from storms and pirates.

Antipolo is a mountainous area, now a city of the Province of Rizal, 25 kilometres east of Manila (the present-day capital of the Philippines). It was in a church there that the missionaries of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuit friars, enshrined the image of the Virgin of Antipolo after its arrival. An act of religious devotion, the Maytime pilgrimage to Antipolo has been ongoing since the Spanish colonial era, continuing

through the American colonial period (1898-1946), interrupted only by World War II. Back in those days, the pilgrimage was undertaken via river tributaries in local **dugouts** called *banca* decked with flowers, **buntings** and lanterns, or taking upland dirt trails on foot, on horses or hammocks borne on men's shoulders. Today, devotees walk up from a designated point in Metro Manila at midnight of 30 April to arrive in the church in time for Holy Mass on the first day of May.

During the American colonial period in the Philippines, the pilgrimage to Antipolo was an opportunity to wear Philippine garb, after many Filipinos started to adopt Western clothes. Women wore the *balintawak*, an ensemble of a cotton top with a bright or pastel-hued wrap-around skirt. They covered their heads with large **kerchiefs** or with a palm-leaf hat called *salakot* (simple work hats), which men also wore with their upper garments known as *camisa chino*, meaning 'Chinese shirt', or *barong tagalog*, Tagalog wear, and the traditional loose trousers of farmers. Shade from the sun was further provided by lush trees, usually mangoes, and the occasional parasol. In their trek to the hills of Antipolo, pilgrims usually brought food to complement Antipolo's delicacies that were cashew fruits and nuts, and *suman*, a rice roll wrapped in spirals of young coconut leaves eaten with luscious ripe mangoes. In the shade of the trees, roasted on a spit over coals, a small pig or the *lechon* has often been the culinary delicacy of many Filipino festivities. Food was carried in baskets, with an extra dress or personal provisions packed in knotted cloth squares, and a pet might have gone along for the trip..

About the Artist

Fernando Amorsolo (1892-1972) was the first Filipino to receive the distinction of 'Philippine National Artist'. He was the most prominent artist of the 1920s and 1930s, and to this day, is the acknowledged master of **genre** scenes. His body of works also include historical themes, such as putting on canvas the horrors of World War II as it unfolded and ended in the city of Manila. He also painted **portraits** of many prominent people, illustrated textbooks, and designed a company logo.



I Philippines I



During his most prolific period, Amorsolo's genre work was the Philippines idealized on canvas for the world to see. Throughout his career, Amorsolo remained aware of and informed by his Filipino roots. "The works of Mr. Amorsolo are an **iconographic** representation of the countryside," wrote Patrick D. Flores, a professor of Philippine Art History.

Amorsolo studied at the Liceo de Manila and graduated from the School of Fine Arts of the University of the Philippines with medals for excellence. After working as a commercial artist, he taught at the University of the Philippines and became director of the School of Fine Arts. He also studied at the Escuela de San Fernando in Madrid. It was there that he learned the technique of Spanish artist Joaquin Sorolla, using sunlight to create contrasts and focus. It was a technique he perfected and made his own.

Amorsolo was successful critically and commercially, becoming renowned among art **connoisseurs** and plain citizens. From the 1930s to the 1950s, he exhibited in the Philippines, Panama and the United States. Among many other Philippine and international awards, Amorsolo was the recipient of the highest recognition from the UNESCO National Commission. Fernando Amorsolo passed away in Manila in 1972.

Description of the Artwork

Painting as a formal art was introduced by the Spanish **friars** between 1700 and 1800. Themes and **subjects** were scenes from the **Bible**, and holy personages, which became visual aids for introducing and inculcating Catholic teachings. Rituals and festivities were later also consigned to wood panels, canvas or paper.

In "Maytime in Antipolo", Amorsolo shows not the religious elements of a *fiesta*, but the social aspect of it. The church, however, looms large in the **background**, a reminder and representation of the Catholic Church and the people's faith. Imposing yet assuring, the church is positioned on the highest ground within the **composition**. Today, the church has been replaced by a modern structure, and the surroundings have undergone many changes.

On either side of the picture are means of transportation: on the right, a wood and bamboo sled called *paragus*, and, on the left, a hammock, and also a cart with two wooden wheels pulled by a bull and roofed with bamboo woven in large herringbone **patterns**. This painting captures the good will and festive spirit of the group, a couple of whom dance the *tinikling*, a dance in the lowland Christian areas mimicking birds called *tikling* avoiding capture by a pair of bamboo poles to the music of a guitar and a bamboo flute.

The human figuration is accurate, a common trait in most of Amorsolo's genre paintings: the graceful bend of the knee, the upswing of the arm, the suggestions of heads in various **poses**, but all indicating a common focus, the dancing pair. The **composition** is balanced, in harmony with the stance of the other figures in **the setting**, who are at mostly at rest. The entire picture represents the enjoyment and pleasant aspects of countrylife.

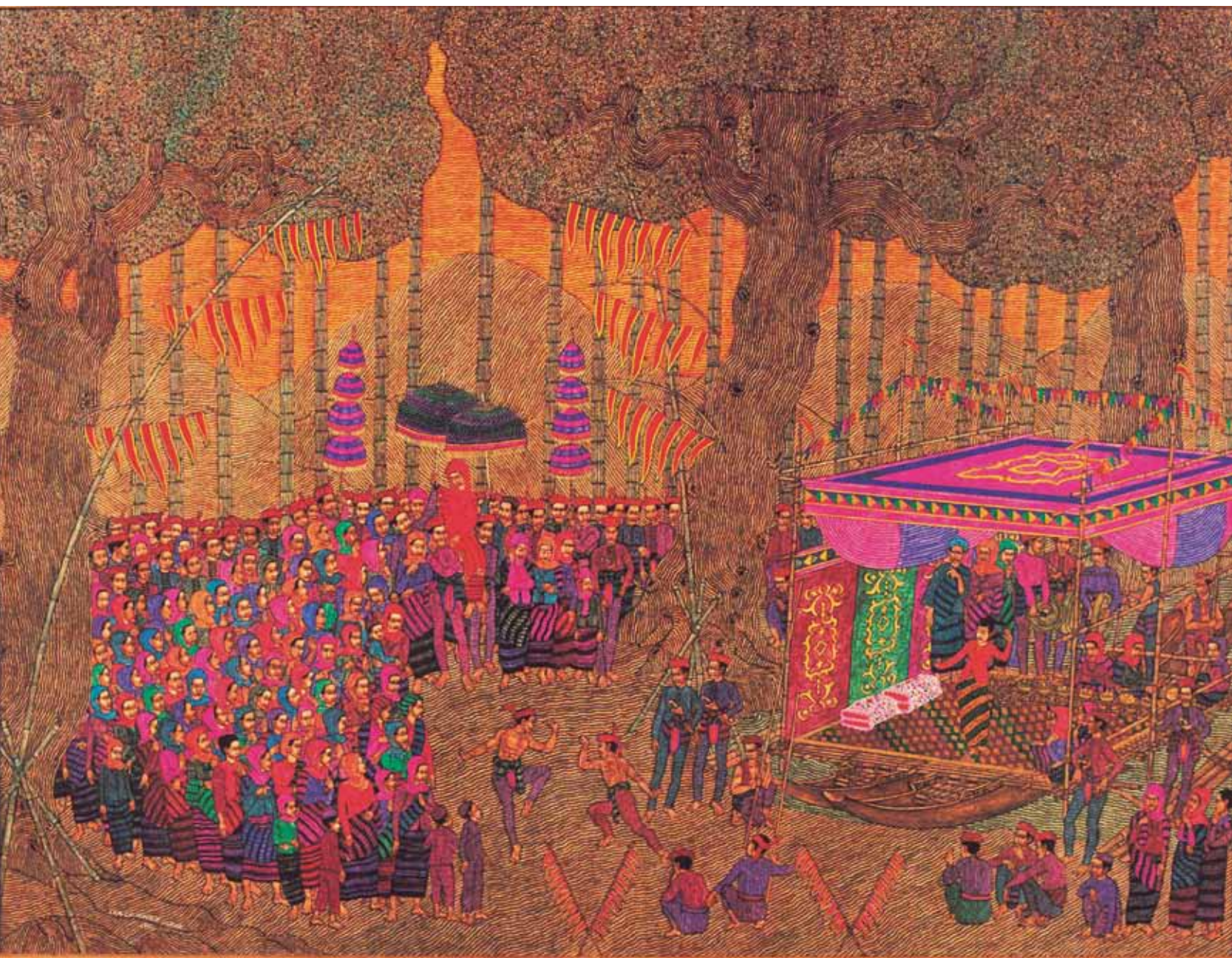
Putting aside all these elements, however, and central to the painting, is the light cast on the dancers, a painting technique for which Amorsolo is famous. Indeed, the painting "Maytime in Antipolo" is an object display of Amorsolo's legendary light.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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Name of the Festivity: Philippine Muslim Wedding

Title of the Artwork: "The Bride"

Artist: Ibn'saud Salip Yasin Ahmad

Year of Creation: About 1997-2000

Materials: Watercolour on paper

Image courtesy of the Philippine Art Awards, with the permission of the artist

Philippine Muslim Wedding

Islam started to come to parts of the Philippine archipelago through ancient Southeast Asian maritime trade routes from about the tenth century of the current era. Trade then was dominated by Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula, passing through what is now Malaysia, Borneo and the Philippine Sulu Archipelago, reaching other Philippine major islands in the Visayas, and Luzon.

Populations in the Sulu Archipelago were Islamized in the 15th century, and those in Mindanao in the early 16th century. Sharif Muhammad Kabungsuwan, a Muslim missionary of Arab-Malay roots, is said to have introduced Islam to Mindanao, arriving from Johore and settling in today's Lanao del Sur, where he married into a prominent family. He later established the Sultanate of Maguindanao in Cotabato, Mindanao.

Muslim Filipinos have ever been proud of their cultural identities and languages. They now comprise between five to ten percent of the total population. The provinces in Mindanao that are predominantly Muslim are Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, and Maguindanao. Three ethnolinguistic **groups** comprise the majority of Muslims in the Philippines: the Maguindanao, the Maranao, and the Tausug. Other groups, in smaller number, include the Samal and Bajau, mostly of the Sulu Archipelago; the Yakan of Zamboanga del Sur Province; and the Ilanun and Sangir of Southern Mindanao Region, to name a few.

About the Artist

A Maguindanaoan, Ibn'saud Salip Yasin Ahmad was born in 1952, and lives in Kabasalan, Zamboanga Sibugay, in Mindanao. Ahmad did not undergo formal training in painting. He said that he was simply inspired in his youth to draw images from American movies.

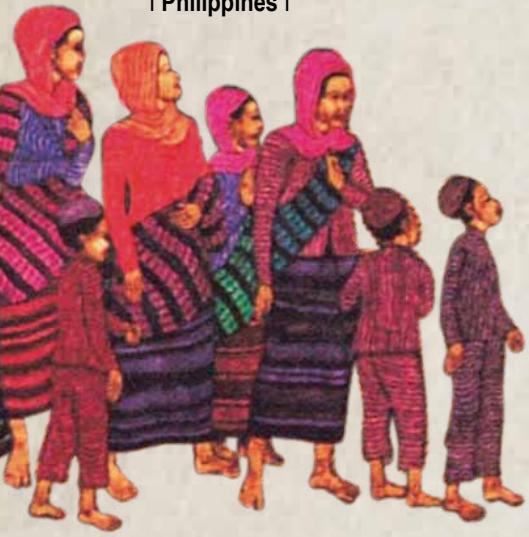
Ahmad's art depicts Muslim culture and people. Muslim material culture such as dress and adornments, scenes of both daily life and rituals capturing people in various situations, are among his preferred subjects.

He has worked with the Philippine National Commission of Culture and the Arts (NCCA), and one of his projects with the NCCA has been a series of paintings showing life's passages. The painting in focus here is part of that series.

The works of Ahmad have been exhibited in local art spaces in Mindanao and in national venues such as at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the Metropolitan Museum of Manila in Manila, and the National Art Gallery of the National Museum of the Philippines, where Ahmad's work is part of the permanent art collection. He has also participated in exhibitions abroad, most recently in Kuala Lumpur.

Ahmad owns an art gallery in his hometown, to exhibit his watercolours, sculptural works and installations, but also those of other Mindanao artists.





Description of the Artwork

“The Bride” is one of a pair of watercolour paintings portraying a traditional wedding, and is part of a series illustrating life’s passages, from birth to death, an idea that was developed with then curator of the Vargas Museum of the University of the Philippines, Dr. Brenda Fajardo, a Filipino art educator and herself a visual artist of distinction.

The painting depicts a scene from a Muslim wedding, probably one of the three days marked for the celebration. It has been written that “Marriage is a strong tradition in the Islamic faith; it is the foundation of a healthy, pious and cohesive social structure... Marriage is seen not only as the union of joining together of two soul mates but also an important social contract that forms the foundation of a healthy religious society.”

The bride emerges from an assembly of guests. She is borne on the shoulders and protected by huge umbrellas on her way to a platform built over two *bancas* or dugout canoes on a riverbank. The platform is adorned with colourful draped flower garlands, and is roofed and provided a siding of textiles with traditional art motifs. Bamboo poles have been used as a frame for these. There are pillows to one side, the covers of which are embroidered with similar motifs. On the platform are ladies who dance and play on the Maguindanao *kulintang*, a musical instrument consisting of a series of bossed **gongs** laid in a row on an embellished frame. The men who stand behind beat on the *agung*, hand-held bossed gongs. Two men in the foreground meanwhile dance.

The picture is rich with illustrations of material culture. Though the bride is dressed in distinctive opulent red, the female guests wear variations of the tubular skirt and overskirts, traditional female garb donned with shirts with narrow sleeves. The men wear tapering trousers, some of whom have tucked ceremonial weapons into sashes. The heads of both female and male are covered.

This part of an elaborate wedding ceremony takes place outdoors, a large space with ancient trees made festive with colourful flags and **buntings**. In the background, we can see silhouettes of nearby hills. In Islam, it is preferred, if not required, that a wedding be held in full public view.

The artist builds up the picture using thin undulating lines, producing both movement and texture. The colours are alternately bright and muted, producing both balance and multiple focal areas. Take a look at the most vibrant colours: they are on the bride’s clothes, highlighting her and calling attention to the most important character in the composition, and on the brilliantly coloured roof of the platform, indicating that under it is the special space for the bride.

The picture teaches us how important passages in the life of many communities are marked with specialness by presenting the elements of celebration and ritual, the coming together of friends and relatives who exhibit a respectful demeanour and quiet joy. These are a common heritage among diverse cultures.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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THAILAND





Name of the Festivity: *Bun Bang Fai* (Rocket Festival)

Title of the Artwork: Untitled

Artist: Unknown

Year of Creation: 19th century

Materials: [Tempera](#) on [stucco](#) wall

The 11th bay of mural paintings in the Ordination Hall of Wat Pratusan, Suphan Buri Province, Thailand

Bun Bang Fai

Rocket Festival



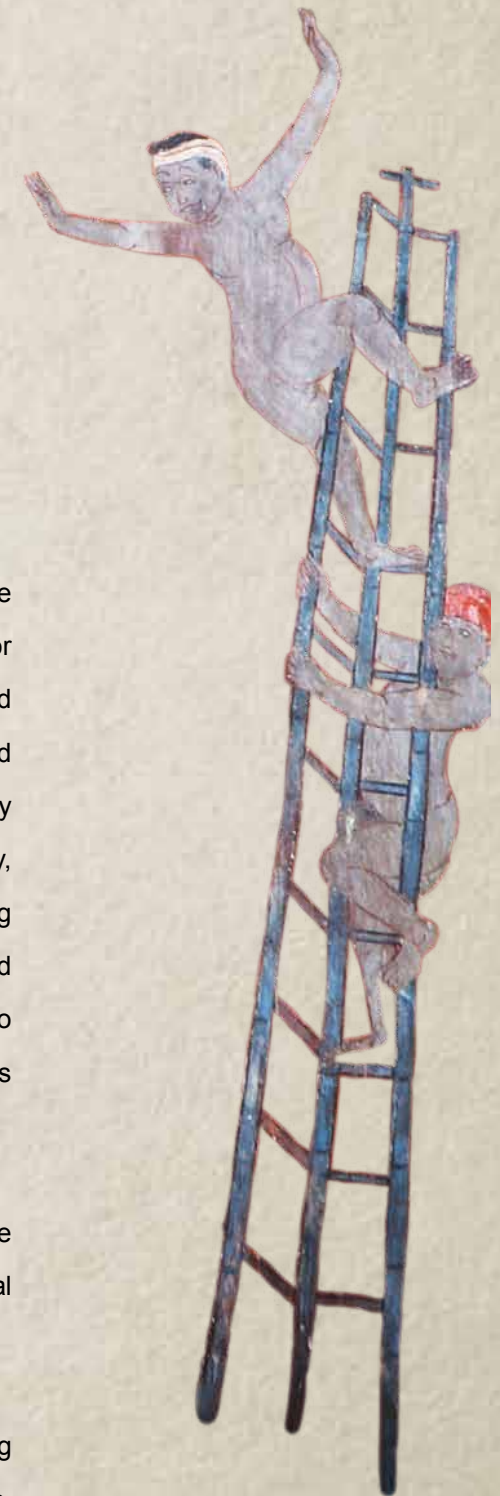
The name of the festival means ‘making merit (*Bun*) with the bamboo tube of fire’ (i.e. a rocket).

Traditionally practised among the people of the northeast of Thailand and Laos, *Bun Bang Fai* is a **merit-making** tradition conducted during the sixth lunar month as a fertility ritual at the start of the rainy season. It is described in the old records of monthly rites and rituals of the year. For farmers, the ceremony provides them with the chance to enjoy themselves before the hard work begins. Celebrations include folk music and dance performances, rocket parades, and competitive rocket firings. Traditionally, the *Bang Fai* were homemade rockets made from bamboo stuffed with black gun powder. Nowadays, rockets have been adapted to using plastic PVC pipes and bamboo pipes.

There are many legends regarding the firing of *Bang Fai*. Some people believe that launching *Bang Fai* will please the god of rain to grant a plentiful harvest for rice cultivation. The most famous legend about *Bang Fai* is the “Myth of the Toad King”, according to which people fire *Bang Fai* to remind Phaya Thaen, the lord of the sky, to pour rain onto the earth. Another aim of sending *Bang Fai* to the sky is to make predictions for the future. If the *Bang Fai* goes up to the sky smoothly, this means that whatever they wished for will come true. Another objective in firing *Bang Fai* is to participate in a competition. According to a local story entitled “Phadaeng-Nang Ai”, men from various places joined the *Bang Fai* competition to win a beautiful maiden as his bride. At present, the rocket launching competition is one of the festivals that attract the most number of tourists.

Before the festival starts, it takes many weeks to make the rockets, to build the launching platforms, and to make decorations. On festival days, along with traditional dances and music, colourful floats of rockets are carried to the launching area.

In regards to the fertility rite origins of the festival, the festivities include cross-dressing (dressing up like someone from the other sex) among men and women of all generations.





The climax of the festival is the time of ignition. One by one, the rockets are fired from the launching platforms. The rocket that reaches the greatest height is the winner. The owner of this rocket will dance and urge for rewards on his or her way home, while the owners of the rockets that explode or fail to fly will be thrown in the mud without inciting any anger.

The celebration is a village communal affair during which people come to share joy and happiness before heading to the rice fields where hard work is awaiting them. The world-famous *Bun Bang Fai* Rocket Festival is in Yasothon Province in the northeast of Thailand. It attracts a considerable number of visitors from all over the country to experience the festival.

Description of the Artwork

This scene is extracted from a large mural painting in the Ordination Hall of Wat Pratusan in Suphan Buri Province (central Thailand). It depicts a scene from the *Bun Bang Fai* Rocket Festival. We can tell from their smiling faces how cheerful the people are in the painting.

The naked man at the top of the launching spot is laughing and dancing happily, while another man is climbing up the ladder. On the ground, a parade of homemade rockets is approaching the launching platform. People are dancing with intensive movements, unaware that their *panung* (loincloth) are slipping off (or they might be aware of this but do not care). Perhaps the last man in line, who is the only one who is properly dressed, is the shyest, since he paces forward with his face turned backwards, holding his *Bang Fai* with both hands, while the others are enjoying themselves intensely.

This painting is representative of Thai traditional mural painting style: two dimensional with no **perspective**, murals lack shadow and depict dramatic movement. The artist first draws the contours, fills them in with colour, and then goes over the contours with black paint. Fine lines and brush strokes were used for the landscape and figures. To paint the bushes, the artist applied repeated strokes with a special brush made from plant roots.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158





Name of the Festivity: *Khao Phansa*

Title of the Artwork: Untitled

Artist: Unknown

Year of Creation: 19th century

Materials: [Tempera](#) and [gold-gilding](#) on [stucco](#) wall

The fourth bay of mural paintings in the Manuscript Hall, Wat Bowonniwet Vihara, Bangkok, Thailand

Khao Phansa



Khao Phansa falls on the first day after the full moon of the eighth lunar month, during the rainy season, just before all monks and novices take a vow to stay in a particular place or temple for three months. They should not venture out or spend the night in any other place, except in exceptional cases based on reasons granted by Lord Buddha, such as taking care of sick monks or parents or handling religious functions. However, they have to return within seven days.

The custom of spending three months of the rainy season in a fixed place is a ritual successfully observed since the time of the Lord Buddha. The people complained to Lord Buddha that the Buddhist monks kept travelling, even during the rainy season, while ordained people of other religions stopped travelling and took retreat. The Lord Buddha decreed that his followers would henceforth spend three months of the rainy season in a permanent dwelling to observe the teachings and to practice meditation.

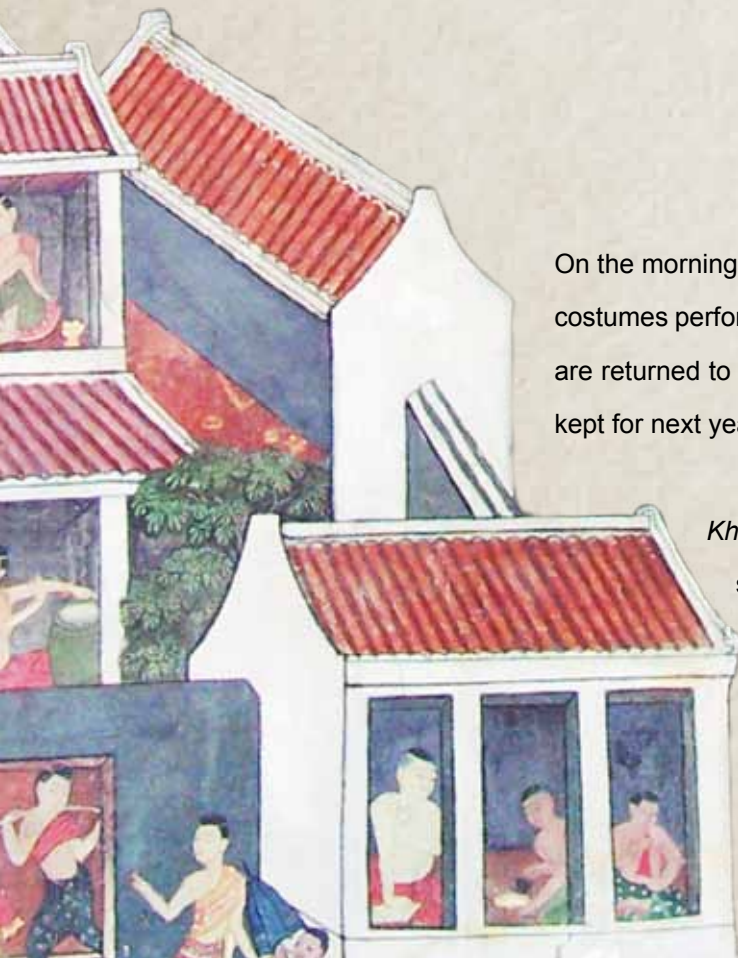
The oldest evidence of *Khao Phansa* in Thailand can be found on the inscription of King Ram Khamhaeng the Great from the Sukhothai Period (14th century). There are some sentences mentioning that, during *Khao Phansa*, the king and the people devoted themselves to the teachings of the Buddha, following the **Buddhist Precepts**.

During *Khao Phansa*, Thai Buddhists go to temples, offering alms to the monks, attending sermons, and participating in the candle procession. Some people also swear to give up certain vices, such as alcohol, tobacco, or meat during this period.

People also participate in the candle making ceremony. In the old days, when there was no electricity, villagers offered small candles to temples, so monks could use them throughout the rainy season. However, most of the time, the temples were offered bunches of candles, so large candles were cast to be used in communal areas. Buddhists believe that offering candles to monks to provide light will brighten up their lives, making them as 'enlightened' as candlelight. Despite the development of electricity, the tradition has been passed down from one generation to the next. Today, it has become the Candle Festival, celebrated in many villages, especially in northeastern Thailand. The most famous Candle Festival takes place in Ubon Ratchathani Province (northeastern Thailand).

Before the beginning of the festival, villagers and artisans will prepare candles for the parade and the contest. Huge candles are moulded in wood or plaster and coated with paraffin wax. The candles are decorated with stories derived from Buddhism and with Thai **patterns**. The candles are then brought to a location in the village or city centre where they wait for the winner of the competition to be announced at nightfall.





On the morning of *Khao Phansa*, there are parades. People dressed in traditional costumes perform folk music and dances. After the procession is over, the candles are returned to the temple or village, and then peeled off the mould. They will be kept for next year's celebration.

Khao Phansa is not only an opportunity to make merit, but also a special occasion to bring local communities together. People who have left their hometown return to visit their families to spend time together. Artisans, musicians, and dancers will take this opportunity to express themselves, as well as to practice and pass on their artistic talents.

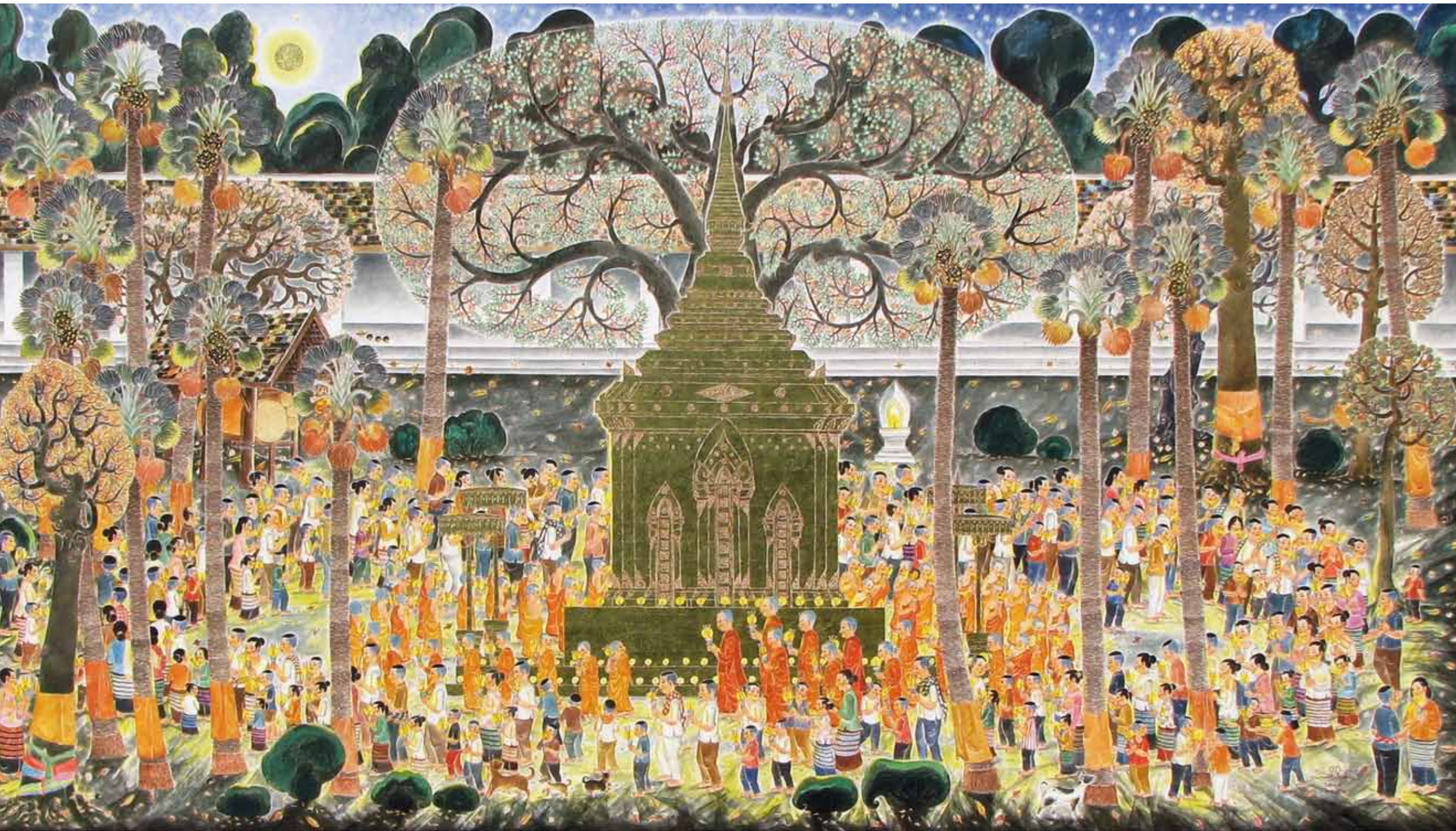
Description of the Artwork

This mural painting, in the style of the Rattanakosin (Bangkok) School of Art of the 19th century, depicts the activities of Buddhist devotees on *Khao Phansa*. People are gathered around the temple. On the top left, the women are carrying durian in baskets. A group of elderly and young people are making a candle together, while *lakhon* (Thai theatrical performance) dancers and a Thai traditional musical ensemble are performing among the crowd. Can you find them? The dancers are depicted in gold underneath the tent, and there is a man playing the flute and another tapping a handheld drum near the dancers on the left.

This painting shows the traditional costumes, hairstyles, musical instruments, and architectural style of the time. The artist used **tempera**, creating fine lines and brush strokes, as well as applied gold leaves (**gold-gilding**) to the painting's surface with tree sap as glue to highlight parts of the temple, the bell, wares, women's clothing, the actors' garments, etc. The painters also used western techniques, such as **perspective**, lighting, and shading, as can be seen from the buildings and the trees. However, there is no perspective technique used for the people, as they are all represented in the same size regardless of their distance from the viewer, which is typical of Thai traditional mural style, as is the case in the former painting. This technique is very similar to the one used in the mural paintings from Cambodia shown in this book.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158





Name of the Festivity: *Visakha Puja Day (Vesak)*
Title of the Artwork: "Visakha Puja 2551 (Vesak 2008)"
Artist: Pornchai Jaima
Year of Creation: 2008
Materials: [Tempera](#), [acrylic](#) and [gold-gilding](#) on [canvas](#)
Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Bangkok, Thailand

Visakha Puja Day

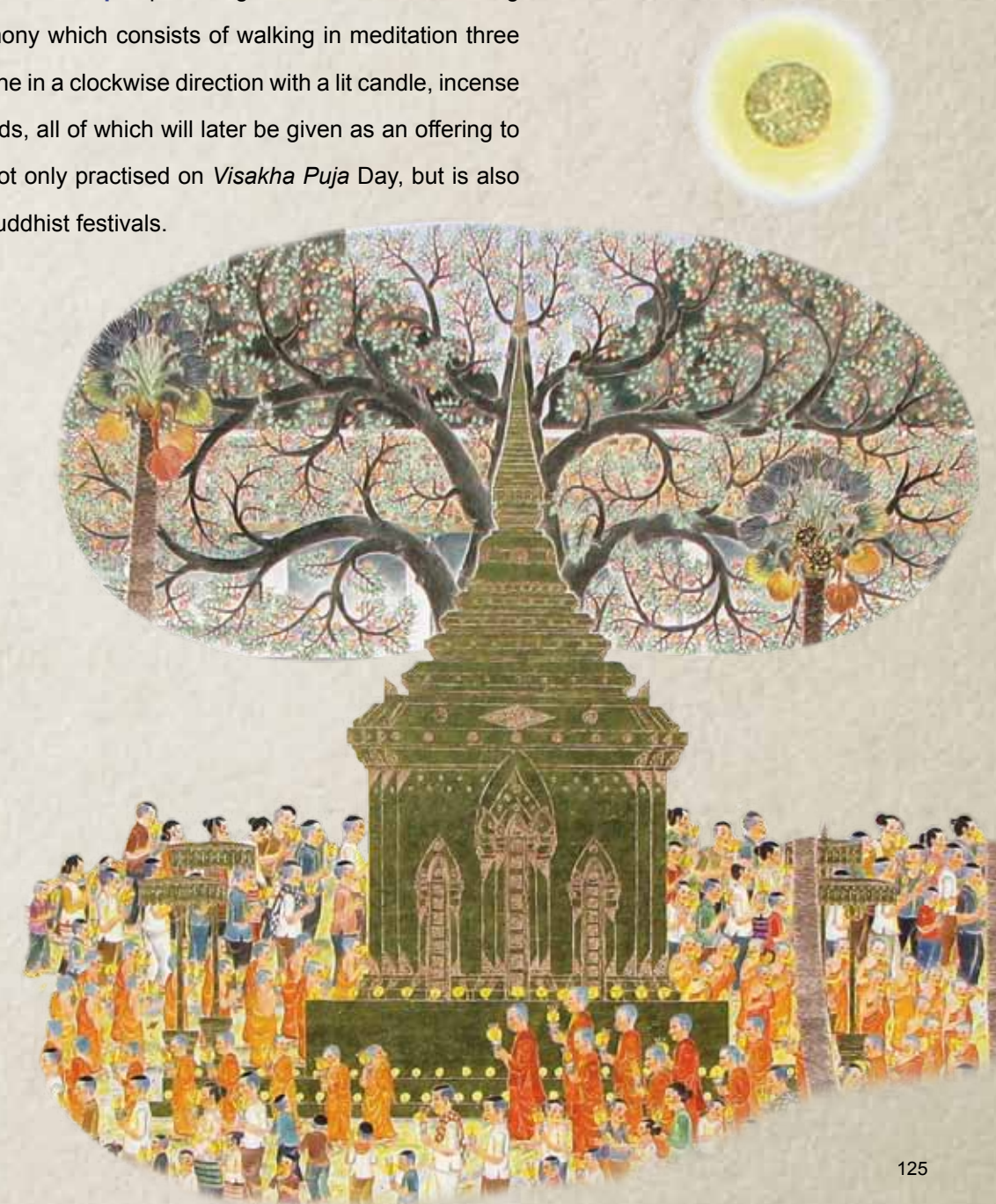
Vesak

Visakha Puja, or Vesak, refers to the full moon day of the sixth lunar month. However, if there is an extra eighth lunar month in the year Visakha Puja Day is held on the seventh lunar month.

It is one of the most important days for Buddhists because the three significant events of the Lord Buddha's life – birth, enlightenment, and death – occurred on the same day. This is one of the greatest religious holidays, recognized by UNESCO on 19 December 1999 as “International recognition of the Day of Vesak”.

Prince Siddhartha (Lord Buddha), son of King Suddhodana and Queen Maha Maya, was born eighty years before the Buddhist era on the full moon day of Vesak. At the age of 16, he married Princess Yasodhara and had a son named Rahula. One day, when the prince was 29 years old, he decided to leave his royal life behind to become an **ascetic**. He studied and practised under many teachers searching for the way to **enlightenment**, but there was no successful result. Consequently, he went his own way and attained enlightenment on Vesak day at the age of 35. After his awakening, the Buddha taught his discoveries, the ‘Four Noble **Truths**’, to the people for 45 years and sent his followers to spread Buddhism in various places. Eighty years later after his birth, the Buddha passed away, reaching **parinirvana** on Vesak day.

Buddhists continuously practice various rituals on *Visakha Puja* Day to worship the Buddha. These activities may vary from country to country. In Thailand, they celebrate this auspicious day throughout the country. **Merit-making** on this day involve offering food to monks and novices in the morning, listening to sermons at the temple, observing the **Buddhist Precepts**, practising **meditation**, and attending the evening *Wian Thian* ceremony which consists of walking in meditation three times around the Buddha's shrine in a clockwise direction with a lit candle, incense sticks and flowers in one's hands, all of which will later be given as an offering to the Lord Buddha. This rite is not only practised on *Visakha Puja* Day, but is also performed at most important Buddhist festivals.





About the Artist

Pornchai Jaima was born in Chiang Mai (northern Thailand) in 1970. He received a Master's degree in Art from Silpakorn University, Thailand. His paintings are known for depicting the northern Thai atmosphere and local village life. Moreover, he has painted the murals of two temples in Chiang Mai. His semi-traditional works focus on the traditional villager's life, such as praying, farming, festivals, etc. He has won major awards throughout his career, such as the Silpathorn Award of Visual Arts awarded by the Ministry of Culture of Thailand in 2005, the first prize of the 17th-19th Bualang Painting Exhibition (1993-1995). Pornchai's works are exhibited in Thailand (Bangkok's Museum of Contemporary Art and the Chiang Mai Art Museum) and abroad (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum and Ueno Imperial Park Tokyo in Japan).

Description of the Artwork

In this prominent painting showing the ambiance of northern Thailand, the painter depicts the *Wian Tian* ceremony of *Visakha Puja* Day (*Vesak*), drawing upon his childhood experience. The scene takes place at an unspecific temple in Chiang Mai, showing the lustrous waxing moon of *Vesak* night (can you see it in the top left?) and the glowing light from many candles that enlighten the entire scene and the people. Monks, novices, Buddhists devotees are walking calmly around the pagoda and the *bhodi* tree (ficus religiosa, the tree under which the Buddha attained **enlightenment**) with incense sticks, lit candles, and flowers in their hands. However, the children and young novices cannot concentrate on the ritual: they are looking around as if wondering what the others are doing. All the women and girls are dressed in '*pha sin*' (Thai traditional tube skirt).

The painter adopted **perspective** and Thai mural technique for this contemporary painting. He used a blend of different paints, using **tempera** lightly mixed with **acrylic**, while the contours were painted with red acrylic. The pagoda was gilded with gold leaves, becoming the highlight of the painting. The artist's reason for choosing tempera is to maintain traditional Thai mural painting style, thus adding a folk element to his work.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



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VIETNAM





Name of the Festivity: Central Highlands Spring Festival

Title of the Artwork: "Spring in the Central Highlands"

Artist: Trần Hữu Chắt

Year of Creation: 1962

Materials: Lacquer and natural mineral colour paint

Collection of Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, Hanoi, Vietnam

Central Highlands Spring Festival



There are many festivities practised in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Among them is the Central Highlands Spring Festival, which is organized annually to celebrate **Gong** Culture. A gong is a musical instrument that consists of a flat circular disk that is beaten with a mallet. In the Central Highlands, gongs are often performed with an ensemble consisting of barrel drums, cylindrical drums, bamboo mouth organs, and bamboo xylophones.

Gong culture in the Central Highlands of Vietnam covers the five provinces of Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Dak Nong and Lam Dong. Among the ethnic minorities that practise gong culture are the Ba Na, the Xo Dang, the M'Nong, the Co Ho, the Ro Mam, the E De, and the Gia Rai. The gong performances are closely tied to their community rituals and ceremonies. Many researchers have classified gongs as a ceremonial musical instrument. For the peoples of the Central Highlands, as in other parts of Southeast Asia, the sound of the gong is a means to communicate with deities and gods. UNESCO inscribed the space of Gong Culture on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008 (it was first proclaimed in 2005).

Today, the Central Highlands Spring Festival, also known as the Gong Festival, is organized on a large scale in the provinces where this tradition is rooted. The festival plays an important role in the ritual life of ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands and has generated a positive impact on the tourism industry. The Central Highlands Spring Festival is the most important yearly event among ethnic minority villages in the Central Highlands. It takes place each year from the first to the third month of the lunar calendar.

The festival is usually organized in an empty space in front of the communal house of the village. From the first day of the festival, gong music is played to invite and welcome spirits and people to participate in the festival and to complete the festival's preparations. During this time, gongs are played non-stop to enliven the atmosphere. The festival's main activities include dancing, singing, buffalo sacrifice rituals, elephant racing and wine drinking.





About the Artist

Trần Hữu Chất, also known as Hồng Chinh Hiền, was born in 1933 in Ha Tinh province and currently lives in Hanoi, Vietnam. He is known for his skills as both a poet and a painter. He has received various poetry and literature prizes. This specific painting has won him the State Prize for Literature and Art Series 3 in 2012. Many of his artworks are preserved at the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum and depict beautiful landscapes and people throughout the region.

Description of the Artwork

For every festival in the Central Highlands, gongs are always present. For the majority of ethnic groups in the Central Highlands, gongs are musical instruments that have sacred power. It is believed that within every gong resides a deity who becomes more powerful as the gong gets older. This deity is considered as the tutelary deity for the community’s life. Therefore, gongs are associated with all rites in one’s life, such as the inauguration of new houses, funerals, buffalo sacrifices, crop praying rites, new harvests, ceremonies to pray for the health of the people and cattle, ceremonies to see soldiers off to the front, and victory celebrations.

The artist depicts the cheerful atmosphere of the festival. The **composition** contains many realistic details. At the village gate, there are people welcoming guests. They are inviting the guests to join the festival to drink wine and dance. Details of the procession, costumes, activities of the people participating in the festival, and the **rông** house (communal village house) are depicted in detail. The artwork is colourful and beautifully recreates the rhythm of the Central Highlands Spring Festival.

For this painting, the artist’s techniques include **lacquer** engraving and painting. The painting’s **surface** is lacquer, which consists of layers of the resin from a special tree that have been laid upon wood, often creating a varnished finish. In Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Korea, China and Japan, lacquer is often used for art and to create objects known as lacquerware (boxes, bowls, etc.). Once the lacquer surface has been prepared, the artist engraved the lines in the painting with a sharp tool, and applied paint made from natural minerals to various parts of the surface.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



References

- “The space of gong culture”, UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Culture of Humanity website, www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00120.



Name of the Festivity: Gióng Festival

Title of the Artwork: "Phù Đổng Temple Festival"

Artist: Nguyễn Nghĩa Duyệt

Year of Creation: 1983

Materials: Watercolour on silk

Collection of the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, Hanoi, Vietnam

Gióng Festival

Gióng Festival is a traditional festival in commemoration and praise of the mythical hero Saint Gióng, one of the four immortals of Vietnamese folk beliefs.

The festival vividly imitates the evolution of the fights of Saint Gióng and the people of Van Lang under the 6th Hung King reign against foreign enemies, thereby raising the public's awareness on forms of ancient tribal warfare and fostering national patriotism, martial arts traditions, indomitable will, and the desire for independence and freedom for the nation. Gióng Festival is held in many locations throughout the northern part of Vietnam. The most famous locations for celebrating Gióng Festival are Phù Đổng and Sóc temples (Hanoi, Vietnam).

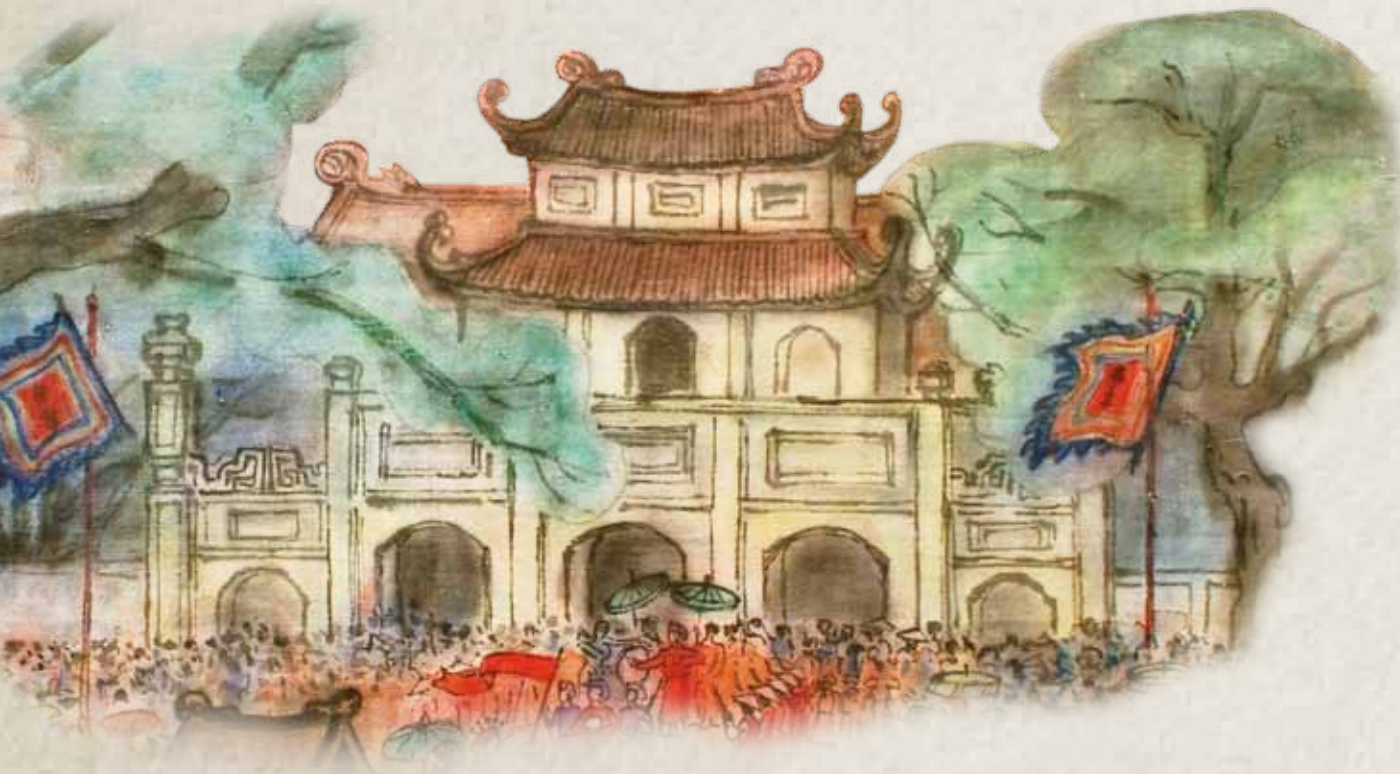
Depending on the location, Gióng Festival is celebrated annually at different times of the year. At Sóc Temple (Phù Linh Commune, Sóc Sơn District, Hanoi), it is held from the sixth to the eighth days of the first lunar month, while at Phù Đổng Temple (in the village of Saint Gióng's birth in Phù Đổng Commune, Gia Lâm District, Hanoi), it takes place from the sixth to the twelfth days of the fourth lunar month. According to legend, Sóc Mountain in Phù Linh was the last stopover of Saint Gióng after



he defeated foreign invaders and before he flew to heaven. Many traditional rituals take place during the festival, such as the procession ceremony, the incense-offering ceremony, the ritual of bathing the statue of Saint Gióng, and the bamboo flowers-offering procession. During the festival, traditional games are played, including human chess, cock fighting, burning votive paper, and villagers perform traditional arts, such as traditional opera (*chèo*), love duets (*quan họ*), and *ca trù* singing.

The values of Gióng Festival are represented as a cultural phenomenon that is preserved and handed down in its entirety from generation to generation. The festival also serves as an ensemble of activities that bring the community together and contains many creative ideas expressing the desire for national peace and family prosperity.

In 2010, UNESCO recognized Gióng Festival celebrations of Phù Đổng and Sóc temples part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. According to UNESCO, Gióng Festival is “a Viet Nam culture museum that keeps many alluvial layers of culture and beliefs”.



About the Artist

Nguyễn Nghĩa Duyệt was born in 1943 and currently lives in Hanoi, Vietnam. A member of the Vietnam Fine Arts Association, he graduated from the Vietnam Fine Arts University, where he then became a lecturer. He has received various teaching, military and art prizes throughout his career. He has composed many paintings of high artistic value using different materials. He is known for his skill in engraved lacquer paintings. His works often depict people and landscapes in ancient times, or contemporary scenes in village ports, in the countryside, at country fairs, rivers, temples, alleys, as well as festivals in Vietnam.

Description of the Artwork

This painting recreates a scene from Gióng Festival at Phú Đồng temple, depicting the long and sacred procession of Saint Gióng's horse in very vivid and realistic detail. The details of the procession, the costumes of the people participating in the festival, and the architectural building serve as important information for research and reflect the artist's deep knowledge and understanding of the traditions involved in the rituals. The artwork shows the bustling atmosphere and the orderliness of the festival.

The author uses **watercolour** and Vietnamese silk as his **medium**. The simple colour shades, the warm, soft contours, and the blanks have been carefully chosen to express the artwork's simplicity and uniqueness, while showing the artist's gentle and harmonious attention to detail.

Silk paintings are an ancient East Asian tradition. Since the 1930s, Vietnamese silk painting has acquired its own style. The silk used for the paintings is loosely woven and the fibres are thin. Artists often prefer to use yellow silk. Several types of paint can be used for silk paintings, including watercolour, ink, tempera and gouache. The artist has to paint many layers on the silk, from bright colours to dark colours. Sometimes, when the colour dries out, it is necessary to wash the silk to get rid of the residues and to allow the silk to absorb the colours. It is possible to use seashell powder and silver leaves as backing for the painting. The artist usually adds a paper backing to make the silk painting more solid.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



References

- "Gióng festival of Phú Đồng and Sóc temples", UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity website, www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00443.
- "Ca trù singing", UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding website, www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/USL/00309.



Name of the Festivity: Hung Kings Temple Festival

Title of the Artwork: "Ancient Traits"

Artist: Đỗ Ngọc Dũng

Year of creation: 2006

Materials: Oil painting on canvas

Collection of Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, Hanoi, Vietnam

Hung Kings Temple Festival



The worship of Hung Kings is a tradition tracing back to the legendary Hung Kings dynasty with the belief that all Vietnamese people have the same origin. According to legend, the people of Vietnam are the “Dragon’s children and Fairy’s grand-children”. It also expresses the Vietnamese philosophy “When drinking water, remember the source” and the spirit of national unity.

This legend tells the story of Lac Long Quan, son of Kinh Duong Vuong Loc Tuc, and Au Co, daughter of King De Lai, who were married and gave birth to 100 sons. After that, 50 sons followed Au Co and 50 others followed Lac Long Quan to form communities. The first son followed his mother to the land of Phong Chau (now Phu Tho Province) and established the nation of Van Lang and became King Hung. Van Lang was the first nation in Vietnamese history and was ruled by 18 kings. The Hung Kings taught local people how to grow rice and selected Nghia Linh Mountain, the highest mountain in the region, to perform the religious rituals of the agricultural population to worship the rice god and sun god for good weather and good crops. To remember the great deeds of the Hung Kings, the people established a temple (the Hung Kings Temple Relic Site) at the centre of Nghia Linh Mountain and chose the 10th day of the third lunar month as the Ancestral Anniversary day. From this first temple, the worship of Hung Kings has gradually spread and reached a national level. Today, it is practised at temples in northern, central and southern Vietnam, as well as among Vietnamese communities who live overseas.

According to historical documents, the Hung Kings festival, also called Ancestral Festival, is an ancient tradition. Today, the government allocates a substantial budget to safeguard, restore and maintain the places for the worship of the Hung Kings, especially at the Hung Kings Temple Relic Site. There are also initiatives to include materials related to the Hung Kings’ legend in the school curriculum in order to transmit the tradition to future generations. The 10th day of the third lunar month, the day of the festival, is a government-approved public holiday so that people nationwide can participate in and organize sacrificial activities. There are a total of 1,417 Hung Kings temples nationwide.

Every year, on the 10th day of the third lunar month, the Ancestral Festival is held at these Hung Kings temples. The most important one takes place at the Hung Kings Temple Relic Site in Phu Tho Province. On Hung Kings Festival days, communities make offerings of rice-based delicacies, such as square cakes (*bánh chưng*) and round cakes (*bánh dầy*). People engage in arts and performances, including the reading of supplication petitions, praying, bronze drum beating and *xoan* singing.

Considering its unique and distinct values, UNESCO officially recognized the worship of Hung Kings in Phu Tho Province as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012.





About the Artist

Đỗ Ngọc Dũng was born in 1960 in Doan Hung, Phu Tho Province. He graduated from the Industrial Fine Arts University in 1989 and is currently working at the Phu Pho Art Association. A member of the Vietnam Ethnic Minorities' Art and Literature Association and the Vietnam Journalist Association, he has taken part in national and international exhibitions (Vietnam, Russia, Czech Republic, and Finland) and has received many prizes, notably from the National Committee of the Union of Vietnam's Art and Literature Association, the Fine Arts Association, and the Ethnic Minorities' Art Literature Association. He has also been the recipient of the prize of Hung King Literature on several occasions. His works are currently being preserved at the Vietnam Military History Museum.

Description of the Artwork

The artwork is composed of basic shapes: square (like the *bánh chưng* cake) and circle (like the *bánh dầy* cake). The square represents the Earth and while the circle represents the Heavens. In this painting, there are 12 squares, reaching towards four cardinal directions and eight inter-cardinal directions, symbolizing that power is shared equally to all the parts of the earth.

In the central square and circle, the stylized figures are women and men devotees performing symbolic rituals by dancing in a circle and pounding on a large drum. They are dancing to thank their ancestors who taught them to farm, cook and weave, and to thank the Heavens, the Earth, and their ancestors for giving them their harvests, prosperous life, and peace.

Each of the other squares contains a symbolic image representing cultural elements of the Hung Kings period. The drum on the right represents a large drum made from bronze with many designs and is believed to be from the Hung Kings period. It is called a **Đông Sơn** drum, which is an ancient drum that is famous throughout the country and the Southeast Asian region. These drums date back to the ancient Đông Sơn period. In the other squares, we can see other cultural elements: mythical **lac** birds (a kind of swan), human figures wearing feather hats, a human figure hunting, humans dancing, human figures on board a **dragon boat**, etc. All of these elements can be found on the designs of the famous Đông Sơn drum.

These drawings and signs that represent the Hung Dynasty are still mysterious to researchers. Nevertheless, Ancestral Day is an ancient tradition that has existed for centuries, observed from generation to generation and kept its uniqueness and distinctiveness.

For this painting, the artist used oil paint and **canvas** as his **medium**. The artwork has a balanced **composition** that gravitate the viewer towards the centre and is a highly decorative work of art. Warm colours, fine traits and lines create rhythm for the artwork, revealing the joyful atmosphere of the Hung Kings Temple festival.

For terms in blue, see Glossary of Terms pages 148 - 158



References

- "Worship of Hùng kings in Phú Thọ", UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity website, www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00735.
- "Xoan singing of Phú Thọ Province, Viet Nam", UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/USL/00538.

Glossary of Terms

- **Achar:** In Cambodian tradition, an *achar* is a master of ceremony who presides over certain rituals. He is usually over 50 years old and acts as a counsellor during marriage and parenthood due to his wisdom and experience.
- **Acrylic (paint):** Acrylic paint is a type of paint that dries fast and that is made from a chemical plastic-like material.
- **Alms-bowl:** In Buddhism, the alms-bowl is a recipient in which people place food for monks. This is an act of merit-making.
- **Areca flower:** This is the flower from the areca tree. The areca tree is popular for the consumption of its seed, known as the areca nut, which is chewed with leaves from the betel plant on special occasions across Southeast Asia, South Asia, and various parts of the Pacific Ocean.
- **Ascetic:** A person who abstains from indulgence and devotes his or herself to living a strict and simple life, often for religious reasons.
- **Austronesian peoples:** Austronesian peoples refer to a group of populations in Southeast Asia and the Pacific who speak languages belonging to the Austronesian family of languages. Belonging to this group are peoples of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, as well as some peoples in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. This group extends all the way to Madagascar, Polynesia, Micronesia and Hawai'i.
- **Background:** The background refers to the part of the painting that is the farthest away from the viewer. It is the area where the subject matter is placed.
- **Bánh chưng and bánh dầy:** Bánh chưng is traditional Vietnamese dish that consists of glutinous rice shaped as a square filled with pork and bean paste and wrapped in banana leaves. *Bánh dầy* is shaped as a circle and is made from glutinous rice flour. The square shape of *bánh chưng* represents the Earth, and the round shape of *bánh dầy* represents the Heavens. According to legend, a prince from the Hung Dynasty created both dishes to enter a competition launched by the king in which the winner would be proclaimed as the king's successor. This prince won the competition and became the next king. These dishes are served on festivity days, such as Ancestral Festival day and Vietnamese New Year (*Tết Festival*).
- **Basketry:** Basketry is the process of weaving materials to make baskets.
- **Bible:** The Bible is the holy book of the Christian faith.
- **Brahmanic:** Relating to the traditional priest community of Hindu societies.
- **Brahmin:** A member of the priest community in Hindu societies. Brahmins are often responsible for performing religious rituals.
- **Buddhist Precepts:** The Buddhist Precepts are vows to undertake training to follow various moral codes, such as abstaining from killing, abstaining from taking what is not given, avoiding sensual misconduct, abstaining from false speech (i.e. lying), abstaining from alcohol, etc.
- **Bunting:** This is a light piece of cloth that is often used as a flag or a ribbon for decorative purposes.

- **Ca trù singing:** It is a form of sung poetry practised in northern Vietnam, and involves a female singer and two instrumentalists, one of whom plays a type of lute and the other a drum. It is inscribed on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.
- **Canvas:** This is a type of painting surface. It is a thick and flat woven fabric that is stretched on a wooden frame. It is one of the most common types of painting surface.
- **Changpo:** An aquatic herb plant.
- **Composition:** The composition refers to how the subject matter, foreground, background, as well as other elements of the painting, come together as a whole.
- **Confucian / Confucianism:** Confucianism is a school of thought developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. Confucianism places great emphasis on the importance of family (such as respect towards elders), on cultivating virtue and on maintaining ethics (moral codes that relate to good behaviour). Today, Confucianism is widely practiced in Korea and Vietnam, as well as among ethnic Chinese communities across Southeast Asia.
- **Connoisseur / Art connoisseur:** A person who has special knowledge and appreciation towards a specific field, such as the arts.
- **Dip pen:** A dip pen is consists of a metal nib that is fixed to a handle. The metal nib is repeatedly dipped in ink to paint, draw or write. A fountain pen is a type of dip pen.

- **Đông Sơn drums:** It is believed that these bronze drums were produced between the 6th century BCE and the 3rd century CE. They are decorated with engravings of patterns, including the elements found in the painting, and have been found throughout Vietnam and even as far as Indonesia.
- **Dragon boat:** This is a traditional Vietnamese boat. It is long and narrow, and is shaped like a dragon. In the town of Cat Ba, in northern Vietnam, the people organize the Dragon Boat Race Festival each year on April 1.
- **Dugout:** A boat made from a hollow tree trunk or by carving out the inside of the tree trunk. These boats were, and still are in some cases, used among peoples all over the world.
- **Enlightenment:** In Buddhism, enlightenment is referred to as an awakening of the mind, through which a person acquires knowledge on freedom from suffering and on the path towards [nirvana](#).
- **Ethno-linguistic group:** An ethno-linguistic group refers to a group of peoples who are placed in the same category in terms of ethnicity and language, sharing some common ethnic characteristics and vocabulary.
- **Evangelization:** Evangelization refers to the process of spreading the Christian faith among people.
- **Foreground:** The foreground to the part of the painting that is closest to the viewer.

- **Four Noble Truths:** This is regarded as a central belief in Buddhism. The Four Noble Truths involve the concept of *dukkha* (suffering). They are 1) the truth of *dukkha*, 2) the truth of the origin of *dukkha*, 3) the truth of stopping *dukkha*, and 4) the truth of the path leading to stopping *dukkha*.
- **Fresco:** A **mural** painting technique through which the paint is applied to the wall before the plaster has dried and is still damp.
- **Fresco-secco:** Fresco-secco is a **mural** painting made on a dry wall that is then soaked with limewater (a mixture of alkaline and calcium minerals, and other ingredients, used as a fixing agent or as a solvent) before the paint is applied.
- **Friar:** A Friar is a man who is a member of a religious order of the Catholic Church who asks for alms.
- **G-string:** This is a garment that is most often worn among men in many cultures across Southeast Asia and the Pacific. It consists of a piece of cloth that covers the groin area, attached to a waistband with a piece of narrow cloth or a string.
- **Galleon:** This was a large sailing ship used by the Spanish in the 16th and 17th centuries.
- **Genre:** In art, a genre is a category of artistic practice that uses specific contents, forms, and techniques.
- **Gold-gilding:** This is the process of applying gold leaves onto a surface, usually for decorative purposes.

- **Gong:** A gong is a polyphonic musical instrument (an instrument producing multiple sounds) that consists of a circular bronze disk. The sound is created when it is beaten with a mallet. A gong can often create additional sounds as well as its basic sounds. In fact, a six-gong orchestra can produce more or less 12 different sounds. In the Central Highlands of Vietnam, depending on different ethnic groups, a gong orchestra can consist of three, five or six primary sounds. As a result, the sounds of the gongs are heard as resonant and solid. Moreover, a gong orchestra is arranged in a broad space, so the melody is formed by three-dimensional sounds with different pitch, length and resonance. This original phenomenon of gong performance creates a stereophonic effect.
- **Hermit:** A person who lives secluded from society. In Hinduism and Buddhism, a hermit lives a solitary life in order to renounce worldly concerns and pleasures.
- **Hinterland:** This often refers to a region that is remote from densely populated areas.
- **Iconographic/Iconography:** Iconography is a collection of visual art representations that symbolize a specific meaning and that follow certain artistic conventions.
- **Jataka Tales:** Stories of the Buddha's previous lives (the Pali body of literature contains 547 stories).
- **Kerchief:** A piece of cloth that is tied around the head.
- **Lac bird:** It is a mythical bird that looks similar to a swan. It exists in legends and Vietnamese iconography.

- **Lacquer:** Lacquer is a type of surface that results from applying layers of a paste made from the resin of the Lacquer Tree (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*), which can be toxic if it is not handled with care. The end result is a very dark (dark brown to deep black) wood finish with varying degrees of varnish (from matte to glossy). In Vietnam, Myanmar, Korea, China and Japan, lacquer is often used for art and to create objects known as lacquerware (boxes, bowls, etc.).
- **Literati:** Literati refers to a group of scholars who are experts on literature. In Asia, especially in ancient Korea, Vietnam and China, the literati were knowledgeable and reflected on Confucian texts, and were often bureaucrats (government administrators).
- **Loom weaving:** This is the process of weaving fabric using a loom. Depending on the culture, the loom's mechanism may vary. In general, the loom helps to hold the threads under tension to help the weaver make the cloth.
- **Mangrove:** a tropical tree environment where the trees grow in water Expand.
- **Meditation:** Meditation is practice through which a person trains his or her mind to achieve specific objectives. In Buddhism, one of the objectives is to achieve serenity and insight. Meditation often involves being seated in the lotus position (legs crossed) in a silent environment.
- **Medium:** The medium refers to the paintings materials, such as the different tools and supplies that are used to create a painting. The medium includes the surface and the paint.

- **Metalsmithing:** Metalsmithing refers to the process of producing and shaping metal into an object.
- **Merit-making:** In Buddhism, merit-making is the act of performing good deeds to contribute to one's spiritual liberation.
- **Missionary:** A missionary is a member of a religious order of the Christian faith who travels abroad to help spread Christianity among foreign peoples by performing educational and/or social services.
- **Mural:** A mural is a painting that is applied to a wall.
- **Neo-Confucian / Neo-Confucianism:** Neo-Confucianism refers to new types of social values and thoughts that have emerged from traditional Confucianism (see Confucian / Confucianism in this glossary).
- **Nirvana:** In Buddhism, nirvana refers to a state of being through which one is liberated from earthly pleasures and suffering, achieving peace of mind.
- **Oil painting:** This type of painting involves the use of colour pigments that are bound with drying oil.
- **Pageantry:** A showcase, spectacle, demonstration, ceremony.
- **Palanquin:** This is a covered platform, similar to a large box, that can seat a person (or two), that is supported by two horizontal poles borne on the shoulders of several carriers.

- **Parinirvana:** In Buddhism, parinirvana refers to a state of being that occurs after **nirvana** (in which one is freed from earthly pleasures and suffering). It is the end of the cycle of births and rebirths. What happens after nirvana, in the parinirvana, cannot be known, as it transcends any conceivable experience (in this case, it refers to the Buddha's passing away).
- **Pattern:** A pattern is a series of repeated elements.
- **Pavilion:** This is a free-standing structure that is located in a park or a garden, often built to enjoy the view or to admire its architecture.
- **Perspective:** The perspective is a technique that used to depict the dimensions and spatial relationship between the various elements of the painting.
- **Portrait:** A portrait is a painting of a person. A self-portrait is when the artist paints his/her own portrait.
- **Pose:** The pose is the way a figure is positioned (sitting down, waving, standing up, etc.).
- **Pottery:** Pottery refers to receptacles made from ceramic materials, such as porcelain or clay.
- **Rapidograph:** This is a technical pen that is commonly used by architects and engineers to create lines of one consistent width throughout a drawing.
- **Ramie:** A flowering plant from which the fibres can be extracted to make cloth.

- **Regatta:** A regatta is a series of boat races. This is practiced in many parts of the world, including Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, China and Europe.
- **Rông house:** Among ethnic minority communities in Kon Tum Province, Vietnam, the rông house is the village's communal house. It is considered the heart of the community and is where village events take place.
- **Xoan singing:** This is a traditional type of singing practised in Phu Tho Province, Vietnam, and performed for various rituals. Women sing while men play the musical instruments. It is on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.
- **Serigraph:** A serigraph is a printing process that utilizes screen prints. This means that one colour of ink is applied to the surface through a woven mesh fabric, such as **silk**, upon which an image has been photographically transferred. Areas that are not meant to be printed in that particular colour are blocked with the screen. The process is then repeated with a different colour and a different screen until the desired image and colours are achieved.
- **Setting:** The context and/or environment in which a scene occurs.
- **Silk:** A textile made from natural fibre produced by the silkworm (a type of caterpillar). It is a highly regarded fabric that is produced in many countries across Asia.
- **Stamp:** A device used to apply inked markings on a surface, often bearing an official symbol.

- **Stucco:** A fine plaster material used to coat walls or to mould into decorations.
- **Subject / Subject Matter:** The subject, or subject matter, of a painting refers to the ideas and information that are being presented to the viewer. It is the focus of the work of art.
- **Sultan:** The ruler of a sultanate (a territory over which a sultan claims sovereignty) in a Muslim cultural context. Today, the majority of sultanates are located in Southeast Asia, in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia (Yogyakarta) and Malaysia (which has nine sultans).
- **Surface:** The surface is the material on which the artist paints. It is the painting's support base.
- **Tempera:** A painting technique using colour pigments mixed with a glutinous material (i.e. egg yolk) to bind the paint to the surface.
- **Watercolour:** Watercolour is a painting technique in which colour pigments are combined with a water-based substance and then applied to a surface.

User's Guide

Introduction

In the aim to further strengthen cross-cultural understanding between the countries of Southeast Asia and Korea, this book has been compiled to demonstrate how works of art, specifically paintings, can be used by both teachers and students as a means of education.

In addition to being the fruit of the artist's imagination and creation, art, including paintings, drawings, photographs, films, is a reflection of a moment in time. As a result, many paintings have the capacity to show traditional and cultural practices of the past and the present. It is in this spirit that we wish to share these paintings from the countries of Southeast Asia and Korea representing traditional festivities that capture diverse aspects of cultural life.

These paintings have been carefully selected by a panel of experts, ranging from art professionals, historians, anthropologists and educators, for their educational value in learning about traditional practices and customs and for their ability to bring out the unique character of each culture and the similarities between them.

The objective to help students understand and embrace cultural similarities and diversity between the countries of Southeast Asia and Korea has been the driving force behind this book, a goal we hope to achieve through a universal and timeless practice: art.

Learning how to look at and how to learn from art are keys to developing visual thinking strategies – an educational tool that we can use our entire lives, whether at school, at university, at work, in museums, or at home. By introducing Art History and Cultural Studies through this publication, we hope to encourage students to utilize art as a source of information and education.

This User's Guide is provided as a tool to help guide you through the process of looking at and learning through the paintings presented in this book. Moreover, the methodology given below may be adapted to other art-related activities.

Suggested Activities

The following activities are guiding questions for teachers and students to facilitate discussions to help develop cultural understanding through paintings.

1) Group Discussion Activities

1.1 Scene and subject matter

- What do you see in the painting? Who do you think these people are? What are they doing? Where are they? Do you see any interesting objects, shapes and buildings?

- Can you think of a painting, photograph, book, film or television scene from your own culture that depicts a similar subject matter?
- Discuss the similarities and differences between two paintings.
- Find the paintings' countries of origin on a map.
- Can you think of a dish or a type of food from each country?
- Can you find any similarities in how people dress in the different paintings?
- Can you find similar objects in the different paintings, like musical instruments, utensils, etc., and identify how these are called in your own country?
- Can you find similar activities in the different paintings, like dances, ceremonies, rituals, etc.?
Are there similar activities practiced in your country?
If so, how are they called and how are they practiced?

1.2 Painting materials and techniques

- What materials and techniques were used for this painting?
- Do they use similar materials and techniques in your own culture? If so, which famous painting and/or artist from your country uses the same materials and techniques?

2) Field Trip Activities

Visit a nearby museum, art gallery or place of worship (temple, church, sacred space, etc.) and compare paintings that are found in the book with the paintings that are exhibited.

3) Creative Art Activities

- Paint or draw a festivity from your country that is similar to one of the festivities depicted in this book.
- Try to draw a festivity from your culture, using the materials and techniques from one of the paintings in this book.

Extra activities and tips can be found on the websites listed below.

Digital Resources

If you wish to show these paintings for classroom viewing via a projector or television screen linked to a computer, we strongly recommend that you download the book's digital version in Portable Document Format (PDF) from the following websites:

www.unescoapceiu.org

www.seameo.org

www.seameo-spafa.org

PUBLISHERS



APCEIU

Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) under the auspices of UNESCO was established in 2000, the International Year of a Culture of Peace, to promote Education for International Understanding (EIU) towards a Culture of Peace in Asia and the Pacific region according to the agreement between the Government of the Republic of Korea and UNESCO. To fulfil its mandate, APCEIU, as the first regional centre of its kind, works in collaboration with governments, National Commissions for UNESCO, UNESCO, academia and civil society of the UNESCO Member States in the region. (www.unescoapceiu.org)



SEAMEO

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) is a regional intergovernmental organization established in 1965 among governments of Southeast Asian countries to promote regional cooperation in education, science and culture in the region. Its 11 Member Countries include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam. It embodies 8 Associate Member Countries: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom; and three Affiliate Members, namely the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), the University of Tsukuba, Japan and British Council.

Over the past four decades, SEAMEO has developed 20 specialist institutions throughout Southeast Asia which provide regional leadership in human resource development and diverse expertise that they offer in education, culture, health, environment, and agriculture and natural resources. (www.seameo.org)



SEAMEO SPAFA

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO SPAFA) acts as a regional coordinator for professionals and educationalists in the fields of archaeology and fine arts by organizing meetings, forums, workshops and performances. In organizing these activities, SEAMEO SPAFA hopes to highlight both the cultural diversity and uniqueness of the Southeast Asian region in order to promote mutual understanding and collaboration for increased collective knowledge and a better quality of life. For more information on SEAMEO SPAFA's mission and activities, please visit the website at www.seameo-spafa.org.

