



The Development of the National Museums in Thailand

THAI CULTURE, NEW SERIES No. 24

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN THAILAND

BY
DHANIT YUPHO



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Preface



The Mangkhalaphisek Pavilion

Thailand is very rich in precious arts and cultural heritage which represents a long-lasting independence, prosperity and stability of the country. These various fields of heritage have been preserved, accumulated and inherited throughout generations until the present. This legacy brings pride, dignity and prestige to Thai people. Therefore, it should be shared with the world so that Thai wisdom can be appreciated.

The Fine Arts Department is responsible for the preservation, promotion, transmission and dissemination of arts and culture of the Thai nation. As such it has compiled and published a book series of 25 volumes written by experts in their respective fields. Their areas of knowledge include artistic works, architecture, music and dramatic arts as well as language and literature. Each series has been reprinted from time to time. In this publication, there are no alterations to the contents although some illustrations have been added for the benefit of the readers.

The Department hopes that this series of books will be a resource among the international community to help them understand Thailand better through its unique arts and culture.

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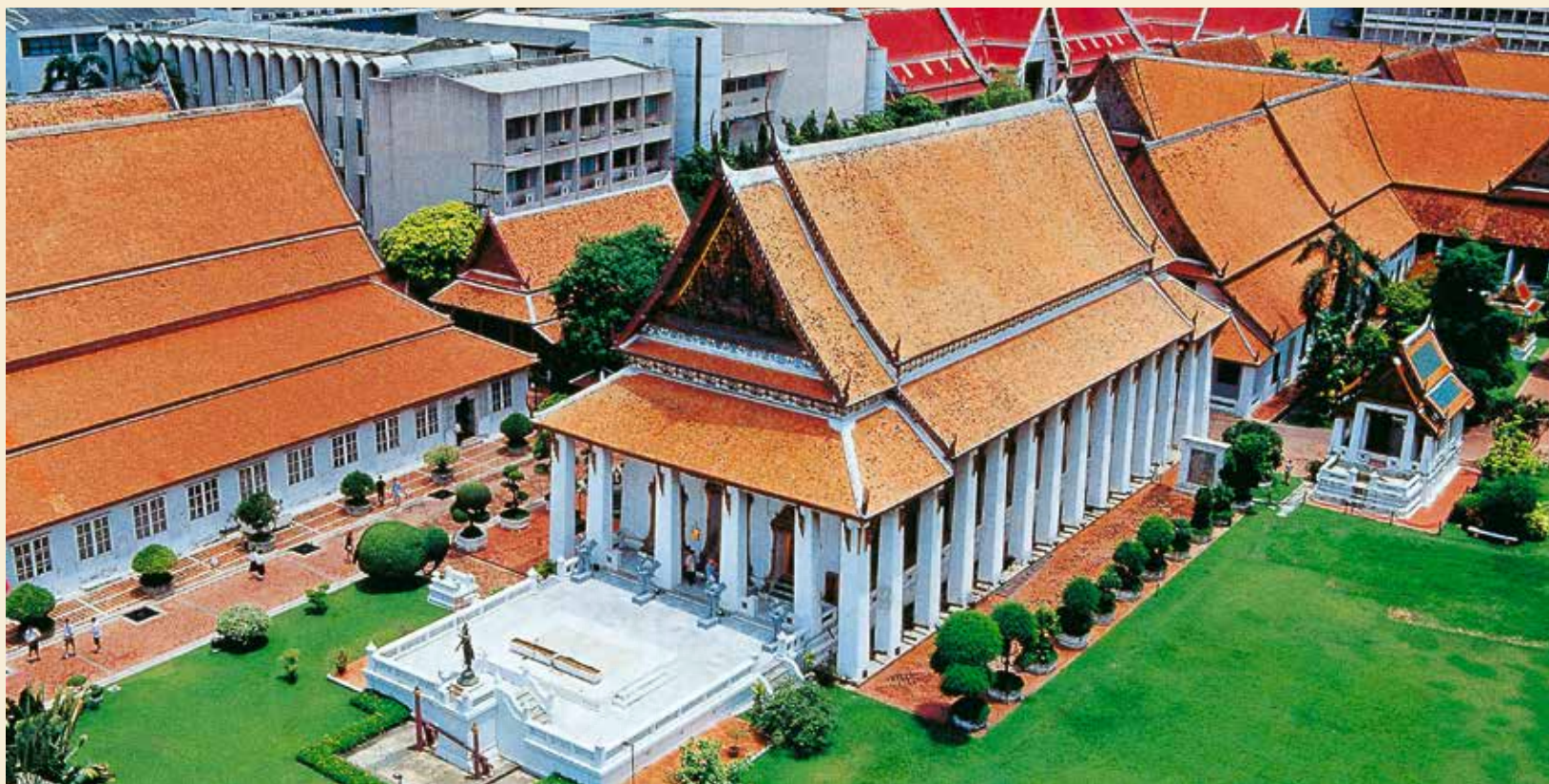
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was Director General of the Fine Arts Department from 1956 to 1968. He was born in Nakhon Sawan Province, Thailand, in 1907, and learned Pali at Wat Mahathat, Bangkok, in 1918. He was also a graduate of the ecclesiastical doctorate of Thailand. He entered into the government service in 1934 and became Chief of the Research Section of the National Library in 1943. He was the Director of the Division of Music and Drama in the Fine Arts Department from 1946 to 1956. Mr. Yupho was also a lecturer in the history of Thai literature at Chulalongkorn University. He was the editor of Thai Culture, New Series and the author of the following publications:

The Economic Conditions of India in the Buddha's Time; The Khōn; The Classical Siamese Theatre; Artists of the Thai Dance-Dramas or Lakhon Vol. I; The Preliminary Course of Training in Thai Theatrical Art; Thai Musical Instruments; The Khōn and Lakhon Presented by the Department of Fine Arts, etc.



Samrān Mukkhamāt Pavilion.



THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN THAILAND

The first museum in Thailand was established in the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868 A.D.) who in 1862 had built a royal building which was used as an exhibition hall for his collection of art objects and antiques. This hall, called “PRAPĀS- BIBIDHABHANDA”^{*} was located at the present site of the Sivalai Mahāprāsād Hall in the Grand Palace. This first museum was in fact the King’s private museum.

Later on in 1874 during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) a public museum was established in the Concordia Hall, (later known as the SĀLĀ SAHATHAI SAMĀKHOM) within the walls of the Grand Palace. The English word “museum” was used to name this new institution. This was the first public museum in this

country. In 1887 King Chulalongkorn had all the museum exhibits removed from the Concordia Hall and installed in the three halls in front of *the Palace of the Prince-successors*.^{**} In December 4, 1889 by the royal decree the museum became a museum directorate under the Department of Education. In 1892 when the Ministry of Education was established with its ministerial offices in the three buildings on the site where the National Theatre now stands, the new directorate came under the Ministry of Education. The museum was opened to the public twice a week. The exhibits included antiques, art objects and natural history exhibits. Museum catalogues, the first in this land were prepared in both Thai and English.

^{*} The name consists of three words: “Prapas” meaning “to tour” or “to visit”; “bibidha” meaning “various” and “bhanda”, “material”.

^{**} Also called Wang Na, or the Palace to the front.



National Museum, Bangkok.

THE PALACE OF THE PRINCE-SUCCESSORS

The Palace of the Prince-successors, built in 1782, the same year that Bangkok was founded, belonged to the Prince-successor Mahā Surasinghanāda, younger brother of King Buddha Yod Fa Chulalok (Rama I). The Palace grounds were much larger than they are today. Like those of the Grand Palace, they were surrounded by a brick wall. Starting from Phra Chan Street the wall (part of which is the southern wall of Thammasat University) crossed Phramane Ground to the front of Ministry of Justice turned north along the Rajadamnern-nai Avenue and again along Rajini Street to the river bank at Tā-chāng Wang Nā. So the palace grounds touched the left bank of the Chao Phraya River and included what are today the Thammasat University campus, Bangkok National Museum, the School of Dramatic Arts, the School of Fine Arts, the National Theatre, the First World War Memorial and the northern half of Phramane Ground. After the abolishment of the rank of the Prince-successor, King Chulalongkorn divided up the Palace. The fortresses and the outer wall east of the palace were pull down to lay out the Phramane Ground and Na Phra-Dhatu Street, part of

the southern quarter was used for the construction of an arsenal, in the western compound the land at the back of the palace along the river bank was a site for barracks where Thammasat University now stands; the north palace wall was demolished and three buildings were erected and a lawn laid out (on the site where the National Theatre stands). These buildings were used to house the Ministry of Public Instruction, and later on the Ministry of Justice, later still the Ministry of Communication; land near Bovorasathān Sudhāwās Temple was levelled when the Mēru Bimān, or royal funeral pyre was erected (on the present site of the School of Fine Arts and the School of Dramatic Arts). The only parts of the palace to be retained were the precincts of the royal residences. In the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925) when there were only a few ladies of the court living in the Palace of the Prince-successor, the King requested them to move into the Grand Palace and all the royal residences were turned into barracks. King Rama VI had the new shed for the royal chariots built in front of them. In the reign of King Prajādhīpok (1925-1934), the soldiers were moved to Chandrakasem Palace (today the site of the Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Council), and the royal residences housed the Vajirañāna Library and the museum.



Phutthaisawan Chapel, Palace to the Front, Bangkok, where Phra Phuttha Sihing is now enshrined.

The three buildings which have been used as the museum exhibition halls in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) are:

1. Sivamokkha Bimān Hall

The Sivamokkha Bimān Hall was formerly also known as the “Song Puen Hall” after the name of an audience hall in Ayudhya times. This building along with others was built when Prince-successor Mahā Surasinghanāda built the Palace of the Prince-successors. At first it was an audience hall and later on it became the place where his urn was laid in state. In the reign of King Rama II it was used for performing various court ceremonies. This hall, which had no walls at the time was renovated by the Prince-successor Mahā Sakdi Balaseb in the reign of King Rama III (1824-1852). Walls were added to the hall when it was converted into a museum in 1887.

It is today the place where pre-historic exhibits are on public display.

2. Buddhai Savariya Chapel

This building was built by the Prince-successor Mahā Surasinghanāda around 1795 to enshrine the Phra Buddha Sihinga image. After his death, the image was moved to the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and then the Buddhai Savariya Chapel was used as an audience hall and later on a palace for laying in state the urn of the Prince-successor Mahā Senānurak in the reign of King Rama II (1809-1824). In the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868) the Phra Buddha Sihinga image was re-installed by the Royal Command in the Buddhai Savariya Hall where it has remained to this day.

At present the important things in this hall are:

1. The Phra Buddha Sihinga image raised up on a Busabok.*
2. Two standing Buddha images in Ruankaeo (frames following the outline of the images), which flank the Busabok. It is said one of them commemorates H.R.H. Kromaluang Pithakmontri and the other H.R.H. Kromakhun Isarānurak.
3. Two lacquered and gilded bookcases with painted episodes from the RAMAKIEN (the Thai version of the Rāmāyana epic). In the reign of King Rama III the Prince-successor Mahā Sakdi Balaseb had a set of three made for holding an edition of the Tripitaka (Three Buddhist Scriptures). He employed for the purpose Chao-Krom On and some others whose names are not known, who were the best artists of the day. The third bookcase is now exhibited in the Bangkok Room on the first floor of the new northern building.
4. Mural paintings. These murals illustrate episodes of the Buddha’s life and an assembling of celestial-beings. They were painted in the early Bangkok period. It is worth noticing that some parts of the paintings are stylistically similar to the murals at the Monastery of Yai Intharam in Chonburi Province.

* A throne with four posts supporting a decorated roof or a spire.



Issarawinitchai Hall

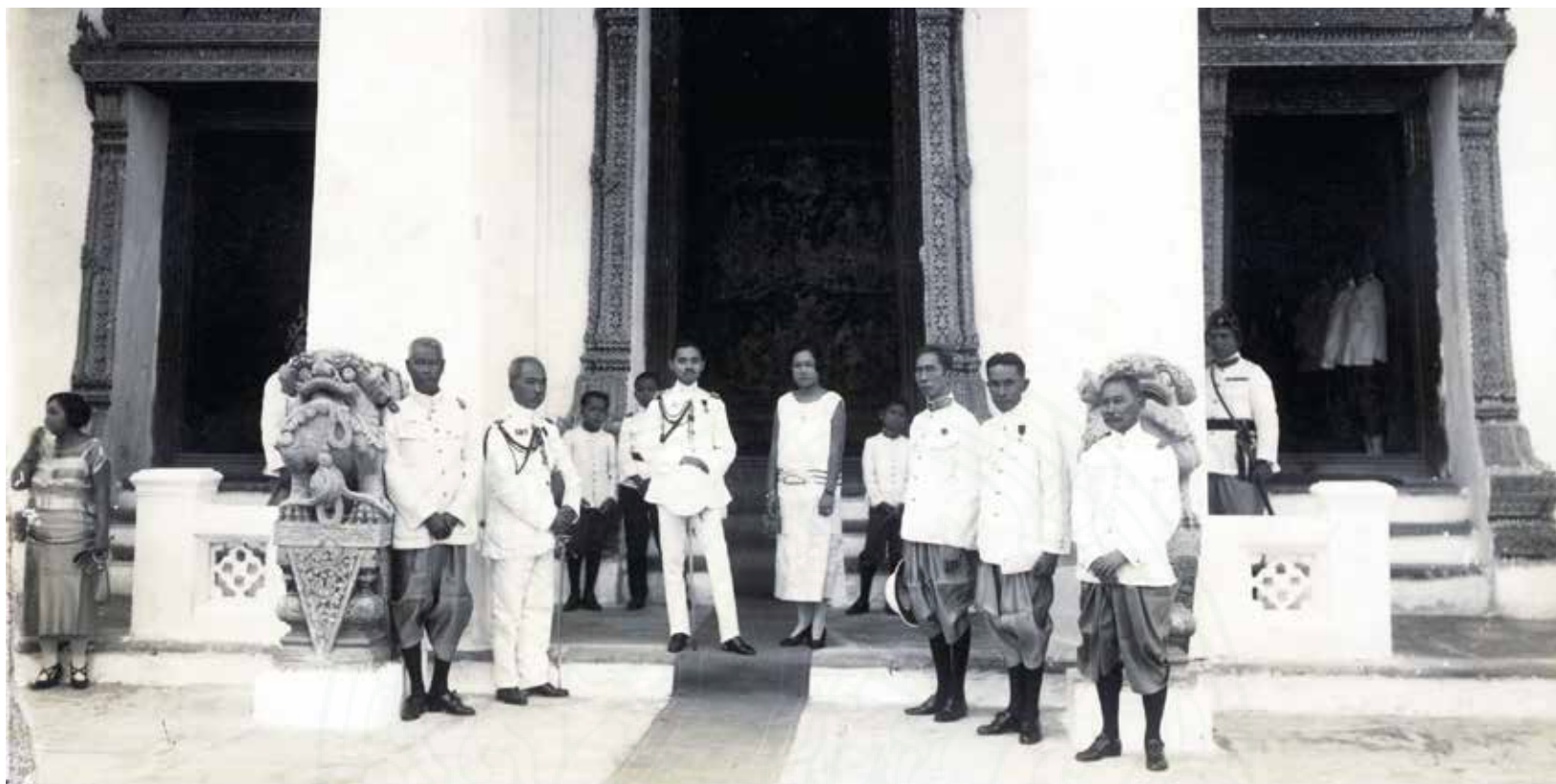
3. The Isrā Vinicchaya Hall

In the reigns of King Rama II and King Rama III where this hall now stands was an open space where the Prince-successor granted audiences. It was then called “*Thim Mahā Vangsa*”. Three sides of the space were bounded by three row houses and the space was called “*Thim* Mahā Vangsa*” because it was where the scholars, who translated the Mahā Vangsa (the Chronicle of Ceylon) met and worked. Facing the west side was an old royal seat on an elaborate dais, called a Busabokmālā. The seat originally belonged to the Prince-successor Mahā Surasinghanāda, who had it made in the reign of King Rama I and it stood in the portico of the hall. Later on in the reign of King Rama III the Prince-successor Mahā Sakdi Balaseb had a throne hall built which called the Isrā Vinicchaya Hall.

The Hall was later used as a place for laying in state the urns of the Prince- successors and also of the Second King Pin Klao in the reign of King Mongkut. In the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) it was used as a royal treasury after which it became an exhibition hall for the museum pieces moved from the Grand Palace. In the reign of King Prajādhīpok (Rama VII) it was repaired by the Royal Institute and became the bronze exhibition hall.

Today this hall is used to house the temporary exhibition on some occasions such as the display of excavated finds from a stupa of the Monastery of Rājabūrana, Ayudhya, the exhibition of arts in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the exhibition of masterpieces from private collection held on the occasion of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of ICOM etc.

* “Thim” means row houses in a palace.



H.M.King Prajādhīpok graciously presided over the inauguration ceremony of the Bangkok Museum and the Vajirañāna Library in 1926.

On April 19, 1926 H.M. King Prajādhīpok established the Royal Institute. He appointed H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajānubhāb as President of the Institute. In the same year the residences and the northern grounds of the Palace of Prince-successors were given over to the Royal Institute and the Bangkok Museum and the Bangkok Library were placed under its administration. The Institute immediately began the work of repairing and renovating the building, and housing the Vajirañāna Library and the Bangkok Museum. On November 10, 1926 on the occasion of the King's birthday celebration H.M. King Prajādhīpok proceeded to the palace of Prince-successors and presided over the inauguration ceremony of the two newly formed institutions.

The display of the art pieces and ancient objects in the Museum was originally based on the type of material used. Exhibits made of bronze were displayed in the Isrā Vinicchaya Hall, of stone in both the Mukhakasan Room between Isrā Vinicchaya Hall and the

Royal Residence and the stuccos were shown in a room near the stairs of the Vasanta Bimān Hall on the eastern and western sides. There were also some exhibitions which were classified after a function e.g. musical instruments, costumes and regalia. Thus the exhibition rooms or halls have commonly been called the bronze room, the stone room, the stucco and terra-cotta rooms etc, by curators and other members of the museum staff. However museum visitors could appreciate the exhibition arranged under such a system only if they had had a basic knowledge of art history and archaeology. All the newly built structures at the time, such as the storeroom, workshops, a room for keeping lacquered and gilded bookcases, a depository of the reserved books and houses for curators and other officials were built of wood. Only the shed for the royal funeral chariots was a brick building. After a lapse of 30 years there was a great increase in the number of exhibits and the display became overcrowded.



Phra Phuttha Sihing seated on a Busabok in Phutthaisawan Chapel.

Most of original buildings and also the newer wooden ones were in a bad state of disrepair so it was imperative to restore or demolish them. One of them was Sivamokkha Bimān Hall, which was being used as the Vajirañāna Library. Around 1929-1930 an architect reported that the hall would collapse if the necessary restorations were not made. Since no budget for this purpose had been allocated, hard-wood posts were used to prop up the ceiling and the walls of the hall. Those who worked in this hall and the visitors who

wanted to study the manuscripts had to walk carefully between the posts. Sometimes they had to stop to pass. After the coup d'état an act of the Establishment of the Fine Arts Department was promulgated on May 3, 1933. The administration of the Bangkok Museum and the Vajirañāna Library was consequently transferred from the Royal Institute to the Fine Arts Department. This was only a change of name and administration and the two institutions remained in the same buildings. The Bangkok Museum became the National Museum

and the Vajirañāna Library renamed the National Library. The Sivamokkha Bimān Hall was propped up for more than 20 years before successive budgets were allocated for the repairs. The restoration was completed in 1952. Many years later parts of the hall were gutted by the fire. The year 1960 saw a great restoration of the Hall. The Fine Arts Department has taken great pains to restore the other buildings from time to time. When the School of Dramatic Arts was set up in 1934, a group of buildings in the Isares Rājānusorn Residence and the compound of Bovorasathān Sudhāwās Temple were used for classrooms. These were, in fact, parts of the compound of the Museum. A temporary Silpakorn Theatre was built on a site between the Sivamokkha Bimān Hall and the auditorium of the Thammasat University. This wooden structure was at the time called Silpakorn Auditorium. Later on it was named the Silpakorn Theatre which reflects its actual function.

THE BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM TODAY*

The site, at which stands the Bangkok National Museum, was during the first half of the 20th century A.D. occupied by many official bodies such as the Vajirañāna Library, (a component part of the National Library), the Bangkok National Museum and the School of Drama and Music. The last was attached to the Division of Drama and Music. It has now been renamed the School of Dramatic Arts and placed under the administration of the Division of the Arts Education. Since the working hours of each body were not the same, causing inconvenience to the officials working in the different bodies. The Bangkok National Museum was opened to the public in the daytime, but the actors, actresses and musicians who worked at night at the Silpakorn Theatre or at the other theatres had to pass through the gates of the Museum, so the Museum was swarming

with people day and night. As no restrictions on using the gates were placed, guarding the treasures of the Bangkok National Museum was very difficult. Yet the development of the museum along modern lines and the re-organization of the other official bodies had to be done at the same time.

The public at the time did not appreciate the importance of a museum and it was easier to make organizational changes and site improvement than to change attitudes to the museum. This being so, the task required considerable persuasion to gain support for a resolution to allocate funds from the Government budget for the purpose. Fortunately in 1951 the Government gave the Fine Arts Department the three buildings belonging to the Ministry of Communication and their precincts, the present site of the National Theatre. These enabled it to plan a future expansion. At first the Department lacked any budget for the expansion, so the buildings temporarily housed the pre-university school of the Silpakorn University, which later became the School of Fine Arts. When the construction of the National Theatre commenced, the school was moved into the new buildings within the precincts of the School of Dramatic Arts. In the meantime the Fine Arts Department made slides explaining to the public the usefulness of libraries and museums and had them projected in the local picture theatres. The outcome was very satisfactory. The Fine Arts Department has since gained more and more public support and money from the Government. This enabled the Fine Arts Department to carry out smoothly the improvement and the construction of the buildings for the National Museum and the National Library. Meanwhile the building of the National Theatre was finished and then an official opening ceremony was performed on December 23, 1965 by H.E. the Prime Minister. On that evening Their Majesties the King and the Queen proceeded to the National Theatre to view the gala premier of a drama staged by actors and actresses of the Fine Arts Department.

* This book "The Development of National Museums in Thailand" by Mr. Dhanit Yupho was written in 1968. The book was revised and reprinted again in 1979. The content is, therefore, meant to be part of the developing history of the National Museums. A more comprehensive study on this subject, especially of recent period can be read from "Guide to the National Museum, Bangkok" by Mrs. Chira Chongkol, published by the Department of Fine Arts in 1986.

THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

An urgent task undertaken by the Fine Arts Department was the construction of new buildings and the development of the National Museum, the National Library, the School of Dramatic Arts and the School of Fine Arts and also the movement of the Office of the Division of Music and Drama to a place outside the precincts of the National Museum. The left wing of the National Theatre is now used to house the office of the Division. After the completion of the construction of the new National Library at Thā Vāsukri, Sāmsen Road, books from the old National Library in front of the Monastery of Mahathat (Wat Mahathat) were transferred to the new library building, and while part of the collection of manuscripts, stone inscriptions and laquered and gilded bookcases remained in the old library and selected pieces were moved to the new one. When the librarian and her staff had finished the work of arranging and cataloguing the books and manuscripts, the Fine Arts Department invited H.E. the Prime Minister to preside over the inauguration ceremony of the new National Library on the anniversary of the King's Coronation, May 5, 1966. The National Library then resumed its public services.

Last of all the work of improving and moving the other official bodies was successfully carried out. Since 1957 the Fine Arts Department has had as a project the improvement of the National Museum concurrently with the improvement of other official bodies. Details will be found in the pages following information about the relation between the National Museum in its capacity as a member of the International Council of Museums and the other member-museums.



A Bussabokmālā in the western part of the Issarawinitchai Hall.



Chao Sam Phraya National Museum, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya.



Some pieces of the exhibits displayed in Chao Sam Phraya National Museum.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS

After the Second World War, in 1946 the late Mr. Chauncey J. Hamlin, who was then the President of the Buffalo Museum of Science, N.Y., U.S.A., submitted a project for the establishment of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Its importance summarized in its aim and procedures will be mentioned later. This institution is closely related to UNESCO, which has offered the Council necessary help and a financial support. Today, ICOM has over 66 National Committees including one in Thailand and a further 16 countries in which ICOM is represented. Its effects are felt throughout the five continents of the world. Through its National Committee, each member-state has contact with the Executive Committee, Advisory Board and the Secretariat, whose headquarters is in Paris, France. A member-state will send its delegates to participate in the General Conference which is previously held every two years but now every three years. An extract from the statutes of the ICOM concerning the definition of a museum, aims and methods of ICOM and its members is as follows:



Ramkhamhaeng National Museum, Sukhothai.

SECTION II DEFINITION OF A MUSEUM

Article 3

ICOM shall recognize as a museum any permanent institution which conserves and displays, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, collections of objects of cultural or scientific significance.

Article 4

Within this definition fall:

- (a) exhibition galleries permanently maintained by public libraries and collections of archives;
- (b) historical monuments and parts of historical monuments or their dependencies, such as cathedral treasuries, historical, archaeological and natural sites, which are officially open to the public;
- (c) botanical and zoological gardens, aquaria, vivaria, and other institutions which display living specimens;
- (d) natural reserves.

SECTION III AIMS AND METHODS OF ICOM

Article 5

As the international organization representing museums and the museum profession, ICOM has for its aims:

- (a) to stress the essential unity of purpose behind the museum concept;
- (b) to further cooperation between museums and members of the museum profession in different countries;
- (c) to protect and promote the interests of museums and the museum profession and widen their influence;
- (d) to emphasize the importance of the part played by museums and the museum profession in each community, and in the promotion of knowledge and understanding among peoples;
- (e) to cooperate with other international organizations whose aims are similar to those of ICOM and especially with UNESCO.



Part of the gallery displaying the Dvāravatī objects in the southern wing, National Museum, Bangkok.

Article 6

Among the methods by which ICOM shall carry out these aims are:

- (a) to establish itself in the largest possible number of countries and to recruit the greatest number of qualified members;
- (b) to set up study group and working parties, either permanent or temporary;
- (c) to organize and encourage:
 - (i) large international conferences of museum experts,
 - (ii) smaller international meetings of specialists on museums and kindred subjects;
- (d) to encourage the international exchange of experts and students, missions of experts, travelling scholarships in museology, and international seminars on the improvement of museum techniques;
- (e) to study the problems involved in the international exchange of museum objects;
- (f) to organize international exhibitions, to keep a watching brief on the quality, technical methods and the coordination of international exhibitions in which museums take part;
- (g) to carry out international surveys;
- (h) to encourage the exchange of information and publications;
- (i) to issue periodical or occasional publications;
- (j) to collect documents dealing with museum subjects, and to make them accessible;
- (k) to promote, in addition to missions of museum experts, the free flow of documents, objects and technical material relating to museum.



Part of the gallery showing Lop Buri art, National Museum, Bangkok.

SECTION IV MEMBERS

Article 7

ICOM shall be composed of Active Members, Associate Members, Supporting Members and Honorary Members.

Article 8

The number of Active Members shall be limited. They shall be drawn from the following categories:

(a) Directors of Museums, or Permanent Heads of Institutions directly responsible for Museums; qualified members of museum staff, whatever their duties; persons engaged in educational services in Museums; Museum Inspectors, former members of the Museum Profession, as defined above; members of the technical staff of Museum laboratories and scientific workshops;

(b) Librarians and Archivists; members of Governing Bodies and of Institutions responsible for the administration of Museums; specialists working, by reason of their professional activities, in collaboration with museum staff; distinguished persons who are associated with Museums.

Each National Committee may elect 15 active members.

Article 9

The number of Associate Members shall be unlimited. It shall consist of the following categories:

- (a) persons having the same qualifications as active members;
- (b) museums and comparable institutions.

Article 10

The number of supporting members shall be unlimited. They shall be drawn from the following categories:

- (a) persons having the same qualifications as active members;
- (b) institutions with scientific, cultural, or educational aims.

Article 11

The Executive Committee shall nominate a limited number of Honorary Members from among persons who have rendered exceptionally distinguished services to museums.

HONORARY MEMBERS

His Majesty the King of Sweden
 Mr. Douglas A. Allan (United Kingdom)
 Mr. Torsten Althin (Sweden)
 Mr. Guglielmo de Angelis d'Ossat (Italy)
 Sir Leigh Ashton (United Kingdom)
 Mrs. Marthe Benoist d'Azy Moltke (France)
 Mr. Julien Cain (France)
 Mr. Frédéric Gysin (Switzerland)
 Mr. Jan van der Haagen (The Netherlands)
 Mr. William M. Milliken (United States)
 Mr. Georges Salles (France)

Thailand has become a member of the ICOM since 1947 and it that year by the virtue of the statute the Government appointed the first National Committee for the International Council of Museums.

The First National Committee of Thailand

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. H.H. Prince Dhaninivat | Chairman |
| 2. H.S.H. Princess Poonpismai Diskul | |
| 3. M.R. Devāthirāj P. Mālākul | |
| 4. Phya Anuman Rajadhon | |
| 5. Phya Vinitvanandorn | |
| 6. Luang Boribal Buribhand | |

H.H. Prince Dhaninivat, the Chairman who was promoted to the rank of Kromamün Bidyalābh Bridhyākorn went with some members to attend the first General Conference in France in 1948, and also the third General Conference in Italy in 1953. The Thai National Committee has been changed many times. In 1959 H.H. Kromamün Bidyalābh resigned his post as the Chairman. In that year the Government appointed a new National Committee having Mr. Dhanit Yupho, Director General of the Fine Arts Department as the Chairman. The present National Committee was appointed in 1967. The names of the members are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Mr. Dhanit Yupho | Chairman |
| 2. Princess Chumbhot of Nakara Svarga | |
| 3. Phya Anuman Rajadhon | |

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 4. H.H. Prince Prem Purachatra | |
| 5. Colonel Damnern Lekhakul | |
| 6. Dr. Pradisth Cheosakul | |
| 7. Associate Professor Kasin Suvatabandhu | |
| 8. Mr. Vija Sethaput | |
| 9. Professor Sood Saengvichien | |
| 10. Police Major-General Surapon Chulabrāhm | |
| 11. Police Colonel Suthas Sukhumvat | |
| 12. Professor M.C. Subhadradis Diskul | |
| 13. Mr. Chin You-di | |
| 14. Mrs. Chira Chongkol | Secretary |
| 15. Mr. Vidya Intakosai | Assistant Secretary |

For 12 years after the 3rd General Conference in Italy in 1953 no member of the Thai National Committee attended a General Conference. The only contact made with the ICOM headquarters during this period was through correspondence and the sending of an annual subscription, so the National Committee knew very little about the resolutions and suggestions of the General Conference and the developments in the other member countries. Yet in the last decade Thailand has made progress both in the development of the museums and in archaeological activities: the museum improvement, the construction of more provincial museums, the organization of a travelling exhibition of Thai arts to many countries, surveys and excavations at archaeological sites. Thai archaeologists worked in cooperation with foreign scholars at both pre-historic and historic sites and also worked without any foreign colleagues. Such progress



A painted bookcase for holding Buddhist manuscripts, Bangkok Period. It is on display in Phutthaisawan Chapel.



should have been announced to the General Conference and to other member states, but they had no opportunity to do so.

At the beginning of 1965 the Chairman of the Thai National Committee received a letter from the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of United States of America, the host country, inviting the National Committee to send some delegates to participate in the 7th General Conference of ICOM to be held in New York from the end of September to the beginning of October 1965. At the meeting of the Thai National Committee it was decided that the Fine Arts Department should request, on behalf of the National Committee of the Government, approval to send some members to the General Conference.

Following the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers, a Thai delegation consisting of 5 members of the Committee attended the General Conference in New York. They were Mr. Vija Sethaput, Mr. Kasin Suvatabandhu, Mr. Chin You-di, Mrs. Chira Chongkol and Mr. Dhanit Yupho, Director-General of the Fine Arts Department, who headed the delegates. The General Conference took place at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Arts from September 22 to October 4, 1965. It was attended by more than 600 active members and 200 associate members from 60 member states. After the plenary and working sessions the participants in the General Conference elected the new President and members of the Executive Committee. Dr. A. van Schendel, Director of the National Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands, was elected as President and Mr. Hugues de Varine-Bohan as the Director of the Secretariat.

THE WORK OF DEVELOPING THE BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM

The project for developing the Bangkok National Museum that has been carried out since 1957 has already been mentioned. Developments had to wait until the other official bodies could be moved from the precincts of the National Museum, so progress was slow in the beginning. Meanwhile the Fine Arts Department did what it could: construction of buildings for the Chao Sām Prayā National Museum in Ayudhya, for the Ramkhamhaeng National Museum in Sukhothai and also for the U-thong National Museum in Suphan Buri,

re-organization of some provincial museums and planning a project to establish museums in other provinces, and minor works done on the Bangkok National Museum. The front gate of the Museum was moved from the space in front of the Sivamokkha Bimān Hall to its present location, while the Long-song Pavilion was transferred from a lawn near the shell for open-air music to a site near the front gate and used as the Museum shop. Apart from the repair of the Museum fence and roads within its precincts, the Fine Arts Department also repaired the Long-song Pavilion, Ekalongkot Pavilion and Buddhai Savariya Chapel. At the same time the museum staff were trained to carry out their work more efficiently. The construction of the new wings of the the Bangkok National Museum began in 1963.

First of all the Red Residence (Tamnak Daeng) was transferred from its site north-west of the group of residences to a place in the opposite direction. The wooden building for depositing books and manuscripts was pulled down and the site was replaced in the southern and western parts of the precincts of the National Museum by a brick wall that separates the Museum from the Thammasat University. Thus the wall encloses the southern and northern parts of the National Museum. Other works were the repair of the Isares Rājānusorn Residence, the construction of roads within the precincts and the beautifying of the site.

It is realized that the development of the National Museum can succeed not only by making efforts to obtain a budget for the repair of the old building and construction of the new permanent ones, but also by the systematic display along modern lines. To reflect the results of the cooperation with foreign archaeologists and the intensive investigations into the pre-historic and historic archaeology of this land, the curators of the National Museum tried their best to display clearly and distinctly the exhibits in the galleries of the two new buildings and the old ones based on styles and periods, so that visitors could admire or study easily. At the request of the Fine Arts Department, Dr. Grace Morley, UNESCO Museum Expert, was sent to Thailand on the first phase of a mission on March 2, 1967 and the second phase on March 22, 1967. Her mission was to help and give advice on the display of the museum objects. On her return she wrote a letter to the Director-General of the Fine Arts Department which reads as follows:



Phra Tamnak Daeng (The Red Mansion), Palace to the Front, Bangkok. It was used to be King Pin Klao's residence.

Dr. Grace Morley,
Adviser on Museums,
Govt, of India,
Ministry of Education.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

April 15, 1967.

Dear Mr. Yupho,

May I thank you for your courtesies during my second visit, to Bangkok, March 22 through March 30 as part of my UNESCO mission in relation to the National Museum and museum development in general in this country.

As you know, this time I gave all my time to the National Museum, where the final preparations for the formal inauguration are being carried out. I saw what had been accomplished in the exhibition galleries and reviewed with those in charge what remained to do to bring their various plans to completion. I must congratulate you

on the success of the installations. In all the galleries the standard is very high; labelling is attractive and is on a high level of education, with good text (as I judge by the English, of course), excellent maps which are decorative as well as instructive and a discreet and effective use of photographs to illustrate settings or architectural complexes from which exhibited objects come.

It is especially difficult to make pre-history material attractive and interesting. Thanks to varied and striking examples and that extremely handsome building, in which the exhibition occupies the central portion, and the surrounding areas have been turned to effective use for offices and work space, the pre-history exhibition, with which the visit to the Museum should normally open, is outstanding. The pre-history of the country, in which such excellent work has obviously been done and continues to be carried on, and which can show such an interesting range of exhibits receives the attention that it deserves.

The new building which house the historic archaeology and arts provide excellent space and it has been utilized well. I like the sensitive use of color and the thoughtful arrangement of the objects, according to their character and scale. The “display ” has been exceedingly well done everywhere, and, of course, the National Museum has collections of such fine quality that showing them well assures beautiful galleries.

I like especially the fact that the manner of installation, its style and “personality” one might say, have been evolved from the requirements of the material and therefore, though in harmony with international standards of installation, the National Museum’s new galleries have found their own individual character. I think you can feel content that when the National Museum opens it will truly takes its place among the great museums of the world.

Obviously finishing all the detail required for the perfection to which everyone is aspiring for the inauguration requires priority and all attention and work at present.

The next priority, however, is clearly to give to the National Museum a definitive administrative pattern corresponding to its importance as an institution pre-eminent in the country in culture, archaeology, arts and education. On this visit I was able to understand more fully the present interim organization and the potentialities of the National Museum once it opens all its halls to the public. In a separate letter to you I make suggestions for the permanent organization of the Museum: they are based on rather wide international observations, but obviously must be sensitively adapted and adjusted to the administration of the country.

Meanwhile I was eager that you learn as quickly as I could send word in formal way how favourable my impressions are of the National Museum’s exhibition aspects and thus confirm in writing what I had expressed to you when I called upon you.

Let me congratulate you on what I know must be to you a most gratifying success in bring a new form to the National Museum.

All good wishes.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr. GRACE MORLEY)

Mr. Dhanit Yupho,
Director-General,
Fine Arts Department,
Ministry of Education,
Bangkok, Thailand.

After consultations with the authorities concerned the Fine Arts Department decided that the Museum was ready for the inauguration ceremony, so I requested H.E. the Minister of Education to invite Their Majesties the King and the Queen to preside over the ceremony, which had been performed once before on November 10, 1926 by Their Majesties King Prajādhīpok and Queen Rambai Barni. The Office of the Royal Secretariat replied by informing H.E. the Minister that H.M. the King would come to the National Museum on May 25, 1967. On that day the King arrived at 4.45 p.m. and entered the Buddhā Savariya Chapel through the front door. There he paid homage to the Phra Buddha Sihing Image. After that he left the place through the back door and proceeded to the Isrā Vinicchaya Hall, where he took his seat. Then H.E. the Minister of Education read a report of the construction of the new buildings and the installations of the objects in the galleries. The King made a reply and thence went to the Sivamokkha Bimān Hall to cut the ribbons as a mark of the inauguration. After viewing the pre-historic material in the Hall, he proceeded to see the exhibition in the Red Residence and in galleries of the southern wing. Then he went to the northern wing to see the exhibits in the textiles room, the coins room and other galleries both in the first floor and second floor. H.M. the King spent about 3 hours going from gallery to gallery. On his return to the Isrā Vinicchaya Hall he had tea. There he viewed the archaeological dances until 8.15 p.m. Then he left for the royal palace.

News of the royal visit to the Bangkok National Museum appeared in many newspapers. An extract of the news from the STANDARD of May 27, 1967 reads as follows:

THE PASSING HOURS

In these days when nations and people are plunging recklessly forward, it is too often forgotten that it is impossible to shape the future without having a perfect understanding of the past. That is why the role of history is still just as important as it ever was, that research into the past is as necessary as research of the present and the future, that museums are not repositories of archaic junk but valuable clues to the evolution of future human progress.

It is satisfactory to note that the Thai Government has full cognizance of these facts in making possible a recent grant to the Siam Society enabling it to carry on the research work maintained in its research library and ethnological museum, and now its budgetary allocation which has enabled the Fine Arts Department, under the inspired leadership of Mr. Dhanit Yupho, to open two new buildings of the National Museum in Bangkok incorporating spacious new galleries for display of its already rich collections. Up till now, the treasures of the National Museum had been piled into such inadequate space that the place resembled a packed godown where any serious study of the objects was barely possible. Now, with ten million bahts' worth of new galleries with ample space and illumination and uncrowded showcases, scholars and research workers and students alike, not to mention tourists, will be able to browse to their hearts' content.

His Majesty the King, who opened the new buildings on May 25, spent more than two hours going from gallery to gallery, from pre-history to the Bangkok period, inspecting the treasures of a storied past, including human remains of the bronze age, neolithic pottery, Buddha statues through the centuries, coins and textiles. In the Ayudhya Gallery, His Majesty drew an ancestral sword from its golden scabbard, a privilege of the Sovereign alone.

Those who had the honour of accompanying His Majesty, and those who will later visit the new galleries of the National Museum in Bangkok, must concur that never has public money been better spent than on this effort to preserve and display the heritage of a nation of South-East Asia.



The first stone inscription, shown inside the Gallery of the Thai History, National Museum, Bangkok.



A view of Lop Buri Room, part of the Gallery of the History of Art in the National Museum, Bangkok.

A Note on Spelling

As most of the proper names in this book were written in the Pali and Sanskrit languages, the editorial board has provided a table comparing them with the spelling according to the Royal Institute's Principles for the Romanization of the Thai Script which is more familiar and widely used today as shown below.

Words written in the Pali and Sanskrit languages.	Words transcribed to the Royal Institute's Principles for the Romanization of the Thai Script
Ayudhya	Ayutthaya
Bovorasathān Sudhāwās	Bowonsathan Sutthawat
Buddhai Savariya	Phutthaisawan
Chandrakasem	Chankasem
Isares Rājānusorn	Itsaretrachanuson
	Issaretrachanuson (widely used)
Isrā Vinicchaya	Itsarawinitchai
	Issarawinitchai (widely used)
Mahā Sakdi Balaseb	Maha Sakdi Phonlasep
Mahā Surasinghanāda	Maha Surasinghanat
Mēru Bimān	Men Phiman
Mukhakaran	Mukkhasan
Na Phra-Dhatu	Na Phra That
Phra Buddha Sihinga	Phra Phuttha Sihing
PRĀPĀS-BIBIDHABHANDA	Praphat-Phiphitthaphan
Rājabūrana	Ratchaburana
Rajadamnern-nai	Ratchadamnoen-nai
Rajini	Rachini
Sivamokkha Bimān	Siwamokphiman
Vajirañāna	Wachirayan
Vasanta Bimān	Wasanta Phiman

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