



No.8 June 2010

- » Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Building
- » Fabulous Friday Morning with the Japanese Ambassador
- » International Conference

Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Building



“Substance over style” would not only be a good way to describe the Faculty’s new, beautifully functional Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Building, but also captures the atmosphere of the latter’s historic inauguration on Friday, March 26, 2010. Greeted in the ground-floor open-air gallery by an audience that was as enthusiastic as diverse—ranging from undergraduates to distinguished diplomats and scholars—none other than Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn herself graciously presided over the ceremony. After the President of Chulalongkorn University, Professor Pirom Kamolratanakul, M.D., had started the proceedings by informing the public about the current status of the Faculty’s new landmark building, the Princess acknowledged and rewarded those individuals who had contributed to making its construction possible, presenting the project supporters with pins imprinted with her initials. On a day devoted to the Arts in Thailand—Her Royal Highness was also due to visit her other favorite Humanities place, the annual Book Fair—she dedicated a great deal of time and care to our Faculty, not only unveiling the building’s name, but also planting a ceremonial tree and inscribing her name. Representatives of several countries with close ties to the Faculty of Arts were invited by the Dean and the Section of International Affairs.





Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Building (continued)



His Excellency Guan Mu, the Ambassador of the Republic of China, His Excellency Kyoji Komachi, the Ambassador of Japan, Mr. James Entwistle, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, Mr. John Paul Schutte, Cultural Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Mr. Stefan Duppel, Head of Mission, Embassy of Germany, and Mrs. Anne-Emmanuelle Grossi, Attaché de Coopération Pour le Français, Embassy of France were granted an audience with the Princess, who proceeded to take them on a brief personal tour of the new building. The dignitaries had a chance to admire the elegant functionality of the place in general as well as the history exhibition on the second floor in particular, before being shown two real academic jewels of the Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Building on the eight floor. Her Royal Highness officially opened the Confucius Institute and the Sirindhorn Thai Language Center. Bridging Thai and international scholarship, as well as language studies and culture, this last act suitably symbolizes the character of the whole ceremony; the University, thanks to Her Royal Highness's immense kindness, gained a new place of diversity, friendship, and in-depth scholarship and teaching.



Fabulous Friday Morning with the Japanese Ambassador



In the morning of Friday, February 12, 2010, the Faculty of Arts was honored by a visit from the Japanese Ambassador, His Excellency Kyoji Komachi, and his wife. The dignitaries had been invited by the Dean, Assistant Professor Dr. Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, the Section of International Affairs under Associate Professor Surapeepan Chatraporn, and the Japanese Section of the Department of Eastern Languages.

The status of this rare visit was underscored by the veritable collection of hosts. His Excellency Mr. Komachi and his wife were greeted with a warm welcome from virtually everybody in our Faculty associated with Japan and the study of it: the Dean, Assistant Professor Dr. Prapod Assavavirulhakarn; the Deputy Dean for International Affairs, Associate Professor Surapeepan Chatraporn; the Deputy Dean for Research, Associate Professor Dr. Kingkarn Thepkanjana; the Deputy Dean

for Administration, Assistant Professor Kongkarn Tavetheekul; the Deputy Dean for Student Affairs, Assistant Professor Sankavat Pradithpongse; the Head of the Department of Eastern Languages, Assistant Professor Dr. Voravudhi Chirasombutti; the Head of the Japanese Section, Ajarn Namthip Methasate; the Faculty staff of the Japanese Section, and the students. Over 120 of the latter, both Japanese minors and majors from the regular undergraduate program, the BALAC international program and the graduate program welcomed the distinguished visitors in room 105, Maha Chulalongkorn Building, actively participating in the question-and-answer session and listening attentively to the Ambassador's words.



Upon arrival, the Ambassador and his wife had embarked on a special tour of the historic Maha Chulalongkorn Building with the Dean himself as the special guide who provided anecdotes from his days as a student at the Faculty as a particular treat. After the brief but comprehensive tour (plus a glimpse of the new Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Building from the second floor of the Maha Chulalongkorn Building), the tour party proceeded to room 105, where students were waiting to greet the Ambassador and his wife.

In the question-answer session, arranged by Dr. Duantem Krisdathanont and moderated by MCs, Ms. Wilasinee Songsri and Mr. Arnon Buasaengtham, the Ambassador and his wife kindly answered every single question from the students—both in Japanese and in English—ranging from inquiries about Japanese culture, Thai affairs, Japanese and Thai relations to the issue of prospects for further studies on the graduate level in Japan, a question that made every student visibly perk up with interest.



Fabulous Friday Morning with the Japanese Ambassador

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Regarding culture, when asked about culture shock, His Excellency advised the students that from his personal experience, culture shock could simply be overcome with respect and understanding. Confronted with the classic question about what he liked most about Thailand and its culture, the Ambassador said that he found Thai people's hospitality most impressive, and the Ambassador's wife added that to her Thai people are serene and beautiful (this was greeted with smiles and giggles from the students). Having said so, His Excellency Mr. Komachi also showed us true Japanese hospitality by generously proposing an invitation for students and faculty to join the Hinamatsuri festival celebration (the Japanese doll festival on Girl's day) on March 3, at his residence, generating an enthusiastic response from the students and the faculty members who could still remember how delicious the 'kaki' (Japanese plum) was from the previous visit to his residence. The exuberant session ended impressively with the students seeing the Ambassador and his wife off by singing the Faculty of Arts' song, March Aksorn, making the visit memorable to all who were present. Although this Japan-themed gathering was short, only about an hour, it is clear that the memory of it, peppered with smiles and laughter, will linger on well for a long time.



International Conference



The Faculty of Arts in collaboration with the Embassy of India held an international conference on "Archaeology of Buddhism in Asia" from March 31 to April 1, 2010 at the Dipak E. Jain Hall, Sasa International House and Pathumwan Princess Hotel. Dean Dr. Prapod Assavavirulhakarn and His Excellency Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty together with his wife, Dr. Radharani Chakravarty, co-presided over the opening ceremony and the lighting of the lamp in the Indian tradition. The conference, fully funded by the Embassy of India, and organized by staff members of the Section of International Affairs, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University was a pioneering attempt in Thailand at initiating academic dialogue and discussion on the Archaeology of Buddhism in Asia. As the lively exchanges during the two-day conference indicated, there was active participation from the audience, which included faculty members of Chulalongkorn University, researchers, archaeologists from the Fine Arts Department of Thailand and Friends of the Museum, Bangkok.



Among the invited speakers and presenters were, for instance, Dr. Gautam Sengupta, Director General, Archaeology Survey of India, Prof. A. Jamkhedkar, Director of K.J. Somaiya Center for South & South East Asian Studies, Mumbai, Prof. Dr. Himanshu Prabha Ray, Conference Director from JNU, Dr. Chedha Tingsanchali, Silapakorn University, Capt. Boonyarit Chaisuwan, Office of Fine Arts, Pluket, Dr. Sisit Charoengwongsa, SPAFA, and Dr. Bunchar Pongpanich, M.D., Buddhadasa Bhikku Museum. Each session was smoothly run by MCs Dr. Ingo Peters, and Ajarn Mathurin Leelasathakul.

We are at Your Service.

The Committee Members of the Section of International Affairs, which comprises Deputy Dean Surapeepan Chatraporn, Dr. Brett Farmer, Charunee Hongcharu, Dr. Duanthem Krisdathanont, Dr. Ingo Peters, Dr. Julispong Chularatana, Dr. Nurida Hayiyakoh, Pawit Mahasarinand, Dr. Piriya-dit Manit, Dr. Sasern Petcharpiruch, Dr. Sirivan Chulakorn, Mathurin Leelasathakul, Wipada Petcharak, and Walailuk Chorpankul as secretary, welcome advice and suggestions concerning any plans and activities. We aim to encourage a fully internationalized environment and to promote increased networking with overseas institutions and scholars. If you would like to talk to us, you can contact any of the committee members. We would be very happy to hear from you and cooperate closely with you.



International Conference

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The papers focused around two main themes: first, accounts of archaeological work undertaken at Buddhist sites in different regions of India, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Cambodia were presented and analyzed. As summed in the concluding session, monuments are the earliest surviving 'documents' for the practice of Buddhism in Asia and hence constitute crucial evidence for understanding the development and expansion of Buddhism across Asia. Monuments are however primarily religious structures and there is an urgent need to critically examine the information provided by them within clearly defined conceptual frameworks.

A second theme that emerged prominently in the paper presentations was trade contacts between peninsular India and south Thailand, which date to as early as the third-second century BCE and continue well into the historical period. The evidence for these contacts is provided by a range of beads manufactured locally as also imported, and made of carnelian, glass, metals such as gold and a variety of other material. That these beads formed a part of larger maritime networks that involved the spread of language and scripts, as also religious ideas, is evident from the presence of carnelian seals with names written in Sanskrit or Prakrit in the Brahmi script and the adoption of auspicious symbols such as the *triratna*, *nandipada*.

