

REPORT

Published in Vihangama 2003 Vol. I (March - April)

CONFERENCE ON INDONESIAN ART



Dr. Najma Heptullah being ushered in

India and Indonesia share a common cultural heritage and their traditional art styles have great similarities. IGNCA, in collaboration with the Embassy of Indonesia in New Delhi, organized a three-day "International Conference on Indonesia Art" from March 4 to 6, 2003. The Conference was aimed at promoting a deeper understanding of the rich art heritage of Indonesia. Eminent art historian from Australia, Germany, India, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and United Kingdom participated in the Conference and presented their papers. In all 28 papers were presented, including two in absentia.

The Conference was inaugurated on March 4, 2003 by Dr. L.M. Singhvi, President, IGNCA Trust. He spoke of the old cultural relations between India and Indonesia, which were established through trade. The missionaries also took active role in spreading their religious cults i.e. Buddhism and Hinduism. Dr. Singhvi also spoke on the prevalence of different versions of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in Indonesia.

In his welcome address, Prof. N.R. Shetty, the then Member Secretary, IGNCA, drew attention to the classical art of Indonesia and said, "the art style of Indonesia is very close to India and it developed in different phases, in its own cultural milieu". Prof. Sachchidanand Sahai, former pro-Vice Chancellor, Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya, explained the conceptual framework of the Conference referring to the visit of great poet, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to the island of Java in the first quarter of twentieth century. The poet had appealed for research into the shared cultural heritage between Indian and Indonesia in the dim distant past. Prof. Sahai emphasized on the need to study the Indonesian sensibility to beauty and aesthetics and to rediscover the creative genius of the Indonesian people and their great contribution to Indian culture.

Prof. Edi Sedyawati, former Director General, Ministry of Culture, Government of Indonesia, in her opening remarks said the traditional arts have declined because of lack of attention. She said the socio-cultural changes have affected the customs and traditional rituals, once very closely linked with traditional arts. She pleaded for the urgent revival of the indigenous artistic proficiency, inherited through traditions. Prof. Sedyawati is presently with the University of Indonesia.

In his keynote address H.E. Mr. Mangasi Sihombing, Director General for Information, Public Diplomacy and International Treaties, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Indonesia, mentioned that the Indonesian art is a proof of close relations between Indonesia and India. As early as 78 AD, the Sanskrit language and the Pallava script were introduced by the Indian prince Aji Caka, and were later adapted into Kawi, a language of the ancient period of Java. Mr. Sihombing underlined that the Indian culture and civilization were incorporated into local culture, such as the government system, architecture, literature, music and dance. Dr. Bachchan Kumar, IGNCA, proposed a vote of thanks.

The first session, on General Art was chaired by Dr. Lokesh Chandra, in which two papers were presented. On the basis of Wanua Tengah (WT) III inscription, Roy E. Jordaan posed questions on the origin of the Sailendra Dynasty. WT III inscription gives an uninterrupted list of kings ruling Central Java in the period between the 8-10 C AD. and throws a new light on the art history and archaeology of Central Java. He argued that the scrutiny of the other scholars reveals various invalidating flaws in their historical analysis, which underscored the theory that the Sailendras were a foreign dynasty. Their original home might have been India, Sri Lanka or main-land South East Asia. Dr. Shashibala presented here paper on "Syena-Citi at Chandi Ceto in Java and Empowerment of the Kings". Discussing the architectural designs and carvings in the temple, she said that the Javanese always turned to their ancestral faiths, guardians and protectors and performed rituals and ceremonies to invoke the protective power to seek help when their empires ran into difficult times. The Syena-citi at Chandi Ceto is one of the temples made for this purpose.



Participants at the Conference

In session II, papers were presented on the theme 'Pre-historic art, archaeology, and sculptures.' It was presided by Prof. Edi Sedyawati. Dr. K.N. Dixit and Dr. D.P. Sharma presented their papers on Pre-historic art. Speaking on "Megaliths in Indonesia: An Asian Perspective, Dr. Dixit said the megaliths of Indonesia have been placed in Bronze-Iron Age and their date varies between first millennium BC to first millennium AD. The megaliths of Indonesia have their parallels in South Asian countries, through culturally they do not have any connection. Dr. Sharma spoke on "Pre-historic Cultures of South East Asia with special reference to Indonesia".

Dr. Najma Heptulla, Hon'ble Chairperson Rajya Sabha, who was present on the occasion, expressed her pleasure in associating herself with this Conference. Mentioning the cultural similarities between India and Indoneisa, she said during her last visit to Jakarta, she saw the *Ramayana* performance and noticed the acceptance and assimilation of Indian culture in the Indonesian society. Four papers were discussed on sculptures. Dr. Endang Sri Hardiati presented her paper on "Ancestor Statues on Ancient Bali". In Bali, ancient statues can be classified into two groups: one group represents Hindu/Buddhist deities and another group is of non-divine statues. Non-divine statues were the focus of her paper. During *pitra-yajna*, non-divine statues were made in order to summon the soul of their ancestors to descend on the statues for acceptance of the offerings. Mrs. Pooja Bhatnagar, in her paper "Trailokyavijaya", explained the meaning, importance and iconography of the statues of Trailokyavijaya found in Indonesia. In his paper "durga Mahisasuramardani in the Art of Indonesia". Dr. Bachchan Kumar mentioned that over 500 images of this deity have been found in Indonesia. It reveals the fact that the deity was widely worshipped. Dr. John Guy presented his paper on "Southern Buddhism and Southeast Asian Buddha

Images: Searching the Indonesian Record."

'Temple Architecture' was the theme of the third session. It was presided by Professor Phasook Indrawooth. Professor Timbul Haryone presented his paper on "Architecture in Early Java from the 7th to the 15th century AD: A Case Study on Hindu Temple." Comparing the architectural style of the temples he pointed out the changes in the design and size of the temple. Other papers discussed during this session were by Dr. Lokesh Chandra on "Indonesian Bronzes and Gobu-shingan," Dr. Nandana Chutiwongs on "Re-appraising Chandi Singhasari," Dr. S. Nagaraju on "Art and Ideology: the Role of Local Genius in Indonesian Art," Dr. Roy E. Jordan's second paper on "The Foundation Date of Candi Badut Reconsidered." Dr. Malini Saran on "Some Questions on the Dating of Prambanan Temple," and Dr. Padma Subramanyam on "*Karanas* Sculptures of Prambanan." Dr. subramanyam recognizes 53 *Karanas* at the balustrade of Prambanan, a Siva temple and argues that they are the exact codification of *Karanas* (dance postures) of *Natayasastra*. She felt that the balustrade of Prambanan had 108 *Karanas* in perfect serial order as found in the *Natayasastra*. Dr. Newal K. Agnihotri, a delegate from USA could not participate in the Conference. His paper on "A Glimpse of Temple Architecture in Indonesia" was brought to the notice of Chairperson.

Session on "Continuity of Art and Narrative Reliefs" had three presentations. Prof. Phasook Indrawooth in her paper on "Srivijaya Art in Peninsular Thailand" explained that the total artistic production in the Peninsular Thailand during Srivijaya Period illustrate influence from Java as well as from northeastern and southern India. professor Chirapat Prapandvidya presented his paper on "The Inscription of Wat Semamuang: The Definite Evidence of Cultural and Political Link between Ancient Indonesia and Ancient Thailand." The inscription of Wat Semmamunag, dated 755 A.D. records that the King of Srivijaya constructed three residential buildings for the *Kajakara*, one who holds a lotus, for *Marasundana*, one who destroys *Mara*, and for *Bajrin*, one who have a *vajra* or thunderbolt. It also revealed that there were close cultural and political relations between Thailand the Indonesia. In his paper 'Indonesian Art in Continuum Frame', Dr. B.B. Kumar highlighted the iconography of the trinity, the Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and other deities. The deification has been a common phenomenon both in India and Indonesia.

Session V on theme "Religion, Philosophy and Cosmological Setting of Art." was presided by Prof. Timbul Haryono. The paper 'Ki Brayut and Ni Brayut, Hariti and Pancika; Protectors of Children in Java' was presented by Dr. Michaela Appel. She discussed Ki Brayut and Ni Brayut who were revered as the protectors of children in Indonesia. prof. Sachchidanand Sahai, in his paper "Concept of Meru in Indonesian Civilization and Aert", spoke on Meru and its location. Mr. I.K. Widhya's paper was on "Cosmological significance of Borobudur" which looked into the cosmology in the architecture of Borobudur. Three spheres of Buddhist cosmology i.e. the sphere of desire (*kamadhatu*), the form (*rupadhatu*) and the formless (*arupadhatu*) have been depicted in Borobudur, he said.

Session VI had as theme "Performing Art, Textiles and Conservation". It was presided by Dr. Michaela Appel. prof.,. Edi Sedyawati discussed "Character types in Javanese Performing Arts". As Dr. Jgomaya K.K. Saikia could not participate in the Conference, Dr. Radha Banerjee of the IGCA presented her paper. the paper on "The Javanese Syncretism and Wayang Kulit Purwa was presented by Dr. Karen Smith. She said the Wayang Kulit Purwa is the product of a fusion of Java's original belief systems with the elements from its Hindu-Buddhist period and the religious beliefs and values of Islam. Mr. Chrys Orchestra". Dr. Jasleen Dhamija discussed cloth and costume in her paper "Woven Links between Indonesia and India". Dr. Roland Sulva discussed the Conservation aspect of art in his paper "The Need for a Conservation Charter for Monuments and Sites of South and South East Asia". The valedictory address was given by Dr. Lokesh Chandra. He said the conference had shed new light on some vexed issues like the date of Sailendra, the *karanas* at Prambanan, etc. The participants at the conference proposed a conservation charter for ancient sites of South and South East Asia as several historically crucial sites were being lost due to neglect.

- Report by Dr. Bachchan Kumar