

Curriculum Vitae

Mr. Willard Van De Bogart was born in New York City. His secondary education was completed at Cambridge Academy in Cambridge, Massachusetts with Bachelors work from Ohio University and Masters work from the California Institute of the Arts and the University of Pittsburgh. His speciality is knowledge acquisition and on-line learning. Mr. Bogart has taught and lectured in universities in United States and France. His works are published in many Journals including "Leonardo" from MIT Press. He was a consultant to NASA's Technology Application Division prior to the 1st launch of the Space Shuttle in 1981.

Ancient civilizations and astronomy became a serious study after the discovery of the Cydonia region of Mars by the Viking-I spacecraft in 1976 eventually leading to research on Mayan and then Khmer temple construction in Laos and Cambodia and their relationship to astronomy. His latest work shows the origins of civilization in the Indus Valley and how star fields formed early cosmologies for cultures world wide. The history of the full solar eclipse which took place on July 22, 2009 over Varanasi was presented at IGNCA's lecture on July 13, 2009. His present lecture explores the origins and the ritual use of the swing throughout India and Thailand and its relationship to ancient celestial events.

Mr. Bogart is active in organizations which exchange information on the cultures of India and South East Asia. Currently he teaches in the Language Institute at Bangkok University in Thailand. His web site is http://www.earthportals.com/Portal_Messenger/willard.html

The Giant Swing: (Lo Ching Cha)

Brahmanical origins and its significance to the religious culture of Thailand

by

Mr. Willard G. Van De Bogart



INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Abstract

The Giant Swing is one of Thailand's most well known landmarks. What is less known about this historical landmark is its symbolic significance, which Phra Phuttha Yotfa Chulalok, (King Rama I) first installed in the center of "Krung Rattanakosin In-Ayothaya" 1782; the name given to the new capital after the fall of the 400 year old city of Ayutthaya in 1767. The city pillar (lak muang) was also a crucial installation linking the Indic linga cult associated with Lord Shiva. Both these installations (swing and pillar) were to establish the new city as the center of the universe similar to Lord Indra who occupied the center of the universe. These same installations are also found in ancient 10th century temples in India specifically the Chittuldroog temple of Chamondee. From its origins in Ayutthaya, when the swing was presented as a gift by Brahmin priests to Phrachao Ramathibodi, eleventh King of Siam, (1491-1529), it was used annually to honor the Hindu gods. In India the swing has been used for hundreds of years with its early beginnings going back even further to the aboriginal cultures which populated the Indian sub-continent. The swing has been used in fertility rites, religious rituals and as a symbol for the cosmological understanding of the universe. The swing was developed as a way to celebrate the beginnings of the New Year by cultures all over the world.

A discussion of how the swing came into existence and was used since early times, along with interpretations for its construction, will be presented and accompanied by photographs. The swing ceremony in Thailand is referred to as the Tripavay and Triyambavay which are the names of Tamil hymns composed by Saint Antal, which are still sung in India today and testify to the swing's Brahmanical origins. Although the pomp and ceremony accompanied by Kings and Queens that once formed an integral part of this royal ceremony no longer exist, the Brahmin priests at the Devasthan Bosth Brahman temple still conduct the annual swinging ritual on the second lunar month in January when the Hindu gods Shiva and Vishnu are invited to come to earth and be presented with gifts and oblations. The Giant Swing ceremony is the most important sacred ritual in Thailand to maintain the countries foundational roots as well as securing protection from the Hindu gods. The monarchy has thus become the defining focus of this eternal royal city so as to protect and give Thailand a lasting place on Mount Meru, which is that central part of heaven where Indra resides, and at the same time secure a sacred place on earth so the people of Thailand could enjoy their lives and prosper. The giant swing represents all this and much more. Rare film footage of the Giant Swing prior to 1930 will be shown as well as the video footage taken by the author of the most recent swing ceremony held on January 21, 2011 during the full moon.



INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE ARTS

cordially invites you to a lecture

by

Mr. Willard G. Van De Bogart
Language Institute, Bangkok University
Thailand

on the topic

The Giant Swing: (Lo Ching Cha)
Brahmanical origins and its significance to the
religious culture of Thailand

Friday, 8th April, 2011 at 4:30 PM

presided by
Professor Ganga Nath Jha

venue
Lecture Hall, Ground floor
11, Man Singh Road
New Delhi