

1. Interpreting Burmese Music from the 1920s to the 1990s – Sayuri Inoue, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Language and Culture, Osaka University, Japan

Abstract: Many articles on Burmese music have been written since the early 1900s. They cover the gradually emerging corpus of Burmese music, which includes elements such as *thachingyi*, *hkit haun*, and *kalabaw*. In this paper, I analyze Burmese music magazines—including *Didouk Journal*, *Gita Padeitha*, and *Myawadi*—collected from the Universities Central Library in Yangon, as well as Burmese books on music, published between the 1920s and the 1990s. Several classical song anthologies appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, followed by articles on Burmese classical music from writers such as U Khin Zaw and Didouk U Ba Cho. Didouk U Ba Cho energetically described Burmese music theory and the interpretation of specific *thachingyi* songs in *Didouk Journal*. In 1954, the Ministry of Culture published an official classical song anthology, and thereafter, articles on Burmese classical music were produced by writers such as U Goun Ban, Hla Thamein, Than Hlain, and Nan Nyunt Swe, who contributed articles on *thachingyi*—regarding subjects such as songs’ aesthetic aspects, critical theory, song genre explanations, and theoretical analysis—to *Gita Padeitha*. Some articles on non-Burmese music, such as Western classical music and Japanese music, appeared in the 1970s. After that, many article titles began to include the term “Myanmar’s music (or instrument).” Articles on the music of Rakhine, Kachin, and Mon appeared in the 1980s, and Burmese music was more often emphasized in other articles. Some experimental notations of *thachingyi*, which uses a numbering system based on Western scale names, were also employed at that time. Burmese music, especially *thachingyi*, became a single corpus through the editing of song anthologies. In addition, these articles demonstrate that the interpretation of Burmese music has changed slightly over time. Thus, in this paper, I discuss how Burmese music was interpreted and described from the 1920s to the 1990s.

2. Using Performance to Confront Censorship – Nathalie Johnston, Founder, Myanmar Art Evolution online platform; Founder, Myanmar Art Resource Centre and Archive; Co-founder, 7000 Padauk Art Space

Abstract: My research interests investigate how performance was used to confront censorship in Myanmar. Performance art practiced in Myanmar's current sociopolitical transition period is an extension of the community actions and vernacular theatre outlawed by censorship policies during the years 1962-2010. Such artistic expressions provide insight into a population's navigation through decades of isolating public policy and stifling creative environment, and in turn provides points of reference for the unrealized transitions out of censorship in neighboring countries. The artistic community often channels public dissent and protest. Throughout the Socialist period of Myanmar (1962-1988), artists envisioned a transitioning censorship state. What can be revealed through research of previously censored materials and conversations with the older “silenced” generation? How did their practice evolve over years of stringent policy? How is performance now changing in a post-censorship, transitioning Myanmar? After examining the evolution of performance art as an artistic medium through an MA dissertation, I attempted to connect the vernacular performance of the village as

evolving into performance art as contemporary artistic practice. Censorship, as a socio-political institution, fundamentally shifted the subject matter, content, methods and attitudes of both traditional and contemporary artists of this period. Beyond visual art, performance is able to reach a larger audience with theatre, activism, and public display. It accentuates the political leaders and the people themselves – the everyday struggle of the artist and activist. These stories lead to significant moments in political and artistic history; the investigation lies in the sources, conversations about, interactions with, and documentation of the performances held or created during this time by Myanmar artists; specifically locating such records in a post-censorship Myanmar. It is indispensable research, especially based on the fact that the transition from censorship to post-censorship is currently underway, and performance is in the midst of its own transition.

3. Key Intersections of Modern Dance with Dance Traditions of Burma – Christopher Miller, Assistant Professor and University Archivist, McConnell Library, Radford University, Tempe, Arizona, USA

Abstract: Modern dance emerged in the late nineteenth century as a response to ballet, the dominant performance paradigm of western concert dance, and grew in prominence through the first half of the twentieth century. An escape from the narrative structure, codified technique, and canon of ballet, modern dance sought an expansion of movement sources (somatics) that followed performance trajectories and forms made increasingly available by global exchange. This paper illuminates key intersections among prominent members of the professional modern dance community with the dance traditions of Burma. Most important among those are the Denishawn Dancers, led by Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis and featuring Jane Sherman, whose tour of Southeast Asia in 1926 offered the ensemble opportunity to study Burmese dance with Po Sein. Drawing on archival sources including filmed performances and personal accounts, the paper investigates the residual effects of artistic exchange, both on the performance aesthetics of the dancers as well as the Denishawn repertoire, which came to include the work “A Burmese Yein Pwe.” Further source material is considered from Irene Lewisohn's production of “A Burmese Pwé” at New York's legendary Neighborhood Playhouse in 1928, which featured a musical score by American composer Henry Eichheim that drew from *mahagita* and included among its instrumentation Burmese musical instruments acquired by the composer in Burma. Finally, the paper considers the 1977 travel to Burma of Eleanor King in the waning years of modern dance influence and as a measure of more sophisticated attitudes toward Burmese movement. By framing a study of artistic gesture and somatic practices in Burma from the perspective of the modern dance vanguard, the author hopes to illuminate insights and challenges of this dialogue as realized in physical bodies (as opposed to text) while suggesting a potential serious inquiry into the phenomenology of such exchanges.

4. “Good and Precious Women” in Burmese Military (Tatmadaw) Propaganda Films – Amara Thiha, PhD Candidate, Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal

Abstract: The idea of “Good and Precious Burmese Women” has been constructed and reproduced in Burmese society for the political agendas since the independence struggles. This idea becomes more prominent after the rise of state feminism during the socialist regime and plays a crucial role on the construction of nation and patriotism during the military regime. Military propaganda complex (Myawady) is one of the central elements on promoting the state feminism. Annual Armed Forces Day’s (Tatmadaw Day) military propaganda films were the most popular in the public due to the high numbers of artists starring in the films. All of these annual propaganda films delivered the messages related to gender role, gender stereotyping, homophobia and also never fail to support the state feminism through the dialogues and film’s plot. This article address, how did annual military propaganda films define “ Good Precious Burmese Women” for society? Plots, characters and dialogues from 25 military propaganda films produced by Myawady between 1988-2008 were analysed. According to the propaganda films, Burmese state feminism can be considered as the occidental feminism. Supporting for the modernity, however still rejecting the western interpretations of modernity and consider western norms are the threats to the nation and national identities. According to their discourses, women have the autonomy of their body only to the certain extend; while supporting on equality in economy, education and working conditions. Women are still require to be appreciated by the patriarchy society to be a dignify person, that is good and precious women. They only appreciate the women, who is supporting and reproducing the patriarchy norms as the necessity for the nation’s survival from western influences. This idea becomes the centre of contemporary ultra-nationalist movements in Burma as the reactionary anti-globalization movements.

5. Contemporary Women’s Art in Myanmar – Marie-Pierre Mol, Graduate Student, LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore

Abstract: Contemporary forms of expressions, such as performance art, installations and photography were fast adopted by Myanmar women artists since the mid 1990s. Inspired by certain international vanguard practices, they have chosen to use a visual vocabulary deeply anchored in local tradition and culture: Buddhist images and symbolism, for instance. They are distinctly Burmese in the way they embody and transmit tradition, a local sense of spirituality, morality and ethics as well as in the way they adopt a collaborative approach with the community. They are contemporary by their conceptual approach and thematic content. The objective of this paper is to show firstly, why and how women developed a voice of their own through writings, group shows and art collectives, and secondly, to analyze the contemporaneity of their art practices and works. In response to the constraints imposed on women in a male-centric society, Burmese women artists have used art to address social and political issues and to create a space for themselves. Even under the very strict censorship of the military regime, some artworks conceived by women artists advocated for freedom of expression and referred to gender issues. Although the concept of women’s art in

Myanmar is not connected to a feminist agenda, the strong commitment of women artists to transform society can be interpreted as the inception of a specific art movement.
