

# IN MEMORIAM



PHASOOK INDRAWOOTH  
(10 MAY 1945 – 7 SEPTEMBER 2016)



Professor Emerita of Archaeology, Phasook Indrawooth, passed away peacefully on 7 September 2016 at the age of 72 in Bangkok, Thailand. She joined her husband, who had died a few years earlier. The second of six daughters, Phasook Indrawooth was born on 10 May 1945. She became fascinated by Buddhism through her father, Major General [Dej Tulwantana](#), who wrote a book entitled *Buddhism: An Intellectual Approach*. Having made a significant contribution to the archaeology of Dvāravatī, an early Buddhist state that formed in central Thailand, Phasook Indrawooth went on to become a very distinguished professor and a leading archaeologist in Thailand and Southeast Asia. Indeed, her work has had a profound impact on the archaeology of Thailand as a whole.

Phasook Indrawooth earned a B.A. in Archaeology in 1967 from Silpakorn University, followed by an M.A. in 1971 and Ph.D. in 1979, both in Archaeology from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India. She joined the Department of Archaeology at Silpakorn University in 1974, where she remained until she officially retired in 2005. During her long career, she developed a great breadth of expertise and interests, including the archaeology of Dvāravatī, Srivijaya, and Suvannabhumi, Hindu and Buddhist iconography, and Indian archaeology.

At Silpakorn University, she served as Dean of the Faculty of Archaeology for two terms, between 1992–1996 and 2000–2004. She was a founding member of the Graduate Program in Archaeology and played a major role in strengthening the Ph.D. program at Silpakorn. In addition, she founded *Damrong Vichakarn Journal*. Published by the Faculty of Archaeology, the journal still serves as a platform for academic discussion in the fields of archaeology, anthropology, arts history, epigraphy, and eastern languages. Prof. Indrawooth also published intensively. Some of her most influential publications are listed in the selected bibliography below.

After her retirement, Phasook Indrawooth remained passionately committed to teaching and mentoring archaeology students. She was a great professor who always supported young students and archaeologists. She continued to write and publish her research regularly until the end of her life, while also providing frequent guest lectures at many universities and institutions in Thailand. She was known by her colleagues and students for her active energy, kindness, generosity, and dedication to archaeology and teaching. Throughout her life, she contributed immensely to Thai archaeology and to the general public.

The passing of Prof. Indrawooth brings great sadness and is a tremendous loss for our department. She definitely made a difference for Thai archaeology and was a role model for young female archaeologists. She will be always remembered for her significant contributions to our archaeology community and for her scholarship.

—Rasmi SHOONGDEJ

In her research and teaching Prof. Indrawooth pioneered a new methodology by successfully combining the disciplinary strengths of both art history and archaeology in the study of the historical periods of South and Southeast Asia. With a post-graduate degree and Ph.D. from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in Vadodara, India, Phasook Indrawooth introduced archaeology to the study of Dvāravatī culture, which until then was largely dominated by art history. In her 1985 publication on the pottery index from Dvāravatī period sites, she adopted a new approach comparing ceramics

excavated from historical sites in central Thailand such as Chansen, Nakhon Sawan province; Ban Ku Muang, Singburi province; Ban Tha Kae, Lopburi province; Ban Ku Bua, Rajburi province; and Nakhon Pathom, Nakhon Pathom province. This was done through a typological study combined with a chemical analysis that showed that the pottery had been locally produced from clay available in the Chao Phraya river basin. Many of the shapes were a continuation of earlier vessel types, while some were new introductions, such as spouted vessels, which showed similarities with those from archaeological sites in India.

The study helped determine links with the contemporary sites of Beikthano in Myanmar; Oc-Eo in Vietnam; and Sombor in Cambodia, thus establishing the period as one of cultural growth. Traditionally, historians had viewed Dvāravatī as a politically unified state with a well-defined territory encompassing a largely homogenous Mon population in the period from 600 to 1000 C.E. On the basis of similarity in the form of cultural materials rather than their content, Dvāravatī art was seen as representing the power of the state radiating from the centre. Thus, in secondary literature, there was an overemphasis on art and architecture, with little attention to settlement pattern and material culture (Vallibhotama 1986). This changed after Prof. Indrawooth's publication, which also pushed back the beginnings of the Dvāravatī period to 400 C.E.

Prof. Indrawooth also blazed a fresh trail when writing about sculpture and art dated to the Dvāravatī period. Rather than adopting the traditional art historical approach of focusing on form and style, she contextualized it in terms of concepts of state and kingship. She explained the presence of stone *dharmacakras* of the Dvāravatī period as symbolizing the Universal Emperor or Cakravartin. This is a concept that dates to Mauryan rule in third century B.C.E. South Asia and is based on the Buddhist notion of *dhamma*, which had then formed the basis of kingship, especially of King Ashoka.

Another aspect of the Dvāravatī period that interested her was the influence that both Buddhism and the many strands of Hindu worship had on one another over many centuries of being fused together in an almost seamless way. This is evident, for example, in a sculpture of Vanaspati that combined the vehicles of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma. This insight was important to explain the origins of Ganesha, the four faced Brahma, and many other Hindu deities that have been absorbed into Thai Buddhism.

Throughout her life, Prof. Indrawooth continued to be associated with institutions in India. At a conference on Indonesian Art organized by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts from 4 to 6 March 2003 in New Delhi, Prof. Phasook Indrawooth explained in her paper on "Srivijaya Art in Peninsular Thailand" that the total artistic production in peninsular Thailand during the Srivijaya period exhibits influences from Java as well as from northeastern and southern India.

Prof. Indrawooth continued to mentor students and researchers in India and Thailand. She co-supervised Wannapat Ruangsap's Ph.D. thesis on "The Emergence and Development of Brahmanism in Thailand with Special Reference to the Iconography of Brahmanical Deities (up to 13th century AD)," which was submitted to the Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute in 2013. Given her active engagement with researchers and institutions in South and Southeast Asia, Prof. Indrawooth will be sorely missed.

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