

Institute of Ethnology Celebrated the 60th Anniversary with Burmese Classical Music Exhibition, Conference and Book

The Institute of Ethnology celebrated its 60th anniversary from September 16 to 19, with a special exhibition organized by the Museum of the Institute of Ethnology entitled “Unfaded Splendor: Contemporary Development and Multiple Representations of Burmese Classical Music”(displayed until November 30, 2016), an anniversary conference were held from September 17 to 19 with the theme “Crossing Cultures”, and the publication of a book.

The special exhibition showcased a full set of *hsaing* musical instruments and related relics received by the Museum of the Institute of Ethnology in 2013. *Hsaing* referred to an ensemble that is composed of several drum sets, gong sets, oboes, clappers and cymbals used in playing music for theater performances, rituals and religious festivals and secular events in Burma. These valuable instruments, along with a large amount of historical documents, field data, sound recordings, and cultural artifacts, such as rarely seen musical instruments and puppets were all presented. With the assistance of multimedia and interactive devices, the exhibition aimed to advance the understanding of Burmese classical music and the socio-cultural contexts in which it is embedded. The exhibition also presented a section devoted to modern Burmese musicians showcasing their possessions, photos, and audio-visual records to deepen the sense of the interaction between music, people, and society, and presented the viewer with a glimpse into the dazzling world of Burmese classical music. The opening ceremony on September 16 featured a performance by well-known Burmese classical music singer Ma Hlaing Than Tun and drummer Myo Hein Oo, and an audio-visual slideshow that introduced the tracks of the development of the Institute of Ethnology over the past 60 years.

The curator of the exhibition Dr. Tasaw Hsin-chun Lu, an Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnology, said that the foundation of Burmese performing arts can be traced back to the 17th century. By showcasing splendid images on wooden slip illustration books (*parabaik*), valuable historical documents and artifacts, this exhibition aims to portray the 400 years of Burmese music development in a chronological fashion. The emphasis of this exhibition is on "representation" based on historical documentation of Burmese musicians and dancers. Court painters, foreign authors, artists, or photographers during the colonial period, and even contemporary military government and tour operators, have all had their opinions on Burmese music and dance. A mixed media presentation combining historical materials, instruments, albums, and images introduces the context from which these perspectives arose.

In addition, the Institute of Ethnology held a conference on September 17-19 to commemorate its 60th anniversary. The theme of the conference “Crossing Cultures,” reflect the long-term efforts of researchers, who have focused on the study of cultures and ethnicity as well as social practices, to cross borders between their own and other cultures and to keep expanding, connecting, and

transcending with regards to their research fields, locations, methods and topics. Eighteen papers were presented at the conference along with two roundtables. Distinguished scholars from abroad, including countries such as the United States, Japan, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan were invited to provide concrete suggestions for the Institute's future directions and strategies of development.

The Institute has also published a book entitled *The Special Edition of 60 Years' Development of the Institute of Ethnology*. The book gives a full account of the story of the institute since it was established in 1955 and explains how the institute built up its academic structure and developed to incorporate the current seven research groups. The research objects and topics have been expanding all the way from rebuilding the tradition of Austronesian cultures and the study of their traditional social structures to the research of the society and religion of Han people. Nowadays, the institute has expanded its research scheme to several new fields such as to join interdisciplinary collaboration projects on anthropology and psychology research; and the research of the culture of Chinese ethnicity and psychology and behavior, the research of medicine and body experience, the research of cultural performances and anthropology research on economy, ecology and environment. All these present the outstanding academic achievement of the institute.

Dr. Tai-Li Hu, the Director of the Institute of Ethnology, said "In deepest gratitude, we reviewed our path over the past 60 years. It's the accumulation bit by bit of the efforts of our predecessors and successors, so that we can have a solid base to continue our way on academic research and social practice. In the future, we are willing to take on challenges and cultivate new directions with our creativity."

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