



## Issue 10 – October 2020

### Note from the Editors

The [Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme](#) is a transformational programme that aims to further the *understanding and preservation of ancient to pre-modern Buddhist and Hindu art and architecture in Southeast Asia*. The Programme supported over 90 scholarships between 2014 and 2019 and funds three fully endowed academic posts at SOAS, as well as research and publishing initiatives, conferences, lectures and workshops in London and Southeast Asia.

SAAAP is designed to strengthen SOAS' research expertise and existing institutional links to create a vibrant network linking the art, archaeology and heritage organisations in the Southeast Asian region.

This edition of the SAAAP Newsletter has been edited by Olivia Burt (SAAAP Programme Administrator) and Dr. Peter D Sharrock (Outreach and Communications Manager). If you would like to be involved in the production of future editions of the Newsletter, or if you would like to report on any news from the region or any SAAAP-related activity you've been a part of, please do let us know – we'd be delighted to hear from you! Please contact Olivia at [ob9@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ob9@soas.ac.uk).

### Note from the Chair: Dr Tamsyn Barton



Dear Readers,

I am pleased to introduce the 10th edition of the SAAAP Newsletter, which covers an array of the Programme's activities over the summer months and looks ahead to new projects for the coming academic year.

First of all, as the 2020/21 academic calendar begins, we are very pleased to announce that SOAS and the Alphawood Foundation have agreed to a second phase of the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme (SAAAP), which will run from 2020/21 to 2022-23.

The generosity of the Alphawood Foundation will enable the SAAAP to continue to support and advance the understanding and preservation of Southeast Asian Buddhist and Hindu art

and architecture from ancient to pre-modern times. The second phase of the programme will see:

- New Alphawood scholarships for the next three academic years. These are expected to support a mix of Diploma and Masters level programmes (details to follow in late 2020);
- Outreach and Communications – continuing our collaborative work with alumni, networks and partners to maximise the impact of the programme in the South East Asia region; and
- Research and Publications – generating a range of high-quality outputs and outcomes which advance knowledge and understanding within the remit.

I would like to congratulate everybody at SOAS that brought the discussions with Alphawood to a successful conclusion.

As for the newsletter, some of the highlights are as follows.

Head of the School of Arts, Shane McCausland, provides us with an update on the SOAS' Transformation and Change project. Initiated in the spring of 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project aims to ensure SOAS has a sustainable future.

We hear from Heather Elgood, who writes on her changing role at SAAAP and the late Denise Acford, and her generous contribution to SAAAP over many years.

Following the retirement of Heather Elgood, her successor Dr. Malcolm McNeill introduces himself as the new Director of the SOAS Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art and Senior Lecturer in Arts Education.

Heidi Tan announces exciting news on the official launch of [Pratu](#) Volume 1 and Udomluck Hoontrakul tells us about the Research Seminar series, sponsored by SAAAP and the Centre for South East Asian Studies, plans for term 1 of the 2020-21 academic year.

Dr. Peter Sharrock, SAAAP Outreach and Communications Manager, writes about the experience of an entirely online module.

In-region liaison Prof. Elizabeth Moore provides us with an in-region update. Following the November 2019 Inaugural Myanmar Alphawood Alumni Conference in Bagan, [“Celebrating Diversity in Ancient Myanmar Hindu-Buddhist Art: Mythical Creatures”](#), the alumni, along with Prof. E. Moore, are working with the Bagan Archaeological Museum, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture on a bi-lingual (Myanmar and English) catalogue connecting bronze and stone sculptures in the museum to their 'home temples'.

We extend our congratulations to Heidi Tan, Alphawood scholar, who received her PhD in June of 2020. Her thesis *Meritorious Curating and the Renewal of Pagoda Museums in Myanmar* is the first attempt to explore curatorial lives, relationships with Buddhist objects and the development of museums situated in the sacred space of the temple.

Finally, we look forward to welcoming Dr Stephen A. Murphy who will be joining us in the autumn. Stephen comes from the Asian Civilisations Museum Singapore and will take up the post of Dr. Pratapaditya Pal Senior Lecturer in Curating and Museology within the SAAAP programme.

We hope that you enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter, which is testament to the considerable achievements of the programme over the past years - and can now look forward to building on our successes in the future.

**Tamsyn Barton** is Chair of the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme Board and a Trustee of SOAS

## **Shane McCausland: Transformation & Change**



*Head of School of Art, SOAS & Chair of SAAAP Scholarship & Outreach Sub-Boards reports on the 2020 university-wide project*

The Transformation and Change Project is led by SOAS Interim Director, Prof. Graham Upton. It began in the spring of 2020 in response to the growing Sars-CoV-2 pandemic but also to address underlying structural issues with the SOAS business model, which had resulted in budget deficits that were not sustainable. Before the pandemic struck, SOAS had formulated a bold plan of reform, backed by the Board of Trustees, that would have seen a balancing of the budget in 2020-21, leading to a period of growth. But the arrival of Coronavirus cast that model into doubt and it became clear an even more sweeping plan was called for, despite it still being uncertain what exactly would be happening on campus and with student enrolments come the autumn.

As everyone will remember, the immediate response to the public health emergency in the spring of 2020 was to close the SOAS campus and switch to online teaching, as happened across the Higher Education sector in the UK and across the world. Staff and students adapted to this sudden and dramatic change remarkably well in the circumstances and the business of learning carried on in the virtual space, to the immense credit of all concerned. Subsequently, exams (where these happened) took place online and graduation duly followed in the virtual format we have all become so familiar with. It was a tough year in many ways, not least because of the challenges that came with using technology to communicate and with social distancing, and it continues to be strange not to have the regular human contact we are all used to, but everyone has adapted, of necessity.

The switch to online learning accelerated a turn toward the digital that was already well underway in arts education at SOAS, as we explored in a School of Arts podcast called [The Digital Turn](#) recorded in the summer. SOAS teaching was already (in the jargon) 'blended', involving both online and digital components and learning 'in real time' and not, in the

classroom and remotely. However, the fast-tracking of this change to how we actually deliver teaching and student support was not the only implication of the pandemic.

As the spring of 2020 turned into summer, it became clear at SOAS and at universities everywhere that the pandemic was going to have knock-on effects on students' ability to travel and enrol on campus well into the 2020-21 academic year and perhaps even beyond that. Though we now have a much better idea of what the student experience is going to be in 2020-21, everyone recognises that flexibility has to be built into the way we do things. There is now plenty of relevant information on the [SOAS website](#) about how teaching will be delivered online in term 1, with one-to-one meetings happening on campus where it is appropriate and safe to do so. Meantime, everyone recognises that the public health situation, and rules governing quarantining and social distancing, could change at any time. As things stand, we are pleased that we will have some students on campus for the start of term and the plan is that the remainder will join in January 2021.

In the spring of 2020, the Transformation and Change Project took a close look at expected enrolment for September 2020, guided by research and government advice. The project initiated a whole School curriculum review which resulted in the rationalising of programmes that were not expected to recruit well so that we could continue to invest in those that had potential to grow. This review has had implications for staffing in the School of Arts, primarily in English and in Music, where we are sadly going to be saying goodbye to staff members connected with a small number of programmes that have now closed and are being taught out. We have tried as hard as possible to minimise the impact of these changes on our current students so that even if their programme is closing after them, they will all be able to progress and graduate as planned.

History of Art is the largest unit with the School of Arts and is fortunate to have been less affected than other areas of the Department, given its undergraduate intake, its PG Diploma courses and of course its MA programmes which continue to draw students from across the world and in particular the students we welcome each year from East and Southeast Asia. The sustainability and attractiveness of History of Art is, as everyone knows and appreciates, in no small measure down to the presence of the transformational SAAAP programme.

What changes will students see as a result of the Transformation and Change Project in 2020-21? The answer is, hopefully, not too many. The School of Arts will join with History, Religious and Philosophies in a single administrative cluster, but there's no reason students will particularly notice this change and the level of service and support should be the same, if not better. As for what modules are on offer, we have tried our best to match and balance the teaching offering to the student numbers we expect. If we get more students enrolling than we planned for, we can of course introduce new modules into the portfolio. We worked hard to ensure a vibrant co-curricular student experience and to engender a sense of community among the student body. Colleagues busily prepared the popular Southeast Asian arts fieldtrip to museums and archives in Paris and Amsterdam in the spring of 2021—and

planning it in such a way that it can still go ahead virtually if travel in person is not possible by then.

Some activities can go ahead regardless, like the annual Photography Competition, which invites entries on a topical subject or theme for the year to be announced. Look out for details. Nor will the pandemic prevent incoming SOAS Director, Prof. Adam Habib, joining us to assume his post as planned in January 2021.

The last part of the Transformation and Change Project, which runs on until the end of 2020, involves looking at how the current 11 academic Departments/Schools across SOAS are configured. From October, in the School of Arts we will be content to share support services with our humanities colleagues in History, Religions and Philosophies or HRP. As the conversation develops, we could imagine also being with HRP in an 'arts and humanities' academic cluster, one that allows us to retain our identity as a taut and collegiate unit of arts disciplines.

When the Transformation and Change Project concludes SOAS will be leaner but the institution we all value, which has a hugely important role and voice in the world today, will also be better positioned to grow and thrive in the future. This autumn, I look forward to working with colleagues and students to refine our vision and formulate a new School of Arts strategic plan for 2020-2025.

*Shane McCausland is Chair of the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme Scholarship and Outreach Sub-boards and Head the of School of Art, SOAS.*

## **Remembering the late Denise Acford**

*Dr. Heather Elgood, MBE, Course Director, Post Graduate Diploma Programme of Asian Arts, SOAS writes about the late Denise Acford and her contribution to SAAAP*

We are very sad to announce that Denise Acford the Diploma Manager passed away early Monday morning on 3 August, 2020 after a protracted illness.

Denise and I had worked together creating and maintaining the Diploma for over twenty years. Over time we worked together to refine the Diploma and give it the structure it has today. Denise's professional commitment, her attention to detail, efficiency and commitment was exemplary. As Diploma Manager she was essential to the smooth running of the courses and the pastoral care of the students. For the last few years, she has taken particular care of the Alphawood students. She communicated regularly with the SAAAP office, checking issues relating to Visas and making sure the students from Southeast Asia had the support they needed. Denise is sorely missed by colleagues, students, and contributors to the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art.

## **Dr. Heather Elgood's Retirement**

**Dr. Heather Elgood, MBE, Course Director, Post Graduate Diploma Programme of Asian Arts, SOAS announces her retirement**



Denise's passing strangely coincided with my retirement. Since August, I have stepped down from full-time directorial responsibilities, and moved into a transitional role. For the 2020-2021 academic year I will work part time as director emeritus, to ensure continuity in the Postgraduate Diploma's delivery and mission, and to support the incoming Director Dr Malcolm McNeill.

I have been involved with the Postgraduate Diploma since its inception more than three decades ago, conceived at SOAS in partnership initially with Sotheby's Institute for the first 12 years. From 2000-2007 the course was run from a classroom at the British Museum, where we developed the object study room, which is today the [Sir Joseph Hotung Centre for Ceramic Studies](#). This was a remarkable opportunity to design the type of object experience that we have woven into the future learning experience of students.

In 2007, the Postgraduate Diploma was invited to return to SOAS by the newly appointed SOAS Director, Professor Paul Webley. The course is now part of the School of Arts and I am delighted to have had the pleasure of working with Alphawood scholarship students, who have enriched the diversity of our classes. These students have focused on the art and architecture of three different cultural areas - India, China and either Southeast Asia or Buddhist art in their year of study. They have combined this academic challenge with the cultural experience of life in London. It has been a pleasure getting to know them.

In 2017 I was very grateful to have received a travel grant from the Alphawood foundation to travel to Myanmar for a conference. In Yangon I was able to witness the library and sense of community that Professor Elizabeth Moore has created for the Alphawood family of Myanmar. Elizabeth and I remain in touch and I keep contact with many of the Alphawood alumni.

On the occasion of my retirement as Course Director, I am delighted to reflect on the substantial achievements of the Postgraduate Diploma in Asia Art. It is one of my proudest achievements to have played a part in pursuing the aims of the Alphawood Foundation and the SAAAP programme at SOAS. I am honoured to have been asked to continue to be part of the SAAAP executive board and so will have the privilege of being involved with new scholarships over the next 3 years.

## **Introducing Dr. Malcolm McNeill**

**Dr. Malcolm McNeill, incoming Director of the SOAS Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art and Senior Lecturer in Arts Education**

Malcolm joined SOAS on 1 June from Christie's, where from 2017-2020 he was a Specialist in Chinese Painting responsible for the European market, collaborating closely with international teams in Asia and North America. While at Christie's Malcolm was deeply



engaged in developing educational events and programmes for the company's international clientele.



Malcolm has worked in curatorial, research and public access roles at leading museums and cultural institutions in the UK and Asia, including Asia House, the British Museum, the National Palace Museum Taipei, and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Malcolm holds a PhD from SOAS, for a thesis in art history examining medieval Chinese Buddhist visual culture, an MA from SOAS in the History of Art and Archaeology, and an MA from Cambridge in Oriental Studies: Chinese. He has strong research and teaching interests in Chinese and Buddhist visual culture, text-image relationships, and in the study of curation and display.

Malcolm looks forward to working with Alphawood scholars in his teaching on both the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art, and on MA programmes in the School of Arts. He is thrilled be joining the SAAAP Scholarship and Outreach sub-boards, where he will work to support and build upon the vital work of the Alphawood Foundation at SOAS.

## *Student stories*

### **Alphawood researcher receives Ph.D.**

*Alphawood alumna and researcher Heidi Tan tells us about her experience*

April 2020 saw the culmination of a journey as news arrived that my thesis had been passed, followed by good wishes from friends and family in COVID-19 lockdown around the world. In the wake of the pandemic the importance of supportive relationships takes on renewed significance. Colleagues often speak of doctoral research and thesis-writing as a lonely experience – a sense of alone-ness is perhaps more accurate – yet as precious as this is to the endeavour, it is largely realised through the generous support of others. Most vivid for me was the experience of learning collectively with and through the experiences of colleagues in Myanmar, many of whom candidly shared their knowledge, as well as their hopes and fears. Titled *Meritorious Curating and the Renewal of Pagoda Museums in Myanmar*, the thesis is the first attempt to explore their curatorial lives, relationships with Buddhist objects and the development of museums situated in the sacred space of the temple. I thank in particular Daw Nu Mra Zan, U Maung Maung Gyi, U Mya Thaung and Daw Baby without whom this work could not have been undertaken.

At SOAS, I am extremely grateful for the support and mentorship of the supervisor committee without whom this work would not have materialised; Louise Tythacott who excelled as main supervisor and source of inspiration, Stacey Pierson who gave timely and strategic editorial advice, and Christian Luczanits who readily lent a critical eye. I am especially grateful to Elizabeth Moore for her encouragement as supervisor in the early stages to be ambitious in the approach to fieldwork. I thank the late John Okell, Justin Watkins and Ma Tha Zin for making Burmese language-learning so enjoyable and for editing my ‘garden-variety’ transliterations. Working with the academic community was an important part of the doctoral experience and I am indebted to the examiners for their careful scrutiny and comments on the thesis. I thank Louise Tythacott, Ashley Thompson and Shane McCausland who nurtured my teaching interests, and the Alphawood scholars in particular, who contributed a wealth of experience to modules that I taught including, *Curating Cultures*, and *Collecting and Curating Buddhist Art in the Museum*.



Gilding the Buddha, Kyauktaw Mahamuni Temple, Mrauk-U,

Finally, and most importantly, this journey could not have been undertaken without generous financial support from the Alphawood Foundation. I was fortunate to be the recipient of a scholarship and grants to undertake fieldwork in Europe, the United States and Myanmar. In the coming year, as Postdoctoral Research Associate with the Department of the History of Art and Archaeology and co-editor for *Pratu Journal*, I hope to make further contributions to SAAAP’s growing body of research and publications.

## COVID-19: Diploma Students Study Remotely

*SAAAP Outreach and Communications Manager Peter D Sharrock, Ph.D. tell us about the transition to the online module*

In April 2020, after Covid struck London, we hastily convened a special online Module on the art of Southeast Asia from April-July so that the 5 Alphawood scholars in the UK could complete their Diplomas before returning home in the summer.

Hettie Elgood, Patrick Monger and the late and sorely missed Denise Acford worked around the clock to get Tutor Peter Sharrock’s streamlined module version approved technically and administratively. As SOAS Term 3 started on 20 July, the Diploma launched its first fully online module with the scholars in their rooms in Robeson House, Hettie in Oxfordshire, Peter in Hampstead, Pia Conti in Islington, Lesley Pullen in Kensington and Stacey Pierson in Suffolk.



Purple buttons from the Adobe 'Collaborate' software had been added to the familiar Moodle screens and all the reading lists were uploaded PDFs of books and articles because the SOAS campus and Library were in lockdown. 'Collaborate' is not as flexible and fast as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, but it does bring the PowerPoint slides to your PC at home and enables you to listen to the lecturer and ask questions with everyone speaking into their PC microphone with a small video image of the speaker. Everyone's image appears on a Zoom-like screen at the start of each session and pops up when asking or answering a question. We were all at the mercy of the post office lines occasionally going up and down and there were a couple of technical glitches with student PCs that Patrick worked to fix. Fortunately, we were a small group and the students were all from Southeast Asia – Sovarattana Sin, Chantha Seng and Yav Huon from Cambodia and May Su Ko and Thet Thet Aung from Myanmar. We soon learnt the online etiquette of muting the sound unless asking or answering a question, raising 'hands' on screen when we had questions, signing on again when the internet lines played up, and using the 'chat' file for Q&A if a lecturer was on a poor connection.

After a packed first week, we settled into a routine of a 90-minute lecture on Mondays and Wednesdays, and a Review session on Thursdays, followed by one-on-one tutorials for everyone. Slowly we grew accustomed to always speaking at screens and trying to be interactive in Q&A sessions – especially the Reviews. PowerPoint lectures are not so different from the classroom experience, but it takes practice to try to reach say 40% of all the dynamics and nuances of human communication in a classroom. And there's no chatting after class or going for coffee or a sandwich. Yet over 11 weeks, through about 45 hours of lectures plus weekly tutorials, we got to know each other pretty well and had a lot of good times. There were no 'handling sessions' together in the London museums, but we did manage some virtual tours of museum collections.

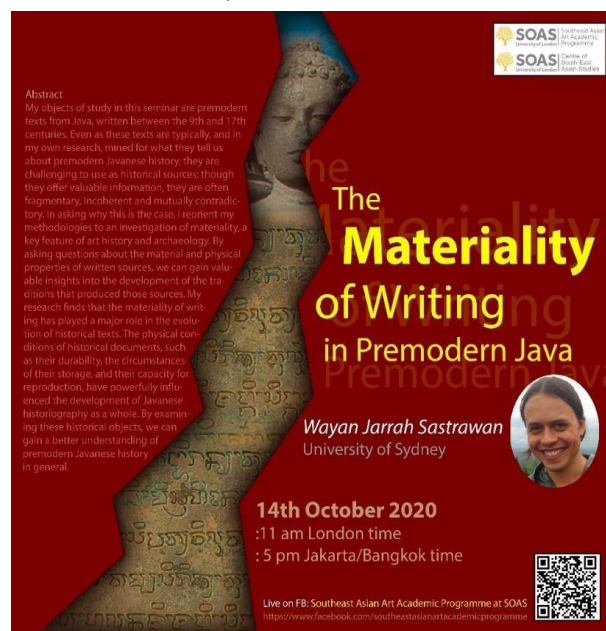
Peter opened the module with the prehistory of the Region and the impact of Buddhism, while Hettie reminded everyone of the India module they had taken months ago with a glowing overview of Hindu religion and art. Then for two weeks we focused on the huge monuments of Cambodia and Java. In the following 2 weeks Pia Conti joined us to study ancient Vietnam and Siam. Miranda Bruce-Mitford, Lesley Pullen and Stacey Pierson came to us in the final weeks to lecture on Bagan and Arakan, textiles and ethnographic cultures and ceramics. After all that, the essays and slide tests reached gratifying levels of scholarship and were all uploaded on time and we bowed to the power of the Internet before saying goodbye.

## Approved projects

### Research Seminar Series supported by SAAAP and CSEAS

Alphawood PhD candidate **Udomluck Hoontrakul** updates us on the SAAAP-CSEAS Research Seminar Series

The Research Seminar series supports the research and study of Southeast Asian ancient to pre-modern Hindu and Buddhist art, architecture, archaeology, and museum and heritage studies. The program is jointly arranged by SAAAP and [SOAS Centre of South East Asian Studies](#) (CSEAS). In the 2020-21 academic year, the program aims to invite international scholars in various disciplines including history, archaeology, history of Art, and heritage studies. The first online webinar of Term 1 was held on 14 October, 11am (UK time): [‘The Materiality of Writing in Premodern Java’](#) was presented by Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan, PhD candidate, University of Sydney and accumulated a large audience with over 2.5k views.



The next webinar will be held on 25 November, 11am (UK time). Alex Giang from the Vietnam Academy of Social Science, and Abhirada Pook Komoot - PhD candidate, University of Western Australia, will discuss 'Maritime trade and shipwrecks, recent discoveries from Vietnam and Central Thailand'.

The seminar series in Term 1 are online and broadcast live on SAAAP's [Facebook page](#).

## **Update from Pratu: Journal of Buddhist and Hindu Art, Architecture and Archaeology of Ancient to Premodern Southeast Asia**

*Alphawood Ph.D. alumna Heidi Tan reports on the launch of Pratu's inaugural volume*

In April 2020 [Pratu](#) officially launched Volume 1 with three new peer-reviewed research articles. Interest in the journal has tripled over the past year, with the strength of our readership coming from Southeast Asia, the UK and USA. The editorial team would like to thank our advisory board and SOAS colleagues for their unstinting support, and in particular, our contributors and anonymous peer-reviewers for their commitment to helping us bring this volume to fruition.

Volume 1:

Ambra Calo, “Durgā Maḥiṣāsura-mardīnī in Likely Tantric Buddhist Context from the Northern Indian Subcontinent to 11th-century Bali” [Durga Maḥiṣāsura-mardīnī dalam konteks agama Buddha Tantrayana dari Subkontinen India Utara dan Bali pada abad ke-11]

Abstract: This study examines the significance of the originally Hindu goddess Durgā Maḥiṣāsura-mardīnī (Durgā slaying the buffalo demon) in Tantric Buddhist temple contexts of the 8th–11th century in Afghanistan and northeastern India, and 11th-century Bali. Drawing primarily on archaeological and iconographic evidence, it suggests that Durgā Maḥiṣāsura-mardīnī is likely to have reached Bali as part of a late 10th–11th century phase of renewed transmission of Tantric Buddhism to Indonesia.

Conan Cheong, Kingship and Procreation in a Pyu Viṣṇu Anantaśāyin Stone Relief from Śrīkṣetra [သရေခေတ္တရာရှိ ဗိဿနိုး အနန္တသာရင် ကျောက်စစ်ရုပ်တု၏ မင်းရိုက်ရာ နှင့် စည်ပင်ပြန့်ပွားခြင်း]

Abstract: This paper examines closely a stone relief carving found in 1919 at the Pyu city of Śrīkṣetra in Myanmar, an unusual variant of the Viṣṇu Anantaśāyin iconographic type, which offers new ways to think about the significance of kingship and the art of the Pyu period. It also considers the apparent reinterpretation of Viṣṇu's Creator-function in this image in relation to his possible cadastral functions, to the Bagan king Kyauzzittha's conceptions of kingship, and to Buddhist lineages as reflected in the succession of the four Buddhas of the Past.

Chhum Menghong, Nine Deities Panel in Ancient Cambodia [ផ្ទាំងចម្លាក់ទេពប្រាំបួនអង្គក្នុងអារាមធម៌ខ្មែរបុរាណ]

Abstract: This paper re-examines the iconographic development of the nine deities panel through the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian periods. It argues that earlier panels showed nine celestial bodies, while the later panels represented a combination of four celestial bodies and five deities of the directions. This study considers the imagery's meaning and significance, based on associated iconographic themes of cosmological order and their original architectural contexts. The significance of the panel is suggested to relate to the idea of the temple as cosmic space.



Bayon, Angkor, Cambodia. 12<sup>th</sup> century. Duyen Nguyen. CC BY-NC 4.0.



***Pratu* welcomes new submissions and expressions of interest**

*Pratu* journal welcomes new articles and expressions of interest on an ongoing basis. We are particularly interested to hear from scholars whose work speaks to the journal's remit of ancient to pre-modern Buddhist and Hindu visual and material culture of Southeast Asia. Our first papers will be out shortly. For more information please visit the website and contact us.

pratujournal@soas.ac.uk  
<https://pratujournal.org/>

Pratu Journal Editorial Team

## SAAAP welcomes applications for the Academic Support Fund

SAAAP invites applications to its Academic Support and Related Costs Funds. The Funds support individual and group research projects, conferences, workshops, publications and other activities and outputs which further the research and outreach aims of the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme. The Funds are open to all SOAS staff, current SOAS postgraduate students and SOAS alumni, for activities that further the SAAAP remit:

*To support and advance the understanding and preservation of Southeast Asian Buddhist and Hindu art and architecture from ancient to pre-modern times. The SAAAP remit includes study of the built environment, sculpture, painting, illustrated texts, textiles and other tangible or visual representations, along with the written word related to these, and archaeological, museum and cultural heritage.*

To apply for SAAAP Academic Support and Related Costs Funding, please visit the SAAAP website for the [application form](#) and return to Alan Goulbourne at [ag87@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ag87@soas.ac.uk) and [alphawoodscholarships@soas.ac.uk](mailto:alphawoodscholarships@soas.ac.uk).

### From the Region

#### Updates from the Region

SAAAP In-Region correspondent **Elizabeth Moore** updates on regional activities from Yangon, Myanmar

Following the November 2019 Inaugural Myanmar Alphawood Alumni Conference in Bagan, [“Celebrating Diversity in Ancient Myanmar Hindu-Buddhist Art: Mythical Creatures”](#) the alumni, along with In-Region Liaison Prof. E. Moore, are working with the Bagan Archaeological Museum, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture on a bi-lingual (Myanmar and English) catalogue connecting bronze and stone sculptures in the museum to their ‘home temples’. In August, Hnin Wut Yee Latt and Yamin Htay held meetings with the Museum Director and worked with the museum staff on the catalogue enhancing knowledge of the ancient sculptures of the [UNESCO World Heritage site of Bagan](#). In addition to the Bagan Museum catalogue, all have been busy, sending on news below.

#### 2016 Batch

**Swe Zin Myint** (2016) Lecturer at Mandalay University, has been busy with her duties in Mandalay University. She also published an article in the *University of Mandalay Research*

*Journal*, 2020 (11/2) titled “The Buddha: Aniconic and Iconic Representation” developing research carried out during her MA studies at SOAS.

**Su Latt Win** (2015) has been helping to consolidate all the parts of the collection and guiding at the Zaykabar Museum preparing to open in December 2020.

**Thuya Aung** (2015) is the focal person of the Myanmar Archaeology Association (MAA) under the direction of the Magway Division working on an Archaeology Inventory Project at Aung Nan Archaeological Zone, Magway Division. A second ongoing project is at the Maha Min Htin Wooden Monastery in Mandalay Division. He and his MAA team have been scanning monuments in Yesagyo, Magway Division at the request of the divisional cultural authorities. The Bagan World Heritage Property includes parts of Magway along the Ayeyarwaddy River, with the MAA advisory project aimed at boosting knowledge of the ancient Buddhist culture in the rest of this division renowned for its prehistory as well as the temples and monasteries.



**Thu Ya Aung presenting with his MAA team at a governmental meeting in Magway**

**Saw Tun Lin** (2016) is now in Myanmar carrying out field research for his SOAS MPhil/PhD titled “The Distribution and Consumption of Glazed Ceramics in Lower and Upper Myanmar from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century CE”. His survey will take him to areas all over the country to inventory pottery production sites and glazed wares at a range of historic cities.

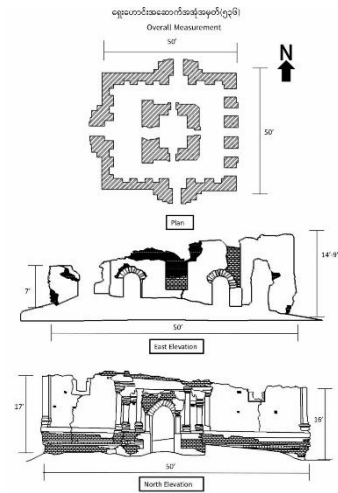
**Win Myat Aung** (2016) is busy at SEAMEO CHAT with their new Online Lecture Series on ‘Buddhist Arts of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar. At the most recent held on 28-28 August 2020, he presented one of his entries for the Myanmar Alphawood Alumni Bagan Archaeological Museum Catalogue, titled ‘Two Bronze Mettaya Images of the Pyu period: Shwesandaw and Paunggu’.

## 2017 Batch



**Thet Mon Htoo** (2017) is now in Mandalay and has begun offering English home-schooling classes and one-to-one tutoring. She recently joined the Aung Nan Archaeological Zone Magway Heritage assessment with MAA, contributing her architectural drawings to the group report.

**Yamin Htay** (2017) continues her work and research with Conservation Section of the Bagan Office of the Department of Archaeology where her section has carried out conservation (and Yamin Htay has made architectural drawings) on thirteen temples and stupas with one in-process. Some of the structures, such as Pho Kalone, are dangerous for visitors, so are being monitored. She was recently interviewed for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic friendship by a Chinese expert group assisting on conservation at the Thatbyinnyu temple, the focus of her successful MA dissertation at SOAS.



Elevations of conserved temples at Bagan by Yamin Htay



Yamin Htay being interviewed as part of celebrations of the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations with China and in the field (on the left with hat and sun protection)

## 2018 Batch

**Hninn Wutyee Latt** (2018) Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology, Yadanabon University, Amarapura is also the Logistics Head for the Myanmar Alphawood Alumni catalog project with the Bagan Archaeological Museum.



Hnin Wut Yee Latt and Yamin Htay working with the Bagan Archaeological Museum staff, August 2020

**Kyaw Minn Htin** (2018) is working on two Covid-19 related research projects — as the Lead Researcher for the PiCH (Pandemic & Inter-Communal Harmony) Research Initiative at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and the Lead Consultant for Protecting Rights, Openness and Transparency-Enhancing Civic Transformation, PROTECT Project, at the Article-19 Organisation in Myanmar.

**Sanda Linn** (2018) Assistant Professor in the Department of Archaeology, Mandalay University has been busy with her departmental duties. She also published an article in the *University of Mandalay Research Journal*, 2020 (11/2) titled [“The Most Common Decorative Motif in Bagan Temples: Lotus”](#) developing further her paper from the November 2019 Alphawood Alumni Conference in Bagan.

**Ye Myat Lwin** (2018) has moved to the Department of Ethnic Literature and Culture, Ministry of Ethnic Affairs where his new position is Junior Officer, based in Sittwe.





**Sulatt Win preparing part of ceramics collection of the Zaykabar Museum to move to the new museum and guiding visitors**

### 2019 Batch

**Nan Htaik** (2019) is based in Nay Pyu Taw with the Department of Archaeology and National Museum, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, busy with her department working on Division of World Heritage Sites for the implementation of guidelines for the Pyu Ancient Cities, Bagan and Mrauk-U. She has recently been translating parts of the Conservation Management plan for Mrauk-U for her Director U Than Zaw Oo and uploading data to the Myanmar Cultural Heritage Digital archive. She has also participated in workshops of the Myanmar Cultural Heritage Management System (MCHMS) for Cultural Mapping, a Myanmar-ODA Collaborative Project with Korea.



**Nan Htaik working with her Director in Nay Pyi Taw**

**Pwint Phyu Maung** (2019) has been based in Amarapura helping her father to arrange and catalogue his extensive collection of Myanmar culture, especially pottery. She is also making a photographic record of Nyaung Yan style stupas in the Inn wa (16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Pin Ya (14<sup>th</sup> century) areas. In her leisure time, she is drawing and painting, particularly watercolour. In early September, she joined the Zaykabar Museum in Yangon.

**Theint Theint Aung** (2019) has created two websites, one for her lacquer work '[Art & Lacquer from Bagan](#)' (named by John Okell) and one to promote ancient designs and paintings '[Ancient Mural Styles, Painting, Myanmar Traditional Art](#)'. All works on both sites are her creations, from the lacquer painting and engraving to the paintings in Nyaung Yan and Konbaung styles of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In early September, she joined the Zaykabar Museum in Yangon.



[Thet Thet Aung Ancient Mural Styles](#)



[Thet Thet Aung with her paintings and earrings](#)

**Dhamma Sami (Htay Wai)** (2019) is completing his dissertation "Heritage-making in a political transition: a case study of Mrauk-U proposed UNESCO world heritage site" for his MA in Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies at the University of East Anglia (UEA) with a scholarship from Prospect Burma.

### 2020 Batch

**May Su Ko (2020)** successfully completed the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Arts in the academic year 2019-2020. She has recently returned to Myanmar to re-join the Department of Archaeology, Yangon University.

**Thet Thet Aung (2020)** successfully completed the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Arts in the academic year 2019-2020. She has recently returned to Myanmar to re-join the Department of Archaeology, Dagon University.



May Su Ko delivering the 'Buddhism' catalogue from the British Library Exhibition and Thet Thet Aung greeting after finishing with Quarantine

*Elizabeth H. Moore is SAAAP Outreach Sub-board member, Scholarships Sub-board member and In-region liaison.*

## Sign up and join in with the SAAAP Newsletter!

The SAAAP Newsletter is published annually, with contributions from across the SAAAP Community – Alphawood Scholars and alumni, SOAS academics and key international project partners. The Newsletter is edited by Dr Peter Sharrock and Olivia Burt. We also welcome the engagement of guest editors from the Alphawood Scholarship community – if you are currently on award at SOAS and would like to get involved in producing the next edition, we would love to hear from you.

The Newsletter is open for new contributions and submissions from Alphawood Scholars, alumni, academics and partners – if you are interested in having your article featured in the Newsletter (or if you are interested in Student Editing a future edition), please contact Olivia Burt at [ob9@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ob9@soas.ac.uk).

You can also sign up to the Newsletter to ensure you receive future editions directly in your inbox. Please email [alphawoodscholarships@soas.ac.uk](mailto:alphawoodscholarships@soas.ac.uk) to sign up. We look forward to hearing from you!



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