CLASSIC DANCES of the ORIENT

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The author in a Bharat Natyam posture.

Royal Thai Ballet

Origin of the Dance

LEGEND TELLS HOW the dance came to earth as a gift of the gods, and when one sees the Royal Thai Ballet, one readily believes the legend, for such a scintillating spectacle of elegant and virile gestures, of noble bearing, of pathos and humor, reenacting the beloved tales of ancient kings, celestial beings, and heroes, is a credible invention of the gods.

Historically, the dance came to Thailand through the great Khmer Empire. Extinct a thousand years now, the superb ruins of the Khmer cities lay lost in the rampant forest until Henri Mouhot rediscovered them in 1860, and brought these amazing wonders to the attention of the world. Of all that splendid civilization, only one eyewitness has left a record. This record was found in Chinese archives. Tcheou Ta-kouan, a Chinese ambassador, visited the Khmer Empire at the height of its glory in the twelfth century and wrote a detailed account of the luxurious life he witnessed in Angkor Thom, the Khmer capital. Archaeological research and the lavishly sculptured walls of Angkor confirm Tcheou Ta-kouan's report.

When the Thai (Siamese) attacked and conquered the Khmer Empire (ancient Cambodia), they were themselves conquered by the beauty of Khmer arts. Among the 90,000 prisoners of war were artists and artisans whom the Thai carried home with them to embellish their capital. But of all the arts, it was especially the dance that the Thai loved and cultivated.

The dance had come to the Khmers with the Siva cult from India. Those great temples scattered through the forest for hundreds of miles were built to the glory of Siva. One of the temples supported, according to record, a ballet of 625, including musicians, since the dance played a

very important part in the Siva ritual. The kings, nobles, and provincial governors also had their private ballets for entertainments on festive occasions. When the purifying wave of Buddhism rolled over the land, the temple rituals were simplified and the dance excluded from religious services, but it continued at the courts, and probably each village had its local ballet as many do today. These ballets were, and still are, the theatre of the people. Dance dramas are the theatre and much more, for they contain the literature, the poetry, the history, the beloved myths and legends of a glorious past.

Although this dance art has a definitely prescribed technique, it has not remained static. From time to time some especially gifted artist makes contributions or innovations. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn some fifty years ago, His Royal Highness Prince Naris wrote new dance dramas and music, as did more recently Rama VI, King of Siam from 1911 to 1925. All the courtiers studied the dance and took part in the dance dramas.

In former times the dancers lived within the palace enclosure as part of the royal household, but in 1925 the palace budget was greatly reduced, so now the dancers live in their own homes, and go daily to their quarters in the palace enclosure where they are trained, rehearsed, fed, and paid a small salary by the government. In 1925 the royal troupe numbered 300 dancers and musicians. Today the royal troupe has been reduced, but it is still composed of the finest artists of the realm.

Characteristics of the Dance

From its original source, the dance filtered through the Khmers to the Thai, losing some forms, evolving others according to racial taste, until it became a distinctively Thai dance art. The extreme upward turning of the fingers is an example, a motif repeated in Thai roofs; in the shafts of water-buffalo carts; in the golden paintings on walls, furniture, and books; in the ear frames of the royal mongkots (headdresses) which are identical in form with those worn by dancers; in the epaulettes of ceremonial costumes of kings and princes, which are also identical with those worn by dancers representing these roles; and in numerous other ornamental details. This upward curve, or flourish, is characteristic of Thai art. Only in Khmer, Cambodian, and Thai dances is this extreme curvature of the fingers used. An uplifting of the toes and deeply flexed knees complete the plastic harmony of the dance postures.

Training for the Dance

In the Royal Palace at Bangkok, Thailand, I had the privilege of studying with Kunying Natakanuraksa, the Directress of the Royal Ballet. Her name means Titled or Noble Guardian of the Dance. Her husband, the late Phya Natakanurak, was a celebrated dancer, and for many years directed the Royal Ballet. He knew every role and every gesture in the extensive repertoire of the Thai classic dance. Kunying Natakanuraksa ably carries on her husband's work, for she too knows every role, though when she taught me she was then a grandmother of sixty. When she begins to dance, she is instantly transformed by the magic of this art into whatever she desires to represent. The day she was teaching me the role of Nang-Ma-Tcha, the siren of the river Menam, she became, before the enchanted eyes of my pianist and myself, a seductive mermaid on a sandy riverbank. Then, entering the river with a gesture, she suddenly became a graceful fish with quivering fins, darting through the water, then poised looking here and there, slowly rising to the surface and darting off again, leaping and splashing like a dolphin in the transparent water of the perfectly dry studio. Her hands became fins, and her body supple and glinting as a fish. In another lesson she was Kinnari, the gorgeously plumed bird-woman, the celestial singer, flying leisurely through a tropical forest, flitting about the studio with birdlike glances on the lookout for luscious fruit to eat. For Mekala, the Lightning Goddess, Kunying became a serene and beautiful young goddess descending from her sky palace to dance in the clouds and gaze at the earth far beneath. In still another lesson, she transformed herself into Hanuman, the beloved white monkey of the Ramayana stories, crouching, impish, restless and scratching, leaping suddenly, then pausing, head cocked while thinking of some new mischief. Kunying's hands became simian with hook-fingers and set-out thumb, and her very eyes became round, shiny black beads.

One day Kunying Natakanuraksa brought out a silk-wrapped book and laid it gently down; looked at me meaningfully and said, "Anjali." Anjali is the Thai word for the reverential salute to a great personage or to a sacred object. So Kunying and I knelt and bowed and made Anjali together before the book. There are only two such books in existence: one in the Thai National Library, and this one in the possession of the Directress of the Royal Ballet.

Then Kunying opened the sacred book. It opens like a screen, black pages painted with gold figures of a man and a woman in dancing poses on

each page. The names of the poses are written beneath in Thai. Here is the record of all the basic positions of the Thai dance. The gold lady and gentleman dance over the black pages in antique costumes, very rich, yet simple, which cling and flow with the dance movements: ethereal costumes in contrast to the heavy jeweled and brocaded costumes of today. But as the gilded ones dance in the book, so do the Thai dancers of today, and so did they long before the book was painted.

Training is begun very early, at three or four years of age. Children so young do not dance, but they sit and watch the others so that they grow up in the atmosphere of dance, and each day their small elbows, fingers, toes, and knees are exercised to attain that remarkable flexibility typical of Thai dance. Later, training consists mainly of following the older dancers. The stars lead, and the rest follow in order of merit. If a young dancer shows promise, the instructor places him or her behind a good dancer to follow the movements, the teacher correcting by touching the head, arms, elbows, fingers, or knees, and explaining the direction the eyes should take. In spite of a very rich technique and astonishing suppleness, there are no hours of *barre* work to undergo. However, to perfect a certain movement it will be repeated many times in succession and then in sequence with the preceding and succeeding movements until it has attained the required quality.

The most classic form of the Thai dance is called Khon, and is danced exclusively by male dancers, feminine parts being taken by the most slender and delicate-featured boys. The dances are dance dramas relating episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, or Thai myths and historical episodes, always about kings and princesses, heroes, celestial beings, and wonderful mythological creatures, representing the ideal types of the race. Even the villains are ideal villains.

The second classic form is the Lakhon, danced by women or by both men and women, and relating the same dance dramas. The feminine style of dancing differs from the masculine only in a certain modesty of deportment. The feet are placed nearer togther, the knees are flexed toward the front instead of being widely opened to the sides, in a ballet second position, distinctly different from the masculine style. The head is carried modestly, chin slightly drawn in, eyes often downcast. All feminine movements are gentle. Movements and postures are otherwise identical.

The masculine style expresses virility and strength, especially in the roles of warriors, giants, and demons. The feet are placed widely apart in a ballet second position, knees are deeply flexed in *plié* or are raised hip-

high; the transition movements from one pose to another are sharp and energetic; the head is carried high and arrogantly. Roles of refined or gentle masculine characters are played in a style somewhere between that of a virile warrior and the feminine style. Characters such as Hanuman, the White Monkey, are definitely comic roles, although sometimes scenes of touching pathos are played by such characters. When a clown plays pathetic incidents, they are the more poignant by contrast.

Costume for the Dance

The costumes for the Royal Ballet are kept in a special wardrobe building in the palace enclosure. It has whitewashed walls and a barred and locked door, and stands among the buildings prescribed for the dance. Inside, the wardrobe building looks like a museum with its center cases for jewelry and accessories, wall cases for hanging garments and headdresses, drawers and shelves for precious brocades which are kept rolled, not folded. Each case is carefully locked, since the contents have considerable value.

As one enters the cool, white-plastered building from the heat and glare outside, one has the impression of entering a fairyland cave; jeweled headdresses sparkle and twinkle; masks glower, smirk impishly, or stare in surprise; garments of rich colored silks, pailletted velvets, and gold and silver brocades glow with soft radiance; on the floor stands a chariot such as seen in ancient sculptures, with ornaments that repeat the upward Thai flourish; horse heads of leather for the dancers who draw the chariot stand near; painted wings and tails for Kinnara and Kinnari, the celestial singers, are here too, made of buffalo hide, gilded, painted, and encrusted with little flashing mirrors; tails for mermaids and many other evocative objects glint from the cases. In former times the dancers wore real jewels, but these often fell from their settings during performances, so imitation jewelry was substituted, beautifully made and still quite expensive. Each role has its typical costume, distinguished by details of ornament and color.

The basic feminine costume consists of a tight-fitting underjacket with very short sleeves; a panung (skirt) which is a rectangle of beautiful material about forty inches wide and three yards long, of brocaded silk, or silver or gold brocade, drawn about the hips, with the extra length being pleated in front and held by a belt; a broad velvet cape, pailletted and jeweled, which is fastened to the belt in front and hangs behind nearly as long as the panung; a broad jeweled collar, armlets, bracelets, rings; a tchedah (headdress) of gilded buffalo hide, studded with tiny mirrors, denoting the role of the danseuse.

The basic male costume consists of knee-length trousers over which is draped the panung, the extra length being twisted into a roll, passed through the legs, and tucked into the belt behind; an embroidered panel which hangs in front from the belt, and two more which hang over each thigh; a tight, long-sleeved jacket with up-curved epaulettes; a broad, jeweled collar with two chains crossing on the back and on the breast; a tchedah, which, like the female dancer's headdress, indicates the role being played.

The value of the costumes varies with their richness, but the most expensive is that of Rama or of Tosakan which in 1938 cost about 4,000 ticals or $2,000.

Masks and Makeup

The picturesque old artist, Nai Siri Yanthanaphon, who makes the masks, wings, tails, headdresses, and other accoutrements for the Royal Ballet, was making a tchedah for me. His humble house was at the end of a narrow stone walk leading from a street door so inconspicuous that no one but a frequent visitor would ever notice it. But this modest dwelling, whose roof was so low that a person not more than five feet six in height could just manage to stand in it, was a fairyland laboratory. Pots of paint and gold lacquer stood about, and masks and tchedahs in various stages of construction were perched here and there, some already twinkling with little mirrors encrusted in their gold-lacquered surfaces.

The first time I visited Nai Siri Yanthanaphon, he did not measure my head for the tchedah, but instead measured my hand and assured me he could make a headdress for anyone, even in a faraway land, to fit his head just from the hand measurement. Now, a tchedah must really fit perfectly, because if it is not just right, it is quite uncomfortable, even painful, to wear, pinching the head, causing headaches and faintness; or if too loose, giving an insecure, top-heavy sensation that may cause the dancer to lose balance. The day I went for my tchedah, it went on my head, but pinched here, was too loose there, and did not frame my face properly. I did not look at all like the ravishing goddess into which I had expected to be transformed. Evidently my proportions of head and hand did not correspond to the Thai, and as I was the first foreigner Nai Siri had ever made a tchedah for, he had to abandon his tradition and measure my head for a new tchedah. So he asked me with a polite and friendly smile if he might touch my head to measure it. The head is sacred in Thailand, and

no one would dare to touch the head of another person. Even Kunying Natakanuraksa asked my permission to touch my head to correct it in dance positions. What a difference from lands where "a good sock on the jaw," "a punch on the nose," or the call to "knock his teeth out," "slap him down," and "*foutre une paire de claques*" are everyday expressions and actions!

Masks are used for all character roles, such as hermits, saints, holy men, yakshas, ogres, Devatas (celestial beings), Hanuman and other monkey roles. Only feminine roles and the gentle princes are without masks, but their faces are painted white and kept impassive during the dance so that the impersonal effect of a mask is attained. The mask and accompanying headdress are made in one unit, put on and taken off together. The features of the masks are often exaggerated to enhance expression, and are painted elaborately in traditional colorings. A yaksha's mask, for example, is always jade-green with round, bulging eyes and fang teeth. A Devata mask is pink with elongated, dreamy eyes and a gently smiling mouth.

Facial makeup is simple. Faces are whitened with water paint, not the greasepaint traditional to Western actors; eyebrows are painted in the approved arch with black; and lips are painted red. All the characteristics of masks and makeup in both the Thai and Cambodian dances are the same.

One realizes the height of corporeal expression has been attained when seeing these actor-dancers playing the whole gamut of human emotion without the aid of facial expressions. The eloquence of their art must be seen to be fully understood and appreciated.

Dance Properties

The various roles have special dance properties that accompany them. A prince or king carries a rod about 27 inches long, encrusted with tiny diamond-shaped mirrors that flash when it is twirled during the dance. Ravana (or Tosakan as he is called in Thailand) carries a tapering, curved cane finished by a Thai ornament at the upper end which is flourished during his dance. Sometimes he appears with a fan. Hanuman often carries a three-pronged instrument similar to a trident. The Thunder God, Ramasoun, wields a clublike accessory encrusted with little mirrors.

Women's roles sometimes require flowers carried in the hands. Mekala, the Lightning Goddess, appears with her "lightning-maker," a small mirror-studded sphere which creates lightning-like flashes during the dance. Nang-Ma-Tcha, the River Goddess, wears a fishtail; and Kinnari and

Kinnara (female and male celestial singers) wear wings and elaborate tails.

In accordance with each story, chariots and animals—horses, elephants, and others—may be used; but the most indispensable property, one which is always present, is the tiang, a low table-like platform representing a throne, a bed, a seat, a palace, a house, or whatever the story requires.

Scenery is nonexistent but is evoked in the minds of the spectators by the acting of the dancers and the unfolding of the dance dramas. Recently some attempts have been made to introduce scenery in the European sense. The results were "realistic" in the best Late Victorian style, quite out of harmony with the evocative qualities of the dance dramas. It is to be hoped that the use of garishly painted set pieces of canvas and wood will be discontinued or improved to correspond with the spirit of the dance.

Music for the Dance

Thai music has a history of more than a thousand years. Its tradition has been carried on orally and by memory; no notation existed. The National Library has conserved an ancient list of Thai musical pieces, recorded by their names, but of these more than half have been lost forever, being unknown by living musicians. In view of this misfortune, His Royal Highness, Prince Damrong, in 1929 requested Phra Chen Duriyanga to devise a notation system to record and conserve Thai traditional music. Phra Chen Duriyanga, who had studied Western music, made a thorough study of Thai music and the technique of playing the instruments, and devised a means of recording the Thai musical modes in Western notation.

Thai music is not derived from any other system of music such as Chinese or Javanese, as is sometimes supposed, but is purely Thai. The scale has seven full tones arranged equidistantly. It is a diatonic scale, neither major nor minor in the Western musical sense, but a typically Thai diatonic scale. The Thai orchestra is called the Pi-Phat orchestra, and its instruments are all percussion with the exception of the pi, the flute. They are:

ranad ek: an alto xylophone of wood or bamboo; 21 resonance bars.
ranad thume: a bass xylophone of wood; 17 resonance bars.
ranad thong ek: alto xylophone of brass or steel; 21 resonance bars.
ranad thong thume: bass xylophone of brass or steel; 17 resonance bars.
gong wong yai: 16 small bronze gongs in a circular frame.
gong wong lek: like the gong wong yai but pitched one octave higher.
tapone: a horizontal drum, both ends having drumheads.

song na: like the tapone but smaller and held on the lap of player.
klong thad: a large, vertical drum; always used in twos or threes, each having a different pitch.
gong hooi: a set of 3, 5, or 7 gongs hung in a frame.
charb lek: a pair of small cymbals.
charb yai: a pair of large cymbals.
ching: a pair of small cup-shaped cymbals of fine resonance. They are the time beater and timekeeper of the Pi-Phat orchestra. They set the pace for the whole performance. There is no conductor in a Pi-Phat or any other Thai orchestra.
mong: a single medium-sized gong, used only for sound effects.
krub sebha: two bars of hardwood used to mark time during recitations, although these may be replaced by the ching.
pi nai: a flute made of rosewood.
To approximate Thai with Western instruments, substitute for the:
ranad ek: a treble wood xylophone
ranad thume: an alto-wood xylophone or marimba
ranad thong ek: a treble steel xylophone
ranad thong thume: an alto steel xylophone
gong wong yai: a glockenspiel or Resonophone
gong wong lek: a celesta
tapone: no equivalent
song na: no equivalent
klong thad: timpani
gong hooi: no equivalent
charb lek: small cymbals
charb yai: large cymbals
ching: triangle
mong: gong

The role of the gong wong yai (glockenspiel) is to carry the principal melody. The ranad ek (treble xylophone) usually produces variations on the principal melody. The ranad thume and ranad thong thume embroider freely on the principal melody. The gong wong lek (celesta) sometimes duplicates the principal melody, at times creates variations on it. The gongs are used for special sound effects. The ching are extremely important. They are the time beaters and timekeepers of the orchestra. Their clear resonance gives two sounds: alternately: "ching-chap," the long ringing sound and the muted sound marking the up- and down-beats of the music. The ching are the conductor of the Pi-Phat orchestra.

The method of tuning the ranads and the gongs is interesting. The wood or bamboo bars are of graduated lengths and thicknesses, but humidity and temperature alter the tone. To tune the ranads and gongs, beeswax mixed with scraped lead is heated slightly and placed in a lump on the underside of each resonance bar of the ranads or the inside rim of the gongs, in larger or smaller amounts until the exact pitch or tone is attained. All the instruments are played traditionally resting on the floor, which gives them an increased resonance.

Since the Thai dance is dance drama, moments occur when both speaking and gestures are used to tell the story. At such times a narrator begins to recite the story, synchronizing his words with the dance gestures. As the Thai do not like the beauty of the words to be confused with or distorted to fit the music, the musicians cease to play when the human voice begins. The krub-sebha or ching continue marking the time with their sharp but melodious sounds. As the narrator approaches the end of his recitation, the ranads begin softly to play, and when he finishes, all the instruments again accompany the dance. This is a distinctively Thai innovation. It is accomplished smoothly, with no break or interruption, and gives the decided advantage of hearing the poetic beauty of the words clearly so that they may be fully appreciated. Moreover, the effect of having the music fade in and fade out intensifies immensely the dramatic effect.

As in Indian music, there are modes to express the various sentiments, emotions, and actions. The Thai Department of Fine Arts has a list of over 1,200 melodies. They are divided into 36 groups, each for a particular purpose, such as: 13 melodies for expressing anger; 21 for sorrow or affliction; 4 for joy; 7 for reflection; meditation, contemplation; 4 for excitement; and many others. A choreographer chooses a story and then selects from these musical modes the melodies for his dance drama. Appropriate variations may be introduced as desired. The meanings of the musical themes are so well known to the Thai people that a blind person hearing the music would be able to understand clearly the action of the drama being played.

Thai music is a source of great national pride. It has the same fairyland quality that exists in other Thai arts, the same feeling of the uplifting flourish that is seen in roof lines, in dancers' fingers, in ornamental details. It is "happy music," rippling and cascading like a crystal mountain stream, at times throbbing like the sea or tinkling like the little wind-bells that hang from the edges of temple roofs, at times as serene as the face of Buddha. It is reposeful, soothing, or exciting, but always melodic and delightful to the ear.

Presentation of the Dance

In addition to all the places one might expect to find dance performances—at the Royal Court, in public theatres, on little temporary stages in the midst of public gatherings—one of the occasions in Thailand for the presentation of a Khon ballet is at cremations. The Thai are Buddhists, and cremate their dead, and one of the most important features of the cremation of a notable or wealthy person is the dancing of a Khon ballet in an open-air theatre especially erected for it. The Thai take the logical attitude that the departure of a loved one from this life to a happier one should be a joyful event and therefore an occasion for feasting and entertainment.

A Dance Rehearsal

The dance rehearsal hall in the Royal Palace enclosure is a large pavilion, a Thai roof supported on tall, slender columns over an excellent dance floor. It is entirely open on three sides with a wall closing the fourth side. The crenelated outer wall of the palace enclosure has an obscure rear door guarded by an armed soldier. Through this unpretentious entrance we arrive at the generously proportioned dance pavilion, set in a grove of banana trees, where, on this particular day, the Ballet is rehearsing for the coming Thai New Year celebration. The King of the Giants, kneeling on the traditional dance platform, the tiang, is miming with high-spirited gestures to his followers who are kneeling in attentive rows before him. At one side stands a man with a book, reciting in rhythmic verse what the Yaksha King says in gesture. The beauty of the man's voice in quality, diction, and dramatic feeling is remarkable. Some forty boys and young men sit in groups along the side of the pavilion, waiting their turn to rehearse. One or two soloists work in a corner on special dance sequences under the keen eyes of one of the masters. Two small boys, working on one of the monkey roles, clutch one of the columns supporting the roof and execute a difficult leg movement, stamping in rhythm and raising their legs alternately no fewer than 500 times until their tired muscles cramp. Only then does their master permit them to rest. Training is exacting and severe. Kunying Natakanuraksa meanwhile goes about among the group that is dancing, correcting their postures, touching them here or there —the angle of the arm, a little more acute; legs in deeper *plié;* torso straighter, weight more to right or left; chin higher; head in sharper profile—a constant striving for perfect form and line.

A group of teachers and singers sits on a mat at the left, around a tray of lovely silver objects composing a betel-chewing set: bowls large and small, little jars, and other objects, all of pure silver and most beautifully engraved. The forms of these objects are so intriguing that one is tempted to take up betel-chewing just for the pleasure of using them.

A Performance of the Royal Ballet

At the Thai New Year in March, 1938, the Royal Ballet danced a Khon two nights in succession, on a specially erected stage in the great square before the Royal Palace, for the entertainment of the general public. It was the high point of the New Year festivities and the performances, which began at seven in the evening, lasted until after midnight.

In the dressing room behind the dance platform, the men and boys were being made up with water paint. Stiff, richly brocaded costumes were being folded and pleated on the dancers and tugged and pulled to make them hang just right. Finally the dancers were sewn into them. It was a very warm night, and the process of getting painted, dressed, and sewed into the costumes was a long one, but no one was cross or ill-tempered for the dance is a divine gift, is reverenced, and to dance is an honor. For proof of reverence, one has only to note the altar in the dressing room whereon are placed the traditional hermit's mask, the mongkot (ceremonial headdress for royalty), flowers, incense, pure water, and a burning candle. At this altar each actor, before donning his final jewels and headdress, prays for a moment with clasped hands.

When the music began, the public, standing two hundred feet deep on all three sides of the platform, was waiting with upturned, expectant faces. There was no place left for me, so Kunying pushed me onto the very stage where I sat on the floor, huddled in a corner among a group of Thai children for more than five hours, to watch, entranced, the dénouement of a heroic tale of giants and monkeys, of princes, princesses, and Devatas, of warriors and trusting friends and of sly enemies who resorted to magic forces to attain their wicked ends.

The story was revealed through the most complex and skillful interweaving of group action separated by solo dances, duos, and trios. The choreography never repeated itself but always presented new groupings, perspectives, and stage pictures. Scenery there was none, light effects were nonexistent—only white floods were used—nor did one feel the lack of them, for the dancers themselves with their dance properties were the

scenery, and the costumes of dazzling richness that glowed or flashed brilliantly in rapid movements were the light effects.

A long sequence of scenes like those intriguing Thai frescoes illustrating episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata were acted, one linking with another without a break: the joyful meeting of two friends, both princes; bad news brought by one of them; the preparation for battle; the sortie in war chariots in gallant but risky postures like those of the sculptured kings at Angkor; arrival at the enemy camp; a conference—the dancers were panting now in the heat of the night, and those bowing low before their general as he planned the attack, took advantage of the moment to turn their faces from the audience, raise their masks slightly, and gasp a few breaths of sultry air before they were off again into combat to capture Rama; the grief and consternation of the monkeys as they searched excitedly for Rama whom they loved, and consulted among themselves in a rapid chattering dialogue spoken by the narrators accompanying the scene; the encounter of Hanuman with his son by Nang-Ma-Tcha, the River Goddess whom he once loved (Hanuman's son acted like a monkey and fish combined, showing his two lineages, a clever and difficult piece of acting. There was fine play of tenderness and grief in this meeting of Hanuman with his son); a descent into the depths of a lake via the stem of a giant lotus; an interview with a Devata to request supernatural aid; and the grand finale when the villain, riding an elephant, was at last destroyed by magic power. The triumph of Good over Evil—the same ideal in all lands.

Dance Technique

See Royal Cambodian Dances chapter, under Dance Technique.

Dance Exercises

See Royal Cambodian Dances chapter, under Dance Exercises.

Concluding Thoughts

Western people, with their matter-of-fact way of thinking, invariably want to know what part such a highly cultivated and ancient art plays in modern national culture, what it really means to people of Thailand today. The answer, I believe, is revealed in the following incidents.

The train in which I was crossing Thailand stopped at a tiny station in the rice fields. Presently, I heard two high, clear little voices saying, "Anjali! Anjali!" That lovely ancient word of greeting I knew from my dance studies. But way off here in the rice fields—what could it mean? Curiously I looked from the train window to see two small girls smiling and saluting me with the classical Anjali, their small palms pressed together, their fingers opening like flower petals. Such a charming gesture should be rewarded, so I handed them a tin of salmon from my lunch basket, and have hoped ever since that they or their peasant parents knew how to open it.

One sunny day in Bangkok I was looking at some antique jewelry in a quiet store. Suddenly the atmosphere became a-quiver with hushed excitement. Then I noticed that a big black limousine had drawn up before the shop, a liveried footman had opened the door, and several delicate little old ladies dressed in grays and lavenders were descending. The shopkeeper hurriedly brought out a dainty gold chair, and stood ceremoniously to place it for one of the ladies. As she sat upon it, the others grouped themselves about her, some with fans behind her, others sitting attentively at her feet, on the floor. And they sat just as I had been taught in the dance: the identical placement of the legs, body, arms, and head! It was too wonderful—here before my very eyes a real ballet with a real Queen surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting! For it was King Chulalongkorn's last Queen, a widow now for many years, come to inspect some rare old pieces of jewelry which the jeweler now brought out for Her Majesty.

Shortly after my arrival in Bangkok, I attended a Thai theatre with Prince Sokol and his daughter. Presently a dancer appeared, and to my delight, Prince Sokol began to relate to me in running narrative the story the dancer was telling in gestures. As the gestures succeeded one another, the Prince's narrative developed into a captivating story, and I learned that every Thai can "read" the classic dance in this way.

On a café terrace in Paris, some months later, I was lunching with two Thai gentlemen. We talked of the Thai dance, and I asked them to name various speaking-gestures which I demonstrated. As they gave me the names, they delightedly exclaimed over meeting someone so far from their home who understood and loved their art.

On a visit to London, I had occasion to call at the Thailand Embassy. In the salon were a number of Thai bronzes of dancing figures. The Ambassador responded to my interest with an enthusiastic discourse on Thai dance which lasted until he accompanied me to the door for my departure.

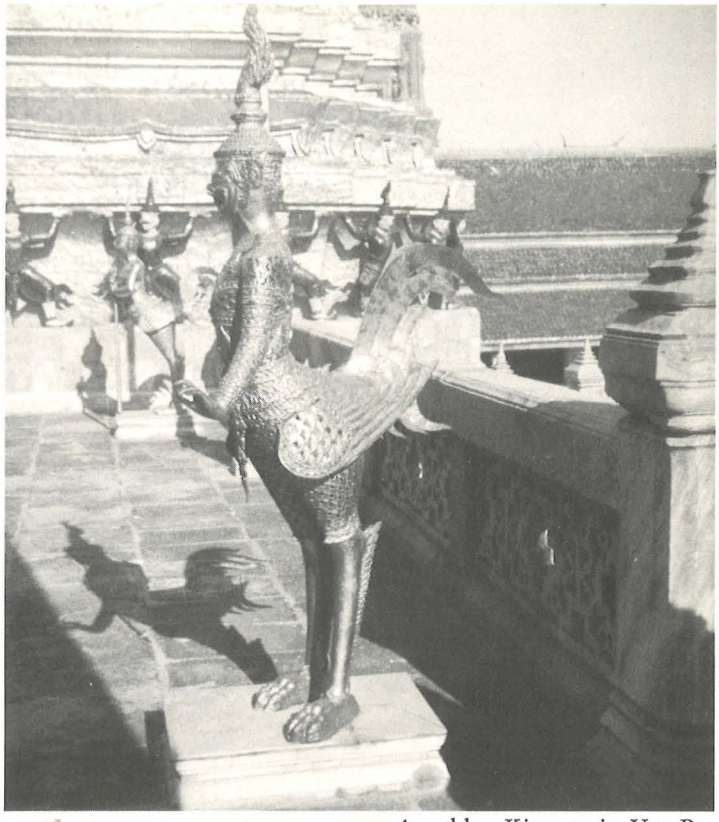
In Thailand, advertisements of modern products carry motifs taken from Thai mythology and classic dance art. Labels for cloth have the seal of Mekala and Ramasoun, the Lightning Goddess and the Thunder God; paper jackets for phonograph records are ornamented with a design of Thai celestial musicians sitting in the clouds with their instruments; figures of Kinnara and Kinnari, the celestial mythological singers, ornament the modern lampposts along Bangkok's most modern Avenue Rajadamnoen; Thai airmail stamps bear the design of Garuda. What more appropriate design could have been chosen than the strong wings of the benevolent, mythological eagle? Garuda is also the protector of mankind, and his figure is the seal and the coat of arms of Thailand. These forms are used because the people have an emotional response to them. The Thai identify with these symbols because they love and understand them.

These few illustrations show that the manners and customs represented in the dance are still, as they have been since ancient times, a living part of daily life. The stories the dance dramas tell form a most important part of the national literature. The costumes worn by the dancers are the same as the ceremonial dress of courtiers and of royalty itself. The music is known and understood by all. The whole art is a synthesis of life from remote times which still pulsates through the life of today. The Thai nation takes the greatest pride in its dance as the mirror of its racial spirit.

A page from the Thai Dance Book.

Kunying Natakanuraksa,
Directress of the
Royal Thai Ballet.

Nai Siri Yanthanaphon,
the Royal Thai Ballet's mask-maker.



A golden Kinnara in Vat Pra Keo, Bangkok, Thailand

A temple in Vat Pra Keo, Bangkok, Thailand

Crocodile Lady in Vat Pra Keo, Bangkok, Thailand

Temple guardians, Bangkok, Thailand

Kunying Natakanuraksa as Mekala looking from her sky-palace. Rehearsal hall of the Royal Thai Ballet in the background.

A small Hanuman, son of a famous dancer.

"Mosquitoes" in the Royal Thai Ballet.

Members of the Royal Thai Ballet pose for the author.

Xenia Zarina as Mekala, Goddess of Lightning, demonstrating the speaking gestures: "I . . . shall go there," and the feminine sitting position.
(*photo by Noutiyal, Mussoorie, India*)

Xenia Zarina
as Mekala,
Goddess of Lightning
(Thai mythology).

Xenia Zarina as a Kinnari, demonstrating position of looking or searching for something—hands in hamsasya mudra.

(*photos by Noutiyal, Mussoorie, India*)

As Nang-Ma-Tcha, Goddess of the Menam River. Hands in pataka mudra represent fish fins.

Demonstrating Anjali in kneeling position on the tiang.

Xenia Zarina in classic Thai dance costume representing a princess or a goddess.

(*photos by Semo, Mexico*)

Hands in Anjali (salutation); feet in "flying" posture.

Hands in hamsasya represent an offering of flowers; feet in "flying" posture.

Closeup of headdress; hands in anjali (salutation)
(*photo by Semo, Mexico*)

Royal Cambodian Dances

Cambodian History

THE CAMBODIANS proudly claim descent from the great Khmer Empire, and their arts and customs are a continuation of that brilliant culture. The Western world knew nothing of the Khmer civilization until the dramatic discovery of Angkor by Henri Mouhot in 1860. Since then, French archaeologists, working assiduously, have recovered valuable information and found numerous marvelous sites of temples, palaces, and cities scattered through the Cambodian forest.

The Khmer civilization seems to have sprung rather suddenly into glorious bloom, and continuing for several centuries, disappeared as mysteriously as it had appeared. The natives of the Cambodian forest say the gods built these vast, elaborate cities. Certain it is that very unusual minds conceived, planned, and directed the construction of these architectural and engineering wonders. Scattered over hundreds of miles of rampant tropical forest lie the remains of cities, reservoirs, canals, palaces, and temples. Angkor Thom (Angkor City), the last great Khmer city, had a population of over a million, an impressive number for any city a thousand years ago. The numerous cities were not all coexistent, but succeeded each other during the centuries as Khmer urban needs changed. A valuable key in determining their historical dates is the artistic evolution of their buildings. Following the Thai attack in the thirteenth and four-

teenth centuries against the Khmer Empire, a series of wars ensued until all Cambodia fell under Siamese influence where it remained until 1863 when it became a French protectorate, part of Indo-Chine Française, independent of Siam. Cambodia now had its own king again, and Pnompenh became the capital.

Character of the Dance

The sculptured walls of the Khmer cities decaying in the forest testify to the place the dance held in that civilization. There are literally thousands of carved dance scenes: religious ritual dances, court dances, dancers at play in a garden, celestial dances, as well as decorative friezes of dancing girls (Apsarases), and Tevadas or Devatas (celestial beings), standing serenely in their niches with enigmatic smiles on their lovely sensuous faces. The Bayon (temple of Siva) in Angkor Thom has a wall carved with one especially intriguing scene: a large panel representing the daily life of court dancers. Amid luxuriant vegetation in a closed garden, the dancers are bathing, arranging their hair, being massaged, exercising, and playing. A point to remark is that all these thousands of sculptured dancers are always female. I did not see a single representation of a male dancer in any of the ruins I visited in and around Angkor. This is accounted for by the fact that the Khmer temples were dedicated to Siva and Vishnu (later to Buddhism) and these two cults employed girl dancers (Deva Dasis) in the temple ceremonies, a tradition still observed in South India today. The Court dancers were undoubtedly part of the "harem" of the king or noble, as they are to this day in the Royal Palace of Cambodia. The Royal Ballet is, in fact, under the absolute direction of the king's first wife.

Since the dance played such an important part in Khmer life, it is reasonable to suppose that even the great disaster that made them abandon their sumptuous cities could not entirely destroy their beloved dance art. The Siva cult still needed ritual dances, and kings and courtiers still craved the diversion of the dance, for it was much more than mere entertainment. They carried the dance with them wherever they fled, and preserved it tenaciously. When they settled again under Siamese rule, Cambodian kings and princes became local governors, and maintained their private ballets as they still do today. As in the past, the ballets are always composed of women dancers. This is remarkable since in Japan, China, Java, Bali, and Thailand it is always the men who are the great

actors and dancers, who carry on the most classic traditions of the dance drama. In certain lands and epochs, women have been entirely banned from appearing in theatrical entertainments. In Thailand, which shares the same cultural heritage as Cambodia, the most classic form of the dance, the Khon, is always danced by men. The explanation of this Cambodian dance phenomenon opens a trail leading back to ancient India with its traditions and customs relating to the dance.

In 1937 George Groslier was director of the lovely Albert Sarraut Museum at Pnompenh. A distinguished artist, painter, writer, and connoisseur of Cambodian arts who has done invaluable work for Cambodia, M. Groslier has also written and illustrated a splendid book, *Danseuses Cambodgiennes*. He arranged for me to have lessons with Princess Say Sang Van, the favorite dancer in the Royal Ballet. She was married to the brother of the King of Cambodia, but after domestic disagreements, she left the court. The French Colonial Government had for some time been in an embarrassing position: the fame and beauty of the Cambodian dances had spread to Europe, and now distinguished visitors came to visit Cambodia and wanted to see the dances. They had made a long and difficult journey, and the Cambodian dancers were a strong drawing card. The French Colonial Government could not ask the King to produce the Royal Ballet, which was part of his royal household, just to please strangers he had never heard of. So the visitors most often had to leave Cambodia disappointed in their hope of seeing the Cambodian ballet. Now Princess Say Sang Van was just the solution to the problem. The French were delighted by her change in social position, and were quick to endow her to organize a ballet trained in the court tradition which would be available to the French Colonial Government when needed. This meant security for the Princess and satisfaction for the visitors, as well as new stimulation of Cambodian dance art. But for this happy circumstance, I would have had the utmost difficulty in studying Cambodian dance. As it was, it took half my energy to have even irregular lessons. Often I would go on the appointed day only to find that the Princess and the whole ballet had vanished. The servant did not speak any French, and explained to me by waving his hands in the air. Presumably the ballet had flown off to other regions, like the carved Apsarases at Angkor where whole ballets soar joyously across the skies, arms and feet daintily raised in the "flying" pose. Then, suddenly, the Princess and ballet would reappear and my lessons would continue until the next "flight."

Training for the Dance

Cambodian and Thai dance training and technique are identical to those set forth in the chapter on Royal Thai Ballet. The Royal Cambodian Ballet recruits in a number of ways: a pretty child may be offered by her parents; a provincial governor may send a lovely child as his offering to the king's ballet; or when provincial ballets come to dance before the king on such festive occasions as the king's birthday, an attractive little dancer may be noticed and asked for. New pupils, being accepted into the Royal Ballet, are appraised as to type by the teachers, and assigned to roles suitable to them. The following is a quotation from *Danses Cambodgiennes* by His Excellency Samdach Chaufea Veang Thiounn who was Prime Minister at the time of my visit to Cambodia, and an ardent devotee of the Cambodian dance.

"Training is begun in classes of a dozen, and lessons are at a very early hour, while the dew is still on the plants in the palace gardens. The dew is used to massage the joints, to aid suppleness in articulation of elbows and wrists, fingers, knees and toes. When the new pupils have been limbered sufficiently and have learned some of the dance movements, they enter class with the older dancers.

"Samdach Preas Kron is the genie of the dance, and every lesson is preceded by a ceremony called 'Sampas Kron.' It is a salute to the genius of the dance and to the dance mistress. The dance mistress sits beside the altar in the rehearsal room, and each pupil brings an offering of betel leaves, candles, incense sticks, perfumed water, and bouquets of flowers. The pupil places the offerings before the mistress, and performs the ritual salute, 'Anjali.' The teacher then wishes the pupil success, and pours some of the perfumed water on her head.

"The pupils are then grouped according to roles, and each group works separately. They dance without music or song. The mistress strikes the floor with a rod to give the rhythm, and with the rod corrects the pupils' positions or points out mistakes."

Every lesson begins with all the pupils dancing together the "slow tempo," a series of movements and poses of about twenty minutes' duration. This is followed by another series in "fast tempo." These two series might be compared to the "groundwork" of a ballet class, since they are training for timing, balance, and perfection of posture. After this, the rehearsal of a dance drama begins with miming of roles, solos, and group action.

To quote again from His Excellency's book: "After months of practice, when the pupils have learned faultlessly the miming of their roles, the steps, postures, and movements, they are ready for the important ceremony, 'Pithi Sampeas Kron Lakhon Krop Muk,' which is the graduation ceremony. Thursday is the day sacred to Sampeas Preas Kron, so a Thursday of a fasting month is chosen for the graduation. Eight little altars are raised in the rehearsal hall with offerings upon them of flowers, betel, rice, incense, and perfumed water. Ten bonzes, the yellow-robed Buddhist priests, come to say prayers which are repeated by teachers and pupils. The following day, dance masks, headdresses, tiaras, toilet articles, makeup, flowers, and platters of food are placed on a white covered platform in the rehearsal hall. Musicians take their places, candles and incense are lit. A dignitary reads the invocation to Sampeas Preas Kron, the genius of the Dance. Pupils lift the platters of offerings onto their heads, and offer them to the four cardinal points. The dignitary dons the mask of the Anchorite, and places on the heads of the pupils the masks and headdresses distinctive to the roles in which they have been trained; sprinkles them with holy water; places a thread dipped in holy water on their shoulders; puts rice powder on their faces, perfume on their foreheads; and finally wishes them each good luck and happiness. The pupils, after this consecration, remove the masks and headdresses, and dance by groups; then, again donning the headdresses and masks, they dance a complete ballet. Now they, who were yesterday only pupils, have become authorized dancers with the insignia of their ancient art."

This elaborate ceremony takes place inside the Royal Palace. At Princess Say Sang Van's, the same ceremony in simpler form is enacted. My own lessons were accomplished thus: After watching the ballet practice in slow and fast tempos, and rehearse dances or a ballet dance drama for a coming performance, I had a private lesson in slow tempo, in fast tempo, and in excerpts from dances and miming. The Prima Ballerina danced and I followed, Madame Say Sang Van following me and correcting my positions as I danced. This was an excellent system, and I learned rapidly in a short time. Later the Princess invited me to follow the dancers during their rehearsals. This was extremely interesting and valuable as training, for I suddenly found myself part of a group, coordinating my movements with theirs and with the music. The Prima Ballerina was an exquisite dancer, kind and helpful as well. We became very good friends although we could hardly converse. I could understand and speak only a few words of Cambodian; she, who had gone to Paris to dance in the Colonial

Exposition of 1931, knew about as much French as I knew Cambodian. However, the dance is an international language, and we understood each other perfectly in that. After my lesson, at Princess Say Sang Van's request, I would demonstrate and teach her and the Prima Ballerina classic European ballet.

A candle and incense are always lit at the beginning of a lesson and rehearsal, and burn on until the lesson is over. The dances are recorded in precious handwritten books, some of them very old, and kept wrapped in fine silks and brocades. These books are never opened without the ceremonial salute, the Anjali, being made before them.

The royal dancers live in the palace enclosure and never leave it except on certain occasions or by special permission, since they form part of the royal household, but Madame Say Sang Van's ballet of eighteen dancers lives in her house. They are much freer than the palace dancers, and even go shopping at times. While not dancing or rehearsing, they make themselves useful in other ways: caring for the house and garden and making new costumes. One day when I arrived for a lesson, several were working at frames, sewing pure gold beads in ancient patterns onto velvet for new scarf-capes. The Princess showed me a small but heavy package of pure yellow-gold beads, and complained how expensive they had become. The dancers also flex each other, bending back fingers, wrists, elbows, and toe joints. The fingers are turned back nearly to touch the forearm, although in actual dance so extreme a flexation is never used, just as ballet dancers execute certain stretching exercises in the studio that they never show on the stage, for aesthetic reasons. When a dancer becomes old or incapacitated, she may retire to her former home, or remain in the palace as teacher or wardrobe mistress.

The Royal Ballet traditionally has been composed of 8 ballet mistresses, 108 dancers, 2 comic mimes (the only masculine elements in the ballet), 2 teachers of singing, 2 first singers, 2 readers, 24 choristers, 12 dressers, 4 guardians of jewels and costumes, 9 male musicians, and two *chefs d'orchestre* who are also considered part of the Royal Ballet.

As already mentioned, regional governors sometimes maintain their own ballets. There are also some small troupes in different localities of local girls trained by a retired palace dancer, who dance for Cambodian festivals. The life of these dancers is quite different from that of the royal dancers. They live in towns or villages, and engage freely in any occupation usual for a Cambodian woman. Some are even married. Their repertoire is the same as that of the royal dancers, but the technique is naturally

less fine and the costumes less beautiful and expensive. As in all lands and at all times, there are also itinerant troupes.

In Cambodia, the classic dance is called Lakhon and is the same as the Thai Lakhon, the classic dance performed by women. Dance mistresses are also called Lakhons. Th.-B. van Lelyveld, in his book on Javanese dance, quotes a statement that Thai are engaged to teach the dance to the Royal Cambodian ballet. This is often true, for the dance is brilliantly preserved in Thailand, and is practiced and understood more thoroughly than in Cambodia. On pages 39 and 40 of his book *La Danse dans le Théâtre Javanais* he makes, however, several statements regarding the Cambodian dance that are inexact. Javanese dance does not "resemble" Cambodian dance, but is vastly different. Further, Cambodian dancers have no *marche à grands pas* like the Javanese actor-dancers, and they do not wear a sarong for the dance or in daily life. The sarong is a Malay garment, worn exclusively by Malay peoples in the Malay States, Sumatra, Java, and all of Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia. But native Cambodians and Cambodian dancers wear the sampot or the panung, a garment different in size, pattern, and manner of wearing.

Costume for the Dance

The woman's basic costume is:

A tightly fitting underjacket with no right arm sleeve, and a very short left arm sleeve, cut in a diagonal line from left shoulder to right armpit.

A sampot (skirt) of handwoven silk brocade or silk and silver or gold brocade. The sampot is about 3½ yards long by 1¼ yards wide. It is held tightly about the hips, the two ends in front being pleated to the body, given a twist, the right end tucked securely into a cord tied tightly around the waist, the left end hanging out in a fan shape formed by the pleats; a broad scarf thrown over the left shoulder, hanging down behind. It is attached under the right arm. This scarf is of velvet, sewn with gold beads and tiny mirrors in traditional patterns. It is lined with a contrasting colored silk.

A collar of silver or gold plaques.

An ornament hanging from the neck onto the breast.

Several gold chains hanging from the left shoulder to the right hip.

A mokot (headdress for princess or goddess roles) gold-lacquered and set with tiny mirrors.

A tassel of champaka flowers and jasmine hanging from the mokot at one side of the face.

An armlet on the right upper arm, bracelets on both wrists, bracelet of jasmine flowers on the left wrist, silver or gold anklets on the ankles.

This is the costume for the leading feminine roles. Minor feminine roles require similar but less elaborate costumes, and with alterations of the mokot, sometimes only a tiara, and a scarf-cape covering both shoulders as described under Thai feminine costume.

Masculine costumes are identical with Thai masculine costumes described in the chapter on Royal Thai Ballet.

The Royal Ballet has mokots and jewels set in pure gold for the leading roles. Other ballets usually cannot afford more than silver gilt for the leading roles. In 1937 a prince's costume cost about 8,000 piastres ($2,000) and a princess' costume cost about 5,000 piastres for the King of Cambodia's ballet.

Masks and Makeup

These have been described in the chapter on Royal Thai Ballet.

Dance Properties

Dance properties are the same as those described under Thai dance properties.

Music for the Dance

All I have said about Thai music applies also to Cambodian music. It is delicate, dreamy, with the silvery, fluid sound of running water. It creates an aerial, celestial atmosphere eminently pleasing to the ear and to the imagination. When heard on a starry, jasmine-scented Cambodian night, played in a distant temple, it is a potent opiate.

The orchestra that accompanies the dance is called Pi-Phat and the instruments composing it are listed by His Excellency Thiounn as:

sralay or *pi:* flute (from which the orchestra derives its name)

roneat ek: a bamboo alto xylophone played by two small wooden hammers

roneat thung: a hardwood basso xylophone
roneat dek: iron-bar xylophone
kong thom: 16 inverted bronze bowls hung in a semicircular frame, and played by two small hammers
kong toch: a small gong
skor thom: 2 big drums similar to timpani
sampho: a horizontal drum with two heads
tching: two small alto cymbals for marking the time measure, or sticks of hardwood or bamboo for the same purpose

Comparing this with the Thai Pi-Phat instruments listed in the chapter on Royal Thai Ballet, some minor differences will be noted.

There is no written music; musical modes indicative of emotions, moods, seasons, time of day, etcetera, are handed down by memory from one generation to another; so that Cambodian music, while remaining true to style and conserving its form and character, still has a great deal of flexibility, especially in the hands of highly talented musicians. The Royal Palace at Pnompenh maintains as part of the Royal Ballet 9 musicians, 24 choristers, 2 soloists, and 2 readers. During performances, the readers recite or declaim the story enacted by the ballet. The choristers sing with the instruments, taking up and elaborating the themes recited or declaimed. They also beat the measure. Curiously, most musicians in Cambodia say they are Filipinos. The two palace musicians who kindly gave me melodies from the Royal Ballet music, copied into European notation, were Filipinos.

Dance Performances

Pnompenh, the capital of Cambodia, is built around the Pnom or hill. This hill is crowned by a pale-gray stone stupa where, legend says, a small statue of the Buddha once miraculously appeared after a great flood of the Mekong River. The Pnom is planted with trees, and its slopes are lawns. At the top, adjoining the stupa, is a lovely little Buddhist temple with wind-bells hanging all around the edges of its roofs. A broad stairway leading from the foot of the Pnom up to the temple is lined on both sides with mythological animals to guard the approach to the temple. On the other side of the Pnom is a zoological garden where handsome imperial tigers do not deign to look at miserable humanity, but roar their loneliness to the moon.

The first Cambodian dance performance I saw was one whose presentation was directed by impeccable French taste. It was Princess Say Sang Van's ballet, and was danced at the foot of the Pnom on a platform built for the purpose. The pale-gray stupa in the background high above was lit by floodlights hidden among the trees. The soft Cambodian wind was perfumed with the scent of flowering trees. The dancers, in gold brocade and jeweled costumes lit by spotlights, were entrancing in that natural setting. Their golden headdresses repeated again the form of the stupa in the background, and the stupa itself, under the floodlights, appeared translucent—a faery thing.

The next occasion was during the *Fête des Eaux*, the "Fete of the Waters." This takes place once a year when the great Mekong River (one of the longest rivers in the world, which flows from the Tanglha Range in Eastern Tibet into the South China Sea) pauses for a moment and begins to flow backward. The astronomers know what day and what hour this phenomenon will occur, and as the life of Cambodia is intimately connected with the Mekong, everyone takes part in the traditional celebrations, which last a whole week. The town of Pnompenh is decorated. The King changes his residence from the pink-walled palace to the royal houseboat on the river. In a procession of elephants in elaborate trappings, beflowered motorcars, and decorated officials, His Majesty is carried on a golden throne on a gold-lacquered platform borne on the shoulders of many servitors. High over the King is carried the traditional golden parasol, symbol of royalty and sanctity since ancient times throughout the East. The sculptured kings of Angkor have identical parasols over their precious heads. The Achaemenidian kings of Persia, 2,500 years ago, sat under such parasols, and they took their customs from Bablyonians, Assyrians, and Egpytians whose kings were also sheltered by parasols. In the palaces of Java today, the sacred texts and the books wherein the dance and music are recorded are carried under parasols even for rehearsals.

For the *Fête des Eaux* Cambodians come from far and near, from every province, to take part in or to witness the celebrations. Fireworks and street processions of amusing and clever paper figures, with lantern processions at night, make the town gay. Within the pink-red crenelated walls of the palace enclosure, in a spacious pavilion beside the famous Silver Pagoda, provincial ballets requested for the festivities dance all day. Anyone may come and watch. As the pavilion is open on three sides, the spectators sit where they wish, or where there is room to sit or stand. The ballets I saw there had excellent and well-costumed star dancers. They

danced their very best, for if they pleased some palace talent scout they might be chosen for the King's ballet which would be a great honor, and their families would be well provided for ever after. There appeared to be quite a large membership in the ballets I saw, and in certain scenes representing processions or a trip to another locality, the whole troupe took part following the leading dancers, getting smaller and younger and less adept and less well costumed until the last tiny tots stumblingly brought up the rear, practically in rags, and doing their best not to forget the dance figures.

On the concluding day of the *Fête des Eaux* there is a beautiful regatta on the Mekong. Each canoe, extremely long and slender, is painted a different color. The rowers are dressed in uniforms that contrast harmoniously with the color of their canoe, and the oars are painted all of a color on one side with gold or silver on the other, so that their dipping and flashing in the sun are the more accentuated. All these canoes moving down the river are a uniquely beautiful sight. During the race their speed is amazing: each canoe does its best to win the yearly prize, and honor the village or community from which it comes. During the regatta the King and his guests watch from the royal houseboat where the King lives the whole week of the festival. At the end of the regatta, the winners row alongside the royal houseboat and the King personally bestows the prizes. In the evening after the regatta, there is a display of fireworks on the water; and then, out of the darkness over the river, appears a sight straight from the land of legends: the royal dancers, gleaming in their golden, jeweled costumes, dancing on a floating platform. They drift past the royal barge, past the pavilions on the riverbanks crowded with spectators, and disappear again into the darkness and distance. Only the tinkling, rippling music that accompanied them comes floating back to us. So brief, so lovely, so intangible, the passing of the Royal Ballet, apparently dancing on the water, seemed a mirage—an imagined vision.

During my visit to Angkor, Madame Say Sang Van's troupes came up to dance a series of performances in the evenings on the broad terraces of Angkor Vat, the famed Temple of Angkor. Vat or Wat means "temple," and the modern Buddhist temples in Cambodia and Thailand are called Vat or Wat. With the ruins for background, the ballet was danced on a wide terrace, and visitors sat about on the Naga-serpent balustrades or on the ancient steps. The moon cast its green-blue light over the scene, highlighting the trees of the surrounding forest and the great towers and roofed galleries of Angkor Vat. The dancers were illuminated by electric floodlights, but formerly they danced by flickering torches, which I felt would

be more appropriate in that enchanted setting. The electric lights gave a hard, unvarying light.

From time to time the warm jungle wind brought the calls of forest creatures, or the pungent odor of bats from recesses of the ruins. The idea of having a living Cambodian ballet dance in front of the sculptured walls of their ancestors, the Khmers, was an example of the French aesthetic sense. Magnificently impressive it was, and I have met people on the other side of the world who, when Angkor is mentioned, catch their breath and exclaim: "Oh, I saw the Cambodian ballet dance there one night. . . ." But my feeling was that to appreciate fully the *art* of Cambodian dance, it should be seen in a less imposing setting, for the delicate play of fingers, toes, and eyes was overwhelmed by the stupenduous background of Angkor Vat.

It was King Sisowath Monivong's birthday, and my brightest hope was to materialize: I was invited to the palace to see the King's dancers perform that evening. The palace walls and gardens were all charmingly illuminated. The up-turning roofs and spires of all the buildings within the palace enclosure, outlined in small electric lights, looked like so many Christmas trees or a fairy city at night, so fantastic and dainty an effect they made against the dark sky.

The guests for this evening, upon arriving by motor or by *pousse-pousse* (rickshaw drawn by bicycle), were shown by uniformed attendants up a broad staircase to the *Salle de Danse,* the pavilion dedicated to the King's ballet performances. Open on three sides, it had lovely paintings of dancers decorating the wall of the fourth side and covering the ceiling from which hung crystal chandeliers. The *Salle* was a rectangle, and along the two long sides ran daises the full length of the room. In the center of one dais stood a throne-chair for the King with other chairs on both sides for his courtiers and the French Resident. On the other dais, facing the King, the other guests sat in comfortable chairs. The evening I was present, there were only about thirty guests. At the far end of the *Salle* sat the musicians in a group, tuning their instruments. The dancing space was the whole floor between the daises with a red and gold tiang (bed-table) placed at each end.

Presently the King, followed by the French Resident and Madame, his wife, and courtiers and other French and Cambodian officials came in and took their places. The guests all rose and bowed to their host, the King. The musicians then played the Cambodian national anthem and the Marseillaise. The Marseillaise, played on Cambodian instruments, sounded very

well indeed, although more celestial than martial. The King and Cambodian courtiers wore the ceremonial costume: a purple silk sampot draped into trousers, and a tailored coat of white in European cut, with decorations and insignia set with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds on the left breast, or hanging by ribbons from the neck.

When all were seated, the King gave friendly nods to those guests whom he recognized, sitting opposite; then refreshments were passed by servitors: tea, bonbons, and delicious petit fours. The orchestra began to play, and suddenly the floor between us and the King was filled with the most exquisite creatures imaginable. They were aglow with gold and little mirrors that flashed lights; the air was filled with the perfume of champaka flowers hanging from their golden mokots (headdresses) and from the jasmine-flower bracelets on their wrists. The features of their white-painted faces were dainty, and their expressions of expressionlessness were fascinating. I remembered what Princess Say Sang Van had told me one day during a lesson: "Don't smile with your mouth. Smile with your eyes." That was what these royal dancers were doing—smiling with their eyes. How beautiful! The "impersonal" faces were each alive with individuality—with a light that shone from within.

Attendant on the dancers, according to ancient tradition, are two old women. They represent "guardians," and pick up fallen jewels, straighten costumes, and make themselves useful in other ways during the dance. In Java, also, the tradition of two guardians for the court dancers is conserved.

As the music of the roneats rippled and purred or tinkled like fairy bells or cascaded like celestial rivulets, the ballet moved through lovely groupings: ensemble dances, solos, duets, with intervals of speaking gestures performed on the bed-tables to tell the story of the ballet. The postures were perfect in sculptural harmony and rhythmic flow. There was a love scene on one bed-table enacted by a prince and a princess. According to tradition, the "princess," with dainty gestures and little screams, rejected the amorous advances of the "prince." The King was especially delighted with the girl, a real beauty, who played the part of the prince. He watched her, constantly smiling, and many times during the ballet, beckoned to one of the two guardians, who came hurrying across the dance floor, crouching amid the dancers as inconspicuously as possible, to the King, where she knelt before His Majesty with her hands in Anjali. The King then handed her a package of money, indicating the dancer on whom he wished to bestow it. The old woman would place it on a silver tray, and crouching again inconspicuously among the dancers, would kneel before the chosen one,

proffering the tray and the present. The dancer, with no sign of recognition other than a lowering of the eyes to rest for a brief second upon the offering, danced straight on. The old attendant then carried the tray and package to the exit door where the dancer would claim it after the ballet. The "princess" received such awards twice; two secondary dancers, once each; but I lost count of the kingly favors to his favorite, the "prince." The ballet lasted about two hours and was by far the most beautiful Cambodian dancing I had seen.

Dance Technique

The technique and exercises of Cambodian and Thai dance are identical, as explained in the chapter on Thai Royal Ballet.

Head: carried erect and level, "nobly," under the heavy tchedah or mokot. Slight inclinations correspond to the body posture or to the emotion expressed at that moment. Dancers playing giants, warriors, and all virile masculine roles carry the head high and arrogantly. Women and "gentle" masculine roles carry the head modestly and introspectively. Comic characters carry the head tilted, and use quick movements or other attitudes suitable to the parts.

Hands: make full use of wrist and finger flexibility. In the straight dance sequences, the hands assume one of two positions: pataka or hamsasya. These have only decorative value in these sequences. In the dramatic interludes, the repertoire of hand-speaking gestures is very great. (See also illustrations for both Thai and Cambodian Dance chapters for a few examples.)

Arms: possess great flexibility. In straight positions, the arm is so intensely straightened that the elbow joint is thrown *in* to give the admired inverted bend to the arm. When the arms are raised, the elbow should never be higher than the shoulder in the feminine roles, and only slightly higher in the vigorous masculine roles. There is an effective movement of the arms achieved by alternately flexing and straightening the elbows, arms being opened to the sides, at shoulder height, the hands in hamsasya position.

Torso: erect except in dramatic moments when its assumes an appropriate expression and inclination.

Knees: deeply flexed for all poses. A posture is often taken on one leg, the arms and hands describing certain movements while the supporting knee alternately flexes and straightens. Another posture is with both knees

flexing and straightening slightly, giving a springy effect. There is a remarkable "walk" on the knees, used to approach a high personage. It is the most unusual and rhythmically beautiful manner of progression imaginable. (See under Theatre Conventions.)

Feet: in walking they are placed slightly turned out, with toes lifted. In running the feet are placed normally. In certain dance movements, the ball of the foot lightly taps the floor in a ballet third position, half-toe, alternately in front of and behind the supporting foot. The heel of the supporting foot also alternately rises and falls again to the floor. An *arabesque Siamoise* is preceded by a tap of the foot on the floor, signifying a "takeoff" into the air since a Thai arabesque is a "flying" position. A rapid beating of the feet on the floor signifies excitement, and a thump of the heel denotes anger or decision. Rapid *bourrées* in ballet *plié en seconde* are often used in masculine roles as a mode of progression in scenes portraying battles or excitement.

Manner of sitting: for Anjali, both sexes kneel, sitting on the heels with toes in half-toe position; feminine knees are placed together, masculine knees are spread. In other sitting postures, women sit with both legs to the right side, toes turning up, and hands on the right thigh, palms down. Men sit on one leg with the other knee raised.

Speaking Gestures

In addition to the dance technique, a special and most fascinating characteristic of Cambodian and Thai dance drama is the use of "speaking gestures." There is a large repertoire of these gestures which are conventionalized. I shall describe a few to give a tangible idea of their meanings. The narrative parts of the ballet usually take place when the dancer is seated on the tiang, a wooden platform raised about 18 inches above the floor like a bed or low table, and which I have referred to in the text as a "bed-table."

Anjali: ceremonial salute performed at the beginning and end of the dance. Executed thus: the hands are raised, palms together, fingers slightly spread and bending back, to the forehead, thumbs touching the forehead. The hands are then lowered to the breast with a slight bow and a slight turn of the wrists; then again raised to the forehead with a slight bow.

Musti: clenched fists, means fight, war, battle, quarrel.

Sorrow, weeping: head tilted down, hand raised to eyebrow level and almost touching the brows, palm down.

Caress, love: one person touching another on the chin.
Love: arms crossing on breast slowly and gently.
Confusion, embarrassment: head averted, palm on cheek, fingers bending back.
Listen, or I'll tell you: index finger pointing up.
Entreaty: arms extended, palms up.
"Come here": fingers tapping the floor or bed-table three times.
I, myself, me: index finger and thumb joined in hamsasya, other fingers spread; hand placed palm in at breast.
Calling attention to the gods or to the sun: pointing heavenward and looking in same direction.
A meeting or coming together: bringing hands together, palms down, right hand on top of left.
Distraction or indecision or worry: rubbing behind the ear with side of hand, palm out.
Surprise, joy, pleasure: clapping hands three times.
Anger, impatience: stamp of the foot.

Theatre Conventions

Anjali is the reverential salute to high personages, to royalty, or to sacred objects. It is achieved by placing the palms together at forehead height, the fingers spread and turned back so that the gesture suggests a flower or chalice being offered. Anjali at breast is the salute to equals.

A journey is indicated by a *tour-de-scène* in a march-time step.

Approach to a royal personage is performed by a remarkable walk on the knees accomplished thus: in ballet first-position *plié* to the floor. Fall onto the right knee, right hand palm down on the right knee, left hand at left hip in hamsasya. Step forward with left foot, and fall instantly onto the left knee, reversing the hands and bringing the heels together. The head faces the direction of progression continuously. Repeat this "walk" until within an appropriate distance from the royal person.

Combats are executed with weapons and shields striking as the warriors circle each other with a rapid ballet *bourrée en seconde.*

Love scenes are always played sitting on the tiang (table-platform) referred to under "Dance Properties." The Princess always repulses her Prince-Admirer with little gestures of deprecation accompanied by little screams and turnings-away.

Scenery and change of locale exist only in the imagination of the spectators, evoked by the acting of the dancers. The only stage furniture is

the tiang referred to above. This is about knee high, and serves as a bed, a platform, a house, a palace, a throne, and so on. Love scenes are always played on it.

Some of the principal characters appearing in Cambodian and Thai ballets are:

MASCULINE
Gods (played with masks)
Kings
Princes
Governors
Officers
King or Prince of yakshas or yeak (giants) played with masks
Yakshas or Yeak (giants)
Kinnara (celestial singer)
Gandharva (celestial musician)
Hanuman (white monkey) with mask
Nillaphat (black monkey) with mask
Sugriva (red monkey) with mask
Bali (green monkey) with mask
Garuda (the eagle) with mask

FEMININE
Goddesses
Queens
Princesses
Governors' wives
Ladies-in-waiting
Kinnari (celestial singer)
Nang-Ma-Tcha (mermaid or River Goddess)

Dance Exercises

Exercise I.

Stand on left foot, right foot one-half toe, fifth position in front of left foot.
Left hand pataka, arm raised at left to shoulder height.
Right hand hamsasya, right arm extended down at right.
Starting from this pose, looking at hamsasya hand continually:
Step on right one-half toe, extending right elbow to right (on count 1).
Step on left heel, bending right elbow (on count 2).
Step on right one-half toe behind left foot, extend right elbow (on count 3).
Step on left heel, bending right elbow (on count 4).
Repeat for 14 counts, stamp right foot, and reverse to left. Continue repeating until perfection is attained.

Exercise II.

Step forward on right foot, raising arms with pataka hands (on count 1). Tap left foot one-half toe behind right foot, with wrist movements so that left hand comes into pataka, palm up; and right hand comes into hamsasya, extended to right side, shoulder height. Look at hamsasya hand (on count 2).

Step forward on left foot, raising arms with pataka hands (on count 3). Tap right foot one-half toe behind left foot with wrist movements so that right hand comes into pataka, palm up at right side; and left hand comes into hamsasya extended to left side, shoulder height. Look left at hamsasya hand (on count 4).

Repeat until perfection is attained.

Exercise III.

Step forward on right foot, raising arms, elbows completely extended with hands in pataka (on count 1); look front; *plié* on right knee, simultaneously lifting left foot in "flying pose," and with turn of left wrist so that left hand comes into pataka, palm up at left side, elbow at shoulder height; right hand comes to pataka, palm facing right, right elbow bent in right angle (90-degree angle) at right side (count "and"). Holding this posture, arms motionless, alternately straighten and flex (*plié*) right knee to the utmost, for 16 counts: 1 and; 2 and; 3 and; 4 and; 5 and; 6 and; 7 and; 8 and; 9 and; 10 and; 11 and; 12 and; 13 and; 14 and; 15 and; 16; stamp on right, reverse to left.

The accent is *always* the upward movement, that is, on the straightened knee.

The upward accent gives lightness, an aerial effect.

Repeat until perfection of posture and equilibrium are achieved.

Exercise IV.

Repeat Exercise III, turning in a circle to the right for 8 counts; reverse to left foot, and turn in a circle to the left for 8 counts. Continue this exercise until perfect equilibrium and control are attained.

Exercise V.

Step forward on right foot, raising arms, elbows extended, hands in pataka (on count 1). Look front.

Plié on right knee, simultaneously lifting left foot into "flying pose," and turning left wrist so that left hand comes into pataka, palm up, at left side, elbow at shoulder height; and right hand comes into hamsasya,

palm up, right arm extended backward, right wrist almost touching left heel.

In this pose, alternately straighten and *plié* right knee to the utmost, 16 counts, as in Exercise III. Stamp right foot, and reverse to left. Continue this exercise until perfect equilibrium, ease, and control are attained.

Exercise VI.

Repeat Exercise V, turning in a circle to the right for 8 counts; reverse to left foot, and turn in a circle to the left for 8 counts. Continue this exercise until perfect equilibrium, ease, and control are attained.

Exercise VII.

Step forward on right foot, raising arms, elbows extended, hands pataka. Look forward (on count 1).

Plié on right knee, simultaneously lifting left foot in "flying pose" and turning wrists so that hands come into hamsasya at shoulders, thumbs and index fingers of hamsasya touching shoulders. Straighten right knee, extending arms completely to sides, hands remaining hamsasya (on count 2).

Plié right knee, bringing hamsasya hands in to touch shoulders (count "and"); continue *plié*, facing front, for 16 counts; stamp right foot, and reverse on left foot.

Continue until perfect poise, equilibrium, and control are attained.

Exercise VIII.

Repeat Exercise VII, turning in a circle to the right for 8 counts; reverse to left foot, and turn in a circle to the left for 8 counts.

Continue until perfect equilibrium, control, and poise are attained.

A Princess in Audience with a King of the Yeaks

(For practice of speaking gestures)

The Princess enters the court of the Yeak King, and salutes him with Anjali. The King greets her with Anjali, and tells her it is a pleasant surprise to see her in his court; what news does she bring?

The Princess replies that she has something to tell him. She has come from her realm to tell him news of a grave nature. Her realm is menaced by a powerful enemy. Her father, the King, is greatly worried, for he cannot resist. There will be war, and many will die. She wishes to avert this, so she has come to entreat the Yeak to lead his army to their aid. The

Yeak listens attentively, then considers his forces, the military strategy, counts his troops; he gives his consent to the Princess. The Princess, who has been waiting tearfully and anxiously for the Yeak's decision, now thanks him with deep gratitude, and leaves his court, returning home joyfully.

Action: The Princess enters in a diagonal across the stage in the manner of progression described under Theatre Conventions: Approach to a royal personage. She stops at a short distance from the Yeak King's throne. From her kneeling position, she salutes the Yeak with Anjali, then sits in the Thai-Cambodian feminine manner described above.

Yeak: seated on his throne (tiang) makes Anjali to Princess; points to her with right hand; makes hamsasya on his breast, then claps his hands three times. Looking at her, he points up.

Meaning: "Greetings to you, O Princess, your presence . . . to me . . . gives great pleasure. . . . What news do you bring?

Princess: sitting before the King, makes hamsasya at her breast with left hand, looking at Yeak, then raises her left hand to point up.

Meaning: "I . . . will tell you, O King."

Hamsasya with left hand at her breast; right arm extends pointing right; left hand, palm out, index finger pointing up, moves side to side in negative sign.

Meaning: "I . . . come from my kingdom . . . to tell you grave news."

Rising onto knees, right hand points with arm fully extended to right.

Meaning: "my kingdom."

Remaining on knees, right hand snaps index finger across face.

Meaning: . . . "is menaced."

Remaining on knees, looking right profile, rubbing left ear with left pataka hand six, seven, eight times.

Meaning: "my father is greatly worried."

Remaining on knees; looking at Yeak, extends arms completely to right and left, hands in musti.

Meaning: "there will be war."

Remaining on knees, brings hands in front of body in hamsasya, turns wrists, hands open to pataka, palms facing audience, fingers down. Head inclined to look down at hands.

Meaning: "many will die."

Sits in Thai-Cambodian feminine manner; looking at Yeak; hamsasya at breast with left hand; left arm opens left, left hand opens to pataka, palm facing audience; shakes hand in negation.

Meaning: "I . . . wish to avert this."

Anjali toward Yeak with pleading look.

Meaning: "so I entreat you to come to our aid."

Sinks into gesture of weeping, leaning on left hand for 16 counts; followed by gesture of anxiety, for 16 counts.

Meanwhile the Yeak King, seated on his tiang throne, has listened attentively. As the Princess weeps, the Yeak thinks deeply with left index finger at his temple (for 8 counts), looking right. Yeak grips chin with right hand, looking left (for 8 counts), left hand at left hip.

Yeak: Left hand open, fingers spread:

Right hand turns little left finger down on left palm (for 2 counts).

Right hand turns third left finger down on left palm (for 2 counts).

Right hand turns middle left finger down on left palm (for 2 counts).

Right hand turns index left finger down on left palm (for 2 counts).

Places right hand on right thigh.

Left index finger opens out (2 counts).

Left middle finger opens out (2 counts).

Left third finger opens out (2 counts).

Left little finger opens out (2 counts).

Meaning: counting the Yeak armies.

Swings left musti fist across face.

Meaning: "I can do it."

Claps hands three times at his left side.

Meaning: "with pleasure."

Points to Princess, and looks intently at her.

Princess: executes a long, slow Anjali on her knees, bowing her head to the King.

Meaning: "Thank you in deepest gratitude . . . O King."

Yeak: executes Anjali to the Princess.

Princess: turns and exits on reverse diagonal on which she entered, in identical manner of progression, that is, on her knees.

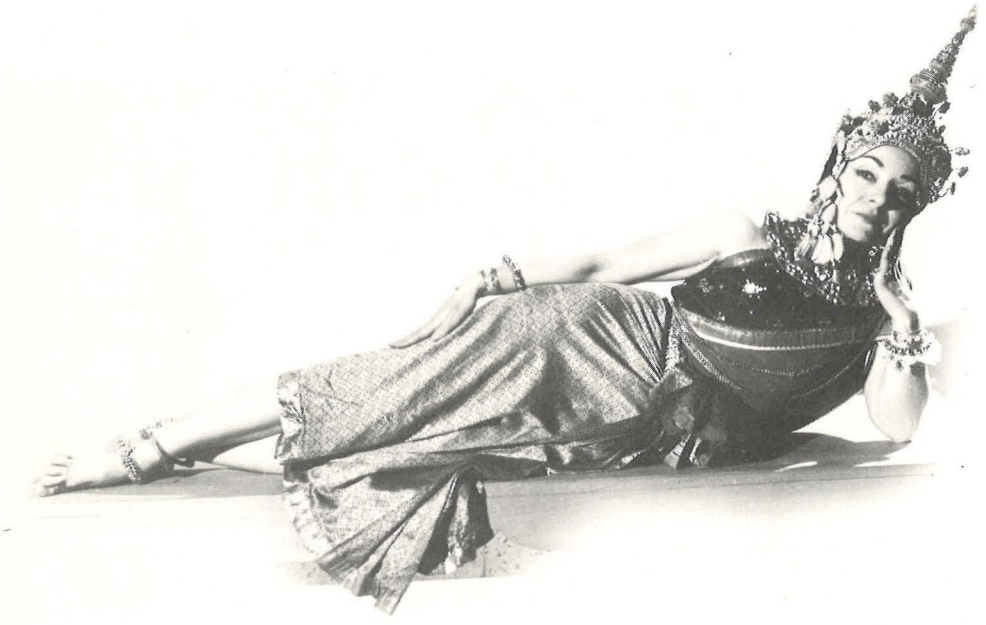
During this conversation, the music fades out when the voice of the Narrator begins. Only the tching continues, keeping time for the dance gestures and for the narrator's voice. At the end of the conversation, during the Anjali of the Princess, the music fades in softly as the Narrator's voice subsides.

Concluding Thoughts

Love and understanding of the Cambodian classic dance are deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. The dance is inextricably woven into the

traditions of the country, with their philosophy, religion, ways of thinking and doing, and therefore must persist. In the past it has flourished more than at present. At one time, the French Colonial Government made laudable efforts to stimulate and encourage the dance and other Cambodian arts such as textile weaving, bronze sculpture, wood carving, and the superb silverwork, all utilizing patterns, designs, and traditions of the great classic period of the Khmer culture. This has been the particular work of George Groslier, Director of the Musée Albert Sarraut in Pnom-penh, and of Mademoiselle Karpeles, Directress of the Bibliothèque Royale, which she was instrumental in founding. Both she and M. Groslier are dance enthusiasts. I have already referred to George Groslier's fine book, *Danseuses Cambogdiennes*. His museum has one section devoted to bronze casting, and nearly all the output is little bronze dancing figures. The silver section makes jewelry in the Khmer tradition, and armlets, bracelets, anklets, belts, and other ornaments such as are worn by the dancers in the sculptures at Angkor and by present-day dancers. Another section of the museum makes dance masks and headdresses (mokots).

Xenia Zarina in a posture of sleep: waking from sleep.

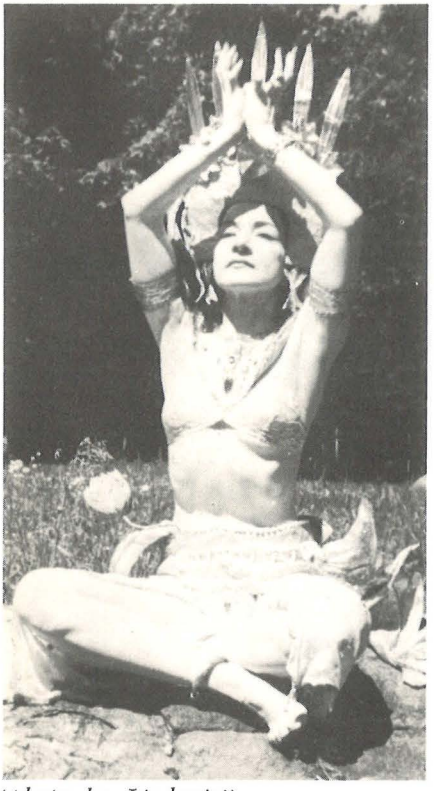


Princess Say Sang Van
with two of her dancers.

Cambodian dancer's hand in pataka mudra.

The King of Cambodia on a golden throne, under a golden parasol, being carried to his houseboat for the *Fête des Eaux*.

Xenia Zarina demonstrating the full-blown lotus in the dance, Apsaras of Angkor Vat, Angkor Vat, Cambodia.



(photo by Lindquist)

Star of Princess Say Sang Van's troupe in flying attitude, right hand in hamsasya, left hand pataka.

Xenia Zarina as Apsaras of Angkor Vat (flying posture).
(*photo by Semo, Mexico*)

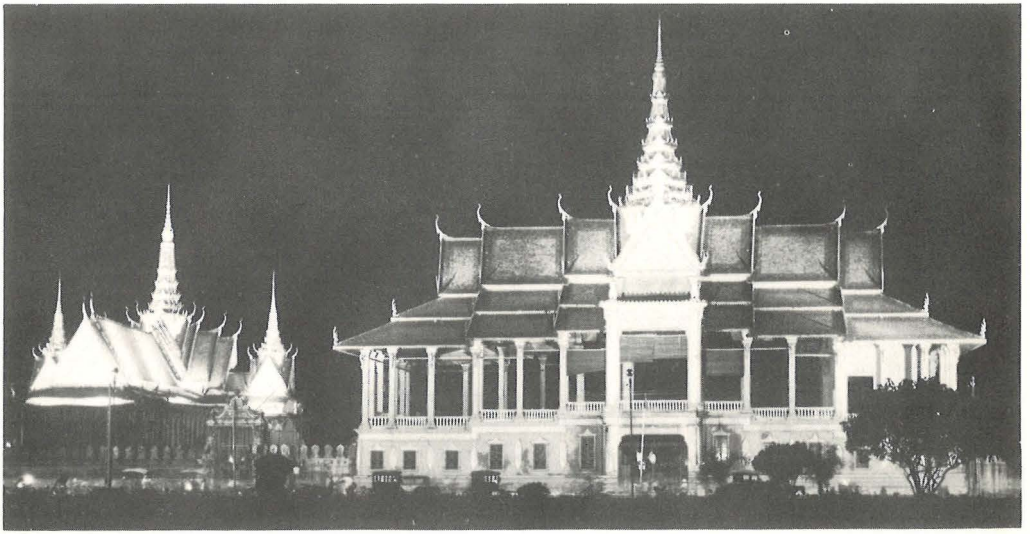
Apsaras of Angkor Vat, sculptured on a wall of Angkor Vat.

Xenia Zarina as Apsaras of Angkor Vat in the niche posture. Right hand in hamsasya mudra, left in kapitha mudra. (*Forbes, N.Y.*)

Dancers in front of Angkor Vat. Note bending of fingers.

Love scene between Hanuman and Nang-Ma-Tcha. Photo taken in a patio of the Royal Palace, Pnompenh, Cambodia. (*photo by Musée Economique*)

Dance pavilion of the Royal Palace (*photo by Royal Photo, Pnompenh*)



Kinnari "flying" in a patio of the Royal Palace, Pnompenh, Cambodia. (*photo by Musée Economique*)

An elopement scene at the ruins of Angkor Vat (hands in pataka mudra). (*photo by Siemréap–Angkor*)

Love scene between a prince and a princess (hands in pataka mudra).
(*photo by Siemréap–Angkor*)

Princess Say Sang Van's Ballet. Right hands in pataka, left hands in hamsasya.

Court Dances of Java

Javanese History

OF THE EARLY HISTORY of Java and the neighboring East Indian islands, little is known, but from Indian and Chinese records, from the writings of Arab travelers, from Javanese documents, and from archaeological research, it has been possible to reconstruct it broadly.

Before the Christian era there existed in the East Indies a powerful and almost mythical Malayan Empire of which Java was a part, and which carried on a flourishing trade with India, Indo-China, and China. The Malayan Empire also made war on China, and had a sphere of influence over a large part of the Indian Ocean and Southwestern Pacific. The religion of the Empire was an animistic cult, with ancestor- and hero-worship and magico-religious rituals. But when Indian traders came and established colonies, they brought their Indian religious beliefs, and, according to Indian records, Vishnu and Siva cults were established in Java in 78 B.C., with Buddhism following much later and coexisting with the earlier Brahmanism. By the time Central Java became Buddhist, the older Brahmanic cults were preserved in East Java and Bali. In fact, many Sivaistic temple ruins still exist, of which the most notable is the Prambanan group. Laid out along avenues, these fine architectural masses, built of beautifully cut and fitted stone, are enormously imposing.

The Sailendra kings who ruled Central Java in the eighth century (A.D. 750–860) were Buddhists, related to the Sailendra dynasty of Palembang, Sumatra. Under their rule, Indian influence increased. The theatre and dance were greatly enriched by contact with the Hindu theatre whose traditions and gestures had been firmly established and classified in the *Natya Sastra*.

During the Sailendra period, the exquisitely conceived Borobodur was built in Central Java. The Borobodur is not a temple, but a monument built to contain a precious relic of the Buddha. It stands on a small hill in a green valley surrounded by mountains. But its appearance was not always thus. Originally the valley was a lake, and the Borobodur appeared as a great stone lotus floating on the waters. Its rising terraces represent rings of petals, and its top platform, which is circular on a square base, is crowned like the center of a water lily by stone "stamens" while in the very center rises, like a pistil, the great stupa that contained the relic. Each stamen has the form of a small stupa, and under its lattice sits a representation of the Buddha. The terraces that form the base of the whole building are quadrangular. They are four in number and are carved with scenes of the Buddha's life. The first terrace shows the meeting and marriage of his royal parents; the second, his birth and youth; the third, his search to relieve suffering humanity of pain, sorrow, and death; the fourth, his enlightenment and attainment to Nirvana. Of particular interest to us are the sculptured panels representing historic dance scenes, such as the daughters of Mara dancing before Lord Buddha to tempt him, and the panels representing court entertainment dances, and the women kneeling and saluting Lord Buddha with Anjali.

In the eleventh century, the celebrated King Airlangga reigned (1019–1049). He was a great patron of the arts, particularly literature and dance dramas. Airlangga's name is connected with one of the oldest and finest pieces of Javanese literature: the *Arjunavivaha*, which is a dance drama beloved of the Javanese from Airlangga's time to the present day. Airlangga's court was famous for its literature and poetry which were presented in dance-drama form during lavish entertainments. Neighboring kings sought to imitate the magnificence of Airlangga's court, thus creating an epoch of artistic development.

The Empire of Majapahit dates from A.D. 1293 to 1525—until the Islamic period—and was a golden age for Java. There was great activity in all the arts, and much literature and poetry were written. Javanese taste and spirit had by this time completely absorbed Indian influences, and produced a true Javanese art in architecture, sculpture, literature, music, and dance.

The violent aggression of Islam put an end to the Golden Age. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, continual disturbances and uprisings against the Moslem invaders led to general decadence in Javanese life and art. The Javanese even sought help from the Portuguese, who had recently

arrived on the scene, but were unable to stem the tide, and in about 1525 Islam became established as the official religion. The king, gurus (teachers and wise men), and aristocrats fled to Bali with the remnants of their treasures. About this time European traders, particularly Portuguese and Dutch, came seeking the "wealth of the Indies."

In the eighteenth century, Java experienced a renaissance. Dance and drama again attained perfection at native courts. There were two courts now, for in 1755 the Empire of Mataram was divided, as a compromise, into two states: Surakarta, whose ruler bore the ancient title of Susuhunan, (Axis of the Universe); and Djokjakarta, ruled by a sultan. Two lesser princes were also established as liaison officers between the Dutch traders and the Javanese rulers. These princes bore the titles of *Mangkunegara* of Surakarta, and *Paku Alam* of Djokjakarta. These political divisions and titles were maintained until 1947, but the states still remain the centers and preservers of Javanese culture and tradition.

Elements Forming the Dance

The story of the creation of the dance, told in Java, is a variation of the Hindu legend. All the gods collaborated in the creation of the seven Widadaris (heavenly danseuses). They formed them of precious jewels of finest quality. Then the Widadaris began to dance, and all the gods watched, and when the seven Widadaris had danced three times around the ocean, all the gods had "wismaya" (ecstasy) and were delirious with delight at the beauty, harmony, and order they had wrought.

Another legend, Javanese in origin, tells about Bhatara Guru, the Supreme One, the Great Teacher, who wrought the first gamelan (Javanese musical instrument), then built a holy place, a temple, where the other gods and goddesses danced the very first dance to its sonorous melodies.

Remnants of the venerable belief in the ancient animistic religion, even after centuries of domination by Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, are still alive today. Dances of that early period were, as is usual, mimetic animistic dances to propitiate or invoke divine forces. They were magico-religious rituals, and although they have completely disappeared in their original form, are distinctly traceable in the masked Topeng dances of today.

During the period of Indian influence, ritual dances, forming part of the Brahmin cult, came with the new religion.

The great Indian dance dramas followed, with their vast repertoire of

significant gestures and mythology, a practically inexhaustible source of dance dramas. It was during this period that Javanese classic dance took form and made its greatest development. In the eighth century, during the Sailendra dynasty, purely court dances were known in Java. Sculptured scenes on the Borobodur represent such dances which entertained princes and courtiers.

An appealing aspect of the Javanese dance is the shadow-play theatre, called Wayang Kulit, or Wayang Klitik, ("Theatre or Drama of Leather") so named because the figures are cut out of buffalo hide. It is the most ancient form of the Javanese theatre. It seems this entertainment evolved as a sort of magico-religious rite from the ancestor and hero cults. The figures are lined up on opposing sides with the Magic Tree in the center, on one side representing the powers of Good, on the other, Evil. They are cut in profile with articulated arms and curiously distorted silhouettes. Long ago this Wayang Kulit distortion became an element of Javenese art, and is one of the most charming characteristics of Javanese dance. Wayang Kulit is still the most popular form of entertainment for the people in Java today, owing to its inexpensive installation and operation, and the fact that its plays, characters, and heroes are known and beloved by all. Motion pictures cannot compete with it.

Another very old form of entertainment incorporating dance technique is the Wayang Golek, the drama of puppets. The puppets, carved in the round, have articulated arms and necks to which thin sticks are attached for the purpose of manipulation. While the Wayang Kulit and Wayang Golek dolls are acting, the voice of the dalang (storyteller) recites the drama with appropriate intonations and changes of voice, as he operates the dolls. This convention, as well as the Kulit and Golek movements of head and arms, has carried over into the Wayang Wong (human theatre) dance dramas.

Thus we find the Javanese dance composed of these elements: ancient animistic dances, vestiges of Siva-cult rituals and ancient court dances, Indian theatre with its Hindu mythology and stylized gestures, Wayang Kulit (shadow plays), and Wayang Golek (puppet plays).

On these elements, Javanese taste played continually, modifying and molding them to the national taste and character. Javanese qualities, blending with Indian, became Indo-Javanese art. Javanese taste and temperament cast away exuberant Indian characteristics which did not accord with their ideals of modesty and refinement, as, for example: the arms of feminine dancers in Indian sculpture and dance are raised high above the

head, legs are raised to hip height, while the hip is thrown in an accentuated curve to left or right. In Javanese dance, feminine dancers never raise the elbow above shoulder height, the feet scarcely lose contact with the floor, and hips remain in line with the torso. Even the dance sculptures on the Borobodur, still very Indian in style, are less exuberant and sensual than those on Indian monuments. From this trend developed the purely chaste Javanese dance.

Probably long before the Golden Age of Majapahit, Javanese dance had already become distinctively Javanese in style and feeling, the product of the Javanese spirit that had cultivated it. As it was then, so it has remained until today, the expression of extreme aristocratic refinement, noble grace, modesty, unworldly detachment, and harmonious control which, even when interpreting strong passions, remains calm, self-contained, and distinguished. These are qualities the Javanese reverence and practice in their daily behavior.

Character of the Dance

Havelock Ellis in *The Dance of Life* writes: "The most beautiful dance I have ever seen was the slowest." Javanese court dances, particularly Serimpi and Bedoyo, are undoubtedly the slowest dances in the world. The movements are so controlled that one posture flows imperceptibly into another. The rhythm is that of Nature herself—as clouds drift across a summer sky, constantly changing form; as waves of a tranquil sea swell and subside; as a flower opens and slowly fades; as the sun, moon, planets, and stars rotate in their orbits; as the four seasons succeed one another through eternity. When Javanese dance translates these rhythms through human form, the beauty of monotony and imperceptible change is revealed, conveying a feeling of eternity, and the effect on the spectator is hypnotic.

In 1866, the Comte de Beauvoir, traveling in Java, saw these court dances and wrote: "I became little by little so accustomed to the sweet langour, monotonous and lulling, of the graceful danseuses, that our rapid music and our animated, whirlwind ballets seem the madness of a carnival and not the Art of the Dance."

Javanese dance seeks beauty in all its phases. Even when the qualities of ugliness, arrogance, brutality, and ferocity are represented in a symbolic instead of realistic manner, the spirit of these repulsive qualities is revealed as beauty. Perhaps understanding will be facilitated by the exam-

ple of motion-picture acting. In the early silent films, actors rolled their eyes, gritted their teeth, and tore their hair to express hatred, vengeance, pain, torture, grief, and allied emotions. Today motion-picture acting has become infinitely more subtle, controlled, suggestive, and, therefore, of greater expressive power. Great acting is the result of spiritual concentration so intense that the whole body and muscular structure react to it and send emotional radiations out to the audience.

Javanese dance has grown from the blending of two elements: Indian and Javanese. In analyzing the dance we find the Indian elements to be: the religious ceremony "Sadjen" performed by dancers before the dance; the ceremonial salute "Sembah" which begins and ends the dance; Ramayana and Mahabharata stories for dance dramas; stylized hand gestures and symbolic actions; head movements and eye movements, and the painting of dancers' faces and bodies with ocher-yellow, the sacred color.

Javanese elements are the ceremonial entrance walks—kapang-kapang and tayoungan; the use of arms, legs, and torsos like Wayang Kulit and Wayang Golek dolls; Javanese historical and legendary subjects for dance dramas; the warrior dances and extremely refined feminine dances; the trancelike execution of dances; and the masked Topeng dances.

Terms frequently used in connection with the Javanese dance are explained in the following list:

Wayang Wong in low Javanese, *Ringit Tyang* in high Javanese, and *Wayang Ourang* in the Malayan language, all mean "human theatre" and are dance dramas using Indian epics or Javanese myths and history as subjects. The most beloved heroes of these plays are Arjuna, Bhima, and Pandji. Wayang Wong is played exclusively by male dancers, boys taking the feminine roles.

Kalana dances represent a warrior preparing to meet his beloved, arranging moustaches, hair, and eyebrows, looking in a mirror represented by the end of his sampour, imagining the pleasure of meeting, dancing his anticipated joy with exuberant vitality. Kalana dances appear in Wayang Wong and in Wayang Topeng plays. They are also presented separately as solo dances.

Kiprah dances are expressions of gaiety, exuberance, or love, and are danced only by princes. Kiprah is the masculine counterpart of the Serimpi dances which are performed only by princesses.

Wayang Topeng are masked dance dramas of primitive Javanese origin. Originally rituals connected with ancient animistic cults, they developed a more complicated form by absorption of Indian theatre conventions and gestures.

Wayang Purwa means "ancient theatre," and applies to the shadow play as well as to human dance dramas.

Dalang is the narrator who recites the narrative of Wayang Wong, Wayang Kulit, or Wayang Golek plays.

Bedoyo is exclusively a feminine court dance, danced by nine girls of the royal palace who are of the royal family or related to it.

Serimpi is a feminine court dance reserved exclusively for royal princesses who dance it only in the presence of the sovereign. Four princesses dance it in pairs, one pair duplicating the other in a very attenuated story of love and jealousy for a historical king.

In Bedoyo and Serimpi dances, very lovely geometrical patterns occur, the girls taking their positions in the floor-pattern with more accuracy than finely drilled soldiers. These dances are a continuation of ancient court dances of the eighth century, and the Javanese even like to say they are the original dances of the seven Widadaris. Certainly they appear dream-like and unworldly enough to be the celestial dances of the seven planets revolving through eternity.

Training for the Dance

Ever since the establishment of dances as part of court life, the Javanese court dancers have been royal princes, princesses, and their cousins who lived within the Kraton (Palace) enclosure. The teachers were also, and necessarily, of the royal family, and the court dances have been kept an exclusively royal entertainment. The only way Javanese outside the court, or foreigners of distinction, could see these royal dances, was to be invited to the Kraton on special occasions when these dances were given. Moreover, it was very difficult to obtain an invitation. It was far from sufficient that one wished to see the dances; one's presence must be desired by the Javanese and recommended (prior to Indonesian independence) by the Dutch authorities. Since the establishment of the Indonesian Republic, the situation has doubtless been modified.

If it was difficult to see these dances, it was impossible for an outsider to study them until 1918 when the late Sultan of Djokjakarta, Hamangkonbouwana VIII, who felt the knowledge of Javanese classic dance should be extended outside court circles, endowed his two brothers, Prince Arya Souryadiningrat and Prince Tedjokoesoemo to establish the Krida Beksa Wirama (School of Dance and Music) to teach children of good families outside the court. Prince (Pangeran) Tedjokoesoemo was the most celebrated dancer in all Java, and the Krida Beksa Wirama is the finest dance

school in Java, carrying on the truest and purest tradition. In 1938 it was my good fortune to be accepted as a student in this school.

Gusti Pangeran Tedjokoesoemo's home stands in a walled garden adjoining the Kraton. In front of the house, and connected with it, is a large pavilion—a roof supported on slender columns above a polished floor. This is the Krida Beksa Wirama dance studio. At the far end stand the gamelan instruments, their rich cases of carved wood red-lacquered and decorated with gold leaf, the great bronze gongs hanging in carved and painted racks.

In the garden round about are tall poles, and at the top of each, high above the flowering shrubs, is a birdcage. Every morning the servants hoist the birds up there in the sun and air to give them the illusion of liberty and encourage them to sing. During lessons the soft breeze wafts across the dance pavilion, bringing the fragrance of exotic flowers and the clarion calls of these Javanese birds.

Three nights a week there were men's classes, and three mornings a week, classes for girls. The school in 1938 had over one hundred pupils, and Pangeran Tedjokoesoemo directed and taught the classes personally, assisted by his silver-haired cousin, also a noted court dancer.

The complete course in the dance school is three years, but of course one may go on studying much longer—there is so much to learn. When I first made my application to enter the school, I was refused because I could not remain in Java long enough to complete the course. I still possess that disappointing letter. But my eagerness to study was so great that Mr. J. L. Moens, an exceptional Dutch official and connoisseur of Javanese art, interested the prince in me personally, and when he understood that I was already a dancer, he accepted me, to my great happiness. In addition to class lessons, I took private lessons so that my teachers, Pangeran Tedjokoesoemo and his cousin, were convinced of my sincerity, and gave me special attention during class lessons which helped me to advance even more rapidly.

In contrast to the old method, Pangeran Tedjokoesoemo instituted a finely thought-out plan of teaching which every student follows. The first things learned are the hand positions. The first forty-five minutes of class are devoted to the Sembah (ceremonial salute) and the kapang-kapang (ceremonial entrance walk). A rest period of fifteen minutes follows, sipping tea and talking with the gurus, then another forty-five minutes of dance sequences and scarf play. The scarfs, when worn by women, are called utdet; when worn by men, sampour. The manipulation of the scarf is

the most important decorative feature in the Javanese dance. It gives accent, marks the music, gives continuity to the rhythm and line of arm movements, makes interesting aerial patterns for the eye, and translates emotional intensity into visible form. Another rest with refreshing tea is followed by the last forty-five minutes devoted to actual dances: Kalana, Kiprah, or heroic dances for men, and Serimpi or Bedoyo dances for girls.

In token of respect and gratitude, each student, as he or she enters the dancing space, salutes the gurus with a Sembah, not the ceremonial Sembah used in the dance, but a less elaborate though similar gesture. And on leaving after the lesson, each pupil again bows to the teachers, bringing his hands, palms together, before his face.

At first I wondered at this leisurely manner of studying the dance, remembering the continuous hours of exhausting ballet lessons and operatic ballet training I had become accustomed to: *barre*-work, ballet lesson, rush down to the stage for orchestra rehearsal, back again upstairs for costume fittings, an hour for lunch, all afternoon practicing dances for tomorrow's opera, an hour for dinner and rest, lying on the dressing-room floor (Oh, how good it was just to lie down!), and the opera performance in the evening. Then the long trip home to the suburbs, perhaps in a snowstorm. But such gyrations would never do in the hot Oriental climate. No, their way is the right way for Java, I soon became aware, as I had already become conscious of their high artistic achievement, devoid of breakneck physical feats and useless demonstrations of physical energy that only serve to emphasize terrestrial limitations. In contrast, Oriental dance enables the dancer to fly through the air, dematerialize, and possess other remarkable powers, because of its evocative nature.

Usually there is no music to accompany the classes, but our guru rapped on a sound box (keprak) with a wooden hammer to mark the time. On certain occasions the classes would be accompanied by the wondrous sonority of the gamelan instruments, played by students of the music-school section of the Krida Beksa Wirama.

It was absorbing to watch the men's class in the evening dancing to the gamelan. The electric lights threw a flickering, torchlight effect over the sixty young men and boys of assorted sizes (some very small but very accurate dancers) all moving in unison, throwing their sampours, turning, posturing, catching the end of the sampour again and fluttering it to indicate emotional intensity, heads executing the patjak-kulu movement, stepping with high, virile, masculine leg movements, turning, dropping on one knee, all exactly synchronized with the ringing melodies of the

gamelan and the deep bell tones of the gongs. Or to see the Sunday morning girls' class, thirty descendants of the Widadaris moving in ecstatic trance through geometrical figures, throwing their bright-colored utdets in unison, balancing the almost nonexistent weight of their slender bodies from foot to foot in an undulating sway—then with a sharp gedruk movement of their little feet throwing all their trains to the other side like the lash of serpents' tails, and at the stroke of a gong, flying through the air with their utdets as wings.

But if it was beautiful and evocative to watch, how infinitely more so to take part in—to be a part of! The memory of the serene beauty of those lessons in that open pavilion in the garden—the scented breeze that caressed our arms and fluttered our utdets as we danced in an unworldly ecstasy of spirit—has many times solaced me in the midst of turmoil in other lands which are even farther in spirit than in miles from the Nirvanic, rhythmically coordinated peace of those noble lessons. More than dance lessons, they are lessons in religion, in philosophy, in the realization of the meaning of life and eternity; they are a spiritual education.

Suddenly one understands the legends that the dance is a creation of the gods and a gift to mankind. Suddenly one understands why both spectators and performers approach the dance with a reverential attitude. One realizes that the reason for the power and continuation, all these hundreds of years, of the Javanese dance, and of all Far Eastern dances, lies in this realization which permeates the race.

Costume for the Dance

The classic dance in Java, as in all lands of the East, has preserved in their most elegant and refined forms the ancient traditions not only of customs and manners, but of costumes as well.

The basic masculine costume consists of:

Knee-length pants of silk ikat material.

A kain (length of cloth 1½ yards wide by about 3 yards long) of fine cotton batik in the "Royal Water pattern" design in indigo, brown, and cream stripes. This kain is folded about the waist, over the ikat pants, one end hanging in front, the other behind.

A breast-plaque of gold or silver gilt, hanging from the neck on a chain. Armlets on upper arms, and a kris (Javanese dagger) in the belt at the back.

A headdress that represents an ancient manner of wearing the hair (a large tapering loop from the nape of the neck to the top of the head)

combined with a gilded leather crown and soumping (ear ornaments). A sampour (scarf) of silk ikat.

To designate the different roles, there are variations in the headdress. A king's headdress is a high crown with two hanks of hair falling over the shoulders onto the breast. There are other subtle distinctions immediately perceived by Javanese eyes, such as the design on batik, or the way it is folded and draped, which are always associated with certain characters. A quiver of arrows is sometimes worn on the back, or very decorative "wings" of gilded buffalo hide which are worn by those who have the power of flying. In Surakarta, these wings are cut so that the arms pass through ornamental loops of leather, but in Djokjakarta the wings are simply attached to the shoulders.

Ikat material is worth a study for itself alone. Since ancient times it has been imported to Java from India, and has always been highly prized. Its manufacture is most unusual. The threads are dyed in vegetable colors: reds, greens, browns, before weaving, and there is supposed to be something magic about the way the design appears, apparently by itself, during weaving. Ikat is fragile, precious, rare, and therefore is reserved in Java for royalty. The ancient art of ikat-weaving is still practiced in India in Gujerat, near Baroda, where only four or five families still preserve the secret. Ikat is called patola in India.

The classic feminine costume consists of:

A kain of diagonally striped batik of indigo, brown, and cream, worn tightly wound about the legs, starting behind the right hip, once about the body, finishing center front, where the end is carried at the left side in the left hand during the kapang-kapang entrance walk, but during the dance, falls to the floor, and passes between the ankles like a train. The kain is *always* worn so that the batik diagonal stripes descend from the right hip to the left ankle.

A corsage of green, blue, red, brown, or black velvet, embroidered in silver-gilt thread, with a panel in front.

An utdet of any color desired, folded and tied about the waist, and falling to the floor in front. Sometimes the utdet is of ikat.

A gold belt is worn over the utdet to hold it in place.

Armlets on the upper arms, in the form of dragons, of silver gilt or of gilded leather.

A breast-plaque of gold or silver gilt, perhaps set with tiny diamonds.

A headdress representing an ancient manner of wearing the hair, combined with the buffalo-hide gilded crown and the soumping ear ornaments.

This costume is also the traditional bridal costume.

There are numerous small differences between the costumes of Surakarta and Djokjakarta, but it is unnecessary to discuss them in detail. The most notable is a sleeveless jacket of velvet, rather European in cut, trimmed with gold fringes, which is worn by the Djokjakarta danseuses instead of the classic corsage worn in Surakarta.

The Serimpis wear crown headdresses; the Bedoyos wear only ornaments or flowers in the classic knot of their neatly dressed hair. There are variations in the form of the crown headdresses to distinguish the feminine roles.

The restrained color schemes—browns, creams, indigos of the batiks with accents of vermilion, jade green, or turquoise utdets—with discreet touches of gold ornaments, exemplify the exceedingly refined and subtle Javanese taste.

Masks and Makeup

Javanese masks are of great variety. One kind is used for the heroes of the Pandji cycle; another kind is used by strolling players; another, by court dancers; other masks represent animals, and were part of the animistic-cult rituals; and lastly, there are traditional masks used only for celebrating certain public holidays.

The masks used for the classic Wayang Topeng are, of course, the finest. They have interestingly stylized features that show Indian influence. The "refined-type" of mask has white, pale green, pale blue, or pale pink face color, elaborately arched and curled eyebrows and moustaches, the nose fine and pointed, the eyes with gilded eyelids half closed in serene contemplation. The "virile-type" of mask has a red, deep pink, or orange-colored face with bushy eyebrows and bristling moustaches, the nose thick and rounded, the eyes round and bulging. I have in my collection four masks: one virile, one refined, and those of their two servants who are comic characters. These have flour-white faces with knobs for noses, squinting eyes, and no lower jaw, so that when worn, the actor's own lower jaw is disquised as a receding chin, giving an "Andy Gump" profile. The refined and virile masks are held in place by a leather thong which the actor holds between his teeth; his is not a talking role, and the dalang recites his speeches. The two clown masks are held in place by cords around the actors' heads, giving them complete freedom to talk. Their parts call for a great deal of improvisation and many comic effects.

The roles of superhuman beings, mythological creatures, garuda

(eagle), and monkeys are always played with masks in both Topeng and Wayang Wong plays.

Sometimes, instead of having painted eyebrows and moustaches, the masks have real hair pasted in place. The actual makeup of Wayang Wong actors also follows these two conventions. In Surakarta the actors paste hair moustaches on their faces. In Djokjakarta, they are carefully painted on, following the traditional elaborate curves for moustaches and eyebrows.

The painting of feminine faces only accentuates the natural features: red on the lips, and black on eyebrows and outlines of the eyes. There is a slight idealization of the eyebrow line. Dancers' bodies are painted ocher-yellow, the sacred color.

Dance Properties

Because Javanese dance action is so highly symbolized, not many dance properties are used. The kris, worn in the belt at the back, should be considered as part of the costume since it is part of the ceremonial dress of princes. Lances are carried by followers of a warrior-hero. Short daggers and shields are used in some combat scenes, bows and arrows in other masculine dances. In feminine roles, the goddess Srikandi often appears wearing a quiver of arrows. Both Bedoyos and Serimpis may carry bows and arrows, or small krises and shields in certain dances.

One astonishing innovation, of which I had heard before I witnessed it at the court of the Susuhunan at Surakarta, is that the dancers suddenly break the celestial serenity of their dances by pulling out and firing pistols. The explosion of several pistols only a few paces away, in the midst of a reverie, is as shocking to artistic taste as it is to the nerves. Everyone hopes this "modernization" will soon be discontinued. Plays representing the time of the East India Company and its misdoings also make use of pistols and sabers.

Music for the Dance

Javanese gamelan music has been called the most truly celestial music possible to imagine on earth. Debussy was charmed by it when he heard a Javanese gamelan at an Exposition in Paris, and went often to listen and take notes. Its influence is noticeable in his compositions.

The role of the gamelan for dance dramas is to accompany, setting

the rhythmic pace for the dance and for the chanted recitations, underlining and increasing the emotional interest, creating a perfect unity of dance, drama, and music.

There are two types of gamelan: gamelan selendro with a five-note scale, and gamelan pelog with a seven-note scale. The instruments, all percussion except three, are:

gambangs (of wood)
bonangs (of brass)
sarons (bronze bars)
kenongs (bronze)
genging (percussion)
gender (percussion instrument like a xylophone)
panerous (percussion)
kempoul (percussion)
rebab (two-string lute)
souling (four-note flute)
yelempoung (harplike instrument)
tjblon (drum)
kendang (long drum)
bedong (big drum)
gongs of several sizes
keprak (wooden sound box)

Every dance is begun by an overture whose melody is played by the rebab. The basic instrument for setting the tempo is, as usual, the drum. Gongs mark the musical phrases with their rich, deep tones, and indicate the beginning and end of dance phrases. And all the while, delicate melodies played by the other instruments give nuance and expression to the dance language. There are modes always associated with certain emotions and actions, for example:

anger, wrath	bhima-kroda
exuberance, exaltation	bindrong
serenity, reverie	ayak-ayakan
combat, war	srebegan
menaces, threats	oulok-oulok

If two contrasting characters appear together, two modes expressing their types are combined to accompany the scene. There are infinite variations possible in the order and combination of the musical themes, of which a vast repertoire has been handed down through the centuries.

During the dance dramas, the dalang gives indications to the musicians as an orchestra leader would. When the task is too complicated, he is assisted by a *chef-d'orchestre* called lourah gending who gives the dance tempos. The dalang and lourah gending are seated before the gamelan players.

For Serimpi and Bedoyo dances, a chorus of women, who sing from time to time, is often added to the gamelan.

When the Javanese dance absorbed Indian attributes, the original Javanese gamelan music also took on Indian musical additions, but possessing greater musical scope than the simpler, more limited Indian instruments, a wonderful music developed. No one who has ever heard a Javanese gamelan played—preferably in Java—can ever forget those rich, sonorous, ringing tones, the delicate nostalgic melodies of the ringing carillon of bronze bars, and those incomparable gongs. What an incalculable loss to Western music not to have Javanese gongs in symphony orchestras!

Presentation of the Dance

The court dances are presented today as they have always been, following the ancient Indian tradition whose instructions were written in Vedic times: in one of the Kraton's reception halls, a large pavilion open on three sides with decorative columns supporting the roof, the sovereign and his immediate family take their places. The guests are disposed to the right and left of the ruler on comfortable seats. In this atmosphere, unaided by any special lighting, scenery, or other effects, the art of the Javanese dance simply and unassumingly unfolds itself.

A Wayang Wong Rehearsal

I had the exceptional privilege of being invited to visit several Wayang Wong rehearsals in the Kraton at Djokjakarta where the princes were preparing a play to be given the following year. The way through the Kraton to the rehearsal pavilion was like approaching a sanctuary; as indeed it was a sanctuary of the dance.

We crossed various courtyards where thick green trees cast dark green shade in the bright morning sunlight, through several gates in white walls where Javanese Kraton guards, dressed in traditional costumes of handsome batik dodots, embroidered jackets, and black velvet Moslem hats, presented arms and inspected our entry permits. At last we arrived at a pavilion with three open sides, its roof supported on slender carved and painted columns, where the rehearsal was in progress on the white marble floor.

The play told of the marriage of Krishna's daughter to Arjuna's son.

A large group of Arjuna's men sat at one side, at a distance; an equal group of "women," played by boys, sat opposite. Both groups then made the ceremonial Sembah to each other, after which they rose. Arjuna's men advanced with the ceremonial walk tayoungan, and the women with kapang-kapang until they met. A long conference ensued in Kawi, the ancient classic Javanese language. The actor speaking stood in a wide second position, left hand on hip, right arm extended forward, hand vertical to the arm in nitteng position. This is the traditional posture assumed by a dancer when he speaks or when he represents that he is speaking during the dalang's recitation. In the present case, the recitation was broken up between the principal actors speaking and the recitation of the dalang. Having arrived at a satisfactory termination of the conference, both groups went out, the men with the ceremonial walk tayoungan, fluttering the ends of their sampours in their left hands and fully extended left arms; their right hands in ngepel, alternating rhythmically from extension at the right side to an upward right angle at the right side, the women with kapang-kapang. All the above techniques are outlined under "Character of the Dance" and "Dance Technique" in this chapter.

A pause—everyone seemed waiting for something. And then it happened: two young palace women appeared walking along a marble corridor which connected the pavilions. One carried on her palms an object wrapped in silk; the other, walking behind, held a golden umbrella over the object. As they advanced smoothly across the white sanded courtyard, I had just time to photograph this rare and beautiful sight. The golden umbrella has, since ancient times throughout the East, been carried over a King or over a sacred object, in this case a book of sacred literature, the dance dramas. Ceremoniously the book was delivered into the hands of the dalang, and the maidens retreated as he unwrapped the exquisite silk from the precious document. Now, with the record at hand, the rehearsal could proceed.

Twenty-four demons entered the scene; then the demon-king and fourteen comic characters entered from the other side, and both groups sat facing each other. The comic characters were composed of albinos, dwarfs, and other deformed creatures who live at court to amuse the sultan. Stools were placed for the demon-king and for his general who headed a group of twenty-four demons. They sat facing each other posed in profile like Wayang Kulit figures, and their followers sat in formation behind them. The two chiefs talked alternately about the demon-king's wedding plans. All the followers, at certain points in the discussion, yelled in unison. They planned to make the town beautiful with flowers, and to bedeck them-

selves to receive the princess, daughter of Krishna. Suddenly a courier arrived with the news that the princess was already married to Arjuna's son. The demon-king gave a great shout of anger—they must make war on Arjuna! Excitedly they discussed war plans. Another courier arrived and sat respectfully before the demon-king, whom he told in rhythmic chant that the demon army had been defeated in another battle elsewhere. Again the king and general conferred, the followers all yelled approval, and all exited in ceremonial walks.

The scene changed again, this time to Krishna's court. Twenty of Arjuna's followers, led by Bhima, appeared, sat, made Sembah, rose, and advanced with the ceremonial walk toward Krishna, where they sat facing him and his followers. Krishna and Bhima sat on stools placed for them, and their followers sat in formation behind. There was a dialogue between Krishna and Bhima: they were glad the wedding had been successfully accomplished. Krishna spoke on one high note as befits a person of distinction; Bhima spoke in a deep, even tone like a gong, suitable to his role as an invincible warrior. The demon-king and demon-general had both spoken in loud, rough voices befitting their coarse natures. Speaking, dancing, and group action were all rhythmically coordinated.

It was now well after noon, and the rehearsal, which had begun early in the morning, was over for the day.

A Dance Performance

One day I received an invitation to a reception at the Kraton of the Susuhunan of Surakarta, and there was to be a Bedoyo dance. My friends, Mr. and Mrs. Moens, called for me, and together we motored along tree-lined roads in the sunset from Djokjakarta to Surakarta. At the gate of the Kraton, we left the car and proceeded on foot across marble floors and white-sanded courtyards until we arrived at the reception hall.

Here the Javanese and Dutch guests stood about chatting until the Susuhunan arrived with his Queen. The guests then formed into line and the Court Minister announced the names of each in turn to the Susuhunan. Rotund and not very tall, His Majesty greeted each guest, who then passed along, bowing to the Queen and to the other wives and daughters who stood in line at the Susuhunan's left, looking like a line of adorable Wayang Golek dolls in their superb batik kains and embroidered jackets. Their black hair, oiled and knotted in a classic Javanese chignon, was ornamented with stars of diamonds and rubies.

All was ceremonious and orderly. Rhythmically the names were called and rhythmically the bows of greeting succeeded one another. Then Mademoiselle Zarina was called. I stepped forward and bowed, but the Susuhunan stepped backward, shouted querulously, "Sarina?" and looking at me with round eyes like those of a "virile-type" mask, incredulously shook his head. As his voice boomed out "Sarina," everyone stopped talking and turned to look. How I longed for the power to dematerialize! Then everyone smiled, for Sarina is a Javanese girl's name and the Susuhunan was astounded that a foreigner should bear it. I bowed again, and all the little queens and princesses smiled and spoke to me as I passed down the line, for they knew I had come to Java to study their classic dance.

As the last guest was presented, all took seats indicated to right or left of the royal family. Refreshments were passed and presently the gamelan began to play. Then, as though suspended by invisible threads, nine Bedoyos moved softly across the marble floor with that unearthly kapang-kapang walk, to kneel in geometrical formation before their sovereign. In motionless silence they sat, with downcast eyes. Then, as though awaking from a trance, they slowly lifted their eyes to gaze directly at the Susuhunan. Slowly their delicate hands came into Sembah, their lovely heads moved in patjak-kulu, their hands separated, the right returning to rest beside the right knee, the left extending and coming to rest, palm down, on the floor at the left, heads and eyes following the left hand and gazing at a point fifteen feet away at the left side. Again they sat motionless until a gong stroke set all their heads moving in nolah-noleh which brought their faces back to center. Slowly, slowly rising, they now stood, the right hand took the right end of the utdet in gnpulth at the right hip; the left hand, in nitteng tremulously ran down the edge to the left end of the utdet and threw it gently over the left hand with a turn of the wrist, in the dance figure called ngatok. The left feet, which had been unobtrusively seeking the ends of the kains, now found them, and with a gedruk drew them between the ankles and threw them, like little trains, to the right. All the above movements and positions are covered below, under "Dance Technique."

This is the traditional opening for Bedoyo and Serimpi dances. The dance now began, figure after figure slowly, smoothly executed: hands throwing the utdets now left, now right, now back, now drawing them forward, the small feet flicking the little trains now to the right, now to the left. The Bedoyos revolved to a new geometrical formation. Figure after

figure—utdets floating in the air and falling again, heads turning, bodies swaying softly like grasses in a gentle wind while the gamelan's clear carillon melodies rippled against the sustained tones of the great bronze gongs, and from time to time a plaintive chant of the women's chorus joined in. On and on they danced like the movement of stars across the night sky. Now and then one of the two elderly women attendants would hurry, crouching among the dancers, to straighten a tangled train or to pick up an ornament that had dropped. These attendants symbolize ancestral protectors and are always present during the dance performances.

Now each Bedoyo unobtrusively drew from her corsage a large, ungainly pistol, and wearily raised it to aim—but the arm and heavy pistol dropped, and heads turned away as though the effort were too great. Again the movement was repeated, again the arms dropped and the feet carried the slender bodies with drooping heads across the floor in vatikangser (sand blowing in the wind). A third time the movement was repeated, and in the midst of the celestial tranquillity a terrific explosion startled all the guests. The Susuhunan beamed with pleasure. All nine pistols had fired, and the Bedoyos, still floating in interstellar spaces, leaned langorously to the right, disposed of the pistols on the floor, and danced on as the original Widadaris had danced—revolving to new positions, forming new, perfectly spaced geometrical figures, utdets floating and falling, feet balancing slender bodies in gentle undulations until, coming back to the original pattern, they sank slowly to kneel again before the Susuhunan and give the final Sembah. For the last time they rose, and with the kapang-kapang walk, disappeared as they had come—silently floating into obscurity.

The dance was over, and one breathed for the first time in forty-five minutes—except for when the pistols went off! The hypnotic spell faded and one became conscious of the world again and of the servants offering tea and trays of alluring Javanese sweetments.

Dance Technique

Gesture is a definite element for determining the degree of civilization of a people. Ancient, highly evolved cultures practice fine and aristocratic gestures, even after the height of political power has long since waned. Ruder people have coarser, more brusque, gestures and manners. While Javanese court dance technique is the essence of aristocratic movement, it is not complicated or involved. It has no extensive repertoire of astonishing

movements. Its keynote is simplicity, nobility of bearing, with subtle line and movement. In this it reflects perfectly the national taste.

There are two styles of classic dance: masculine and feminine. The masculine again divides into two parts, the virile type, warriors and villains (the invincible Bhima is the popular hero of this type), and the gentle type, refined, poetic characters, of which Arjuna is the greatly beloved hero. Although male dancers have a wider repertoire of movements, used only by them and never by women, both sexes use the same basic technique as described and listed at the end of this chapter.

The masculine virile type executes postures and movements with widely placed feet and in an extremely vigorous and dynamic, even brusque, manner, according to the character enacted. The sudden leaps and rapid *bourrées* add excitement to combat scenes. The masculine refined type places the feet less widely; and movements, while manly, are executed with elegance and nobility rather than with vigor.

The feminine style keeps always in mind the feminine qualities of modesty, gentleness, beauty, and grace. It is danced with the feet and thighs close together. No leaps break its serenity and elegance. The feminine style is considered more difficult and subtle than the masculine. Above all in fineness and delicacy are the Serimpi and Bedoyo dances.

All the positions and movements, both masculine and feminine, are executed in the style of Wayang Kulit and Wayang Golek figures, that is, two-dimensional poses, clearly marked angles of wrists and elbows, mobile necks and arms, motionless torsos—doll-like, unreal, yet with a continuous, uninterrupted flow of movement from one part of the body to another. Head, eyes, extremities of toes and fingers, are all linked in rhythmic continuity. The movements are performed in such a way that the spectator has the impression that the dancer is animated by an external power. This impression is further enhanced by the trancelike expression on the dancer's face. Or does the spectator have this impression because it is really a fact that the dancers are moved by a force not their own? As a performer of Javanese dance, I must state that the dancer does become possessed by some unnameable power. The utter calm of the Serimpi and Bedoyo dances—the slow closing and opening of the eyes, the patjak-kulu of the head and neck, the langorous lifting and lowering of the arms, the soft transfer of weight from one foot to another—draws one's being irresistibly into a strange psychic state that leaves one refreshed, rested, and indescribably happy. All worries and annoyances vanish; many things lose their importance, or matter no longer. It is medicine for the soul and body, the nearest approach to the nirvanic state that I know of on earth.

SEMBAH (SALUTATION)

Masculine style: sitting on the floor, legs crossed right over left. Raise hands, palms pressed together, before the face, elbows open so that forearms make a straight line parallel to the shoulders. Thumbs touch tip of nose, eyes look straight forward, head executes patjak-kulu.

Surakarta style: fingers point straight up.

Djokjakarta style: fingers point at 45-degree angle with little finger separate from others.

Feminine style: sitting on the floor, legs crossed right over left. Soles of feet full on floor, knees drawn up; hands crossed, left holding thumb of right, resting on top of knees. From this position, raise hands slowly, palms pressed together so that forearms are nearly perpendicular. Thumbs touch tip of nose, eyes look straight forward, head executes patjak-kulu during which movement eyes close and open twice.

Surakarta style: fingers point straight up.

Djokjakarta style: fingers point at 45-degree angle with little finger separate from others.

HAND POSITIONS

Ngrudji: palm facing out, fingers vertical and straight, thumb in line with forefinger, against the palm. Like Indian mudra pataka.

Nitteng: middle finger and thumb joined in a circle. The other fingers curve naturally.

Ngempurit: thumb and forefinger joined against the palm, tip of little finger on joint of fourth finger. Third and fourth fingers curve toward palm.

Gnpulth (Ngepel): meaning a "fist": fingers closed against palm. Little finger tip on joint of fourth finger. Thumb set out at side of palm.

HEAD MOVEMENTS

Patjak-kulu: facing front, the performer executes a figure eight several times with the aid of neck muscles. This movement marks the end of dance phrases.

Nolah-noleh: the head turns from center to profile with a slight lifting, pauses, turns to the other profile with a slight lifting, pauses, turns back to center with a slight figure eight movement.

ARM POSITIONS

Flexed at elbow, upper arm vertical, forearm horizontal and extending

forward. Hand vertical to wrist. A slight space between elbow and body as in statues of Hindu gods and statues of the Buddha.
Fully extended straight out from the shoulder, to side or front.
Fully extended down at 45-degree angle.
Elbow flexed to side with hand placed on thigh or hip.
Elbow flexed to side when hand is at shoulder or waist.

TORSO POSITION: always immobile and erect with straight spine.

FOOT MOVEMENTS

Nidath: transfer weight from one one-half-toe to other one-half-toe.

Gnutot: relevé and *plié* on one one-half-toe, the other foot full on the floor. *Plié* until the heal touches the floor, rise to one-half-toe, *plié* again, repeating several times with a smooth, springy action accomplished by slight knee flexations.

Jinjit: relevé.

Gedruk: scoop the train of the kain back with the heel, tap the floor with one-half-toe just behind the supporting foot.

EYE MOVEMENTS: these are of the utmost importance in the expression of the dance; but from the half-closed mata kelipan eyes to the fierce glances and introspective gazes, they are impossible to describe adequately and must be learned from a teacher to be performed correctly.

MANNER OF SITTING

Masculine style: sitting on the floor, legs crossed right over left. Used during Sembah and some other gestures.
Sitting on left heel, right foot full on floor, knees widely separated. Right arm rests on right knee (raised). Left hand on left hip, elbow out at left side. Head looking left or right. Torso erect. A very regal posture.

Feminine style: sitting on floor, knees raised and about 5 inches apart. Ankles crossed right over left, soles of feet full on floor and drawn as closely as possible. Torso erect. Used during Sembah at beginning and end of dance.
Sitting on heels, right knee raised so that right thigh is parallel to floor and touching left thigh. Torso erect. Used during ngla-yang position (ga-jax-ngo-ling). An extremely beautiful posture followed by one of the loveliest movements in Javanese dance.

Manner of Walking

Kapang-kapang: ceremonial entrance walk. Extremely slow and trancelike, as though the executant were floating just above floor. Used only by women. Must be learned from a teacher.

Nyamber: a walk signifying "flying"; performed by walking on very high one-half-toes.

Vatikangser: "sand blowing in the wind"; a sideways progression done by a very smooth shuffling of the feet that illustrates perfectly "sand blowing in the wind."

Tayoungan: ceremonial entrance walk. Used only by men. Step, raise opposite knee to hip height, foot horizontal but with toes raised vertically. Slowly straighten raised leg from the knee to form a horizontal line at hip level, with instep "pointed" but toes raised. Step on the raised foot, and repeat whole sequence. Head and glance follow direction of raised leg. This walk gives very large, open steps, and is an imposing manner of walking. It is done in 4/4 rhythm, counted thus: step and raise knee; count 1; straighten raised leg; count 2-3-4.

Rapid bourrée: executed in ballet *seconde.* Used only by male dancers.

Utdet and Sampour Movements

Ngarakum pangil: take utdet or sampour in gnpulth (fist) hand.

Ngatok: take utdet or sampour in nitteng hand and flip over hand.

Kipat: with turn of wrist, throw utdet or sampour off hand, out of ngatok.

Neblah: flip utdet or sampour up behind with palm of ngrudji hand.

Seblah: hold utdet or sampour in nitteng, and with the first finger, throw utdet or sampour back, meanwhile retaining it in nitteng.

Ngumbat: take utdet or sampour in nitteng fingers.

Nzimpet: take utdet in nitteng and lift wrist to shoulder height.

Sampia: with left palm throw utdet over right shoulder, or vice versa.

Ridong: left end of sampour held in extended left hand, stretched taut. Fourth and little fingers beat sampour to give it a vibratory movement. Used by male dancers *only.*

The utdet and sampour are often used to represent a mirror by holding the left end in the left hand, and "arranging" the eyebrows, hair, moustache, et cetera, with the right hand, meanwhile looking intently into the "mirror."

COMBAT STEPS

Warriors approach each other in rapid *bourrées à la seconde*. Retreat with the same *bourrée* movement. Repeat several times.
Warriors grasp each other by placing hands on upper arms, and walk thus in a small circle with large steps, watching each other fixedly. They break and kneel facing each other in pose described under: Manner of Sitting, Masculine Style, Sitting on left heel.
Warriors circle each other by walking on half-toes as though "flying," and watching each other narrowly.
Great leaps in the air, sometimes with a half-turn, sometimes finishing on one knee, striking each other's shields with swords.
Falling on one knee and leaning over indicates being wounded.

SPEAKING POSITION: Whether the actor-dancer speaks himself, or whether the dalang speaks for him, he assumes this posture:

Feet placed in a wide ballet second position.
Left hand in gnpulth on the left hip, elbow at left side.
Right arm fully extended forward, right hand in nitteng.
Eyes looking straight forward.

1. Sembah (salutation). Surakarta style (feminine).

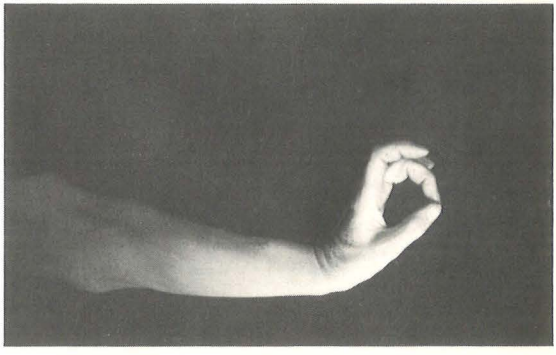
2. Sembah (salutation). Djokjakarta style (feminine).

3. Sembah (salutation).
Surakarta style (masculine).

4. Sembah (salutation).
Djokjakarta style (masculine).

5. Ngrudji
(similar to Indian pataka).

6. Nitteng.



7. Ngempurit
(similar to Indian kapitha).

8. Ngepel
(similar to Indian musti).

9. Kapang-kapang walk (first movement).

10. Kapang-kapang walk (second movement).

11. Nidath. Transfer of weight from one one-half toe to the other one-half toe.

12. Nidath. Transfer of weight from one one-half toe to the other one-half toe.

13. Jinjit with right foot.

14. Jinjit with left foot.

15. Position for swaying from right to left, repeated several times.

16. Gedruk.

17. Nyamber (flying movement).

Dance Exercises

Apart from the techniques listed above, we were given no other dance exercises. We practiced the four hand positions, the two head movements, the five foot movements, the eye movements, the manner of sitting, the three manners of walking (feminine)—kapang-kapang, nyamber, and vatikangser—and the utdet and sampour movements until we were at ease in them. We did this voluntarily, in rest periods, not at the instigation of our guru, so that under his tutelage our dance movements would be more correct in the Bedoyo and Serimpi.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter I have dealt exclusively with the court dances since they represent the finest and purest tradition in Java, and I have tried to make it clear that they are an exclusively royal court art. Readers may well ask, then, what this art means to the rest of the population, 65 million people, and how can this be a national expression?

Art in Asia has grown from the people as a social expression to fill a social need. It springs from the inner spirit, from emotions and ideals of the race. Racial art forms its people's characters as it was formed by them in the past, the unending circle. It gives intellectual and aesthetic unity. Most especially is this true of the dance and drama, for these arts deal with human affairs, and the material for their expression is not stone, or paper and ink, or paint, but living human beings.

Classic dances and drama conserve traditional customs, costumes, and manners in their most elegant and ideal forms. Javanese national characteristics of self-control, reserve, refinement, ceremonious conduct, dignity, and grace of gesture are ideally portrayed in the dance, even as the national taste is reflected in the subdued dance costumes.

The plays or dance dramas are verse dramas of philosophical and sociological content, representing ideal and noble persons performing heroic acts as models for society. The plays are the classic literature of the race, and are familiar to all, high and low alike. As such, they are a great unifying element, for they express the racial traditions and morality.

While this art of the dance drama in its finest form is conserved at the courts, the common people have the same plays, the same poetic dramas, the same heroes and literature, in Wayang Kulit and Wayang Golek, which can be seen somewhere almost every night. I saw, one afternoon, a Wayang

Kulit being set up in the porch of a Chinese temple in Surakarta, and I saw another one evening in the garden of a humble house. Everyone from the neighborhood had assembled to enjoy it, bringing with them their babies, dogs, and food. While the babies lay sleeping on the ground, the others had picnics, for the play lasted until dawn. It is the custom for the Javanese to engage a Wayang Kulit or Wayang Golek troupe to celebrate some family event, and to invite all their friends to enjoy it.

The people have Wayang Wong and Wayang Topeng, too, in the form of traveling troupes of actors who perform the same dance dramas in a style similar to that practiced in the royal kratons, although of course much inferior in technique and beauty. Instead of speaking in classic Kawi, the popular actors speak everyday Javanese, that is, "low" Javanese, or Malay.

Being the literature, poetry, and ethics of the race, the dance dramas are also educational. Instead of studying literature in school, young Javanese learn it by seeing it enacted with the glamour of costumes, manners, and emotional force of the theatre. Literature, poetry, history, and ethics, instead of being faraway things printed in books, are to the Javanese living events in which people like themselves took part. And the spectators, laughing, weeping, rejoicing, fearing, experiencing the whole gamut of human emotions together, unconsciously create among themselves a great social unity. Knowing, too, that after all it is a play they are witnessing, they develop unconsciously a philosophical acceptance of the Play of Life.

The message and effect of the spoken word are apparent, but foreign minds have to concentrate to perceive the message that the pure dance sequences conveys. In transmitting thoughts, gesture and movement are so much more subtle and rapid than words that minds and eyes become aware of thoughts without realizing how they received them. Gesture and movement, moreover, give nuances of meaning of which words are incapable. And how much more noble and beautiful an expressive medium than words are gesture and movement! In dance sequences the spectators recognize their racial way of moving and resting, posing and gesticulating —an intangible something that belongs to them alone. Prince Arya Souryadiningrat of Djokjakarta called the dance "plastic literature," but it is even more. In the dance surges the very essence of race-spirit.

Regarding the religious ceremony Sadjen which is performed before the dance begins, Th.-B. van Lelyveld in his excellent book on Javanese dance states that incense is burned "out of respectful fear." I fail to understand why Europeans so often think other peoples approach their gods

with "fear"! I have never observed the slightest trace of "respectful fear" in these ceremonies in any land of the Far East. Rather, I have seen veneration, love, and gratitude for godly protection and benediction. The Divinity is approached as the Great Friend.

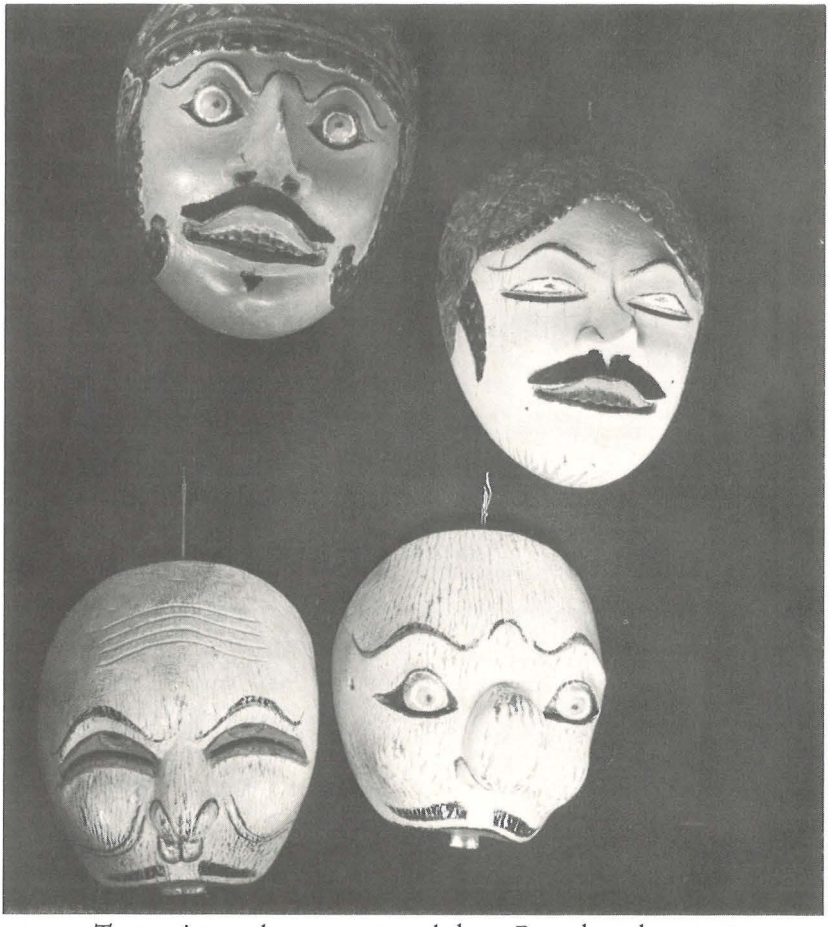
So many people have said, "Oh, yes, Javanese dance—I saw a Javanese dance in the film *Mata Hari,*" that I must say a few words on the subject. I saw the film, too, and nothing more un-Javanese could be imagined. The costume was a banal, sparkly, musical-review costume; the dance, meaningless arm-wavings and unchaste extensions of the legs, snaked around a hideous plaster nightmare which some Hollywood property man must have thought looked like what the filmgoing public expects a Javanese temple idol to look like. The dance was represented as a "Javanese temple dance." As previously stated, Java has been Moslem since 1525, more than four hundred years. Previous to that it was Buddhist. Neither Islam nor Buddhism has any "temple dances." The Brahmanic temples which *did* have dances as part of the cult, have been deserted ruins for hundreds of years in Java. The Javanese are horrified and indignant to have the impression spread that the Mata Hari film dance is representative of Javanese dance art.

A unique event in Javanese dance history occurred in Holland during the commemoration ceremonies of the fortieth year of the reign of Queen Wilhelmina in nineteen hundred thirty-eight. One of the Javanese princesses was in school in Holland, and one of Java's contributions to the festivities was the Bedoyo danced by the Princess Sity Noerail before Queen Wilhelmina and her court. In faraway Java the gamelan played the accompanying music, which was transmitted by radio from the kraton in Surakarta to the palace in Holland, while in Surakarta the other eight princesses danced the Bedoto before the Javanese sovereign, leaving vacant the space occupied by their sister in Holland.

One day during a private lesson, my guru was correcting my posture and arm position. Suddenly I understood and exclaimed in Malay: "Oh, like Buddha?" for the posture was identical to that of the Buddha giving the law. My teacher looked at me, a light came into his eyes, he smiled, and placing his hand on his heart, said, "Yes, Buddhist." Although Java is officially Moslem, Buddha's gentle teaching still dwells in Javanese hearts.

Indonesia has obtained her freedom, and the Indonesian Republic is established, but even when it was still firmly a Dutch colony with no promise of liberation, many signs pointed to a new day. In Java the desire for freedom and independence, to be Javanese again, was manifesting itself

in many ways, but the way that concerns this book was the intensified interest in the national arts. The establishment of the Krida Beksa Wirama is an important example, coming as it did from the initiative of a Javanese ruler. The organization of numerous societies of young Javanese who gave performances of Wayang Wong with girl members playing feminine roles instead of boys as in the old tradition; the establishment of other groups, who made every effort to stimulate and encourage art as the best way of resuscitating a national consciousness, are proofs that the arts, the dance, and drama are synthesized manifestations of true nationalism.



Two princes above, servants below. Round-eyed servant belongs to round-eyed prince and slant-eyed servant belongs to slant-eyed prince.

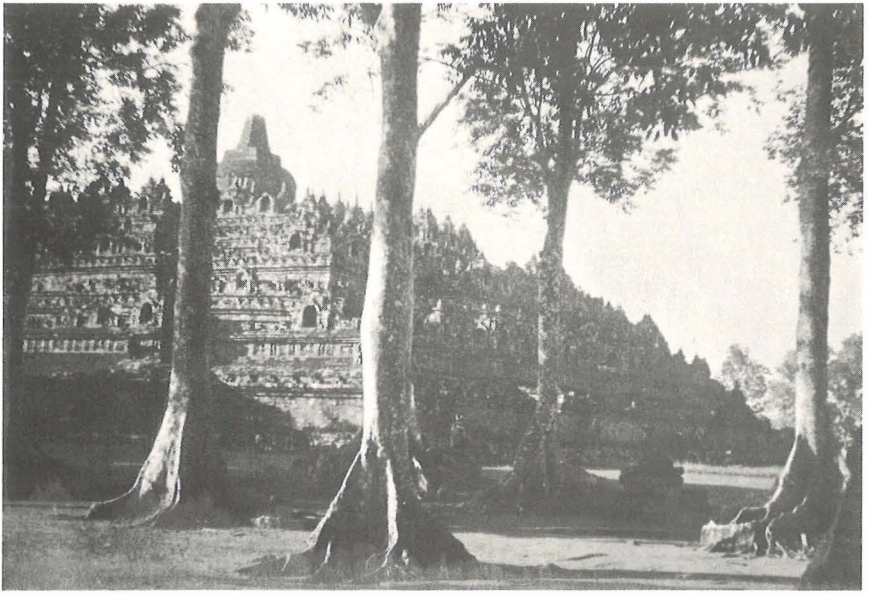
Pangeran (Prince) Tedjokoesoemo.

Borobodur bas-relief showing dance scene before the Buddha.

Reverence to the Buddha, Borobodur, Java.

Wayang Kulit, the shadow play. View behind the screen showing marionettes, the sacred tree, and the dalang (narrator-operator).

The Borobodur, Java.



Prince Tedjokoesoemo with gongs in the dance pavilion, Djokjakarta, Java.

Classmates of Xenia Zarina at Prince Tedjokoesoemo's dance school demonstrating the utdet (scarf) movements: left hand, ngatok; right hand, neblah.

In movements from Serimpi, Javanese princesses Retno and Rennie, author's classmates in Prince Tedjokoesoemo's dance school. (*photos by Hwa Sin, Toegoe, Java*)

Two princesses bring the sacred dance texts, wrapped in silk, across a courtyard in the Kraton (Royal Palace) at Djokjakarta, Java.

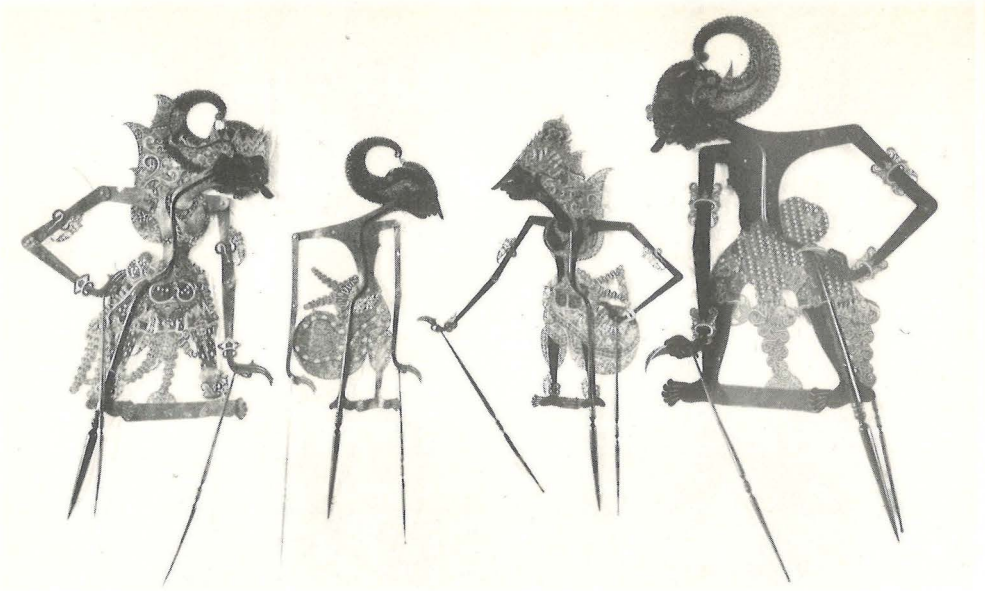
Javanese prince executing the Sembah after rehearsal in the Kraton, Djokjakarta, Java.

Princes executing the tayoungan (ceremonial walk) during rehearsal of a Wayang Wong in the Kraton at Djokjakarta, Java.

Princes rehearsing a Wayang Wong in the Kraton, Djokjakarta, Java. Note the sitting posture.

Princes rehearsing a Wayang Wong in the Kraton, Djokjakarta, Java.

Princes leaving the Wayang Wong rehearsal in the Kraton, Djokjakarta, Java.



Javanese Wayang Kulit figures cut out of buffalo hide, with horn sticks to manipulate them.

Xenia Zarina in Serimpi, Javanese court dance. Right hand holds utdet in nitteng. Left hand holds utdet in nitteng, preparing for seblah movement. (*photo by Studio Iris, Paris*)

Barong keket (mask).

Xenia Zarina in Serimpi, Javanese court dance. Left hand holds utdet in ngatok. Right hand prepares for seblah. (*photo by Studio Iris, Paris*)

Dances of Bali

Balinese History

ALL THE EVOCATIVE THINGS that have been said and written about the island of Bali can scarcely create, in the mind of a reader who has never been there, a clear vision of the utterly bewitching place that it is. I say bewitching intentionally for there is plenty of magic in the air. Enchantments, spirits, and sorcery are everywhere, and those who visit Bali are possessed by the spirit of Bali ever after.

We do not know much of Bali's early days, but Javanese records from the tenth century onward show that Java and Bali were in close cultural contact. Indian culture came to Bali through Java, and, blending with Bali's native customs and practices, formed what is now known as Indian-Balinese culture. About 1525 when the great Javanese Empire of Majapahit fell before Islam, Javanese royalty, aristocracy, and gurus took refuge in Bali and also assumed political control. Javanese princes became Balinese overlords, and Indo-Javanese culture enriched Balinese life. The Islamic period in Java seems hardly to have affected Balinese life and customs beyond a little trade and a few new subjects for dance dramas.

The Dutch conquest of the East Indies reached Bali also, though late, for in 1906 the Balinese made a last heroic and tragic demonstration against Dutch cannons and warships. In his *Island of Bali,* Miguel Covarrubias describes poignantly how the Balinese dressed themselves ceremonially in gold brocades and flower garlands; then, in a great procession they marched, men, women, and children, old and young, into the sea toward the battleships, singing, until all were drowned.

But, since they conquered Bali, the Dutch officials have really preserved it for the Balinese. Except for a comfortable hotel in Denpasar, the capital in the south, another in Boeleleng, the seaport in the north, for tourists, and a few rattletrap motorcars and bicycles, European civilization has made no impression on Bali. It remains a refuge for souls sick of machinery, industrialization, politics, gasoline, radio, television, and jazz.

The religion of Bali is a mixture of Hindu Brahmanism with Balinese animistic beliefs, and from my observations, I should say the latter certainly predominate. Brahmanism contributed the names of Hindu deities, Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, certain religious forms and ceremonies, and motifs for sculpture, painting, and decoration. The Balinese seem filled with a natural religious attitude, a joyous acceptance of all the good and beautiful things that the Great Source bestowed so generously upon their island. They demonstrate their gratitude by innumerable ceremonies, elaborate processions, painstakingly prepared offerings and rituals, by plays and dances that are also offerings to the gods. Then there are many evil spirits—leyaks—waiting opportunities to manifest their wickedness. To guard against and propitiate these forces, magic rituals have been found an effective, indeed, perhaps the only, way to deal with them. The Balinese, however, never seem to take anything too seriously. They poke fun at sacred things as well as at fearsome ones in their festivities and dance dramas. The clown roles are the usual vehicle for mocking the unseen forces. The audience rocks in glee and inwardly shudders while the clown prances gingerly like someone who has accidentally touched an electric current, amazed at his own risky daring, but gratified by the audience's approval, which incites him to still greater hazards. This genial attitude toward life is what makes Bali and its people so delightful. It may be the reason why solemn missionaries have had so little success in converting the Balinese.

Color of Bali

The "color" of Bali is nearly impossible to describe—the physical color and the spiritual color. One must see it and breathe it and let it impregnate one's being to comprehend it: the blue transparency of the air, sea, and sky; the infinite tones of green in the vegetation; the ranges of color in the clothing of the people, in the pyramids of flowers, fruits, and paper decorations moving in processions along the roads to some gray or brown stone temple nestling in the deep shade of a sacred waringen (banyan) tree; the background of blue, green, lavender, or purple mountains; the colorfulness

of all their activities from a group of girls rhythmically pounding rice in shafts of sunlight in a courtyard, or groups of children swinging in the aerial roots of a huge waringen tree, to the most elaborate gold-bedecked ritual. The light and shade of sun, moon, and torches play over these scenes, giving them ever-changing nuances. And there is also the spiritual color of the whole place: thoughts, beliefs, and actions leave vibrations in the atmosphere everywhere in the world, but they seem more intense in Bali.

Early one morning I came to Bali from Java, not as tourists come on big world-cruise ships to the northern port of Boeleleng, but in a little boat across the narrow channel that separates Java and Bali. We landed at Gilimanoeck, a point of land with a few trees. Not a building or a person was to be seen, but over in a clump of trees, a motor bus stood waiting for the boat passengers. My pianist and I followed the others, took seats, and were soon snorting along a pretty road that followed the coast. The weather was like that of a perfect day in May, and we were at last realizing our dream of seeing Bali. Work, study, and fun lay ahead. We could not have been happier.

Suddenly we arrived at a small village, Negara, and were rudely dumped off the bus, bag and baggage. We could not understand a word or ask any questions. No one spoke English, French, Spanish, Russian, or Polish. Our Malay vocabulary was too meager, and the few high Javanese dance terms I had learned had no application to this situation. Moreover, the bus was in a hurry. All we could say was "Denpasar," the name of the southern capital of Bali for which we were headed. We understood from brusque gestures that we were to wait where we were. The bus men did not have time to be cordial. Bus drivers the world over are pressed for time, it seems. We had not the vaguest idea how long we were to wait, or what we were to wait for. It must have been nearly noon, the sun was hot, and we were thirsty and famished. We stood miserably in the dusty road amid our bags. When the dust of the bus's departure settled, we saw a little food booth with the inevitable Chinese cook-owner. (If there are 760,000,000 Chinese in China, there must be an equal number outside. Chinese shops and merchants are to be found on the smallest islands, and such cities as Singapore and Bangkok are practically Chinese cities, the Chinese population being the vast majority.) We ordered something to eat, and while it was being prepared we explored our first Balinese temple which stood nearby: carved gray stone walls surrounding open courts with ornamental open or "split" gateways standing at the top of short flights of stone steps which descend again into the next courtyard. The sculptured walls have

niches for offerings, and great waringen trees, the sacred trees, shade the whole place. This is the classic plan of all Balinese temples.

We returned to the Chinese food booth and had barely finished eating when a bus appeared in a cloud of dust. We were grabbed up, put aboard, and buzzed off along the road which presently skirted the sea again. If we had felt happy in the morning, we were in ecstasy now. The scenery became more beautiful with every mile, natives in colorful garments appeared on the road, the bus stopped to take some on as passengers, at other times the driver was given loads of coconuts or bananas, or bouquets of chickens with word-of-mouth instructions as to where to deposit them. Once we stopped for a long time while the driver and an old woman had it out about the cost of transportation for her heap of coconuts. Other villagers gathered around, and all the passengers (who by now filled every inch of space in the bus) joined in the argument with helpful or amusing comments. Finally it was settled and we drove off, our bus groaning and sagging with its load of people, babies, bananas, coconuts, squawking chickens, and even a squealing pig in a basket. Presently, on the open road, we stopped. My pianist and I could see nothing to distinguish this place as a stop, but the driver did. He and his assistant got down, went to the side of the road, placed two or three stones, burned some incense, and with lovely ritual hand gestures, offered flowers, and seemed to be praying. This ceremony took considerable time, but everyone in the bus sat quietly and waited—not even watching!

As we turned inland, villages became more frequent. Rich brown adobe walls thatched with palm leaves were interrupted by gates through which we could glimpse collections of houses, also with brown adobe or cane walls and thick thatches of palm leaves. These were village compounds. The trees became thick and their shade deep over village and road. Even at noon the shade is heavy and dark, but by now it was sunset. Forms and colors were effaced by the dusk, lit only here and there by a level shaft of light from the setting sun penetrating a grove of trees. At last, in complete darkness, we arrived at Denpasar and found comfortable rooms, food, and welcome bath at the big Dutch Hotel.

Next morning, the sunlight, filtered by the branches and aerial roots of the holy waringen tree in the forecourt of the big temple across the street from the hotel, splashed the sculptured gray stone walls with golden flecks. From nearby came sounds of ravishing music. A kebiyar gamelan, the full Balinese "symphony orchestra," was rehearsing. Men, old and young, and small boys sat on the ground dressed in kains and sarongs, play-

ing bronze instruments with mallets. Between their knees, some men held three-, four-, and five-year-old babies, their tiny hands clutching the mallets within the grown men's hands. Thus Balinese fathers teach their children while rehearsing themselves. I stood and listened a long time. The quality of the tones, rich and ringing, the infinite variations of melody, rhythm, and intensity—pianissimo, fortissimo, crescendo, accelerando, abrupt stops, changes of accent in the same phrase as it is repeated over and over at varying speeds and intensities—are all improvised and remembered from generation to generation, each conserving, evolving, and adding to the basic structure.

The shops of Denpasar held many fascinations for me, especially those three or four that dealt in dance costumes and headdresses. There is a small but excellent museum whose intelligent and kindly attendant made friends with me and was invaluable in helping me find among the shops the very best Balinese costumes, or in getting certain parts specially made for me in the best Balinese taste. There was also a Dutch government-run pawnshop where I bought some handsome old batik kains. My museum friend took me to see how Balinese silk brocade with metal threads is woven. In the courtyard of a private house, a girl sat at a loom weaving the delicate threads into rich design of many colors. I watched for more than half an hour, but only a half inch of progress was made, so fine the threads and so complicated the shifting of the shuttles for the design. Another day my friend took me to see an old man who does gold-leaf work on silk, technically known as prada work, for dance costumes and ceremonial garments for Balinese rulers, their wives and children. At a table in a porch he sat painting on a stretched silk piece with a glue made from a native tree sap. Onto the design painted freehand in glue, he then placed squares of gold leaf. The gold stuck to the glue, and after a moment, the old man blew on it. The rest of the squares of gold leaf blew to the side, leaving a bold design of flowers, leaves, and trailing tendrils in softly gleaming gold.

There is another house where men sit about in the courtyard carving wood, but carving it like jewelry, for the wood they use is fine-grain, hard, and black. There was a figure of a Hindu-Balinese god I especially wanted, but the price of these sculptures is considerable, and I had to forego it. However, the superiority of these wood carvings to the Balinese heads now known so commonly over the world is instantly apparent. All the carvers in this house were true artists, and their work, in the finest Indian-Balinese tradition, is their pride.

Character of the Dance

Most Balinese dances possess an inner intensity, an interior frenzy, which is revealed to the spectator by quick darting movements of widely opened eyes, by quivering fingers, by swift tramplings of the feet, by sudden transitions from one acute-angled pose to another, by whirring fans and the trembling flowers of headdresses. It is as though the dancers are receiving and transmitting a strange, electrifying force that causes every part of their bodies to vibrate intensely. I know from personal experience that Balinese dances are the most exhausting to perform. The dances of Thailand, Cambodia, Java, and Japan, with exception of the demon, or "possessed" dances, are unstrained and refreshing, soothing, even lulling to the mind and body of the performer. Balinese dances make the artist feel, after performance, as though he had emerged from a state of possession or hypnosis.

Dance Training

I lived in a little bamboo, palm-thatched house in a coconut grove by the sea, near the village of Sanoer on the south coast of Bali. Every morning at eight, Ida Bagoes Rai Nyoman Gria came from the village with two musicians carrying a drum and a gender to teach me the Legong. The Legong is the great classic feminine dance of Bali, and from its style many other feminine dances are derived. The Legong is supposedly descended from the dance of the original heavenly nymphs who brought the dance to earth as a gift of the gods. There were, until recently, a number of stories used as subjects for the Legong dances, but now the tale of the King of Lasem has become the popular favorite, and the others have been consequently neglected. As previously mentioned, each guru teaches his own particular style and dance figures, so that each Legong is different from any other, though all tell the same story and introduce the same characters.

The Legong I was taught tells how the King of Lasem, going to war, takes leave of his weeping Queen, who tries to dissuade him, for she has had a premonition of his death. But he is deaf to her entreaties, goes to woo and bid farewell to the Maiden Lankesari whom he found in the forest. Then the Bird of Ill Omen appears, beating its wings, "blood flowing from its beak," a dire presage for the King.

The Legong represents these characters, one by one, in the most ethereal

and delicate manner imaginable—a mere breath of suggestion. The costume and style of dance remain the same. Only by subtle differences in the carriage of the body, the expression of the eyes, the manipulation of the fan, can one guess that the Legong is now possessed by the spirit of the King of Lasem, by his unhappy Queen, by the Maiden Lankesari, or by the Bird of Ill Omen. The Legong is highly symbolic and hieratic dance drama, far, far removed from realism. Legong is therefore the most important feminine dance and the one I most wanted to study. My lessons took place under a palm-thatched roof supported on poles over a beaten mud floor. When the musicians were not playing, the soft wind in the coconut palms and the waves splashing the sandy beach continued the melodies of the Legong music.

Ida Bagoes Rai Nyoman Gria had been court ballet master to the King of Karagasem. He taught me by dancing a sequence to show me, then by standing facing me while I imitated his movements. When I had memorized them, he stood behind me, following me as I danced, correcting my torso, knee, and head positions, pulling my arms, wrists, elbows, and fingers into proper line. Lastly, I had to dance before him for final correction.

My lessons lasted four to five hours every day. Rest intervals were spent sitting on the mud floor writing notes. Those were happy days of intense concentration in that ideal setting of sun and shade, beautiful vegetation, perfect weather, and peace.

When I went to live in Denpasar again, I continued my lessons with Ida Bagoes, coming by pony cart every morning to Sanoer. Those were lovely drives through the Balinese countryside along shady roads, past rice fields and through little settlements in the jaunty pony cart. One morning my charioteer sat in on my lesson, making himself useful by playing the drum. He was a member of a Balinese orchestra in Denpasar.

In Denpasar I lived in the comfortable and picturesque guesthouse of Mr. Houbolt, a Dutch connoisseur of Balinese art. He found another excellent Legong teacher for me, Bjoman Kaler. Every morning I had my lesson with Ida Bagoes in Sanoer, and every afternoon, another with Bjoman Kaler in Denpasar. Kaler taught me by having me follow his best Legong dancer whom he brought along for the purpose. She must have been about eighteen, a "mature" dancer for Legong, which is usually danced by little girls between the ages of eight and fourteen. At fourteen they customarily marry, and very well, since they are the most beautiful girls of the village, and dance training has given them poise, confidence,

and grace. They often marry Balinese princes, but if they marry less highly, after the age of fourteen they may continue to dance if they are specially endowed dancers, and they may also teach.

As I followed Kaler's pupil, he would stand behind me, correcting my positions and movements, humming the music meanwhile. It was remarkable how different Kaler's Legong was from Ida Bagoes'. The style was necessarily the same, but the figures were vastly different. Ida Bagoes' Legong was restrained with postures like the Indian-Balinese paintings and sculptures, classic in feeling. Kaler's was freer, with extravagant postures and movements, more sensual.

Each group of dancers in Bali has its own individual choreography so that every Legong, every Baris, every Djanger is different from every other, although all have the same basic forms that distinguish them from other dances. To clarify the point, one may consider Western ballet companies: they may each perform mazurkas, czardas, and minuets, and each with individual choreography, yet each mazurka, each czardas, each minuet must have the characteristic steps and figures that mark it as such a type of dance. Or take an example familiar to the general public: ballroom dances. Each waltzing, tangoing or fox-trotting couple may dance with an individual style, yet the basic steps and figures that distinguish a waltz, a tango, or a fox-trot must be there.

Costume for the Dance

The costume for the Legong is one of the most splendid imaginable. Its silks of vivid colors, harmoniously combined, are painted in lavish patterns of curling leaves, flowers, and tendrils in pure gold leaf. The leather ornaments, cut into delicate, lacy patterns, are also painted in gold leaf. The gold-painted leather crown is covered with little white flowers, each trembling on a tiny spring. The gold-leaf-decorated fan, fluttering in the dancer's hand, adds the final touch to the effect of fabuluous richness. The gold-leaf decoration is known as prada work.

The complete costume consists of the following articles:

A long-sleeved jacket, the sleeves decorated with prada.

A prada-embellished kain (a length of material from the armpits to the ankles, and about two yards long, worn wrapped around the body as a skirt).

A torso band, also decorated with prada, about 5 inches wide and 3 yards

long, worn tightly wrapped about the torso from armpits to the hips.
A hip ornament of gold leather, hanging behind.
An apron of gold leather, hanging in front.
A bolero of gold leather.
A collar of gold leather.
A headdress-crown of gold leather and flowers.
Earplugs and armlets.

The headdress has two sprays of white (sometimes of beaten gold) flowers that stand erect just above the temples. The crown of the headdress is covered by little white flowers, each on an individual spring. These flowers tremble constantly, giving a living quality to the headdress and enhancing the intensely vibrant character of the dance.

Color combinations may be: emerald green, magenta, purple, and gold; cerise, yellow, deep blue, and gold; or some similar range of colors. The costume belonging to the author has purple sleeves, purple kain, and a cerise torso band, and all the leather ornaments are backed by green silk which is visible through the lacy perforations.

Masks and Makeup

Many and varied are the masks of Bali, but they are used only in the dramas: Topeng plays, Wayang-Wong, Gamboeh, Tjoepak, and the Barong-Tjalonarang and Barong-Rangda plays. The dances—the Djanger, Kebiyar, Sangyang, Redjang, Kris, Djoged, Maboeang, Mendet, and Legong —use no masks at all, except for the boy who plays the part of the Bird of Ill Omen in the Legong, who sometimes wears a bird mask.

Balinese dancers shave their eyebrows into defined shapes. Their faces are powdered white, eyebrows painted black, and lips red. Their necks, hands, and feet are left their natural bronze color. A round white dot is painted between the eyebrows for feminine dances, and, for Legong, sometimes a white dot at each temple is added.

Makeup for masculine dances is essentially the same. Some masculine roles require masks.

The hair is carefully dressed and pinned up, or, for Djanger and Djoged, frangipani flowers are strung, each on a single hair, giving the effect of a cascade of flowers over the hair, which hangs down the dancer's back. Men and boy dancers in Kebiyar, Djanger, and Djoged wear chic turbans of gold-painted (prada) silk, with a great hibiscus flower over the left ear. For Legong, the dancer's hair is rolled up.

Dance Properties

The only property used in these dances is a Balinese fan of silk with gold-leaf decoration (prada work) like that on the Legong, Kebiyar, Sangyang and Djoged costumes. Again, the boy who plays the Bird of Ill Omen in Legong uses leather wings, but more often the Legongs themselves represent the Bird of Ill Omen with their fans used like fluttering wings. This is more in keeping with the ethereal, unrealistic spirit of Legong drama than are the realistic painted-leather wings, which must be a modern invention for audiences of tourists.

Music for the Dance

While listening to a gamelan in Bali, S. M. Milevitch, my pianist-composer, exclaimed: "A thousand variations, and with only a five-note scale!" He was enraptured, as have been many other musicians. Indeed, several distinguished Western musicians, upon visiting Bali, have dedicated themselves to the study of Balinese music. The variety of effects that Balinese inventiveness has devised within a five-note scale limit, and with only percussion instruments, is astonishing. Variations of rhythm, accent, pianissimo, fortissimo, diminuendo, crescendo, abrupt stops, muted effects, and bell-like tinklings contrasting with deep gongs, are ever fascinating, ever fresh and new, seemingly flowing from an inexhaustible source of delights for the ear.

There are several five-note scales, each for a traditional use; and various types of gamelans, or groups of instruments, for the various types of plays and dances. The names of those most often encountered are:

gender wayang: for Wayang Kulit (shadow play)

gender wayang ramayana: for Wayang Wong plays

gamelan anklung: composed of very small instruments of ancient type

gamelan selending: of holy iron, and ancient, to accompany ceremonial dances, offerings, exorcisms, and libations

gamelan soeara (voice gamelan): accompanies exorcistical, ecstatic, or trance dances like Ketjak and Sangyang.

gamelan pelegongan: for Legong dances.

gamelan djoged: for Djoged dances.

gamelans for Topeng: for Ardja plays, Djanger dances.

gong kebiyar: the full Balinese "symphony" orchestra which also accompanies Kebiyar dances.

Dances and Performances

There is always something happening in Bali, some dance or ceremony, temple feast or cremation. Usually these affairs last all night. When the Balinese find time to sleep is a mystery. They work all day and play all night. I do not know when I found time to sleep, either, during my stay in Bali. Mornings I studied until noon, then wrote dance notes and practiced, bathed and lunched. Afternoons, evenings, and nights there was always something to see that must not be missed. The very first evening, after our all-day trip from Gilimanoeck, I saw a Djanger.

The Djanger has evolved from much older dance forms, the Ketjak and the Sangyang, both ecstatic trance-dances, but the Djanger shows its former religious connection now only in the offerings made at the beginning of its performance. Djanger is always given in square formation: two lines of boys facing each other and two lines of girls facing each other, forming the four sides of the square. Songs and dances alternate.

In the Djanger, that first night, boys and girls from ten to twenty years old took part. The boys wore European shirts and shorts, bow ties, black-rimmed spectacles, and painted moustaches. Seeing Balinese interpret Europeans makes one conscious that European actors interpreting Orientals must be equally ridiculous to Orientals. The girls wore sarongs, torsos tightly bound with long, gold-painted bands, and the spraying, arched Djanger headdress. This lovely coiffure is similar to the Balinese wedding crown. The boys and girls sat on mats forming the customary hollow square, six to a side, the boys facing one another and the girls facing one another. The Djanger gamelan was ranged behind them.

The form of modern Djanger is said to have been inspired by the visit, some thirty years ago, of a Malay theatre troupe whose repertoire was a potpourri of ideas they had picked up from various ports they had visited. The Balinese could never be accused of lacking imagination or the faculty of adapting what they so readily and wittily observe. In Djanger they found a great opportunity for combining the most contrasting and incongruous elements. The boys make football pyramids, and do acrobatic stunts in the middle of the hollow square; the girls make lovely weaving patterns with arms, hands, necks, and eyes, sitting in their two rows; or, alternating with the boys, dance duos, trios, or solos in the center of the square. At intervals, hair-raising yells from the boys punctuate the dance, accompanied by fierce, swift dartings of their roundly opened eyes. With menacing hand gestures and shuddering bodies, all the boys look to the right, to the left, to the right again. They yell again and repeat the move-

ments. The gamelan bronzes crash and sustain their sonorous ringing. While the Djanger is the least interesting of Balinese dances, it is amusing. This seems to be its sole purpose; it is a social game, and it does have truly Balinese rhythms pulsating through it. It is impossible for the Balinese to do anything without rhythm. The girls always dance serenely, with impassive faces, in "classic" Balinese style. It is the boys who go wild, incorporate ideas snatched from anywhere: cinema (there was one cinema in Bali), a stray magazine, a newspaper picture, the doings of tourists. Every Djanger group has its own variations, always done within the basic frame of a hollow square.

At Sanoer, some days later, Katharine and Jacques Mershon invited me to see a Djanger in their garden, given by children from five to eight years of age. It was convulsingly amusing to watch these tiny creatures executing the dance figures, ogling with their eyes, twitching wrists, jerking elbows and shoulders, fluttering fingers, their little bodies possessed by a vibrant intensity, their faces set in deadly earnest.

The big hotel held special shows for their tourists in the hotel garden, and I was always graciously invited. For these performances, the hotel engaged the best dancers and actors and the most famous gamelan. The guests sat in comfortable chairs on the lawn in the pleasant evening air, and the programs always started more or less on time. Punctuality was a considerable difficulty and a source of worry for the hotel, since the performers sometimes came from distant villages, and a heavy rain might make the road impassable, or some other mishap might occur. The programs were composed of selected parts or shortened versions of musical compositions, plays, and dances, so that the tourists might get a general idea of several types of Balinese entertainments in one evening. Tourists usually could not stay more than two or three days before having to go back to their ship. It required considerable tact and foresight on the part of the hotel to organize such a program, get all the artists there on time, made up and presented in orderly fashion. The hotel's idea of a condensed show was a good, practical Dutch idea, but precisely because of the cuttings, selections, timing, and rush (from the Balinese viewpoint), the artists did not play with the same spirit and self-dedication that they did in their own performances. Very likely they felt they were being "mechanized," made to "prostitute" their art, and at any rate to present it in a hashed-up form to foreign eyes who could not understand it as a Balinese audience would. There was a Balinese audience, however—a row of brown faces watching over the hedges.

The gong kebiyar is the full Balinese "symphony" orchestra, the most

beautiful and complicated of all Bali's beautiful music. The dance that is sometimes presented with it is also called Kebiyar and is a fairly recent creation of the Balinese dance genius, Mario. I saw a truly beautiful Kebiyar danced by a pupil of Mario one night. His whirring fan, his quivering fingers, his elegant wrist turnings and flowing arm movements, his torso undulations and seductive eye movements as he sat cross-legged in the center of the hollow square formed by the gamelan instruments, garbed in silks lavishly decorated with gold leaf—all this translated the delicacy, passions, and infinite nuances of the exquisite music into visible form. There is an astonishing figure in the Kebiyar when the dancer, sitting cross-legged, suddenly "hops" across the dancing space with his long gold-leaf painted train sweeping behind. The engotan, the characteristic neck movement that transports the head from side to side, is also used in Kebiyar, which employs an even greater repertoire of eye movements than any other Balinese dance I witnessed. Eyes flash, droop, dart, flutter, melt into a seductive swoon, become fiercely passionate in an endless variety of emotions expressed through the eyes harmonizing with the moods of the music. There was a delightful part in the dance of Mario's pupil when he seemed fascinated and lured by the music. He approached an instrument, dancing, watched attentively, then took the mallets from the musician, and played, himself, with great elegance and delicate flourishes. The Kebiyar, always a masculine solo, gives the impression of the utmost refinement in dance. As we watched this scene by torchlight, my neighbor murmured "*Quelle élégance!*"

One morning there was to be a big dance program in the forecourt of a temple on a country road midway between Sanoer and Denpasar. I put off my morning Legong lesson to drive in a pony cart to the scene, where I arrived early enough to visit the dancers in their dressing quarters in one of the rear courts of the temple. On straw mats behind a curtain they were leisurely dressing. No necessity for quick change troubled them. From baskets they unpacked crumpled costumes and headdresses, straightened them and hung them up. How they ever manage to make those rumpled costumes, kept in baskets since the last performance, look so superb and fresh, is a miracle. They bound each other's torsos with long bands of silks spangled with prada, decorated each other's hair with frangipani flowers by threading each blossom on a single hair. They shaved each other's eyebrows, and painted each other's faces. Like European artists, they did not welcome an intruder into their dressing room, and definitely cold-shouldered me so I did not stay long, but joined the audience under the great waringen tree and waited for the show to begin.

In the shade of the holy tree, on the beaten earth, the first dance took place. It was a Djanger, but more refined and developed than any I had seen heretofore. The girls were exquisitely costumed. This was followed by a scene in Ardja style, played by the famous old actor Ida Bagoes. He walked about, exclaiming, posturing, gesticulating, bowing to the ground with a sweeping movement of his open arms. He seemed to be announcing the coming of someone very beautiful. Then the gamelan began the Tjondong melody for the opening dance of the Legong. The Tjondong had been kneeling before the gamelan with her back to the audience, thus indicating she was invisible, until the instant she rose and turned her face to the audience. Ida Bagoes now retired inconspicuously from the scene. The Tjondong began her dance with gestures of opening a curtain and stepping forth. Her dance was one of wide, sweeping curves carried by rapidly trampling feet across the dancing space, under the aerial roots of the waringen tree. Her eyes darted and flashed, her fan fluttered and beat the air like a wasp's wings. There were tense, angular flexations of elbows and wrists, her knees were in deep *plié,* and her feet beat the earth in rapid little steps similar to a ballet *bourrée.* At the end of each sweeping curve, the feet rose to the highest half-toe possible and the knees straightened; then dropping to the full foot, knees in deep *plié,* the Tjondong darted off again in the opposite direction to repeat the rise to half-toe and the ecstatic pose at the end of the next sweeping curve. The sweeping curves were interspersed with postures when the Tjondong stood still, or walked with carefully placed, slow steps, fanning herself with a most seductive drooping of the eyelids, or at times lolling her head in a way expressive of the greatest suffering, or again, with the fan held as a wing, she trampled the earth with heavy, ominous, and slow steps, eyes staring straight forward as she represented the Bird of Ill Omen. The Tjondong's dance synthesized thus the story of the Legong and introduced the two little girl Legongs who must have been about twelve years old. They were dressed in costumes stiff with gold leaf, and wore gilded head-dresses alive with trembling flowers. These two Legongs, who represent one in double, danced in a style identical to the Tjondong whose costume was also similar to the costumes of the Legongs. But the Legongs' dance was longer, and being a duet, there were more figures. They faced each other, seemed to rub noses and cheeks caressingly—a love scene—and circled, rubbing gently against each other. Sometimes they clasped each other, their heads drooping, their bodies seemingly shaken by great sobs, or one would weep and the other console her. Sometimes their movements duplicated each other's, sometimes they were opposed. With rapid *bourrées*

they would dart apart, one right, one left; then, coming together again, they would dance in unison. Now a boy, dressed in Legong costume with two wings on his arms, entered the dancing space, hopping in *plié,* sitting on his heels. He was the Bird of Ill Omen. The wings beat frantically as he pursued the Legongs. They were frightened and tried to beat the Bird off. The Bird hopped in circles about them, striking them with his wings. Something terrible seemed about to happen. After some moments of frenzied dancing, the dancers walked off and the music ceased playing. The Legong was suddenly over.

The Sangyang, a dance of little girls or boys in a trance, is associated artistically with Legong. The Sangyangs are supposed to possess mediumistic powers, and although they have never had dance lessons or learned the Legong, when in a trance they are said to dance the Legong perfectly. They wear Legong costumes. The Sangyang is a purely exorcistic trance-dance.

A most beautiful religious ceremonial dance is the Redjang. In its extremely slow rhythms, sash play, profile figures, management of the train between the feet, slow turnings of the wrists, and leaning into space, it has the dreamy, unworldly quality of the Javanese court dances, the Serimpi and Bedoyo. The Redjang is performed to cast out illnesses, and is therefore exorcistical. It is danced by women.

It was full moon, and there was to be a great temple ceremony. All day preparations had been going on: processions of offerings piled high in colorful pyramids, carried on women's heads, passed by; decorations were placed, and priestly rituals were enacted. In the late afternoon when we arrived, the temple courtyard looked like a three-ring circus. There was so much to see and so much was going on that one did not know where to look first. All around were little shrines with lights and offerings; a gamelan was playing for a group of dancing youngsters. The Bale Poerwa, a holy structure, stood off center, and the great Barong Keket, supported on a wooden bar nearby, waited to be animated for its part in the festival. All these points of interest were filled in with groups of Balinese and their children, a small audience, withall, for so much elaborate preparation. But the festival, like all Balinese festivals, was not given for show, but simply for its own sake.

The Barong Keket is a fantastic animal, more suggestive perhaps of a lion than anything else. Could there be a common, distant origin for the Balinese Barong, the Japanese Jishi (lion) dances, the Chinese lion-dogs that guard Buddhist temple entrances, and the mythical lion-dogs that guard Buddhist temples in Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and Tibet? The

Barong in Bali is a holy animal, and Barong plays are always given in temple courts. The Japanese Jishi dances have some sacred association, the Jishi mask being considered to represent a sacred animal. I believe the ancient link between these mythical lions may be found in Buddhism, or perhaps much earlier.

Barong Keket has a long, sagging body covered with long, thick, white fur or hair. He is covered with splendid trappings of gilded leather studded with little mirrors or bits of glass, white or colored. His tail, erect and curving like a plume, is also of gilded leather with various ornaments at the end including a little tinkling bell. His face is a lovable-looking animal mask, painted red and polished. He has round, staring eyes, elaborate gold eyebrows, dilated nostrils, and two rows of white teeth that chatter and clack his emotions as he dances. His alert little ears point forward. His face is surrounded by elaborate gilded leather ornaments and surmounted by a huge, fantastic crown of the same material, too complicated to describe. From his chin hangs a black beard decorated with fresh frangipani flowers, each strung on a single hair. This beard has magic powers of healing and restoring to normality. The Barong is the protector against Evil. Evil of course cannot be destroyed, it is a part of creation as Good is, but it can be guarded against and warded off by good influences personified by the Barong. This is the theme of the Barong dance drama. Rangda, who plays opposite the Barong, is the symbol, or personification, of Evil.

Now the time had come for the Barong-Rangda drama to begin. The Barong (having become animated by two men, one the front legs and head, the other the hind legs) ambled amiably forward from where he had stood under two white umbrellas. On he went around the temple court, examining everything with the greatest interest, clicking his teeth and wagging his head with pleasure. Children fell back with shrieks of delight as the Barong approached them. He examined the gamelan, stepped back in amazement, cocked his head to listen, pranced and shook himself in rhythm to the music, rubbed against a musician like an affectionate dog, then galloped off to another corner of the court to some new attraction. This play continued for some time, during which we lost all sense of a mask operated by two men. The Barong had become a real and lovable creature to us.

Suddenly an unearthly, raucous, wailing laugh turned all heads toward the temple gate. There stood Rangda clutching the wall with the glittering nails of her spread fingers while with the other hand she held a white cloth, her magic cloth whose touch brings death to mortals. She swayed in a backward curve, raised her arm, and again emitted that blood-

curdling laugh as she swished her cloth down through the air. A dead silence fell over the court. The Barong stood motionless, staring at Rangda. Slowly she descended the stone steps into the court, gesticulating with her glittering claws, tottering, swaying, emitting terrifying hollow sounds like a mad creature escaped from a grave, for Rangda is Queen of the Graveyard. She swished her dread scarf in various directions—everyone dodged and fled. She leaned precariously, shaking with hollow laughter, her eyes starting from their sockets, her white teeth and tusks gleaming, her long red tongue with golden flames lolling, her long white hair rumpled and disheveled. Her flaccid breasts were two bags of sand that swung and drooped with her movements. Slowly this ghastly apparition advanced toward and circled the Barong, who seemed paralyzed with fear. He crouched, moving tentatively this way and that as though seeking an escape; then, snorting and shuffling, with chattering teeth, he retreated, eyeing Rangda like a bull about to charge, pawing the ground. Then he charged. Rangda struck with her cloth; Barong dodged and swerved. The great combat was on! How long it lasted is impossible to say—all sense of time was lost in the fearsome conflict. Rangda seemed disdainfully mocking and sure of herself. Then it appeared that the Barong was in great danger. Now the kris dancers, devotees of the Barong, rushed forward to attack Rangda, but she flicked them with her magic cloth, and her power turned their rage against themselves. They staggered and reeled and turned, pressing their krises into their own bodies in an agony of mad frustration. But men and priests were watching, and when the frenzy had gone far enough, they seized the kris dancers one by one, disarmed them, and carried them, already numb, in trance, to one side, where they were brought back to normal state in due time. The Barong, now safe, was also in a psychic state. Rangda, temporarily defeated but still triumphant, retired from the scene, disappearing up the steps and through the temple gate by which she had entered, with a last disdainful gesture of her scarf and a lingering, jeering, hollow laugh.

The kris dance was actually no dance at all, only a ritual frenzy of disordered movements. Rangda and Barong always act in the same patterns and style, but with complete individual freedom for improvisation. A parallel might be the Spanish bullfight which is also an ordered ritual, yet each bullfight is different from the others depending on the strength and caprice of the bull and the art and ability of the toreador. I was told that the man who plays Rangda is especially exorcised so that the spirit of Rangda will not possess him permanently, but will leave after the drama

is over. It is of course essential that the Rangda-spirit possess him during the play.

The Barong-Rangda drama was followed by a dance of offerings. Torches had been lit long before, and now old priests and priestesses began a stately dance, carrying offerings in a circle around the Bale Poerwa, a little pavilion raised on long poles and serving as a sort of shrine or holy-of-holies, containing offerings and perhaps sacred objects. We saw the dancers as black silhouettes as they passed between the torches and us; then as dimly lit bronze figures when the light fell upon their brown bodies. Some carried flowers; some, food; and some, fire, the flames licking from the vessels. The priests wore only loincloths; the priestesses wore simple kains about their legs, their white hair loose and flowing. Their dance was a Mendet, a "dance of offerings," beautiful in its simplicity, dignity, and purpose. We watched until two in the morning, but activities in the temple court were still in progress as we walked home in the brightness of the full moon.

IMPORTANT BALINESE DANCES

Feminine	*Masculine*
Legong	Baris
Sangyang	Ketjak
Redjang	Ritual Baris
Maboeang	Maboeang
Djanger	Djanger
Mendet	Mendet
Djoged	Djoged
	Combat dances
	Kebiyar

Dance Technique

Head: Chin slightly lowered and head tilted slightly right or left. The engotan, a sideways jerking of the head, the face always remaining front, is used to mark the end of a phrase. The jerks must coordinate perfectly with the musical accents and timing.

Hands: Left hand: fingers extended, stretched, rigid, quivering. Right hand: open, like Indian pataka, fingers curled softly.

Arms: Extended straight, or bent in sharp angles. The movement pulls from the spine to manipulate the arms. Changes from one pose to another are sharp and swift. Sharp movements of the wrists mark the

musical accents. A snakelike rippling of the arms and shoulders is sometimes used.

Torso carriage: The torso is carried erect, spine slightly arched.

Knees: Deeply flexed throughout the dance except at the ends of phrases when they are straightened in a pose of upward-reaching ecstasy on feet in half-toe position.

Feet: Rapid little steps beat the ground in a shuffling, sideways movement (a Balinese version of a ballet *bourrée*). Slow, carefully placed walking steps with lifted toes. Elegant poses with one foot full on the ground, the other in ballet third-position half-toe.

Eyes: Sharp glances from a high point at right side to center front, repeated without drooping the eyelids or blinking.

Same movement also executed to the left.

Drooping, seductive glances usually accompany slow walking steps.

A fiery, intense expression is used for exciting parts.

A straightforward, round-eyed stare accompanies finishing poses.

Finishing pose (used at end of dance phrases):

Step forward on the left foot, bringing the right foot to back of left ankle; *plié* deeply on left leg. At the same time bring arms from open position at sides, together down in front.

Step back on right foot; place both feet in first position, *plié*. At same time, bring right arm to right side, hand in pataka, and left arm fully extended to left side from shoulder. Left fingers vibrate. Neck executes engotan.

Dance Exercises

No exercises were taught, only practice of the postures and movements listed under Dance Technique.

Concluding Thoughts

The Balinese are immensely sorry for anyone who has had the misfortune to be born outside of Bali, and therefore is unable to live in Bali as his rightful home.

Life in Bali is devoid of mechanization, artificiality, and social problems. Everything and everyone has his place and fills it with smiling grace. Life seems utterly natural, balanced, full of interesting activity, joyous—the way life ought to be—the way it was, perhaps, in the mythical Golden Age of the world. Bali has been called, with justice, the "Last Paradise."

Back view of Legong costume. The Legong dance starts with the dancer kneeling before the gamelan instruments. With her back turned to the audience, she is "invisible."

The Bird of Evil Omen.

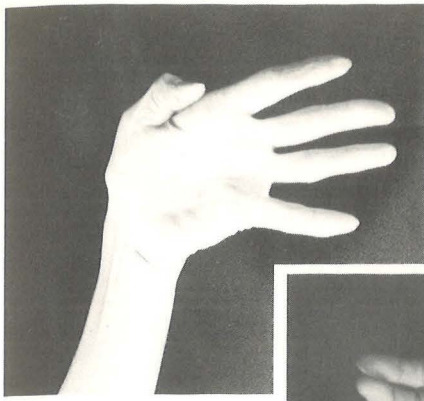
Foot positions. Note gold-leaf work on silk.

Xenia Zarina in the Balinese dance, Legong.
Posture of the King of Lasem. (*photo by Semo, Mexico*)

Xenia Zarina in Legong.
Posture of the Queen mourning. (*photo by Semo, Mexico*)

Djanger performed by children at Sanoer, Bali.

Djanger dancers.



Left-hand position.

Right-hand position.

Legong dancers near Denpasar, Bali.
Note their knee positions, left hands, and shadows.

S. M. Milevitch taking down the music of the Legong at Sanoer, Bali. Ida Bagoes Rai Nyoman Gria in Legong pose behind musicians.

Legong dancers, one weeping, the other consoling, performing near Denpasar, Bali. Note gamelan in background under waringen tree.

Closeup of Legong dancer's headdress.

Ida Bagoes Rai Nyoman Gria in the beginning pose of the Legong, the "opening of the curtain," Sanoer, Bali.

Bjoman Kaler, Legong dance teacher at Denpasar, Bali.

Ida Bagoes Rai Nyoman Gria in the finishing pose of Legong at Sanoer, Bali.

"Split" temple gate, typical of Balinese temple architecture.

The author in her bamboo house in Sanoer, Bali.

Rangda,
the Spirit of Evil.

Garuda, the mythical
eagle in a dance drama.

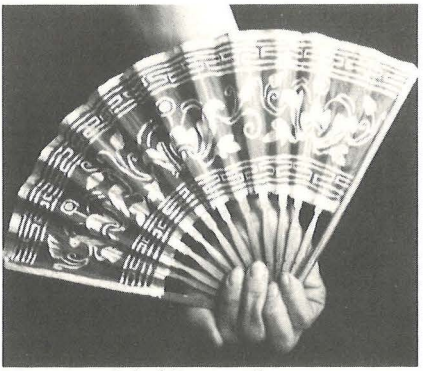
Legong dancer with kris.

Balinese dancers.

Balinese dancers dressing for a performance.

Kebiyar dancer.

Kebiyar danced by a child.



Manner of holding a fan.