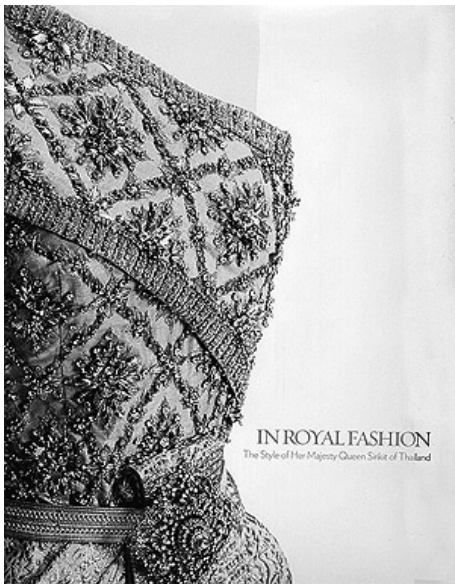


Buddhist studies and I am thrilled to have it as part of my library. It offers a variety of perspectives and insight for researchers, teachers, or students. I hope its publication is an inspiration to others and that it is just the start of an increased interest of scholars and publishers in the field of Thai manuscripts and painting in general.

Rebecca Hall

*In Royal Fashion: The Style of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand* by Melissa Leventon and Dale Carolyn Gluckman (Bangkok: Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles, 2013). ISBN 978-616-91379-0-0 (hard).



When the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles opened to the public on 26 April 2012, the first exhibitions in the grandly renovated former offices of the Ministry of Finance were created in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit. After nine years of study, planning, renovation and assembling collections, the new museum located in the compound of Bangkok's Grand Palace was created to serve as a center for those who wish to study and learn about Southeast Asian and Asian textiles. For the inaugural exhibitions the new museum focused on the exemplary role that Queen Sirikit has played in supporting Thai textiles and included themes on fashion and

Thai national dress. An impressive Thai language catalogue ราชศิลป์พิสดารภรณ์พิพิธภัณฑสถานสมเด็จพระนางเจ้าสิริกิติ์ พระบรมราชินีนาถ that featured a forward by the museum's Patron, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, was produced.

An English language edition *In Royal Fashion: The Style of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand* appeared a year later. Both catalogues cover the displays in two of the museum's principal halls. In the first gallery, the exhibition is entitled "Artistry in Silk: The Royal Style of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit" and a second gallery houses "Fashioning Tradition: Queen Sirikit Creates a National Dress for Thailand". The original catalogue that appeared in Thai in 2012 was written by a committee of museum staff and scholars. Although the photographs and most information in the two editions are similar, the text for the English version was completely rewritten by the authors Melissa Leventon and Dale Carolyn Gluckman.

In comparing the Thai edition and the English version, the changes and additions

were clearly intended to assist an international audience to better understand the topic by providing additional historical and cultural background. As the work was first written in Thai, a direct translation would have been complicated for a foreign readership to follow. This is because, when writing about royalty, *rajasap* ราชศัพท์, the royal Thai language, must be used. This honorific language makes the text extremely formal and repetitive. Additionally, the titles of personages in the royal family are long and complex, and are often not the same as those commonly used in English. As a result, a direct translation of the original Thai edition would pose problems for an English language reader unfamiliar with Thai court etiquette and succession. The authors, who have both served as consultants since the outset of the museum's creation, have carefully focused on providing supplementary and complimentary information to the original text.

Following the Forward by HRH Princess Sirindhorn, the catalogue's Introduction provides readers with a brief biographic background of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit and stresses the important role she played in creating a modern Thai national dress. As the authors point out, "Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the dress of members of the Thai court had gradually Westernized to the point where there was no 'traditional' Thai dress suitable for Her Majesty". This fact is pivotal as the *raison d'être* for the exhibition and the major role that Her Majesty played in reshaping a national Thai fashion identity. The other essential point is that the Queen focused a great deal of attention on rural women and, through this concern, became very interested in supporting traditional textiles.

The book's first chapter is entitled "Women's Fashion at the Thai Court and Beyond, 1860 to 1960". This differs from the Thai edition that has a first chapter entitled "The Evolution of Women's Attire during the Rattanakosin Period" and is divided into three sections starting with a brief one covering the period from 1782 to 1851. The second section of the Thai edition covers the period of the Westernization of Thai dress and the third section deals with the period starting at the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932. The English edition touches on the early Bangkok period as well, and then moves on to the reign of King Rama IV. The authors note that an early photograph of King Rama IV and his Queen Debsirindra was sent to US President Franklin Pierce, and was probably taken in the 1850s.

As a result, the introduction of photography is clearly a crucial development in the study of royal Siamese attire, because for the first time it is possible to know exactly what a personage is wearing. Thus, it is unclear why the English edition uses the starting date for the first chapter as 1860, which is in the middle of the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1863). It would seem more suitable to have chosen the 1850s, the decade that Rama IV's reign began and photography was introduced, unless the authors chose the date 1860 because around this time women in the court reportedly began to appear in Western style dress when greeting visitors. Aside from this minor point, the first chapter is filled with useful explanations of how fashion evolved over the decades.

Of note is the fact that in both the Thai and English editions the year 1932 is highlighted as a turning point in the history of Thai fashion. This is because the Prime Minister at the time issued a Cultural Mandate that discouraged the wearing of some types of traditional Thai attire. He considered that the local population would appear more “civilized” if they used Western dress. While this did not have as much effect in rural Thailand as in the cities, following the Second World War Western fashion took hold even in remote rural areas.

The second chapter in the book covers the story of how Her Majesty prepared for state visits by developing a new type of national dress. In total, eight different styles of women’s attire were created, each named after an important royal place. As the authors point out, most visitors and younger Thais assume that these styles are part of a continuous tradition, when in fact, they are not. The main feature of these new fashion creations is that although they appear to be hip-wrapped and draped like traditional attire, in fact, they are constructed in the same manner as Western style dress.

The third and final chapter focuses on how the Queen encouraged the use of locally woven textiles. Initially her wardrobe was made from silk produced by the company started by locally based American Jim Thompson. However, in 1976 Her Majesty established the Foundation for Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques (SUPPORT) which encouraged many types of crafts. As a result, the Queen began to wear clothing made from locally woven cottons and silks, thus starting a fashion trend followed by many Thai women.

The catalogue’s sixty-two page text is followed by well over one hundred pages of outstanding images that document the ensembles worn by Her Majesty juxtaposed with photographs showing the historic event where a particular outfit was worn. In addition, there are design sketches and close-up photographs that highlight the superb craftsmanship that went into creating many of the fashions. The selection and order of the photographs in the 216-page tome follows the same order in both Thai and English editions. One would assume that while the text could be revised, changing the order of the illustrations from the original format would be more difficult. While the photography of the Queen’s attire is outstanding, the concept behind the layout of illustrations is unclear. It would have been more helpful if the photographs had followed a historic timeline or that the Thai-inspired fashions and foreign designs were grouped separately.

Since the reign of Rama IV, when the King sent photographs of himself to European royals, the Thai nobility has astutely recognized that making an international fashion statement can greatly contribute to the Kingdom’s standing and image as a modern nation. Fashionable King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), the first Siamese sovereign to visit Europe, greatly impressed continentals with his sophisticated taste and elegant style. The beautiful and impeccably attired Queen Sirikit upheld this tradition by gaining international fame for her elegant sense of fashion. Beyond this achievement, Her Majesty contributed even more to the national image by designing

and implementing a new fashion identity for Thai women that also encouraged and supported rural development. Through an informative text and hundreds of beautiful illustrations this achievement has been carefully recorded for posterity in *In Royal Fashion: The Style of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand*.

Jane Puranananda

*How Theravāda is Theravāda? Exploring Buddhist Identities* edited by Peter Skilling, Jason A. Carbine, Claudio Cicuzza, and Santi Pakdeekham (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2012). ISBN 978-616-215-044-9.



*How Theravāda is Theravāda?* is a set of essays that question one of the most important ideas we have about Buddhism in the region: the concept of Theravāda, usually understood as a coherent “school” of Buddhism based upon a community that is aware of themselves in contradistinction to the Mahāyāna Buddhism of Tibet and much of East Asia. It turns out, however, that the term “Theravāda”, in the sense of denoting a set of practices and a community, surfaced only in the 19th century through the writings of foreign scholars. Local scholars and monks took up the term with alacrity, culminating in its use at the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Sri Lanka in the early 1950s. What is also remarkable is the extent to which the concept of “Theravāda Buddhism” has become central both to scholarship and the

so-called Theravadin societies of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia themselves. National histories from the region often project a sense of always having been a Theravāda nation.

Taken as a whole, this volume asks in effect, what do we do with the term “Theravāda”? Despite the fact that it is a recent intellectual construct, what are the historical forerunners of it, and what did earlier terms denote? Even if there were no terms that meant exactly what Theravāda does today, can we find evidence of a shared sense of identity, community, practice, or thought world? How did practitioners in the region understand themselves, and what were their connections between each