

Foundation Sponsoring 7 Books

Drachen Foundation administrators have been busy these days with imaginative publishing projects.

Scott Skinner, president, and Ali Fujino, administrator, made a flying visit to Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia, to celebrate publication of a study of Cambodia's 26 types of kites. The volume is an extensive reworking and expansion of a preliminary photocopied volume put out in 1994. Issued in Khmer, the language of Cambodia, the well-illustrated new volume also has been put out in English, with a grant from Drachen, and in French. It is one of the first books written and issued in Cambodia on that country's culture since the Khmer Rouge holocaust of the late 1970s which took some 1.5 million lives, almost half of Cambodia's population. Since the educated and professional classes were targeted, classic Khmer cultures such as dance, kiting, even haute cuisine were virtually erased from the national memory.

Sim Sarak, director general for administration and finance of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, aided by his wife Cheang Yarin, had the vision to restore kiting to the position of prominence it traditionally held. Kites date back at least 2,000 years in Cambodia. Sim (his surname) staged kite festivals in Cambodia and made himself known internationally by attending the Dieppe festival and other major ones.

Paying a courtesy call on Prince Sisowath Panara Sirivuth, secretary of state, upon arrival, Skinner and Fujino then attended a press conference announcing the new book. Both Sim and Skinner gave talks. The Drachen pair, Skinner and Fujino, were subsequently given tours of the national museum and royal palace, visited important kitemakers in their homes, participated in a national kite festival attended by numerous members of Cambodian royalty, and sat in on a Khmer gastronomy festival. They consulted with Cambodian officials on a proposed kite museum to be established in Phnom Penh, and Skinner said, "The foundation will give aid, if it can, in establishing the museum," adding, "we will certainly be involved."

Commented Fujino on the hectic weekend halfway around the globe: "The encounters were enchanting. It was a proud time for Scott, myself and Drachen to be a part of the Cambodian cultural rebuilding process."

Drachen has embarked on several more publishing projects.

It has commissioned four monographs on Samuel Cody, the American flight pioneer in England. Drachen has the largest extant collection of historic Cody kites, documentation and memorabilia, much of it purchased from the family at Sotheby's in London. Jean Roberts is doing a photo book, Paul Chapman a study of Cody and his various aircraft, Achim Kinter a study of his kite construction techniques, and Jan Desimpelaere an analysis of Cody's multiple, ingenious aerodynamic creations-----kites, gliders and aircraft. Roberts and Chapman are English, Kinter German and Desimpelaere Belgian.

In another Drachen publishing initiative, kitemaker Stormy Weathers of Portland, Oregon, will detail how he makes his wonderful kites in a 77-page book.

A long overdue volume, now in the works under foundation sponsorship, is a biography titled *Brother of the Wind: Domina Jalbert*. In it, Tal Streeter will paint "the rise of the contemporary kite scene around the engaging genius, Domina Jalbert, inventor of the Parafoil."

In an eighth project, Skinner will himself personally fund a monograph on his private collection of 80 masterpiece Japanese kite prints, which show kabuki theater and *ukiyo-e* ("floating world") images from the pleasure quarters of Edo, now Tokyo. The 18th and 19th century prints draw a colorful picture of the kite culture existing at that time. A university press is to be chosen to distribute the volume.