

FOLKLORE FROM THE FAR EAST

by Dawn Jones

KESADA

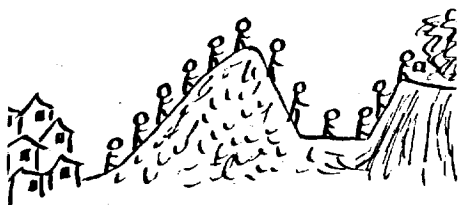
Many of us are familiar with some of the ritual dances of Bali; these are usually performed in the grounds of an ornately carved temple, with dancers in elaborate costumes and the music of a gamelan orchestra.

Kesada is a ritual performed in East Java and though this is not far from Bali, the character of the ceremony is very different.

The geography here is unusual, in that an isolated mass of volcanic mountain rises like a giant upturned cone with the end sliced off. The rim is ringed by very steep walls of stone, through which one descends to a vast desert-like plain which forms the base of a massive cavity known as the Sand Sea. Covered by sand dunes and grasses, this view has been compared to a lunar landscape. This impression is increased by the sight of two volcanoes within the crater, one of which, Mt. Bromo, is still active and is the centre of a religious cult.

The local people believe that the God of the Mountain, Dewa Kusuma, lives in the depths of Mt. Bromo, and once a year, in the month of Kesada, they make offerings to him. Clad in their best clothes, they gather in the nearest village to make the steep climb over the rim and down to the floor of the Sand Sea. At the base of Mt. Bromo, priests from all the Tengger villages gather to bless the offerings. There is a lot of activity as people gather here and the scents of flowers and incense mingle with smells of food and oil lamps.

The ceremonies are timed to occur just as the full moon is at its zenith, directly over the bubbling cavern of the crater, so as the moon rises, they begin their climb to the narrow ledge along the rim of the volcano itself. From here, chanting sacred texts, or mantras, they throw their gifts of money, food and flower petals to the god. (One hopes that's all he receives, for many men and boys climb to the very precipitous inner wall of the crater later to collect the more valuable offerings.)



Village Tengger Massif Sand Sea Mt. Bromo

WHY DOES A MAN SCULPT A BUDDHA?



Buddha by Doug Gardner

Doug Gardner has been fascinated by Asia — professionally and academically — for over 20 years. As a teenager it first struck him that Asia is home to the majority of the world's population, yet we know very little about it. So his quest began.

He pursued Asian studies at university, obtained a master's degree in it, lectured at the University of Guelph, then joined External Affairs with the intention of pursuing his interest in this geographic area.

During this time he lived in Indonesia for two years and has travelled extensively

throughout the region. (A map in his office plots in detail, his various voyages.)

Over the years his interest in Asia, rather than waning, has become more focused and more refined.

He confesses to having eclectic tastes. His home is a conglomerate of cultures and styles and oriental gardens are his particular interest — "they represent the harmonious relationship between natural objects". Even here in Ottawa he has been able to create a small (50 ft. by 50 ft.) oriental garden which he modifies slightly each year in the hopes of "approaching a better balance between form and substance".

Based on this background information, it now becomes more understandable why this particular man sculpted a Buddha.

"The inspiration" he says, "was pure mental image. I wanted to see if I could capture some of the qualities that are inherent in the Buddhist religion — tranquility, self-knowledge and inner peace. All Buddhas are stylized to a certain extent, to represent humanity and qualities of divinity, so I could create it in almost any form I wished."

He knew virtually nothing about sculpting, so he did a little research, bought some clay and started on his project. Several months later he had created his first and only ceramic sculptures — the one pictured here in white and gold and an identical one with a darker finish.

The result speaks for itself — a rendering of the alternative to our stress-laden, pressure cooker existence.

CANADIAN SPOUSE OPENS A THAI RESTAURANT

"SATAE", "TOD MUN PLA", "TOM YUM KUNG", "TUPTIM", may not mean much to most of us. Yet, to those who have lived in Thailand or have been to the Siam Kitchen in Ottawa, they mean "wonderful taste sensations" — chicken marinated in spicy coconut sauce, delicately spiced fish cakes, hot and sour soup and finely chopped water chestnuts in pink coconut milk.

Sue Wilson, a Canadian spouse and the owner of the Siam Kitchen, is the person to talk to should you wish to know more about Thai cuisine. She herself is from Thailand. She met Gardner while he was on posting there and together they went to Australia and Singapore before returning to Canada in 1983. It was while they were in Singapore that the idea first came to them to open a restaurant. They knew little about what would be involved, yet felt that there was a

market for such a restaurant in Ottawa. They also wanted to have a business that Sue's son could take over at a later date.

In June 1984, after a certain amount of research and learning, they started looking for a site and began immigration procedures to bring a Thai cook over to Canada. Then the work began — the renovations, the planning, the organizing, the ordering. Throughout it all, "Sue was the inspiration and organizer and I was the runner and writer," says Gardner.

A rave review by Peter Cochran of CBC saying "I'll come back and back and back" (which he has), started the restaurant off on the best possible note. Bobbi Turcott of the Ottawa *Citizen* also gave it a good review and the rest is now history — one very successful enterprise by a Canadian foreign service family. Congratulations.