

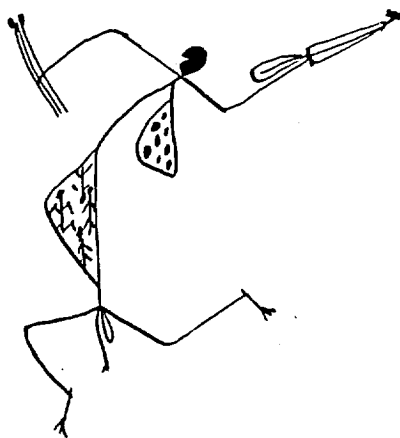
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

JAKARTA: MOST OF THE AMENITIES OF A MODERN CITY

by Marion Bale, Community Coordinator
One of the most satisfying aspects of my position as Community Coordinator in Jakarta is helping newcomers adapt to the very different living conditions they find here. They tend, at first, to be shocked by chaotic traffic conditions, ramshackle slums located next to opulent mansions, high fenced-in housing, and the lack of western sanitation standards. Their uneasiness is dispelled during familiarization tours on which I accompany them and they discover that Jakarta has most of the amenities of a modern city.

During the course of my duties, I have organized T.G.I.F.s where newcomers have met socially with the families of settled employees and discussed mutual difficulties encountered. I have produced monthly newsletters with contributions from staff, enlarged the video library and attempted to start a paperback library (essential as books are scarce and prohibitively expensive). Reference material has also been collected but due to space limitations at the chancery, an office is not yet available. I try to help those with queries, (which have ranged from how to cope with servants to finding places where certain commodities are available).

Newcomers in 1986 will benefit from a more defined Coordinator program. An updated welcome kit will be distributed prior to their arrival to assist them in preparation for their posting in Jakarta.

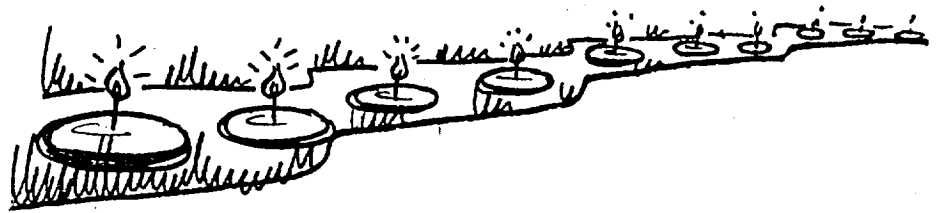


ABORIGINAL

BARK PAINTING

From India

DIVALI: A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



By Dawn Jones

Divali is a major Hindu festival of India. It is a time for religious ceremonies and worship, prayer processions and semi-ritual spectacles, music and dance, feasting and gambling. It is a grand combination of religion and recreation.

It's history is obscure and complex. It is most commonly believed to commemorate the coronation of Rama, the greatest of the Hindu hero-kings, and the illumination, both literal and figurative, which occurred with his return from exile. On this occasion Vishnu, the chief deity, gave this festival to the traders and merchants, at which time they honour Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and good fortune.

The four days of Divali mark the beginning of the New Year according to the Vikrania calendar, and it is a time of general renewal. Houses are painted, new clothing bought and new account books opened. Much gambling occurs also, for this is considered to bring luck for the future.

So far, it sounds like many other celebrations, but Divali is most memorable as a festival of lights.

Myriads of tiny lights burn, as small earthenware pots are filled with oil and lit with wicks. They light up the parapets of temples, and verandahs and window sills of houses. They are also set adrift on rivers and streams throughout the land.

FROM AUSTRALIA: CORROBOREE

by Dawn Jones

Aboriginals may live anywhere in Australia, including the major cities; however, their traditional way of life is nomadic and they wander and camp in the vast arid spaces of the Australian 'outback'. This land is sparse and dry, with scrub bushes, or small stunted tree growth. It is a barren place, but bleakly beautiful, with vivid blue skies and earth colours of all shades of reds and browns.

The term corroboree has come to be used for almost any combination of singing and dancing, which could occur any night of the year, as the Aboriginals gather around campfires, or in the moonlight to relax or celebrate.

A sonorous, droning music is produced by blowing through a large hollow wooden pipe called a 'didgeridoo' and to this accompaniment they sing and perform simple but vigorous dances. Each dance has a meaning and the various 'actors' may bound around to represent buffalo, swoop gracefully as a bird diving for fish, or perhaps represent characters from their spirit world. Everyone participates — even infants who are jogged up and down by their parents, or are carried

on their mother's shoulders as she dances. In fact, as a mother rests, she may pass her baby to a friend who continues to dance, so that as the women rest, the baby, who is passed around, dances all night.

Dance has a recreational value, but far more serious is its function in religious ceremonies. These rituals frequently involve re-enactment of mythological scenes involving characters such as 'the kangaroo ancestor', or 'the snake man' with his sacred hollow log, and require the use of sacred materials. The sacred dances are strongly defined by tradition and as they grow, children are carefully initiated in the proper ceremonies before they are allowed to perform. The dances may occur on special grounds which are secret only to men or to women, and it is considered crucial for the welfare of the whole group that they be properly done. Some dancers are particularly skilled and they become known, and provide for their community what artists anywhere do — pleasure, inspiration and at least a temporary suspension of disbelief which allows one to participate fully in the spiritual life of the community.