

ANNIVERSARY OF A PERSONALITY

A. Information concerning the personality to be celebrated

1. Family name: Debyasuvarn, (née Kunjara)

First name: Boonlua , titled M.L. (female)

2. Born: 13 December 1911, (but an annual event celebrating her Day has always been held in January as explained in 5(a)

Died: 7 June 1982

3. Field of activity:

- a) Secondary and Tertiary Education Expansion and Development;
- b) Languages and Literature Teaching and Learning;
- c) Culture and Cultural Expressions, especially Music and Performing Arts; Creativity;
- d) Intercultural Understanding and Dialogue;
- e) Communication, Cross-cultural Communication--- through languages and comparative literature, writing, criticism
- f) Women and Gender Issues,
- g) Culture of Peace

4. Brief Description of the personality and her most important works:

-- **a teacher** at many secondary schools, colleges and universities, including private, governmental, Buddhist and Catholic schools; teaching Thai language, English, Botany, and promoting extra-curricular activities;

-- **a leading female educator and educational administrator** in the Ministry of Education particularly in 1950's through 1970's, active in the expansion and quality development of secondary and tertiary education. (On the role and thoughts of M.L. Boonlua concerning Education and university Development, read: ML Boonlua and her ideas on Education by Paitoon Silaratana, former Dean of the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, first printed in Varasarn Kru Magazine, February- May, BE 2000, reprinted in Boon Bampen; and Sippanondha Ketudat, "Future of Thai Tertiary Education, reprinted in Boon Bampen)

-- **an advocate for the preservation and promotion of the Thai language and literature** considered as an integral part of the preservation of Thai culture; a founding member of the Thai Language Club of the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University; curriculum developer for Thai language and Thai literature teaching; writer of textbooks on Thai teaching

-- **a recognized national and regional expert in the studies of languages and literature for better intercultural dialogue and understanding;** involved in curriculum development and textbook writing for the teaching and learning of Thai and foreign languages and literature; initiated and promoted the teaching and learning of literary criticism in school and at college and university levels.

-- **instrumental in the founding of The Language Center,** now LANGUAGE INSTITUTE OF CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

-- **an advocate and a major discussant of woman and gender issues,** reflecting and discussing the issues and roles of traditional and modern women in traditional and modern literature; presenting and raising the issues in her own writings, especially presenting in her novels and short stories different or even conflicting characters and roles of women and men in the modern Thai society.

-- **a national and regional expert in intercultural dialogue** and intercultural communication; lectured extensively on the subject both within and outside the country.

-- **a writer of numerous fictions and nonfictions,** most of them are still recommended for external reading at secondary school level; one of her many books on literary thinking and criticism is listed among the 100 books that all Thais must read; one of her novels is placed on The 20 top- Thai- novels listed by a French Translator living in Thailand who translated and printed it as an e-book.(website:-----)

One of her tales: "The Tale of a royal elephant: Plai Mongkol", a tragedy depicting the fall from dignity and grace of an elephant whose fate was comparable to that of a man in similar situations, was published (the third edition) by the Centre for International Understanding, Thai National Commission for UNESCO, in 1971.

One of her novellas, "Saneh Plai Jawak" (The Enchanting Cooking Spoon) was translated into English, studied and discussed together with other important Thai contemporary writings, by Herbert P. Phillips in his Anthology: "Modern Thai Literature-- with an Ethnographic Interpretation", University of Hawaii Press, 1987; her works were comparatively studied by a researcher, Thelma B. Kintamnar, in her "Self and Society in Southeast Asian Fiction", published by Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1988, under Southeast Asian Studies Program whose purpose it was to promote the understanding of Southeast Asian cultures and literatures. In this research publication, one of her novellas, "Dr. Look Thung", was analyzed and commented in detail together with other Southeast Asian writers' works, in the chapter on "Social Class and the Individual"

-- her life and works, considered unique and having significant historic and cultural value to those who study Thai and Asian history and culture, have been the topic of many studies at regional and international institutes, and were recently the subject of an in-depth research for a Ph.D. dissertation of an American scholar at University of California at Berkeley.

5. Brief description of the celebration

a. Introduction -- The Annual M.L. Boonlua Day, Since 1982

Since the death of M.L. Boonlua Debyasuvarn in 1982, an annual commemorative event has been organized by the M.L. Boonlua Fund at Chulalongkorn University, in the first week of January, every year.

M.L. Boonlua, when still living, always observed a strict decorum when it concerned the royalty. One specific example was when she attended a 60th Birthday celebration of her young and very close associate, dressed in black-- the traditional mourning color and hence a bad omen in Thailand. But she solemnly explained that the Supreme Patriarch had just passed away, and as a Thai and a Buddhist, she could not, for any reason at all, forego the traditional mourning for him.

Though her birthday was on December 13, it never was publicly celebrated in December, but had to always be postponed to early January, for her sense of decorum dictated that, December being reserved by the whole nation for the celebration of the King's Birthday, her birthday should be celebrated at a later date.

The annual M.L. Boonlua Day has been hosted by the M.L. Boonlua Fund Committee, chaired by Professor Termsakdi Krisdamara, President of SASIN Graduate School of Administration, Chulalongkorn University. (see full list of the ML Boonlua Fund Committee in annex a)

The purpose of the event has been to celebrate M.L. Boonlua's lifelong commitment to education and to the promotion and transmission of cultural expressions through language and literature, music and performing arts.

In accordance with M.L. Boonlua's will, at the annual celebration each year, scholarships have been granted to selected outstanding university students in the field of languages, literature, music and dance; a financial grant has also been given to the School of Music and Dramatic Arts of the Fine Arts Department to support its activities; and for the past 5-6 years, 2 awards in literary and film criticism, now popularly known as the "ML. Boonlua Awards for Literary Criticism", have been given to critics whose works have been recognized as having specially high value in literary and social criticism for the year.

b. The Centennial commemoration Plan for 2012

Her centenary proper falls on 13 December, 2011. However, respecting her strict sense of decorum, the M.L. Boonlua Fund Committee has planned for her centennial celebration to begin in January 2012, as it has also been a tradition for the Fund to organize the annual M.L. Boonlua Day in early January every year since her death.

For 2012, the centennial event will not be a grand celebration costing big budgets. The event will focus on nationwide series of educational, cultural and communication events, such as ---a series of academic and cultural promotion activities to be organized by universities and concerned organizations which share the idealism of M.L. Boonlua's, (particularly in the areas of the teaching of Thai language and the promotion of literary criticism, and foreign languages especially English for intercultural dialogue and understanding, writing and translation, music and performances, Thai and international food, gender and women issues and mutual understanding and peace) .

It will be both a national and an international event comprising easily implementable forms of activities such as: photo exhibitions, music and theatre, book fairs, lectures and seminars, essay competitions, literary criticism competitions, scholarships granting, etc. with the participation of university students and teachers, music and dance troupes, women and gender associations, writers, publishers, translators , peace and intercultural dialogue groups, and the media.

c. Host and Co-hosts of the event

The centennial events will be hosted by the M.L. Boonlua Fund and co-hosted by:

Ministry of Education

Thai National Commission for UNESCO,

Faculty of Arts of Silpakorn University,

Chulalongkorn University,

Ministry of Culture,

PEN international; Thai Center

Thai Writers Association,

Thai University Women association,

And according to M.L. Boonlua's wishes, scholarships and awards will also be given to students, School of Dramatic arts, and literary critics selected by a designated committee for this purpose.

6. Historical background of the personality and her works

Was born and lived in the time of World Wars and during successive social and cultural changes and transformations.

Family background

M.L. Boonlua was born in 1911, to a family of a royal lineage of King Rama II, in the later period of the absolute monarchy, and 4 years before the First World War began.

One year before M.L. Boonlua's birth, King Chulaongkorn (Rama V)'s long and modernized reign ended with his death in 1910, to be followed by three short but eventful reigns.

Though she lived in 4 reigns, she served almost throughout her career as a civil servant of the governments in the reign of the present king, H.M. Bhumibhol Adulayadej, during the period which is one of the richest and most complex in terms of historical, political and social developments.

M.L. Boonlua's lifetime was the time when Thailand, as a nation, was struggling for her survival, sovereignty, and democracy, as well as the time of rapid educational expansion, economic and political development, and increasingly complex socio-cultural challenges, including many calamities that occurred inside and outside the country.

Her father, Choa Phya Deweswongwiwatana, (M.R. Larn Kunjara), had a very strong and lifelong influence on her, as remembered by M.L. Boonlua in her book, "Tale of the royal elephant: Plai Mongkol" (4th edition, 1912, Kow Na Printing House), a tale based on her family's record and oral history. Her father had occupied some very important and most trusted positions in King Chulalongkorn's government long before she was born, but he had suffered a stroke and had retired from active service, though remaining a loyal and trusted courtier.

Choa Phya Deweswongwiwatana, was born and educated in the strictly traditional Thai and Buddhist system in the reign of king Rama IV. He was an expert in horsemanship and elephantry, statescraft, and royal customs. He also inherited from the family of Rama II's lineage an expertise in literature, music and drama, and also Buddhist scholarship. Presented by his father, Pra Ong Choa Singhanat, to be a royal page at the court of King Chulalongkorn at age 16, he was gradually promoted to be in charge of several important positions, such as: the Royal Cavalry and the Royal Elephant Corps (Krom Ma and Krom Chang); the Royal preceptor and teacher of the first Crown Prince, Prince Vachiroonahit, until the prince's untimely death. During the time when King Chulalongkorn welcomed many western dignitaries to Bangkok, Choa Phya Dewes was asked to be personally in charge of the Palace and City Cleanliness, Agriculture, as well as Cultural Entertainment, including music, dance and drama, masked drama and puppetry (Krom Mahorasop, Krom Khon, Krom Hoon Luang, Krom Rum Kome, Krom Peepat)

Like men of status in Thailand in those days, Boonlua's father had many wives and many children who belonged to different generations of his huge and complex household.

M.L. Boonlua herself described in her autobiography: " Kwam Sumret lae Kwam Lom Laew" ("Success and Failure"),1971, that her family was "...extraordinarily big..." with her father having "...about 40 wives from the very first one to the last, as counted by some of his children after his death... Most of the wives were members of his music and drama troupes but served him at different times,... Only 4 or 5 lived in the house at the same time"

According to M. L. Boonlua, the education of all of his children, not only modern education, but also the moral and artistic training and upbringing of all of his children, was a major concern to her father who considered himself "already behind the time" Therefore he invested generously on his sons' and daughters' modern education sending them to Catholic or missionary schools so that they would be proficient in at least one foreign language and be knowledgeable in the western arts and sciences. The moral and cultural dimensions of education, on the other hand, were strictly and richly inculcated at home where he led his children in the chanting of Buddhist scripts and prayers 3 times a week and where cultural creativity and observation of old traditions were parts of living in his house.

M.L. Boonlua, a daughter born to Mom Nual, was her father's 32nd and the last child. He was then already 59 years old and ailing.

When she was 4 years old, her mother died, but not before she had taught her to read rather fluently in the Thai language. Since her mother's death, her father gave her an especially close attention and care, taking her with him almost everywhere he went, including to the temples where he nightly discussed the Buddha's teaching with learned monks until late, and thus exposing her to his later days' work, experiences and wisdom.

When she was 14 years old, her father also passed away and she was thrust to be under the care of her father's first son, her own half brother, who had been strictly educated and groomed as heir of the family.

In 70 years, she lived through the reigns of Kings and under countless governments, witnessing the first coup d'état that changed the country from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, and many more coups to come, and through a series of calamities, and social, cultural and political upheavals, changes and developments, that took place at unprecedented paces, both in Thailand and in the world.

Background in Religious Tolerance and Intercultural Understanding

She was able to read Thai classical literature rather fluently when she started formal schooling at the age of 6. And though raised in the family steeped in the traditionally Thai cultural and Buddhist background, she was sent to a Catholic convent primary school in Bangkok, and then to another convent in Penang, now part of Malaysia, for her secondary education. Therefore, she not only learnt English at a very tender age, but was also exposed to situations leading to her adopting an attitude of inter-religious tolerance and intercultural understanding, a factor which significantly influenced her perception and outlook throughout her life.

She returned to Bangkok in 1928 after obtaining the Cambridge Honours Certificate in Penang. However, in order to be eligible for the university entrance at the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University, she had to enroll at the Saint Mary's S.P.G School in Bangkok and to take secondary school certificate examination administered once a year by the Ministry of Education in Thailand.

At Chulalongkorn University, she studied Thai Language and Thai literature, the subjects which had been inherently of significant values in her family. She also furthered her study of foreign languages, particularly English and French, paying special attention to English literature as this had been her favourite subject since her convent days. She mentioned in her autobiography that her foreign teachers at Chula were Mr. Arthur Braine-Hartnell, an Englishman, and other American and French instructors,

7. Full list of her works and actions

- **A Career in Language Teaching and Education Development**

Her long teaching career began during her days at the University, teaching Botany and English grammar at S.P.G., a higher secondary missionary school near the University where she was given room and board.

Upon graduation, she joined the Ministry of Education's teaching staff in 1938 and worked at the Triam Udom Suksa Preparatory School of Chulalongkorn University, established in the same year to prepare secondary school leavers from nationwide for adequate entrance into Chulalongkorn university. Since there was shortage of qualified teachers, she concurrently taught English at Chulalongkorn University and also served as a part-time teacher of Thai language and literature at Mater Dei, a renowned Catholic secondary school for girls, in Bangkok.

She was active and took pride in helping both of the schools organize their annual production of the Students Music and Drama. She firmly believed Students Drama Production was important as an extra curricular activity, and a necessary learning experience for the students as well as teachers and parents.

For Triam Udom Suksa School, she took the episode of "Apasarawartar" part from "Ramamkien", the Poetic Epic by King Rama I, and added dialogues and songs, making it into a full-scale verse play which she produced for the performance by her first batch of students of Triam Udom in 1940.

For the Mater Dei School production In 1946, she entirely composed her first poetic play to raise fund for the renovation of school buildings destroyed in the bombardments of Bangkok during the war. It was a play about a "virtuous woman" in the Thai history. As recalled by Mayuree Sukhavivat in "Boon Bampen", 1982, p. 94-98, this poetic play entitled: "Upayobai" was successfully performed and produced by all-female students who were assigned different responsibilities in the production, and had to work as a team respecting each other's role and working towards the same goal. Being students of a Catholic school with a strong leaning towards foreign languages, the students surprised the audience, among whom were parents, national dignitaries and education ministry officials, that they could deliver eloquently and realistically such an important and difficult epic drama in Thai poetry and could produce a play with elegant settings and costumes (borrowed from some very high-level sources by a student, M.R. Supicha Sonakul, who was in charge of costumes). The play, based on a short record of a historical incident that took place in the 14th century during the early Ayutthya kingdom, was elaborated and embellished through Boonlua's knowledge and imagination so that it became real and alive when two Ayutthya princes whose jealous, greedy, and ambitious wives motivated them to fight and kill each other, while the wife of the third prince who was calmer and more intelligent forewarned and thus prevented her husband from falling victim to the evil plot laid by jealous and treacherous court officials. This play was later published in book form in 1985.

During this period, her health became weak, and at the advice of her family, she considered resigning from work.

- **Education and Cultural Efforts During the War Years**

In 1939, World War II broke out in Europe, and soon it escalated to other regions. In December 1941 Thailand was invaded.

Triam Udom Suksa School was the first base in Bangkok to be occupied, and education was disrupted. The Ministry of Education announced that all students with more than 20 percent attendance could pass without having to take the examination. Teachers were instructed to stay home and write texts and exercise books for their courses. Cultural activities, music and plays were promoted to boost the public moral, especially through the radio.

M.L. Boonlua was appointed a member of the Cultural Council in 1942 which she accepted, as she believed cultural and artistic activities were important components in education and would serve to spiritually unite the people in time of fear and difficulty. But as she recalled in her autobiography, she had to work under a cultural policy she neither understood nor agree.

However, Triam Udom Suksa School mobilized about 30 teachers of languages back to work and began teaching and helping the staff of Chulalongkorn to carry on the teaching at some faculties. M.L. Boonlua recalled in her autobiography that she joined this group of teachers, and "...wearing a para-military uniform with a side cap that gave no protection from the sun",... she hopped in the heat of Bangkok from Triam Udom School to the Faculty of art and later also to the Faculty of Education at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, "...unable to use her umbrella as it was not considered appropriate for a female wearing the uniform "..., and as medicine was expensive, she had to carry ..."my own bottle of homemade herbal medicine to cool down the effect of the heat and keep me moving".

In that year, Bangkok was bombarded more and more often, with increased number of civilian casualties. Soon families with women and children moved into the provinces.

At the end of 1942, Bangkok was heavily flooded and Boonlua had to paddle her boat to teach. In 1943, her health deteriorated and she submitted a letter of resignation from government service, but her request was denied. She was advised to get a medical certificate and take a sick leave instead. She agreed and moved out to Ayutthya, as bombing in Bangkok occurred almost every night.

After the war ended in 1945, the political situations were chaotic and most dangerous for Thailand, especially with the influences of international powers. However, schooling returned and rehabilitation and development began slowly.

M.L. Boonlua, having regained her good health from the long rest up-country, soon collaborated with some colleagues in helping the Faculty of Arts of Chulalongkorn University establish the Thai Language Club which she at one time served as Vice-president. On 29th July 1952, the young King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) came, in a private capacity, to attend the Thai Language Club Committee Meeting and to raise some concerns about the use of Thai words in the modern society. M.L. Boonlua was one of the members present and participating rather liberally in the discussion in the presence of the King.

She later won a scholarship to further her studies in the field of education at the University of Minnesota, U.S.A. When she returned to Thailand, she was assigned to work in many administrative and sometimes pioneering posts within the Ministry of Education. She felt uncomfortable in some high positions, but chose instead to do what she could do best and could make more useful contributions, as she recognized that it was the time when the national educational system was rapidly expanding and developing, and qualified personnel were most needed.

M.L. Boonlua was a thinker, and though she was hard-working as a teacher and administrator, she was more respected and remembered for her sincere, frank and liberal views, and for her outspokenness, especially when it concerned the policy of the government regarding public education and cultural expressions.

On October 6, 1961, she was interviewed by M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, a statesman and a very famous journalist and radio commentator at the time, on his radio program "Puen Non", when she aired her views on the education policy and programs of the country, though she said that her views..." might not be pleasing to some people." The interview was included in M.R Kukrit book, "Thok Muang Thai", Bunnakarn Publishing, 1971.

- **Various important positions held**

Among the many positions she assumed at the Ministry of Education were:

Acting Principal of Triam Udom Suksa School

Head of the Supervisory Unit (an American system equivalent to School Inspectors Unit in England) as well as a supervisor of English and Thai teaching in the General Education Department

Member of the Curriculum Development Committee

Member of Textbook Development Committee, and commissioned to write a number of text books,

Vice Chair of the National Educational Radio and Television Committee,

Chairperson of the National Committee for the Regional and International Cooperation in Languages Instruction, cooperating especially with the East-West Center in Hawaii, the British Council in Bangkok, and SEAMEO-RELC language Center in Singapore.

Deputy Rector of Bangsaen College of Education, now Burapha University

Founding Dean of the faculty of Arts at the new British College- styled campus of Silpakorn University in Nakorn Prathom Province, a project initiated by M.L. Pin Malakul, then Minister of Education. This new campus at the outskirts of Bangkok was visited by many foreign dignitaries including Rene Maheu, then Director General of UNESCO, the agency which supported various aspects of educational development in Thailand

In addition to official positions and responsibilities, she was also active in many non- governmental organizations and associations. She also gave lectures at colleges and universities and was a panelist in the discussions on the subjects of education, language and literature teaching, and social and cultural changes and development.

Her health, which was never strong since her childhood, weakened considerably under the stress and hard work at Silpakorn University. In 1970, she decided to resign from the post of Dean of the Faculty of arts, Silpakorn University, and also from government service.

When her health finally improved, she was asked to help in the government service, serving in the education, cultural and communication sectors, various projects, and committees. She was especially active in the promotion of the study of Thai and English languages, the study of literature and literary criticism, and in international cooperation with external agencies in the field of language teaching, intercultural communication and dialogue.

She was appointed during this period as member of many committees such as:

The National Education Commission's Committee for the Restructuring of the School System

Chulalongkorn University's Panel of Experts for the Evaluation of Academic Qualifications and Papers for the University Language Centre

Chairperson of the Education and Moral Committee of the National Council of Women of Thailand

University Reform Committee of the Bureau of Higher Education

National Education Commission's Committee for the Consideration of Post-Graduate Curriculum for Thai Language and Thai Culture of Chulalongkorn University

SEATO's Committee for the Selection of Award-Winning Literary Works

Member of the Committee on Historical Documents for Publication, Prime Minister's Office

Member of the Committee of the Foundation for the Welfares of Needy School Children under H.M. the Queen's Patronage

- **Regional and International Contact and Cooperation**

She worked very closely with RELC in Singapore, Fulbright, British Council, and Siam Society, Bangkok, as well as East West Center in Hawaii where she was appointed as advisor to the East-West Center's Culture Learning Institute, as well as many cultural organizations in Japan, England and America.

At the later stage of her career and her life, she enjoyed warm association with many international like-minded colleagues and accepted invitations to speak and give lectures both within and outside the country.

When she died rather unexpectedly, a simple pocket-book entitled "Boon Bumpen" (The Merit Made), 204 pages, was published in her memory and distributed at her cremation together with her autobiography. The pocket-book contained the writings by 40 of her friends and colleagues of different ages, and from many countries, and many institutions in Thailand. They not only recorded their beautiful

and warm moments they had shared in their work and association with M.L.Boonlua, but also retold many amusing, witty, human and unforgettable remarks and stories Boonlua had recounted to them that had in some ways made their lives richer.

- **Writer of Poetic Plays, Non-Fictions and Fictions**

M.L. Boonlua was born to a cultural and educated family where writing, reading of poetry, composing lyrics and songs for Thai plays and operas, as well as staging a production of play or a musical performance for visiting guests and foreign dignitaries, constituted an important and integral part of every member's life.

She recalled in her interview which was printed in "The Writers from the Faculty of Arts", collected by the Library Science Division", B.E.2515 (1972), pages181-192, reprinted in "Boon Bampen", that she started her creative writing when she was 11 years old, creating poetic parts for her family's production of "lakorn PunTang" as was commonly practiced by most members in her family. Since then she wrote at least 5 poetic plays.

Her father, upon returning from Europe where he saw many operas, produced some of his own opera in the Thai style, called "Lakorn Duk Damban", at his palace at Ban Maw, in Bangkok for King Chulalongkorn's guests. The Operas, performed to the accompaniment of the Palace's already popular live orchestra, became a hit from 1899 until 1909 when cultural activities at the palace had to stop as her father fell ill. In 1910, King Chulalongkorn passed away and other genres of play and drama came into mode.

Boonlua recalled that she wrote her first novel at the age of 13, but never sent it for publication.

She was not the only female writer in her family. Her half sister, M.L. Boopha, who was 6 years older, was an established novelist. Using the pen-name of "Dok Mai Sod", M.L.Boopha is still considered one of Thailand's best loved modern novelists, with 12 novels and 20 short stories published and reprinted many times.

Boonlua's innumerable works, comprised both fictions and non-fictions. However, some manuscripts were lost, some were reprinted many times and are still read and referred to by critics and academics. Her major works are retrievable from the Chulalongkorn University Library and Silpakorn University Library.

Non-Fictions

Her non- fictions are numerous, mostly in the forms of textbooks and guidelines for the teaching of the Thai language and literature; textbooks and guidelines on literary criticism; collections of academic essays on education and culture of Thailand, past, present and future; Collection of essays on language teachings: Collections of essays on understanding peoples of other cultures. These are still used at the high school and university levels and are frequently referred to in Students' theses and dissertations.

One of her important essays: "Women's Happiness" (Kwam Suk Khong Stree), 192 pages, Bandit Karn Pim, was written for and published by the Thai Mental Health Association Under the Royal Patronage, as part of Thailand's celebration of the International Women's Year 1965. It was meant to be read by both men and women with the aim of promoting peace and harmony in the family and the society.

The book, divided into 12 chapters, traced the traditional gender role in Thailand before modernization, and discussed the importance of the family as a basic social organization. It also discussed modernization vis-à-vis westernization, and emphasized the huge potentials of education on the personal and social development of both men and women in modern time. The author, towards the end, made a strong plea to all readers to help one another in reducing the gaps that had increasingly developed between members of the family, and to help build a balance and harmony at all levels of society: in the family, in the school, at work, and in the society in general.

Her autobiography "Success and Failure" (Kwam sumrej lae Kwam Lomlaew) deserves special mentioning, as it was published on the 60th anniversary of her birth with the expressed intention of sharing and passing on some of her happy and unhappy experiences to the younger friends and colleagues..

This book, published in 1981, 239 pages, is a reflection on her own life and career, from the view of a cultured and educated woman who believed in serving the nation to the best of her ability, who was assigned to quite a few important and demanding but sometimes "inappropriate" positions. It was written in her warm and sincere tone, but in the dry-humour and subtly ironic style, and sometimes without naming names, reveals the complexity of the "culture of work" as well as the "red tape and bureaucracy" within the governmental system in her days. She analyzed rather vividly, but intentionally intangibly, why some of everybody's best intentions did not always lead to success by everybody's standard. She summed up her book by saying that "...one should not dwell on counting his or her success or failure, but should simply think of the good deeds done"..., and borrowing from the teaching of the famous monk she knew, ended the book abruptly by saying ... "In Buddhism, one is taught not to be too concerned with the past as it has already passed. The present, on the other hand, is more important. Let us all do useful things now, and at every moment possible".

Her text books and guidelines on literary criticism are among the most used and most referred-to sources on the subject, and are still in active use at many universities and colleges in Thailand.

One of her collections of essays on "literature and literary criticism", together with an article on the same subject by a colleague at Silpakorn University, Dr. Chetana Nagavajara, published in honour of the late Prince Wan Waithayakorn was on the national list of the 100 books that all Thais must read, as proposed by the Thailand Research and Development Fund.

M.L. Boonlua also wrote many academic papers in English which she presented at regional and international seminars and conferences, especially on Language Teaching, the Role of Literature in Society, Languages for international understanding and cultural dialogues. One of her articles: "Acculturation and Reading" was published in the RELC journal, Volume 1(1):82, Sage Publications, inc 1970, and can be searched on the internet.

Fictions: with social, cultural and gender dilemmas

Her fictions comprise novels, novellas, novelettes which sometimes form a trilogy, and also tales and stories. Most of her novellas and novels were serialized in some popular women/ family's magazines, notably *Streearn* under the charismatic editorship of Khun Nilwan Pinthong, and thus were read by thousands of readers, young and old, men and women, both in Bangkok and other cities, before they were published in book forms.

Her protagonists, particularly the female principals, are mostly educated and always reflective, often pondering and discussing with other characters including their male counterparts the role of men and women in the contemporary Thai society. She also very often presents in her stories various or conflicting situations where the social and cultural backgrounds and the role of women interplay with the plots, and the female characters often come into conflict with the role that they act as expected of them by society, vis-a-vis the role or roles in their own expectation and aspiration.

M.L. Boonlua's female characters have been the subject of many studies, researches and analyses by literature students, teachers of literature, and critics. (see for example Vipha Kongkanant, *Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University*, 17th issue, June B.E 2537-May B.E 2538; and Nitaya Masawisut's unpublished analyses of the female characters in 4 novels: *Saneh Plai Jwak*, *Thutiyawiset*, *Suranaree* and *Dr. Look Thung*, presented at the panel discussion on the life and work of M.L. Boonlua, at Silpakorn University, Faculty of Arts, recorded and published in *Streearn*, (43rd issue, 35th year) 23 January B.E.2526 (1983)...

M.L. Boonlua herself also reviewed and analyzed some of the female characters presented by other novelists that are in conflict with the norm of the "good women" in the society as presented by some other writers, for example in Dokmaisod's such as in "Sam Chai" and Sri Burapa's in "Kang Lang Pap".

One of her most ambitious and carefully crafted novels, "Thutiyawiset " (778 pages, 1968) reveals the complex web of social, cultural and political settings of the Thai society, especially after the 1932 coup d'etat that brought down absolute monarchy and introduced the system of constitutional monarchy. Here, the character of the female protagonist is observed by another female main character and discussed through some very clever dialogues. It is the story of a Thai girl from a simple rural background; her mother is uneducated but well-to-do and her father musically talented. She chooses to obey her mother and decides not to pursue her university education as advised by her kind patroness who sees her great potentials and her

quiet leadership. She accepts the proposal to marry a handsome military officer whom she only meets twice and moves to Bangkok with him after the wedding. Feeling inadequate in many situations, she manages to shine brightly in the high society created by the new kind of the militarily dominated political arena in which her husband has risen meteorically. The lady subsequently receives the highest royal decoration bestowed to a woman in Thailand, the "Thutiyawiset", that elevates her to the title of "Than Pooying" .

This novel has been translated into English by Marcel Barang and will be printed as an e-book on his website. (<http://marcelbarang.wordpress.com>) Two Thai translators have also been given permission to translate this same novel into English and will have it published in a book-form soon.

Her first novella published in Streetsarn in 1906 has been a subject of many studies and discussions.

Herbert P. Phillips, a researcher under the Thailand National Research Council and Thammasat University, who published his research anthology: " Modern Thai Literature With An Ethnographic interpretation"(1987, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu), included M.L. Boonlua in his analysis of literary figures and their roles in his first chapter("The Ethnographic Context of Thai Literature"). He stated in the next chapter,(*"Fashioning a Literary Sample"*) that he had chosen to include M.L. Boonlua and some other writers such as M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, Chit Phoumisak, and Sulak Sivaraksa, in his anthology because of their historical significance.

Then he translated "Sneh Plai Jwak" (The Enchanting Cooking Spoon) for the inclusion in the anthology, adding an introduction in which he referred to his essay on this particular novella as being "both culturally and psychologically the richest in the volume".

To his mind, this novella not only..."documents the changing nature of the role of Thai women and also the conflict between the old and new cultural standards",.. it also addresses... "several other equally significant themes of upper-classes life..." such as miscommunication between spouses; the consequences of foreign education; the nature of familial responsibilities, the "noblesse oblige" assumptions of the noble class and the uncertainties about such assumptions in a society that has become increasingly egalitarian; the cycle of boredom and excitement that pervades every part of the Thai emotional life and that influences major decisions; the constant attention to social ritual; the cultivation of verbal confusion and the high tolerance for things that may make little verbal sense; and the perennial threat of the "other woman"...

Professor Philips felt that the novella, set around 1950-1960, was..." most complex and revealing", and yet .."very subtle when it comes to the level of relationship between the two principle characters... And although some of the details of the stories are dated, the basic issues that the story addresses are still critical to the experience of many of the Thai elites"

This novella, "Sneh Pla Jwak" has been included in the reading lists for students of many professors teaching Thai and Southeast Asian Studies at the London University and some other universities in Europe and the US.

Another researcher, Thelma B. Kintamar, a teaching and research exchange fellow of SEAP (southeast Asian Study Program), whose project on "Self and Society in Southeast Asian Fiction" was published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, in 1988, discussed the works of various authors in the region including M.L. Boonlua's novel, "Dr. Look Thung", 1973 in her chapter on "Social Class and the individual". She compared Dr. Look Thung with Si Burapha's novel, "Luk Phuchai", one of the earliest novels in Thailand, which also depicted class conflict but rather in black and white.

Kintamar commented on the ... "more believable picture of upward mobility" in the case of the male protagonist, Dr. Krit in Boonlua's novel (Dr. Krit received his education with the help of a monk and the scholarship from the government). Yet through the observation of his wife, "the narrator and center of consciousness", the researcher felt "the insecurity of and the pressures on this upwardly mobile young man--- in his work, as well as in his social and emotional life". The researcher also appreciated the novel's coverage of other social problems facing modern Thailand: the brain drain, westernization in the form of copying from the west, the rural- urban gap, the need to revitalize religious values. The novel is, in the words of this researcher, "an intelligent and honest portrayal of the complex problems attendant to social mobility"

- **Who's Who in Women's Writing**

As a woman writer, M.L. Boonlua Debyasuvan is on the list of Writers in Who's Who in Contemporary Women's Writing, edited by Jane Eldridge Miller, Routledge, 2001, at Wikipedia.org, as well as on the Celebration of Women Writers, Writers from Thailand, edited by Mary Mark Ockerbloom at http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/_generate/THAILAND.html

- **Translator**

M.L. Boonlua also translated a number of stories and short stories from English into Thai, and many pieces of Thai literary writing into English. Noted among her early translation works was her rendition of Sir Walter Scott's "The Talisman" into her Thai version, entitled "SilaTarrn" : "Six English prize-winning short stories"; and "American Short Stories". She also promoted the translation of Thai literature and writing into English and had contributed significantly at many translators' seminars organized by the Ministry of Education and by Thai National Commission for UNESCO.

A Unique Person

"M.L. Boonlua was a unique person who always gave her best and deeply thought-out views when attending a meeting, and if it was an international meeting, I could trust her completely both in content and in her language ability" .

The above statement is taken from an article by M.L. Pin Malakul, the then Minister of Education, as printed in a book, "Life of a Teacher" by Tongtaw Kluaymai Na Ayuthaya and reprinted in "Boon Bampen")

The Life and work of M.L. Boonlua Debyasuvarn has also been a subject of many studies in Thailand as well as an in- depth research submitted by Susan Fulop Kepner for her Ph.D dissertation at University of California, Berkeley, in 1999. The research was entitled " A Civilized Woman: a cultural biography of M.L. Boonlua Thepyasuwan", and was submitted to the Department of Asian Studies, in the field of Women's Studies Anthropology Sociology, Call No: 308t. 1998.7 47. The dissertation will be published in Thailand soon.

- **Honours Received**

M.L. Boonlua was granted the following Royal Thai Decorations and Awards:

- Commander (Third Class) of the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant. (Lieutenant Colonel rank)
- Commander (Third Class) of the Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand. (Major rank)
- Companion (Third Class) of the Most Illustrious Order of Chula Chom Klao.

She was granted an honorary doctorate degree in Arts and Education from Thammasat University, Chulalongkorn University and Silpakorn University. She was also awarded the full professorship in recognition of her work and dedication to teaching and writing.

6. Please state whether the commemoration is related to the work as a whole or to a particular work or action:

The celebration will focus on M.L. Boonlua's life and works in the fields of:

- **Education:** the role of women in teaching; curriculum development and textbook writing; secondary and teacher educational development; language education.
- **Culture:** preservation and promotion of cultural expressions through the languages, literature and criticism; music, dance and drama; the impact of her fiction and non fiction works upon Thai and Southeast Asian Studies.

- **Communication:** promotion of teaching of languages and translation for better communication and for better understanding of different peoples and cultures.
- **Intercultural dialogue:** the promotion of international understanding and peace, through her promotion of the learning of foreign languages and literature, translation, and communication.
- **Gender and women issues:** through life and work, her writings and lectures and literary critiques.

7. Describe how this work/ action has a genuine impact at the regional and/or universal level

- M.L.Boonlua's life and work are linked with Thailand's cooperation with UNESCO and the centennial celebration will enhance the visibility of UNESCO in many ways
- She was unique in the sense that she lived through the time of great turbulence and change and also of rapid development, both in Thailand and in Southeast Asia, and in the world. She herself was not only a part or an observer of the changes that happened, but she worked (with her many colleagues, particularly with M.L. Pin Malakul, and countless other national and international colleagues many of whom she collaborated with in UNESCO's projects and activities at the time.
- Since the early years when Thailand joined UNESCO and was elected to UNESCO's Executive Board for the first time, she was involved either directly or indirectly, and worked towards more positive changes and development, and international cooperation and peace.
- Her life and works reflected her ability to recognize the potentials of national, regional and international cooperation in education and culture. Her works affirm her beliefs in the important role that education, sciences, culture and communication could play to eliminate some of the social problems, and help the people especially the women to better cope with the challenges of the future. She was committed to national, regional and international collaborations with her colleagues to seek the best solutions they could.
- She was, and will continue to be, through her writings and her Fund, a positive educational and cultural force amidst those changes and developments.
- The centennial events will promote further educational, cultural and intercultural impacts on the present and the younger generations.
- She left behind a good number of books, textbooks, and novels which reflect her rich and unique experiences as well as her observation and analysis of events and issues of her time which are in fact basic and universal issues in many parts of the world. Further study by both Thais and foreigners and translation of her books for wider readership will lead to deeper understanding and acceptance of the diversity of cultures at all levels, and may shed a clearer light on future social and cultural phenomena.

- Some of her books which often discussed women's issues and gender issues in the Southeast Asian contexts will continue to be read by teachers and students of languages and literature, both in the region and in other parts of the world, who are interested in Thai and Southeast Asian Studies, and status of women and gender equality in Thailand.
- Her long-lasting legacy is the will that a Fund, though not a very huge one, be established and should be used for the benefit of the promotion of education in languages, literature, literary criticism, music and performing arts.
- Those who study Thai and Southeast Asian Studies will not fail to recognize that her life and work have a genuine impact at the regional and universal levels, and that studying her life and her written works will lead to a better understanding of the Thai and Southeast Asian Cultures, the intricate layers of the working and administrative methods or the "work cultures" that promote or hinder development during her time.
- Those who are interested in cultural anthropology will find genuine universal values in her lifetime experience during the unique political, social and cultural chapters in the history of Thai and Southeast Asian.
- Her books, serious, sincere and down-to earth, remain to be discovered and appreciated more and more by future readers interested in Thai and regional values, the values that were proclaimed by UNESCO's when it was founded, but are fast forgotten in the world and in Thailand in the sweeping tides of rapid modernization, changes and globalization.
- The values were the values that this woman lived for and cherished throughout her life, and struggled to pass on the next generation.

5. **websites:** in addition to the websites referred above, the following institution will have websites which can be linked to the life and works of M.L. Boonlua: Chulalongkorn University, Silpakorn University, Ministry of Education, National Commission for UNESCO, Ministry of Culture, The ML. Boonlua Fund

B. Anniversary to be celebrated: Centenary

Dates chosen for the celebration: January 2012 (see calendar of events in annex b)

C. Information concerning the activities organized on this occasion by country/countries concerned.

In Thailand : educational and cultural activities...exhibition of photographs, seminar, discussions, lectures, essay competition, scholarships and awards granting, music and dance, food festival, book displays and sales, radio talks, e-articles and chats on National Commission for UNESCO's website.

Institutions responsible: The M.L. Boonlua Fund Administration Committee, Sasin Chulaongkorn University, Faculty of Arts of Silpakorn University, Burapha University, Bangsaen, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, related publishers, Thai Writers' Association, UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok, SEAMEO-SPAFA Digest, Bangkok, Siam Society Journal.

Funding: to be provided by the institutions responsible for the activities

In other countries: At Berkely UC, USA: Lectures and discussions and possibly exhibition of photographs. At RELC, Singapore: Display of Books and exhibition of photographs, special lectures by invited speakers.

D. Link with UNESCO

1. Please indicate the field of competence of UNESCO to which the celebration is related

Education - - Education for gender equality, expansion of quality secondary education, higher education and teachers' education. Many of these projects were collaborations between Thailand and UNESCO and other aid agencies; ensuring deliveries of all aspects of education especially language learning and communication, arts and cultural education to the classroom levels through educational radio and television.

Culture and communication - - preservation of national language , promotion of language development and teaching of other languages in school, promotion of the teaching of literature using music and drama, promotion of intercultural dialogue, creativity and intercultural understanding among teachers and students, promotion of the understanding of cultural differences and diversity.

Culture and Peace and Gender Equality -- In all of M.L. Boonlua's writing her concerns are always **peace** and **gender equality**. In her novels or in her literary criticism, she never imposed these two issues contentiously on the readers so they never appeared as divisive issues, though they always had a strong and forceful presence in all her works. In her novels and short stories, she discussed and analyzed them again and again through the character's experiences and through the dialogues, or in the light of conflicting situations of the plot. The readers are left to form their own judgments of the characters and the situations in accordance with the readers' own experience.

Being a Buddhist, her concept of social justice and a culture of peace is leaning towards understanding the causes and the consequences, and stressing the "peace of mind" at the end.

2. How do you wish UNESCO to participate?

Though her life and work were linked with UNESCO's programs in many areas, and though she attended many UNESCO's meetings and activities during her life time, and though UNESCO's values will be further enhanced through this Centennial celebration, the organizers of this project will **not** ask UNESCO to participate in the event with any financial implication, only to be associated with this centenary through the Thai and regional activities.

3. Please state in what ways this commemoration is linked to and promotes UNESCO's objectives and missions

- In many educational and cultural projects, M.L.Boonlua worked with M.L Pin Malakul who was a member of the UNESCO's Executive Board. During that time, Thailand and other countries were working towards the reduction of their countries' mass illiteracy and to expand and develop their educational system and delivery. UNESCO gave and received the greatest cooperation from Thailand and from Southeast Asia and Asia. Many projects that she undertook were the collaborative projects between UNESCO and Thailand, and also regional and international projects. Her books also promote the universal values that UNESCO promotes.
- The Commemoration of her centenary will bring to a new light some of the projects that Thailand cooperated with UNESCO long time ago which were perhaps forgotten by the Ministry of Education, the university's teachers and students, as well as the general public in Thailand.
- Her novels will further promote the values that UNESCO has been founded to enshrine: Peace, mutual respect and equality.

Annex A : Information about the M.L. Boonlua Debyasuvarn Fund (MBF) and the list of the committee members

Annex B : National Calendar of Activities for the Celebration of the Centenary of Birth of M.L. Boonlua Debyasuvarn

Annex C : Some photographs of M.L. Boonlua Debyasuvarn and her works