



In the Shadow of Rama

Murals of the Ramayana in Mainland Southeast Asia

Vittorio Roveda

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Composed over two thousand years ago, the Ramayana was transmitted to Southeast Asia in the first centuries CE. Over the years, it was adapted to suit local customs and traditions. The story of Rama's exile with his wife Sita, her abduction by the evil ogre king Ravanna, her rescue and Rama's triumphant return to Ayodhya, was one which captured the imagination of the kings of Siam, Cambodia and the islands of the Indonesian archipelago. A story of the triumph of good over evil was then visualized in stone carvings, drama, shadow puppets and mural paintings. Among the latter, Thailand and Cambodia have the finest examples. In ***In the Shadow of Rama***, long-standing expert in the Ramayana, Dr. Vittorio Roveda, examines the most beautiful examples still remaining to us. In Siam, we tour the famous murals of the Grand Palace in Bangkok and the intricacies of the shadow puppets, Nang Yai. In Cambodia, Roveda presents a special study of the delicate and expressive murals of Wat Bo, as well as commenting on the murals of the Silver Pagoda, Phnom Penh. He also explains how in Siam the Ramayana became the Ramakien and in Cambodia the Reamker. This magnificent volume is the culmination of Vittorio Roveda's 20 years of research and a visual feast for all those fascinated by the art of Southeast Asia.