

THE CIAP BULLETIN

INTERPRETASIA

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EDITORIAL

Thailand's conference industry is becoming ever more proficient. As a key partner of the conference industry,

CIAP participated in the ASEAN MICE Exhibition organized by the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau and the Thailand Incentive and Conventions Association in March 2007 and proffered advice on professional interpreting in a more visible conference and exhibitions sector.

Driven by the objective to better serve the conference industry, AIC's Private Market Sector held its bi-annual meeting in Bangkok in January 2007. This was combined with an Inter-Regional meeting, where interpreters from the Asia-Pacific region and Turkey came together to discuss the challenges faced in the two regions. CIAP associate Doreen Dong gives her impressions of being on the other side of the microphone, being interpreted instead of interpreting.

The lead article tracing the history of interpretation in Thailand by Dr Duangtip Surintatip highlights the value of competent interpretation as a powerful communication medium in today's global context.

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Interpretation in Thailand – past and present

by Dr Duangtip Surintatip

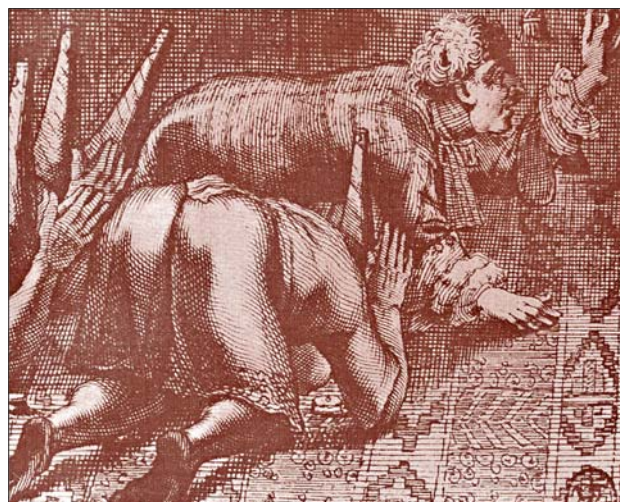
A brief history

During King Narai's reign (1656-1688) a multi-lingual interpreter, Constantine Phaulkon, rose to the height of power as the king's chief adviser in his relations with foreigners. He was given the title of *Chao Phraya Wichayen*, meaning cool and clear judgement. The Greek seaman, who was working aboard English ships, knew English, Portuguese, Malay and Thai (which he mastered in two years), in addition to his mother tongue, a bastardized form of Italian spoken in the Greek islands ruled by Venice. In 1685, by obtaining the highly coveted promise of an alliance between Thailand and France, Phaulkon was able to maintain his powerful yet delicate status until just before the king's death in 1688, when he was lured by the opposite faction and executed for high treason. His machinations led to the expulsion of all trading companies and a 150-year embargo



on all foreign trade relations except with the Dutch.

Phaulkon proved to be a hard act to follow – not that he was exactly an ideal model. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, when the capital was



Interpreter Phaulkon prostrating in front of King Narai

moved from Ayudhya to Bangkok, the Chakri rulers began to open the country's doors to outside merchants. Interpreting resumed its major role in trade and diplomatic negotiations. The usual practice at that time was to use Portuguese and Chinese in a double relay system. The interpreters would work from Thai into Chinese and from Chinese into Portuguese, which would then be conveyed into another European language – until the reign of King Mongkut or Rama IV (1851-1868) of *The King and I* fame.

King Mongkut was the first Thai monarch to master Latin and English. He also employed an English teacher, Anna Leonowens, to teach the royal children, including his successor, King Chulalongkorn or Rama V (1868-1910). English grew in popularity. King Chulalongkorn's letters of his trips to Europe mention a Thai interpreter by the name of Mom Kratai Rachoathai, but unlike Phaulkon, Mom Kratai never became the king's chief adviser. Although King Chulalongkorn and his son, King Vajiravudh or Rama VI (1910-1925), successfully warded off colonialism by deft diplomacy and by employing foreign experts, none of the latter appeared to be interpreters.

Thailand joined the United Nations in 1946, after which it began to play a significant role in regional politics as a western ally. In 1954, Thailand became a founding member of the Bangkok-based Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation, which became the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. Today, Bangkok hosts a number of inter-

"Simultaneous interpreting is a great equalizer as the conference is no longer dominated by a few fluent English-speakers"

national organizations, including the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the South-east Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), and the regional offices of UNESCO, FAO, ILO and UNICEF.

The presence of UNESCAP introduced conference interpretation to Thailand. In the 1960s, multilingual interpreters worked for UN conferences in the official UN languages. There was no need for Thai-English/English-Thai conference interpreters because Thais attending international meetings were supposed to be fluent English-speakers. The few Thais who dabbled in consecutive or escort interpreting in those days were university lecturers or Foreign Ministry officials. Tourist guides and escorts, who began to enter the scene in the 1970s, did nothing to enhance the image of interpreters in Thailand.

The present

By the late 1970s and 1980s, more people in Thailand began to realize that simultaneous interpreting provides direct interaction and full participation in an international conference. Normally reserved by nature, Thais will not intervene at a conference unless they feel strongly about an issue or are actively encouraged, particularly if their English is poor. Senior and knowledgeable participants will lose face immediately if their English is heard in public.

Simultaneous interpreting is a great equalizer as the conference is no longer dominated by a few fluent English-speakers whose knowledge and judgment are not necessarily matched by language

fluency. Even though fluent speakers still insist on speaking English, they sometimes lose face when panellists fail to catch their questions. Better still, Thai participants no longer need to prepare their papers in English. Thanks to simultaneous interpretation, many foreign participants are pleasantly surprised to find that their Thai colleagues are not as reserved (or stupid!) as they seem to be in an English-speaking conference.

Interpretation from Thai into English and English into Thai is generally required in Thailand for international agencies, local associations, private companies, embassies, as well as some international multilingual conferences.

And today, there are several professional Thai interpreters. The first Thai members of AIIC were admitted in 2003, the same year the Thai Association of Conference Interpreters (TACI) was founded to offer users a way to contact experienced practitioners directly. TACI has been co-opted to provide lecturers for a two-year MA in Conference Interpreting at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand's most prestigious institute of higher education.

It's been a long journey from Phaulkon to the professionalization of interpreting, a never-ending journey, perhaps, as we navigate an ever-changing world. ■



Dr Duangtip at the January 2007 AIIC Inter-Regional meeting in Bangkok

Duangtip Surintatip, Ph.D, is the first – and current – president of TACI. After completing her language studies in the UK and France, she followed a career in international relations with the Thai government, while pursuing her additional interests in interpreting, teaching and the media.

CIAP at the ASEAN MICE Exhibition Bangkok, March 2007

Kate Sarasin, CIAP Coordinator,
at the CIAP stand ▼



From 8 to 11 March 2007, CIAP had a stand at the ASEAN MICE Exhibition organized by the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and the Thailand Incentive and Conventions Association (TICA). CIAP is a member of both TCEB and TICA. The CIAP stand was shared with the Thailand Association of Conference Interpreters (TACI) and was set up by Kate Sarasin, CIAP Coordinator in Bangkok, and Jean-Pierre Allain, CIAP associate based in Bangkok.

It was a good opportunity to liaise with other actors in the industry and to sensitize people to the intricacies and difficulties of conference interpretation. Most of the visitors to the CIAP stand knew little or nothing about conference interpretation and some were interested in learning about translation or interpretation as a profession.

CIAP linked up with partners who supply interpretation equipment and booths, like Braehler ICS represented by Convention Organisers Co. Ltd., and Bosch, represented by Numthip Associates Co. Ltd., to give practical demonstrations of simultaneous interpretation using their equipment.

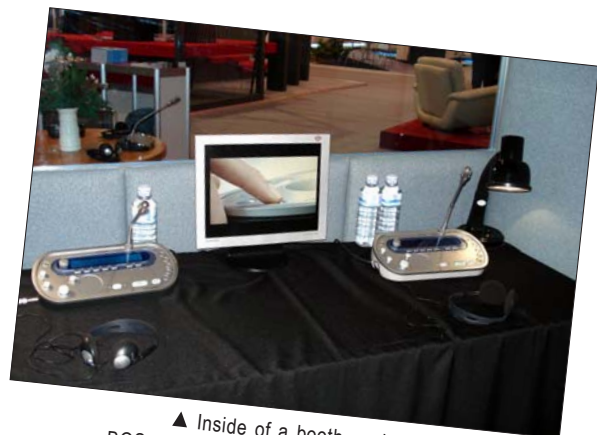
▼ Salma Tejpar-Dang admiring a human robot



▲ A new interpretation booth exhibited ▲



▲ Santi Isrowutakul and Manuel Pastor at the CIAP stand. In the background the banners of CIAP, TACI and AIIC



▲ Inside of a booth equipped with the latest BOSCH DCN interpreters' consoles and flat-screen monitor, shown at the exhibition

From Interpreter to Delegate

by Doreen Dong

As an interpreter, I have attended many international conferences, ensuring communication from a comfortable distance in the booth, but seldom participating in the discussion. I was therefore very excited to attend my first AIC meeting last January in Thailand as a delegate. Despite the disturbing news of the New Year bomb attacks in Bangkok I went – and I have no regrets.

Andrew, my husband and AIC colleague, and I arrived at our hotel at midnight. The need for effective communication became clear when our driver spent 90 minutes driving in circles looking for the Pathumwan Princess hotel, all the while receiving directions over his mobile phone, to which he kept emphatically responding *kha-phom* [I understand]!

The next morning, we were the first to arrive at the conference room and receive the informative folder that had been prepared by CIAP's efficient coordinator, Kate Sarasin. I felt like a true delegate! Familiar faces entered as I got to know new ones. "Hi! I'm Jenny, based in Malaysia!" Jenny..., the name rang a bell. "Oh, it's you who's been writing emails to me about a conference! I'm Doreen from Shanghai!" "Ah, you're Doreen!" Finally, a face to an email contact! Despite modern technology, nothing beats a smile, a handshake or a hug!

At the morning session of the AIC Asia-Pacific region, I learned about the nitty-gritty of running a professional association. After a refreshing Thai lunch, I attended

the afternoon's Inter-Regional and Private Market Sector meeting, where we met colleagues from Europe, Turkey and Canada. The discussion was very relevant for interpreters in China as we work mostly with private clients.

I was impressed by the number of important speakers lined up for the formal opening that afternoon: the Thai Minister

in a wonderful reception hosted by TCEB at the hotel.

On the second day, we heard presentations from Turkey and Asia-Pacific. I have interpreted many powerpoint presentations at conferences, but never given one myself! However, after attending the Turkish colleagues' powerpoint presentations that morning, I converted my own talk to powerpoint, giving myself a crash course during the lunch break! My presentation on the China market and Andrew's presentation on interpreter training went well, and colleagues even asked for copies afterwards. I had received so much support from AIC colleagues both in Shanghai and Beijing that I would have felt very bad if I had not done a good job.

It felt good to listen to like-minded people. When the EU Commission's staff interpreter said that organizers

sometimes considered us a nuisance and would like to make us invisible, we all laughed. Yeah, we've seen that in China too! The lively discussion on common challenges and issues continued well into our exotic, scrumptious dinner by the riverside.

The highlight of the last day was the final gathering of Asia-Pacific colleagues brainstorming in a circle. Many interesting ideas were floated as we discussed how we could work together to advance our profession,

I left Bangkok more committed than ever. ■

CIAP associate Doreen Dong is a consultant interpreter based in Shanghai, China.



Doreen Dong and Andrew Dawrant at the AIC Inter-Regional Meeting

of Tourism and Sports; representatives from the Thai Convention and Exhibition Bureau, the Thailand Incentive and Conventions Association, the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) sector, the incentive travel and even professional conference organisers' sectors. Although I don't want my home city, Shanghai, to lose bids to the competition, I realised why Thailand's MICE industry is thriving.

After listening to the tough-talking founder and CEO of the largest PCO in Thailand, my immediate reaction was: come to China! The small, unprofessional PCOs in China are more like enemies than friends to interpreters! The first day culminated



Interpreters at the World Lotteries Association Congress, Singapore, Nov. 2006

SOME INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP RECENTLY

2007

Singapore	Jun	World Economic Forum on East Asia 2007
Istanbul	May	Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceutical Conference
Macau	Apr	Public Prosecutors Seminar
Singapore	Apr	Eisai Project Investigators' Meeting
Bangkok	Feb	ISO Technical Committee (TC 228) Tourism & Related Services Meeting
Bangkok	Jan	Asian-African Workshop on Avian Influenza Pandemic

2006

Gold Coast, Aust.	Dec	UNI Post Executive Committee Meeting
Istanbul	Nov	The World Economic Forum
Singapore	Nov	World Lotteries Association Annual Convention, 2006
Bangkok	Nov	Intl Symposium on Land & River Boundaries Demarcation
Pattaya	Oct	67th SKAL International Annual Congress
Beijing	Oct	13th Annual Conference of the International Association of Insurance Supervisors

Annie Trottier, AIIC interpreter, at work during the ISO Tourism Meeting, Bangkok, Feb. 2007 ▼



Interpreters at the 13th IAIS Conference, Beijing, Oct. 2006 ▲

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Visit our website! www.ciap.net

AIR MAIL ✈
PRINTED MATTER



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WHAT IS AIIC?

Founded in 1953, **AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence - International Association of Conference Interpreters)** is the only worldwide association of professional conference interpreters. AIIC has over 2,600 members in 89 countries and is recognised by the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO, the European Union and many business organisations as the only representative of professional interpreters and the authoritative voice on matters of conference interpretation.

AIIC sets professional standards and working conditions accepted worldwide. Together with the International Organisation for Standardisation, AIIC's Technical and Health Committee has drawn up standards ISO 2603 for built-in booths and equipment for simultaneous interpretation and ISO 4043 for mobile booths for use in conference rooms without built-in facilities.

ASSOCIATION
INTERNATIONALE DES
INTERPRETES DE CONFERENCE

aiic

INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS

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WHAT IS CIAP?

Conference Interpreters Asia Pacific (CIAP) is a network of consultant interpreters, all members of AIIC, who live and work in the Asia-Pacific region. Established in 1990, CIAP provides teams of conference interpreters for simultaneous and consecutive interpretation at meetings of all sizes.

Its members advise conference organisers on language requirements, choice of conference venues, technical requirements and even seating arrangements, and recruit teams of interpreters suited to the needs of a conference. CIAP also provides written translations of conference documents.

CIAP associates can provide simultaneous interpretation teams for English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and other languages.



CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS ASIA PACIFIC

BANGKOK • BEIJING • DELHI • HONGKONG • KATHMANDU • SHANGHAI • SINGAPORE • SYDNEY • TAIPEI • TOKYO

*There are CIAP Associates in several cities in Asia-Pacific.
For the consultant interpreter nearest to you, please see the
list of names and contact numbers provided in this issue.
Web: www.ciap.net*