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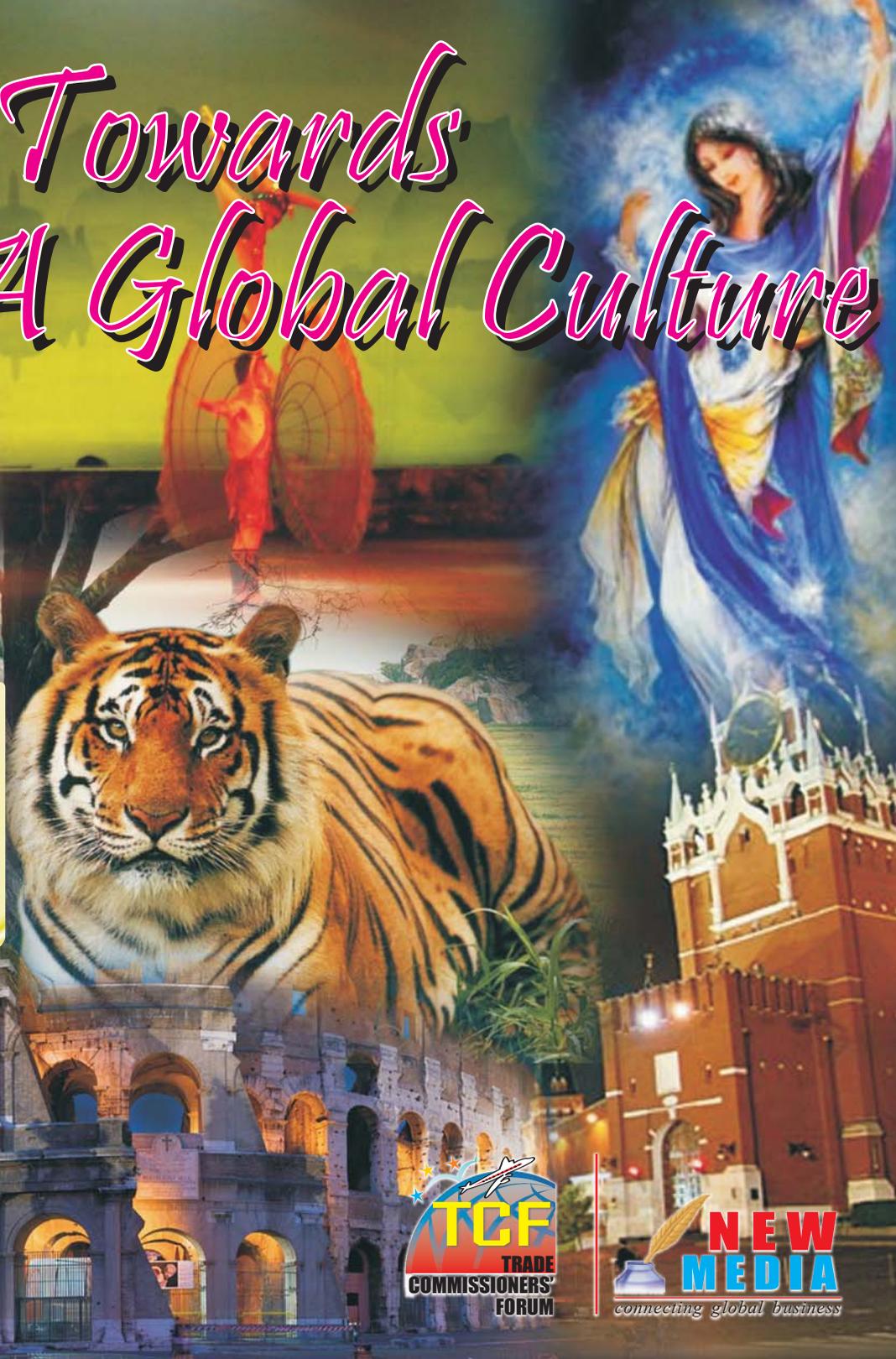
Towards A Global Culture



Special Section



**Roaring Bengal,
Raring To GO**



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WEST BENGAL

Roaring Bengal,
Raring To Go



Founder Chairman
Late Shri R.K. Prasad

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Dear Reader,

Greetings. The current issue of Open Trade deals with the theme we all value most in our lives, namely culture. But here we are talking about the art and culture of different nations, all of them members of the Trade Commissioners' Forum, supporters of this quarterly magazine. Culture gives a distinct identity to societies and nations as much as it does to people that belong to them. We have written about the ancient culture of Iran, where culture is the country's glory. The present day Israel's population, comprising migrants from different parts of Europe and the Middle East, constitutes a confluence of cultures. The United States, relatively a new nation populated by migrants from Europe and Latin America, offers as the write-up on it says, a melting pot of sizzling cultures. So is Singapore, the model city state, where different communities live cheek by jowl but in perfect peace and harmony. Each nation takes pride in its culture, which encompasses every aspect of its existence-art and architecture, literature, music, cuisine, costumes and lifestyle. In fact, you could see the picture of the suave and sophisticated Joseph Koch, TCF's former President, sporting a native costume in a write-up on Switzerland. Yes, Mr. Koch is proud of his culture. Culture is deeply imbedded in a nation's psyche. Even religion cannot erase it. In Indonesia, puppet shows depicting stories from the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, which the travelling traders from ancient India carried with them to the Far East and beyond. That is the living culture. In Australia, the aborigines and their art and culture could not be subdued by the surging population of European emigrants. During Europe's Golden Age, art and architecture thrived and this fact is exemplified in various visual displays in Italy, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Romania, Poland and more importantly Russia. The origins of corporate houses worldwide acquiring art works of famous masters can be traced to Belgium. In this issue, we also highlight the aspect of countries coming together in sharing commerce for global good. Now, we are talking about globalization of commerce and trade. Globalization has definitely bought nations closer. And the process of globalization is being expedited by a revolution in communication. The Internet has shrunk the world to the size of a small globe on your laptop. Cultures are merging with each other without losing their individual zing and flavour. Further, booming travel and tourism business has helped nations and their peoples to get closer and share their cultures and values. This process has already kindled hopes for the evolution of a global culture, which in a larger context, reflects every culture. As we have said in the cover story of the current issue, the world is slowly but surely whirling towards that goal. The issue marks the end of an exciting year and we take opportunity to wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.

Wish you happy reading



Satya Swaroop

Managing Editor

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Friends,



Peter Forby

Greetings. We are presenting you the year-end issue of Open Trade, which highlights the endearing theme of Culture. Since its launch in June 2006, each issue of Open Trade has strived to be unique. The inaugural issue (July-Sept '06) dealt with the issues that we all face in facilitating bilateral trade between our respective countries and India. Then came the ever-binding theme of tourism and how it has enriched our lives. The subsequent issues dealt with the global economy and its upswing that is beneficial to all nations. The year 2007 has been hectic and as it closes with this issue, I would like to thank all the members of the Trade Commissioners' Forum for their valuable contributions to the success of Open Trade. I would also take this opportunity to wish the TCF members as well as the readers of Open Trade a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Peter Forby
President, TCF



Moving Towards A Global Culture



Culture has many connotations. Culture is refinement. Culture is value addition to life. Culture is the sum total of a people's behavioural patterns, evolved over time. Since time immemorial. It is the gist of a civilization that is on display in many a manifestation of traditions, institutions, arts, music, festivities, beliefs and lifestyles. Culture is all pervading, all encompassing. It is a composite product of a community's work and thought. In different contexts culture means differently as in the case of a class, of a period, of a community, of a population, or of a whole nation. Most nations are proud of their culture as individuals of their nations. In a focussed way culture is seen as intellectual and artistic activity and the works produced by it, which also reflect a high degree of taste and

refinement formed by aesthetic training. All these definitions are, at a level, academic. Let us look at, in a pragmatic way, a different culture, namely business culture, which is evolving worldwide. We are now living in an age of globalization of industry and commerce. Globalization has made nations inter-dependent. It has brought nations closer to each other than ever before. Already the term corporate culture has come into vogue as mentioned above as a widely-used phrase. It reflects the thinking, the strategy, the power and might of a whole business class. The term corporate culture is now popularly used by newspapers and magazines. Globalization is being aided by a revolution in communications, mainly the Internet and net-based services, including e-commerce. Aviation technology has shrunk the world further and created a boom in the global tourism industry, which is actively helping nations and peoples share their cultures with each other. All this process might help in the evolution of a composite global culture, which in a larger context would reflect every culture. The World is slowly but surely, whirling towards that goal. ■

IFFTAC
2008

International Festival of Films on Tribal Art & Culture

MP Tribal Film Festival Goes Global

'Vanya' an undertaking of Tribal Welfare Department, Madhya Pradesh, is organizing an "International Festival of Films on Tribal Art & Culture (IFFTAC)-2008" jointly with Indian Infotainment Media Corporation (IIMC) in Indore from 1 to 3 February 2008.

The festival, which will be held at the sprawling Gandhi Hall, aims at providing a common platform for the film makers of the world, who are involved in making films on tribal art & culture. While promoting the making of such films the festival intends to recognize authentic, artistic and informative films on this subject, as well as draw the attention of policy makers towards promoting tribal art & culture and their ways of living, which actually reflects our special national culture and tradition.

IFFTAC-2008 is an international event, which will be the first ever in its own style. Tribal art film makers from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe are expected to participate in this festival.

While showing the best films based on tribal art and culture during IFFTAC, an exhibition-cum sale stalls of tribal painting, sculptures etc. will also be organized at the venue. From the commercial point of view this will provide a big opportunity for tribal arts, according to organizers.

Vanya has been active in promoting tribal art & culture, tradition, literature, myths, beliefs and their ways of living. Vanya has been effective in socializing the tribal traditions and culture, existent in remote forest areas, with the present day society through the use of modern printing and electronic mediums. Vanya also organizes workshops and exhibitions on tribal

paintings and sculptures at the highest level to acquaint the tribal artists with the world of Art and provide a platform to exhibit their skills. Efforts of Vanya have resulted in various tribal artists of Madhya Pradesh attaining various feats in the country.

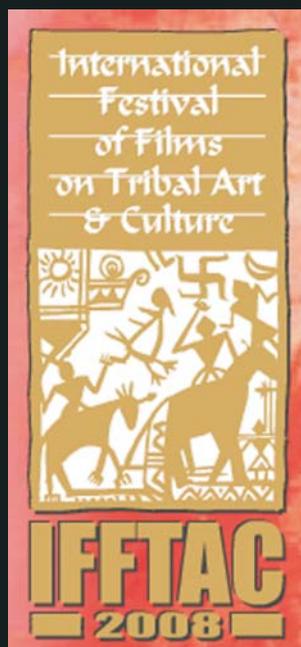
Vanya is active in promoting the market value of tribal products. We give our support to all those government departments, which are involved in promoting tribal products marketing.

Vanya is also supporting various government agencies involved in promoting goods produced by tribals, its sale in weekly markets or meals in nearby towns. It provides all possible cooperation to agencies, which are associated in organizing tribal products based fairs and festivals at the state and national levels.

Likewise, the organization helps agencies, which are working for improvement in tribal goods production technology and institutionalizing skills for tribal arts and crafts to preserve their purity and at the same time helping in popularizing them.

Through IFFTAC, Vanya will be providing a platform for grand exposure of tribal art and culture globally. Therefore after this first festival we would like to continue it as an annual affair.

Madhya Pradesh is dominated by the Tribal population. The differences in the tribal community, spread over in various parts of the state, is clearly seen not only on the basis of their heredity, lifestyle and cultural traditions, but also from their social, economic structure, religious beliefs and their language and speech.



The main tribal groups in Madhya Pradesh are Gond, Bhil, Baiga, Korku, Bhariya, Halba, Kaul, Mariya and Sahariya. Dhar, Jhabua and Mandla districts have more than 50 percent tribal population. In Khargone, Chhindwara, Seoni, Sidhi and Shahdol districts 30 to 50 percent population is of tribes. Maximum population is that of Gond tribes.

Film Festival City : Indore

Indore is located in the heart of the Malwa plateau just south from the Satpura Range and bounded by the districts Khargone (West Nimar) to the south and Dhar to the West. Both are tribal districts, where have major population of Bhil, Bhilala and Korku tribes.

Indore is the economic and commercial hub of the Malwa region and personifies rich culture and traditions of central Madhya Pradesh. It is the largest city in Madhya Pradesh and the administrative headquarters of the

Indore District and Division.

Indore City was named after the Indreshwar temple, which was built in 1741. Built and planned by Rani Ahilyabai Holkar, Indore City has a very colorful past.

Film Festival Venue: Gandhi Hall:

The film festival venue Gandhi hall in Indore, has a marvelous history. The hall was built in 1904 and originally named King Edward's Hall, it was renamed Mahatma Gandhi Hall in 1948. Its architectural style is Indo-Gothic. Made in Seoni stone, its domes and staples are a landmark of Indore today. It has a four-faced clock tower in front, because of which it is locally known as Ghanta Ghar. It is frequently the venue for the various book and painting exhibitions, fairs and festivals held throughout the year. The building also has a library, a children's park and a temple.

For more information logon to www.iffac.org

A Unique Tribal Arts Event



O.P. Rawat, Principal Secretary, Tribal Welfare Department, Madhya Pradesh Government, in an interview to **Veerendra Bhargava** talks about the forthcoming

International Film Festival on Tribal Art & Culture (IFFTAC), being held in Indore from 1 to 3 February 2008, its significance in promoting tribal handicrafts and their contribution to the state's economy. Excerpts.

Please explain the purpose of hosting (IFFTAC).

The festival aims at providing a common platform for the filmmakers of the world, who are involved in making films on tribal art & culture. While promoting the making of such films the festival intends to recognize authentic, artistic and informative films on this subject, as well as draw the attention of policy makers towards promoting tribal art & culture and their





Vanya is active in promoting the market value of tribal products. We give our support to all those government departments, which are involved in promoting tribal products marketing.

Today most of the goods produced by the tribals are sold in weekly markets or melas in nearby towns. Do you have any plans to widen these markets?

We are also supporting various government agencies involved in promoting goods produced by tribals, its sale in weekly markets or melas in nearby towns.

Looking at the diverse range of products coming out of the MP tribal belt – from bamboo cane work to wood and iron craft to zari work – there is a need to hold fairs and festivals to promote them at the state as well as national levels. Have you been conducting them?

We also provide them with all possible cooperation to agencies, which are associated in organizing tribal products based fairs and festivals at the state and national levels.

Tribal artisans seem to be still following the age-old methods in producing their goods. Do you have any plans to introduce some technology to help create better finished products?

We help agencies, which are working for improvement in tribal goods production technology and institutionalizing skills for tribal arts and crafts to preserve their purity and at the same time helping in popularizing them.

Tribal arts and crafts are traditionally passed on from generation to generation. Are there any serious efforts at institutionalizing these skills to preserve their purity and at the same time to popularize them?

By IFFTAC our ideas is to provide a platform for grand exposure of tribal art and culture globally. Therefore after this first festival we would like to continue it as an annual affair.

ways of living, which actually reflects our special culture and tradition.

Will IFFTAC help the promotion of Madhya Pradesh Tribal Arts commercially?

While showing the best films based on Tribal Art and Culture during IFFTAC, an exhibition-cum sale stalls of Tribal Painting, Sculptures etc. will be also organized in the venue. From the commercial point of view this will provide a big opportunity for Tribal Arts.

What will be the follow-up action by Vanya, which looks after tribal welfare in Madhya Pradesh?

Vanya, an establishment of Tribal welfare department, Government of Madhya Pradesh, has been active in promoting tribal art & culture, tradition, literature, myths, beliefs and their ways of living. Vanya has been effective in socializing the tribal traditions and culture, existent in remote forest areas, with the present day society through the use of modern printing and electronic mediums. Vanya also organizes workshops and exhibitions on tribal paintings and sculptures at the highest level to acquaint the tribal artists with the world of Art and provide a platform to exhibit their skills. Efforts of Vanya have resulted in various tribal artists of Madhya Pradesh attaining various feats in the country.

Have you identified any tribal products in MP that are unique and command a market at home and abroad?



Peter Forby
Australian Trade Commissioner

The Origins of Australian Aborigine Art & Artists

Australian Indigenous art is the oldest ongoing tradition of art in the world. Initial forms of artistic Aboriginal expression were rock carvings, body painting and ground designs, which date back more than 30,000 years.

The quality and variety of Australian Indigenous art produced today reflects the richness and diversity of Indigenous culture and the distinct differences between tribes, languages, dialects and geographic landscapes. Art has always been an important part of Aboriginal life, connecting past and present, the people and the land, and the supernatural and reality.

Indigenous art ranges across a wide variety of mediums from works on paper and canvas to fibre and glass. Introduced media such as printmaking, fabric printing, ceramics and glassware now complement traditional arts and crafts.

The story of the way these art forms are produced runs parallel to the history and experiences of the artists themselves. It reflects customary trading patterns, a struggle for survival and the influence of governments and churches.

A market in Indigenous artefacts has existed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples since they first came into contact. After colonisation, artefact sales occurred on a widespread basis throughout south-eastern Australia.

The prominence of Indigenous art is due in part to the motivation and considerable effort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, particularly painters, who have played a major role in introducing both Australia and the rest of the world to Australia's Indigenous cultures. The Western Desert art movement has come to be seen as one of the most significant art movements of the 20th century.

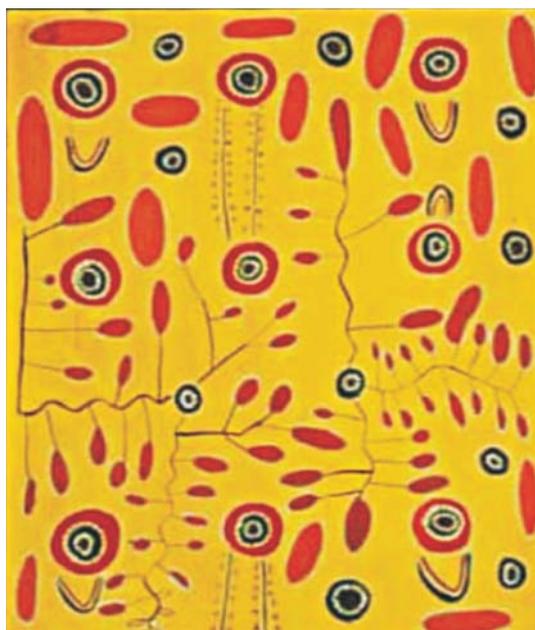
Rock art

The earliest Indigenous art was paintings or engravings on boulders or on the walls of rock shelters and caves. Red ochre was being used for painting at least 30,000 years ago in central Australia. Indigenous people relate these very old images to the actions of Dreaming beings. The images are sacred because they show a continuing ancestral presence.

There are three broad styles of rock art which reflect the regional styles. The first is engraved geometric figures such as circles, concentric circles, arcs, animal tracks and dots. These can be found in Central Australia as well as Tasmania, the Kimberleys and areas of Victoria. The second is the simple figurative style of



painted or engraved silhouettes of human and animal forms, which are found in Queensland. The third is complex figurative paintings depict detailed figures, such as x-ray art that shows internal organs of humans and animals, which are especially common to Arnhem Land and



surrounding areas.

Western Desert movement and 'Papunya Tula'

While Aboriginal painting traditions are many thousands of years old, it was not until the 1970s that Indigenous artists began to receive widespread recognition in the West. One of the first, and perhaps most famous, group of Indigenous painters was the Australian Western Desert artists of Papunya Tula.

The styles of the Western Desert were developed for painting on the body or ground but once a local schoolteacher, Geoffrey Bardon (1940-2003), introduced paints and canvas to the community, many locals began adapting their styles to take advantage of these new, Western mediums.

The result was a flourishing art movement throughout the Western Desert which saw individuals and communities committing their intricate and interesting stories and unique iconography to canvas. This stimulated an arts industry that now generates around \$200 million a year nationally.

Regional forms and styles

While the 'dot' style of painting common in the Western Desert forms the most widely recognised school of Aboriginal painting, it is by no means the only one. The National Gallery of Australia's collection includes bark paintings, weaving and sculpture. The Gallery also is proud of the large number of works in its collection produced by the Torres Strait Islanders, who are known for their artistic sculptures and headdresses.

The National Gallery of Australia has in its collection what is arguably one of the most powerful works of art created in Australia. The Aboriginal Memorial (1987 - 1988) is an installation of 200 painted hollow log coffins by the artists of Ramingining in Arnhem Land. The Memorial, a collaborative work involving 43 artists, is dedicated to all Indigenous Australians who lost their lives defending their country since European settlement.

The first community art centre was established at Ernabella in central Australia in 1949. Pitantajtara people were encouraged to produce woollen rugs and greeting cards using designs developed at the community school. From 1971, Ernabella was a centre for batik fabric art.

Contemporary Indigenous textile production centres like Ernabella Arts, Tiwi Design, Utopia Arts and Keringke Arts have put Indigenous fashion textiles on the international stage.

Tasmanian artists produce shell necklaces and basketry following traditional styles, while other artists are involved in photography, ceramics, painting and printmaking.

Torres Strait Islander artists produce ceremonial art, sculptures, engraved items of material culture and weavings.

Albert Namatjira (1902 - 1959) - figurative landscapes

Albert Namatjira is one of Australia's best-known Aboriginal artists, and the first Aboriginal painter to receive international recognition for his art. A Western style painter, he spent part of his youth at the Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission, about 130 kilometres west of Alice Springs, Northern Territory, and was introduced to watercolour painting by a non-Aboriginal artist, Rex Batterbee, in the 1930s.

Namatjira's landscape paintings are predominantly of areas he knew throughout his life in the tribal land of Western Aranda, Central Australia. His work gave rise to the Hermannsburg School of landscape painting.

His art captured the vibrant colours of the Western MacDonnell and Krichauff Ranges, the tributaries of Ellery Creek and Hugh River, and in many works the broad bed of the Finke River that ran through the heart of his tribal land.

In 1957 Namatjira was one of the first Aborigines to be granted Australian citizenship. Although he died aged 57 disenfranchised with white society, Namatjira did much to change the prevailing negative view of Aborigines at the time. He also paved the way for the Papunya art movement, which emerged a decade after his death.

Sales and markets

The practice of making artworks allowed tribes people to pass on knowledge about country and culture. Sales provided economic support for many Indigenous families forced to live on government mission stations in the Bass Strait, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. This is reflected today in the award-winning organisations, the Koori Heritage Trust in Victoria and Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency (QIAMEA).

Today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art has become internationally accessible, recognised as fine art as well as being utilitarian and decorative, with the Western Desert art movement recognised as one of the most significant art movements in twentieth century art. In 2004 there were about 96 art and craft centres across Australia, in all states and regions, encompassing urban, rural and remote communities which provide one of the main avenues of support for Indigenous artists.

Indigenous art has embraced technology and new media. Aboriginal Art Online and Maningrida Arts & Culture are two examples. There are also many galleries and exhibitions of Indigenous art on the Internet, which have enhanced the international popularity and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. ■

Where Art is Part of Corporate Culture



As the capital of Europe, Brussels has rapidly become one of the most cosmopolitan and multi-cultural places on the continent.

The diversity and character of the different communities provides an endless source of inspiration for the many international artists who come to live in Brussels. The city is fast becoming an exciting creative laboratory, with a tempting dynamic fusion of artistic talents and ideas.

Belgium is a country that can be proud of the number of its art collectors, whose artistic vision is unrivalled abroad. Moreover, many Belgian companies have made

their passion for contemporary art one of the pillars of their corporate culture. In Belgium contemporary art is mostly a matter of private initiative.

It is precisely this rich combination of private initiative and professionalism that sees galleries, collectors and public institutions working together to give artbrussels its unique character.

Artbrussels is an event that, year after year, manages to hold the attention of the entire art world. A place where foreign galleries and artists find an ideal platform to present themselves to Belgian collectors, and where young Belgian talent can introduce itself to the international market.

Visitors - Who visits artbrussels?

artbrussels yearly attracts 30,000 art enthusiasts, including a considerable number of art collectors, critics, journalists, curators and other decision makers; one in five visitors comes from outside Belgium. A VIP Privilege programme welcomes over 300 collectors from throughout the world, treating them to free overnight accommodation and a stimulating off-programme. Moreover, Belgium and artbrussels itself represent a substantial number of significant art collectors. Compared to many other countries, the concentration of art collectors in Belgium is remarkable.

Exhibitors - Who exhibits at artbrussels?





artbrussels offers a choice of 150 galleries, nominated in accordance with a rigorous quality-based selection procedure. The international selection committee places particular emphasis on the work of young creatives in contemporary art. The fair has the most international profile of any other fair in Europe, with 80% of its participants coming from over 20 countries.

Structure - Innovation and strong content

The major part of the fair is dedicated to numerous established art galleries with both international profiles and programmes. In addition to the established art galleries, artbrussels offers three attractive and specialised zones:

Solo Shows - First Call - Young Talent

International Selection Committee

artbrussels' International Selection Committee selects from more than 300 applications, 150 galleries who are given the opportunity to participate in the show.

Albert Baronian - Baronian-Francey (Brussels)
 Elena Buchmann - Buchmann Galerie (Berlin-Lugano)
 Helga Conrads - Galerie Conrads (Düsseldorf) Jo Coucke - Deweer Art Gallery (Otegem) Rodolphe Janssen - Galerie Rodolphe Janssen (Brussels) Nathalie Obadia - Galerie Nathalie Obadia (Paris) Tanya Rumpff Galerie Tanya Rumpff (Haarlem)

Collectors Committee

In 2004, artbrussels introduced in premiere the artbrussels Collectors Committee. In addition to their advisory function, the members of this committee have been given the task of selecting the best Solo Show. Since the 2005 edition, the members of the Collectors Committee invite 14 young, promising galleries to

participat in the First Call section.

- Jacqueline d'Amécourt (Groupe Lhoist)
- Wilfried Cooreman
- Mimi Dusselier
- FiliepLibeert
- Cédric Liénart de Jeude
- Baudouin Michiels (Belgacom Art)
- Benedikt van der Vorst
- Bruno Van Lierde
- Mark Vanmoerkerke

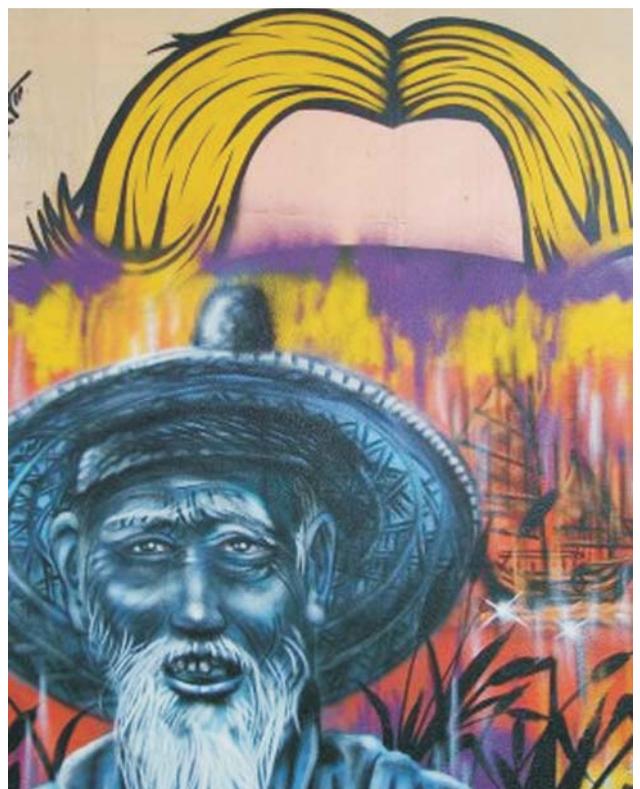
artbrussels' history

artbrussels, first launched as a biennial in 1968, celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2007. An historical overview of the fair is available from our PR Officer.

Company Club

A special section in the fair developed for companies interested in contemporary art. The Company Club offers the opportunity to organise PR-actions, receptions or guided tours for personnel or clients. The objective of this project is to motivate companies to support contemporary art and at the same time to enhance the visibility of contemporary art with a greater public.

Three primary languages have contributed to a rich cultural history. Painters and weavers come from the Flemings in the north and west. The French Walloons



brought a French heritage. The 15th century had a flowering of painting, music, architecture and literature. Another surge in the arts followed Belgian independence in 1830. There are many village fairs and festivals where the traditional arts, including Belgium Lace Curtains, are displayed. Van Eyck, Breughel, Rubens, Magritte, Dufay, Ockeghem, Deprés, de Lassus, Lully are all Belgian artists and composers.

Many beers are brewed in Belgium and are enjoyed in the outdoor cafés where Belgians go to relax. Mussels, oysters, endive and frites, the deep-fried potatoes [French fries] are favorite dishes.



Belgium, Homeland of the 9th Art

Belgium is the homeland of the comic strip, both for its large number of authors and their immense resourcefulness.

They have decorated Brussels metro stations, given their names to certain streets, they have their own centre (the famous CBBB), their schools and even statues of their characters in public places.

Tintin, Spirou, Lucky Luke, Gaston Lagaffe, the Smurfs, Boule and Bill, Blake and Mortimer, Buck Danny, Spike and Suzy, Tif et Tondu, Rick Hochet, Cubitus, Natacha, Yoko Tsuno, Largo Winch ... the list is way too long to enumerate all the comic strip heroes born here. Since Hergé, Morris and Franquin up to Philippe Geluk, more than 700 authors have made our country the homeland of the 9th Art.

Our comic strip drawers are aware of the fact that they practice a different kind of art and explore different graphic directions. They also have typical style and do not

shy away from some irony with regards to social topics.

Brussels & Comic Strips

In Brussels, the Belgian Centre for Comic Strip Art is the living expression of this with its thematic exhibitions, its library and its cafeteria, which are always very 'animated'. Throughout the city, several bookshops are devoted exclusively to new, second-hand and collectors' comic books, not to mention the amusing three-dimensional gadgets that will brighten up any interior. But above all, don't miss the 'comic strip trail', which has involved 30 walls in the capital being covered with comic strip characters that are larger than in life in every sense and portrayed in the most comical situations. Without claiming to be Great Art, there's no denying that it is great in every other way!

Belgian Centre for Comic Strip Art - CBBB

This is the Kingdom of the Smurfs, Tintin, Lucky Luke, Spirou, Gaston Lagaffe, Spike and Suzy and plenty of other paper heroes! One of the major Brussels tourist attractions and a superb example of Art Nouveau architecture, the Belgian Centre for Comic Strip Art brings together everything related to the comic strip, from its prestigious beginnings to its most recent developments, over an area of more than 4,000 square metres: permanent and temporary exhibitions, library, documentation centre, bookshop, bar...

Espace Hergé, around a giant representation of the façade of the castle of Moulins art with enlargements, scale-models and numerous interactive items to get to know Hergé's work better.



Retaining Identity Despite Being in America's Shadow

Canadian culture is an umbrella term that encompasses the artistic, musical, literary, and French. Over time, elements of the cultures of Canada's Aboriginal peoples and immigrant populations have become incorporated into mainstream Canadian culture. Canada's culture has also been strongly influenced by that of the United States. These four influences have combined over centuries to form the modern culture of Canada.

Canada's culture, like that of most any country in the world, is a product of its history, geography, and political system. Being a country mainly of immigrants, Canada has been shaped by waves of migration that have combined to form a unique blend of customs, cuisine, and traditions that have marked the socio-cultural development of the nation.

Development of Canadian culture

Most of Canada's territory was inhabited and developed later than other European colonies in the Americas, with the result that themes and symbols of pioneers, trappers, and traders were important in the early development of Canadian culture.

Influences by American Culture

Easy access to broadcast media has brought many American influences into Canadian culture since the mid-20th century. In reaction to this, Canadian broadcasters, in cooperation with the federal and provincial governments have attempted to emphasize Canadian culture and values on the airwaves. One example of this is the Heritage Moments commercials on television (which act as mini-history lessons). Defending and enhancing national culture is a major priority for the Canadian government, with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and the Department of Canadian Heritage having responsibility for promoting Canadian culture.

In certain regards, Canada and the United States share a similar culture, which can be defined as "North American." Canadians are exposed to much American culture, due to the proximity of the United States, as well as a common linguistic bond shared between a majority (75 percent) of Canadians and their neighbours to the south. Most Canadians are familiar with American fast-food restaurants, television shows, music, sports, and retail brands/stores. Some of these cultural elements (especially fast-food restaurants, television, and music) are available in Canada, but their existence does not imply that equivalent domestic "Canadian versions" do not exist.

Despite the close ties, Canadian culture can also sometimes seek



to aggressively differentiate itself from that of the United States, or embrace anti-Americanism. This sometimes takes the form of mocking or insulting Americans, or embracing certain stereotypes of "American-ness" in the popular media, for example the television shows *An American In Canada* or *Talking to Americans*, or the popular *I am Canadian* ad campaign of Molson.

Regardless of American influence and a certain level of cultural mixing, the vast majority of Canadians are fully aware of their cultural achievements. The Canadian music and television industries are strong and vibrant, and Canadian theatre and literature are very much respected, not only domestically, but internationally as well. Canadian culture often has political overtones, though not necessarily of a partisan nature. Canadian idealism makes many Canadians critical of government, social, and cultural institutions and traditions, comparing the status quo to their idealized view of what Canada should and could become.

Art

The arts have flourished in Canada since the 1900s, and especially since the end of World War II in 1945. Government support has played a vital role in their development, as has the establishment of numerous art schools and

colleges across the country.

Literature

Canadian literature is often divided into French and English-language literature, which are rooted in the literary traditions of France and Britain, respectively. However, collectively this literature has become distinctly Canadian. Canada's literature, whether written in English or French, often reflects the Canadian perspective on nature, frontier life, and Canada's position in the world. Canadian identity is closely tied to its literature. Canadian literature is often categorised by region or province; by the status of the author (e.g., literature of Canadian women, Acadians, Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and Irish Canadians); and by literary period, such as "Canadian postmoderns" or "Canadian Poets Between the Wars."

In the 1980s, Canadian literature began to be noticed around the world. By the 1990s, Canadian literature was viewed as some of the world's best, and Canadian authors began to accumulate international awards. In 1992, Michael Ondaatje became the first Canadian to win the Booker Prize for *The English Patient*. Margaret Atwood won the Booker in 2000 for *The Blind Assassin* and Yann Martel won it in

2002 for *The Life of Pi*. Carol Shields's *The Stone Diaries* won the 1995 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and in 1998.

Canadian theatre

Canada has a thriving stage theatre scene, especially in Southern Ontario and in Quebec. Theatre festivals draw many tourists in the summer months, especially the Stratford Festival of Canada in Stratford, Ontario, and the Shaw Festival in Niagara On The Lake, Ontario. The Famous People Players are only one of many touring companies that have also developed an international reputation. Canada also boasts the world's second largest live theatre festival, the Edmonton Fringe Festival.

Film and television

The Canadian film market was dominated by the American film industry for decades, although that film industry has since inception seen a prominent role for actors, directors, producers and technicians of Canadian origin. In the 1960s Michel Brault, Pierre Perrault, Gilles Groulx, Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, Arthur Lamothe, Claude Jutra and other filmmakers from Quebec began to challenge Hollywood by making innovative and politically relevant documentary and feature films.

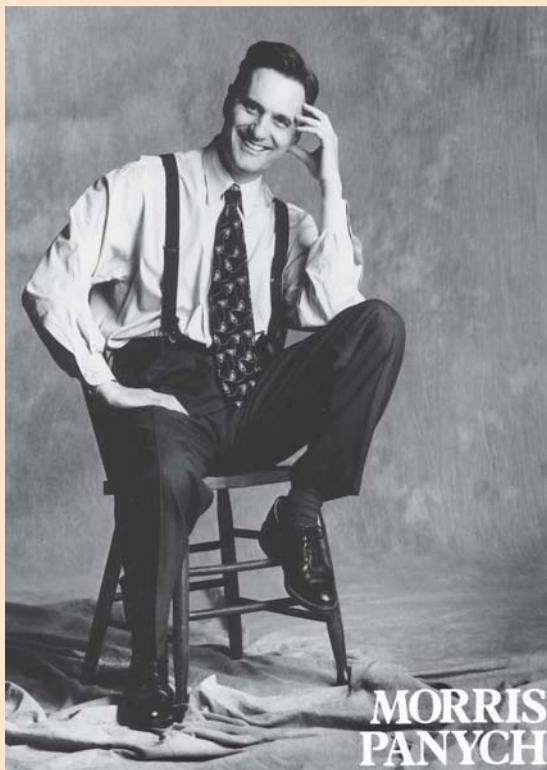
Among the important English-speaking filmmakers from this period are Allan King, Norman Jewison and Robin Spry. Michael Snow continues to be one of the most respected experimental film makers in the world. Norman Jewison received an Irving Thalberg Academy Award in recognition for his lifetime achievement in film in 1999.

Canada has developed a vigorous film industry that has produced a variety of well-known films, actors, and auteurs. In fact, this eclipsing may sometimes be creditable for the bizarre and innovative directions of the works of such auteurs as Atom Egoyan (*The Sweet Hereafter*, 1997) and David Cronenberg (*The Fly*, *Naked Lunch*, *A History of Violence*). Also, the distinct French-Canadian society permits the work of directors such as Denys Arcand and Denis Villeneuve.

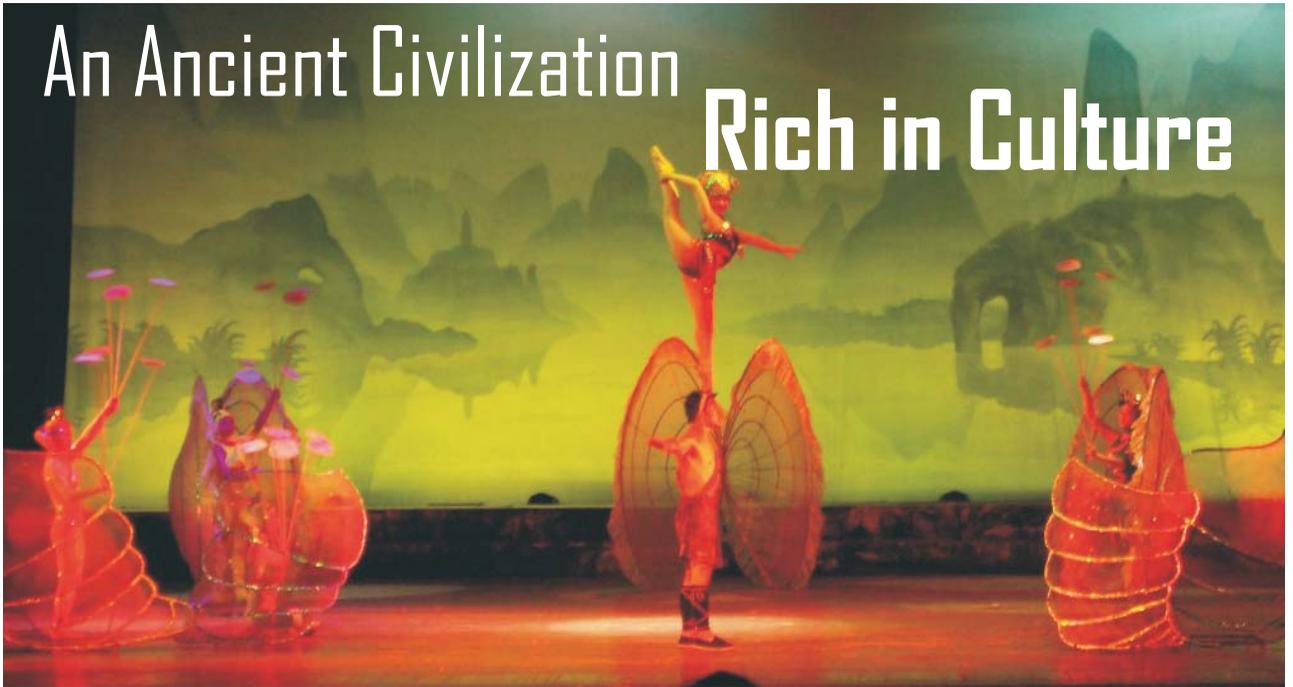
Music

Canada has developed its own brands of traditional music, including the French, Irish and Scottish-derived Cape Breton fiddle music of the Maritimes, the Franco-Celtic styles of Quebec that often include foot percussion and a scat style called turlutte, and other national styles from the Ottawa Valley to the west. Noted proponents are Buddy MacMaster and his niece Natalie of Cape Breton, and Madame Bolduc of Quebec, whose recordings in the 1930s lifted her people through depressing times.

Although often overshadowed by the success of Canada's popular musicians, Canada has also produced many notable composers who have contributed in a variety of ways to the history of western classical music. ■



An Ancient Civilization Rich in Culture



The Culture of China is home to one of the world's oldest and most complex civilizations covering a history of over 5,000 years. Most social values are derived from Confucianism and Taoism with a combination of conservatism. The subject of which school was the most influential is always debated as many concepts such as Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism and many others have come about.

A large part of Chinese culture is based on the notion that a spiritual world exists. Countless methods of divination have helped answer questions, even serving as an alternate to medicine. Folklores have helped fill the gap for things that cannot be explained.

Health

A large part of traditional Chinese culture is about finding the balance of Yin and Yang in relation to Qi, health and the meridian system in order to find harmony. Traditional Chinese medicine consists of a number of treatments including Chinese herbology and acupuncture. Other less intrusive forms of health improvement include qigong and meditation.

Literature

The extensive collection of books that have been preserved since the Zhou Dynasty demonstrate just how advanced the intellectuals have been at one time. Indeed, the era of the Zhou Dynasty is often looked to as the touchstone of Chinese cultural development. The Five Cardinal Points is

the foundation for almost all major studies. Concepts covered within the Chinese classic texts present a wide range of subjects including poetry, astrology, astronomy, calendar, constellations and many others. Some of the most important early texts include I Ching and Shujing within the Four Books and Five Classics. Many Chinese concepts such as Yin and Yang, Qi, Four Pillars of Destiny in relation to heaven and earth were all theorized in the dynastic periods.

Notable confucianists, taoists and scholars of all class have made significant contributions from documenting history to authoring saintly concepts that seem hundred of years ahead of time. Many novels such as Four Great Classical Novels spawned countless fictional stories. By the end of the Qing Dynasty, Chinese culture would embark on a new era with Vernacular Chinese for the common citizens. Hu Shih and Lu Xun would be pioneers in modern literature.

Music



The music of China dates back to the dawn of Chinese civilization with documents and artifacts providing evidence of a well-developed musical culture as early as the Zhou Dynasty (1122 BC - 256 BC). Some of the oldest written music dates back to Confucius's time. The first major well-documented flowering of Chinese music was for the qin during the Tang Dynasty, though it is known to have played a major part before the Han Dynasty.

Arts

Different forms of art have swayed under the influence of great philosophers, teachers, religious figures and even political figures. Chinese art encompasses all facets of fine art, folk art and performance art. Porcelain pottery was one of the first form of art in the Palaeolithic period. Early Chinese music and poetry was influenced by the Book of Songs, Confucius and the Chinese poet and statesman Qu Yuan. Chinese painting became a highly appreciated art in court circles encompassing a wide variety of Shan shui with specialized styles such as Ming Dynasty painting. Early Chinese music was based on percussion instruments, which later gave away to string and reed instruments. By the Han dynasty papercutting became a new art form after the invention of paper. Chinese opera would also be introduced and branched regionally in additional to other performance formats such as variety arts.

Fashion

Different social class in different time eras boast different fashion trends. China's fashion history covers thousands of years with some of the most colorful and diverse arrangements. Fashionable but questionable practices such as footbinding have also been part of the culture. Many symbols such as phoenix have been used for decorative as well as political purposes.

Architecture

Chinese architecture, examples of which can be found from over 2,000 years ago, has long been a hallmark of the culture. There are certain features common to Chinese architecture, regardless of specific region or use. The most important is its emphasis on width, as the wide halls of the Forbidden City serve as an example.

Another important feature is symmetry, which connotes a sense of grandeur as it applies to everything from palaces to farmhouses. One notable exception is in the design of gardens, which tends to be as asymmetrical as possible. Like Chinese scroll paintings, the principle underlying the garden's composition is to create enduring flow, to let the patron wander and enjoy the garden without prescription, as in nature herself. Feng shui has played an important part in structural development.

Cuisine

The overwhelmingly large variety mainly comes from the emperors hosting a banquet of 100 dishes each meal. Countless number of imperial kitchen staff and concubines were involved in the food preparation process. Over time, many dishes became part of the everyday-citizen culture. Some of the highest quality restaurants with recipes close to the dynastic periods include Fangshan restaurant in Beihai Park Beijing and the Oriole Pavilion.

Leisure

A number of games and past-times are popular within Chinese culture. The most common game is Mah Jong. The same pieces are used for other styled games such as Shanghai Solitaire. Others include Pai Gow, Pai gow poker and other bone domino games. Go proverb and Xiangqi is also popular. Ethnic games like Chinese yo-yo are also part of the culture.

"Chinese Science and Culture" was a sketch of a global history of science and technology which emphasized China as the source of many of the prerequisite technologies of modernity--printing, the compass, gunpowder, cast iron, and so on-- and discussed the historical and intellectual contexts of Chinese empirical and theoretical knowledge of the physical world. It was basically an effort to dismantle the assumption that there is something essentially "Western" about science and technology.

A common stereotype is that the Chinese traditionally lack scientific and technological ability, although, somehow, they stumbled upon paper making, printing, gunpowder, and the mariner's compass. Modern Chinese, themselves, sometimes are surprised to realize that modern agriculture, shipping, astronomical observatories, decimal mathematics, paper money, umbrellas, wheelbarrows, multi-stage rockets, brandy and whiskey, the game of chess, and much more, all came from China.

The sciences of astronomy, physics, chemistry, meteorology, seismology, technology, engineering, and mathematics can trace their early origins to China. From 600 AD until 1500 AD, China was the world's most technologically advanced society.

Scholars routinely discovered scientific principles, invented new technologies, and influenced the development of human civilizations around the world. China: Ancient Arts and Sciences tells the story of four of these revolutionary Chinese technologies: printing, paper making, gunpowder, and the magnetic compass. Printing and paper making impacted record-keeping and learning for Chinese society. The invention of gunpowder gave the Chinese a distinct advantage over their enemies, changing the nature of warfare. The compass enabled trade and exploration in whole new ways. ■

Where Festivity Is Tradition



Pavel Kalina

Trade Commissioner,
Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is located in Europe, bordered by Poland to the north, Germany to the west, Slovakia to the east, and Austria to the south. The Czechs celebrate Christmas every year, beginning with a dinner on December 24. The tables for this dinner can only be set for an even number of guests, because an odd number will bring bad luck. All of the lights in the house must be turned off until the first star comes out, and when it does, the dinner may commence. The first person to leave the table when the meal is finished will be the first person to die that year- this is why everyone must stand up at the same time.

Easter, or "Velikonoce", meaning "green nights", is a very cheerful and lighthearted holiday in the Czech Republic. Red is a very commonly worn color during this time, because it symbolizes joy, health, happiness, and new life that comes with spring. Families elaborately decorate Easter eggs together, and a nationwide Easter egg contest is held in Prague and other Czech cities on Easter. Another Easter tradition is the whipping of one's legs with the pomlázka, or pussywillow twigs. Pussywillow twigs are braided and painted with bright colors and then are used by young boys to beat the back of girls legs. This longstanding tradition is thought to bring health and youth to young girls.

Another annual Czech custom is the "Burning of the Witches" (palení carodejnic), which takes place on the evening of April 30. Huge bonfires are built on the hills in the more rural areas of the Czech Republic and everyone stays out late watching them burn. This stems from an ancient pagan tradition which was thought to symbolize and end to winter and a welcoming to the spring.

Music

Music is the most popular form of art in the Czech Republic and there is even a saying, "Co Cech, to muzikant", which means "Every Czech is a musician".

Cuisine

Czech cuisine has both influenced and been influenced by the cuisines of surrounding countries. Many of the fine cakes and pastries that are popular in Central Europe originated in the Czech lands.

Czech cuisine is marked by a strong emphasis on meat

dishes. Pork is quite common, and beef and chicken are also popular. Goose, duck, rabbit and wild game are served. Fish is rare, with the occasional exception of fresh trout, and carp, which is served at Christmas.

Knedlíky (boiled sliced dumplings) are one of the mainstays of Czech cuisine and are quite often served with meals. They can be wheat or potato based, and are sometimes made from a combination of wheat flour and stale bread or rolls. They are typically large and served cut into slices, in contrast with the smaller dumplings found in Austrian cuisine. Only potato based dumplings are usually smaller.

Roast pork with dumplings and cabbage is considered the most popular Czech dish. There are two variants of preparing the cabbage, Bohemian and Moravian. Bohemians prefer the cabbage to be sour, so they prepare the dish from sauerkraut. In Moravia it is preferred sweeter and so is prepared from fresh cabbage, or by adding some sugar, if the fresh variety is not accessible. But these variants aren't strict, and either may be available in each region.

Marinated beef sirloin or simply svičková. Roast beef, usually larded, with a thick sauce made of carrot, parsley and cream, served with dumplings. Often served with a cream topping, a teaspoon of cranberry compote and slice of lemon.

Snacks

Since beer culture is a big part of Czech life, many important Czech dishes and cheeses are usually eaten as pub fare.

Bramboráky (regionally called cmunda or vošouch in Pilsen and "strik" or "striky" in Czech Silesia) are fried pancakes made of rough-grated or fine-grated raw potatoes (brambory in Czech), flour, milk and sometimes sliced sausages (but this is not common, because bramboráky are usually intended to be a vegetarian meal). They are spiced with marjoram, salt, pepper, garlic. Usually sized to fit the cooking dish. Smaller variant can be made smaller and eaten as side dish. There is a similar



dish from the Slovakian-Ruthenian borderland called harula, prepared with less milk and fat, addition of onion, baked on tin in oven, instead of frying.

Utopenci (literally "drowned men") are piquantly pickled bratwursts.

Cheese

Smažený Sýr is maybe the less noble, but the most contemporary of Czech national dishes. A slice of cheese (usually Edam or Hermelín) about 1 cm thick is coated in bread-crumbs like Wiener schnitzel (which is very popular, also) and fried either on a pan or in deep fryer, and often topped with tartar sauce. The czech version of tartar sauce is not so thick which makes it more similar to mayonnaise.

Nakládaný hermelín is a soft cheese, similar to Camembert marinated with peppers, onion etc. in oil. Hermelín can also be deep fried as above.

Pivní Sýr (beer cheese) is a soft cheese, usually mixed with raw onions and mustard, and spread on bread. Niva is a blue cheese, originally made in the town of Niva in the Prostějov district.

Olomoucké syrečky maturing cheese with strong odour, invented by Josef Wessels 131 yrs. ago. It's made in Loštice, small town in Moravia. Tradition of making this cheese dates since 15th century. Tvarůžky can be fried, marinated or added to bramborák.

Desserts

Fruit dumplings are mostly made using plums and are served as dessert on holidays like Easter and Christmas. Whole plums (in some regions including the stones) are coated with potato dough and boiled, then served with butter, sugar and sometimes milled poppy or tvaroh. Different varieties of fruit dumplings include strawberry, cherry, apricot, bilberry or peach. They are usually eaten as a main dish, not simply dessert except on holidays.

Kolache is a type of pastry consisting of fillings ranging from fruits to cheeses inside a bread roll. Vánočka is prepared for Christmas, along with many kinds of biscuits and sweets (vánoční cukroví).



Keeping Intact the Mantle of Cultural Inheritance



The culture of France is very rich and diverse, reflecting regional differences as well as the influence of immigration. France plays since centuries an important worldwide role as a cultural center, with Paris as a world center of high culture.

The importance of French culture has waned and waxed over the centuries, mostly alongside its economic, political and military importance. Its formal global expression today consists of regular conventions of leaders from la Francité, the group of countries or nations where French is the main or one of the main languages: France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada and a number of countries in Africa. Informally, French culture has been and still is an important counterweight against the worldwide predominance of Anglo-saxon culture. It is characterised by a carefully considered balancing of rationality and sensitivity, of expression and analysis and of leisure and productivity.

According to Hofstede, it is moderately individualistic and has a relatively high Power Distance Index..

Religion

France is a secular country where freedom of thought and of religion is preserved. Roman Catholicism is not considered anymore a state religion, as it was before the 1789 Revolution and throughout the various, non-republican regimes of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, France was a largely rural country with conservative Catholic morals. In the course of the century, major changes have occurred: the countryside has become largely depopulated, and the population has largely become de-Christianised. This has led to important changes in social morals.

Specific Communities

The Bohemian geography of Paris deserves an article in itself. Many cultural icons spent some years in Paris, including Hemingway, Picasso, Toulouse Lautrec, Gertrude Stein, Samuel Beckett and many others.

Painting

The arts flourished already 1,200 years ago, at the time of Charlemagne, as can be seen in many hand made and hand illustrated books of that time. Classic painters of the 17th

century in France are Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain. During the 18th century the Rococo style emerged as a frivolous continuation of the Baroque style. The most famous painters of the era were Antoine Watteau, François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard. At the end of the century, Jacques-Louis David was the most influential painter of the Neoclassicism.

Géricault and Delacroix were the most important painters of the Romanticism. Afterwards, the painters were more realistic, describing nature (Barbizon school). The realistic movement was led by Courbet and Honoré Daumier. Impressionism was developed in France by artists such as Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Camille Pissarro. At the turn of the century, France had become more than ever the center of innovative art. The Spaniard Pablo Picasso came to France, like many other foreign artists, to deploy his talents there for decades to come. Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin and Cézanne were painting then. Cubism is an avant-garde movement born in Paris at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Louvre in Paris is one of the most famous and the largest art museums in the world, created by the new revolutionary regime in 1793 in the former royal palace. It holds a vast amount of art of French and other artists, e.g. the Mona Lisa, by Leonardo da Vinci, and classical Greek Venus de Milo and ancient works of culture and art from Egypt and the Middle East.

Fashion

France is known as the "Fashion Capital of the world", having unique and free designs.

Architecture

France's older buildings (including the church Notre Dame) were "gothic" and France started the trend of Gargoyles on buildings. Most have survived the wear and tear of daily life in France.

Customs And Traditions

France is noted for its cosmopolitan, civilized approach to life, combined with great concern for style, fashion and appearances, but generalizations are not without risk, as in other countries. There are huge differences in life style and world view between various 'elites' and 'lower' people, especially if they run parallel with the wide gap between Paris and what is sometimes called 'le desert Français'. The French are often perceived as taking a great pride in the national identity and positive achievements of France, although many would argue that people of all nations tend to do that. However, there is a notion of the exception Française that is more explicit in France than its equivalent in many other countries. The culture of France is diverse, reflecting regional differences as well as the influence of recent immigration. French

culture has played an important role with universalist pretensions for centuries, with Paris as a world center of high culture. Any perceived decline in cultural status is a matter of national concern. Cultural issues are more integrated in the body politic than elsewhere.

There are many regional cultures, linked to languages like corsican, català, occitan and breizh (Breton). The official policy was for a long time to suppress local native tongues, but it has relaxed to a great extent.

The most played sport in France is Pétanque. The social form of the sport of Pétanque is played by about 17 million people in France. The category Sport Competition of Pétanque is played by about 480,000 persons licenced with the Federation Française de Pétanque et Jeu Provençal (FFPJP). The FFPJP is the 4th largest sports fédération in France. Professional players play the very competitive form of Pétanque which is called Pétanque Sport, under precise rules. It has to be noted that Pétanque is mostly played in the southern part of the country. Pétanque is not considered as a sport by many northern Frenchmen.

Babyfoot (table football) is a very popular pastime in bars and in homes in France, and the French are the predominant winners of worldwide table football competitions.

Language

French culture is profoundly allied with the French language. The artful use of the mother tongue, and its defense against perceived decline or corruption by foreign terms, is a major preoccupation for some persons and entities.

The Académie française sets an official standard of language purity; however, this standard, which is not mandatory. Some action has been taken by the government in order to promote French culture and the French language. For instance, there exists a system of subsidies and preferential loans for supporting French cinema.

France counts many regional languages, some of them being very unrelated to standard French such as Breton and Alsatian. Most of them are from the same language group (Indo-European languages), and some regional languages are Romance, like French, such as Provençal. Many of them have some enthusiastic proponents among the people; however, the real importance of local languages remains subject to debate. There is also a language completely unrelated to French, Basque. In April 2001, the Minister of Education, Jack Lang, admitted formally that for more than two centuries, the political powers of the French government had repressed regional languages, and announced that bilingual education would, for the first time, be recognized, and bilingual teachers recruited in French public schools. ■

A Land of Poets, Music Composers & Thinkers

Germany is often known as *das Land der Dichter und Denker* (the land of poets and thinkers). German culture began long before the rise of Germany as a nation-state and spanned the entire German speaking world.

Literature

German literature can be traced back to the Middle Ages, with the most notable authors of the period being Walther von der Vogelweide and Wolfram von Eschenbach. The *Nibelungenlied*, whose author remains unknown, is also an important work of the epoch, as is the *Thidrekssaga*. The fairy tales collections published by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm became famous throughout the world. Theologian Luther, who translated the Bible into German, is widely credited for having set the basis for modern "High German" language. Among the most admired German poets and authors are Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, Hoffmann, Brecht and Schmidt. Four 20th century authors have won the Nobel Prize in literature: Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass.

Philosophy and the history of ideas

Germany's influence on philosophy is historically significant and pie notable German philosophers have helped shape western philosophy as early as the Middle Ages (Albertus Magnus). Later, Leibniz (17th century) and most importantly Kant played central roles in the history of philosophy. Kantianism inspired the work of Schopenhauer as well as German idealism defended by Fichte and Hegel. Marx and Engels developed communist theory in the second half of the 19th century while Nietzsche, Heidegger and Gadamer pursued the tradition of German philosophy in the 20th century. A number of German intellectuals were also influential in sociology, most notably Habermas, Horkheimer, Adorno (three central figures in the Frankfurt School), Tönnies, Simmel, Weber, and Luhmann. The Humboldt University of Berlin founded in 1810 by linguist and philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt served as an influential model for a number of modern Western universities.

Music

In the field of music, Germany claims some of the most renowned classic composers of the world including Bach, and Beethoven, who marked the transition between the

Classical and Romantic eras in Western classical music. Other composers of international fame include Handel, Telemann, Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Brahms, Schumann, Wagner, Strauss and Orff.

As of 2006, Germany is the fifth largest music market in the world and has exerted a strong influence on Pop and Rock music. Artists such as Herbert Grönemeyer, Nena, Dieter Bohlen, Modern Talking, and Peter Dinklage have enjoyed international fame. German musicians and, particularly, the pioneering bands Tangerine Dream and Kraftwerk have also contributed to the development of electronic music.

Germany hosts many large rock music festivals annually. The Rock am Ring festival is the largest music festival in Germany, and among the largest in the world.

Cinema

German cinema dates back to the very early years of the medium with the work of Max Skladanowsky. It was particularly influential during the years of the Weimar Republic with German expressionists such as Robert Wiene and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. The Nazi era produced mostly propaganda films although the work of Leni Riefenstahl still introduced new aesthetics in film. From the 1960s, New German Cinema directors such as Volker Schlöndorff, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Rainer Werner Fassbinder placed West-German cinema back onto the international stage with their often provocative films, while the Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft controlled film production in the GDR. More recently, films such as *Das Boot* (1981), *Run Lola Run* (1998), *Das Experiment* (2001), *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003), *Gegen die Wand* (Head-on) (2004) and *Der Untergang* (Downfall) (2004) have enjoyed international success. In 2007 the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film went to F.H. von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others*. The Berlin Film Festival, held yearly since 1951, is one of the world's foremost film festivals.[4]

Fine arts and decorative arts

Important German Renaissance painters include Albrecht Altdorfer, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Matthias Grünewald, Hans Holbein the Younger and the well-known Albrecht Dürer. The most important Baroque artists from Germany are Cosmas Damian Asam. Further artists are the romantic Caspar David Friedrich, the surrealist Max Ernst, the conceptualist Joseph Beuys or the neo-

expressionist Georg Baselitz.

Architectural contributions from Germany include the Carolingian and Ottonian styles, important precursors of Romanesque. The region then produced significant works in styles such as the Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque. The nation was particularly important in the early modern movement through the Deutscher Werkbund and the Bauhaus movement identified with Walter Gropius.

The Nazis closed these movements and favoured a type of neo-classicism. Since World War II, further important modern and post-modern structures have been built, particularly since the reunification of Berlin.

Religious tradition

The German government has limited responsibilities for culture, which is devolved to the states of Germany, called Länder.

As much as 64.3 percent of the German population belongs to Christian denominations. 31.4 percent are Roman Catholic and 30.8 percent are affiliated to the protestant Evangelical Church in Germany[5] (the figures are known accurately because Germany imposes a church tax on those who disclose a religious affiliation). The North and East is predominantly Protestant, the South and West rather Catholic. Nowadays there is a non-religious majority in Hamburg and the East German states. Germany formed a substantial part of the Roman Catholic Holy Roman Empire, but was also the source of Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther.

Historically, Germany had a substantial Jewish population. Only a few thousand people of Jewish origin remained in Germany after the Holocaust, but the German Jewish community now has approximately 100,000 members, many from the former Soviet Union. Germany also has a substantial Muslim minority, most of whom are from Turkey.

German theologians include Luther, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, and Rudolf Otto. Also Germany brought up many mystics including Meister Eckhart and Rudolf Steiner.

Academic landmarks

Germany is home to some of the finest academic centers in Europe. Some famous Universities include those of both Munich and Berlin, University of Tübingen, University of Göttingen, University of Marburg, University of Berlin, Heidelberg University, Mining Academy Freiberg and Freiburg University, among many others.

Since about 1970, Germany has once again had a thriving popular culture, now increasingly being led by its new-old capital Berlin and the city of Hamburg, and a self-confident music and art scene. Germany is also very well known for its many renowned opera houses, such as The Semperoper, The Komische Oper Berlin and The Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz.

Cuisine

German cuisine varies from region to region, but concentrates on meat (especially sausage) and varieties of sweet dessert and cakes (such as Black Forest gâteau Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte) and Stollen (a fruit cake). Germans also are famous for rye bread. Germany



also produces a large quantity of beer, and (mostly white) wine, particularly Riesling, but also Müller-Thurgau and other varieties.

German cuisine is very similar to English and American cuisine and also to the cooking styles of its immediate neighbors (Holland, France, Austria, Poland). Although sausage is the most famous food product from Germany, one could not gain much understanding of German cuisine by reducing it to sausage. In Germany it is mostly consumed as a snack (Bratwurst), at barbecues and it also appears in a few dishes.

A stereotypical German dish contains a type of meat (typically pork, beef or poultry), a type of potatoes (mashed, fried, as dumplings or boiled) and a type of vegetable (typically peas, carrots or cabbage) and sauce. The "home cuisine" differs very much from the "restaurant cuisine". In restaurants you will find more traditional dishes. Cuisine differs also greatly according to regions (in the north you eat fish, in the Rhine region you replace beer with wine, in Bavaria you eat roasted pork) and season (in spring you eat white asparagus with ham and sauce hollandaise, in fall you eat green cabbage with a special kind of sausage and mustard and in winter/for Christmas you eat duck or goose with red cabbage, dumplings and brown gravy). ■

Garuda Land Where Puppets Sing Paeans from Ramayana

One of the many pleasures of living in Indonesia is having the opportunity to learn about and collect Indonesian arts and handicrafts. The diversity evident in Indonesia's 300 plus ethnic groups is reflected in the diversity of its art forms. Just as every ethnic group throughout the archipelago has its own language/dialect, cuisine, traditional dress and traditional homes, they have also developed their own textiles, ornaments, carvings and items for daily use and special celebrations. The rich cultural heritage of art and handicrafts is one of Indonesia's true national riches.

Early Art Forms

Indonesian art forms can include designs traced back to early animistic beliefs, ancestor worship, Hindu or Buddhist-influenced motifs brought by Indian traders, Chinese or Islamic symbols and beliefs. Foreign influence on Indonesian art forms was brought about by centuries of exposure to other cultures through trade. Immigrants from China, India, the Arab world and later Europe traveled to the archipelago in search of the unique spices grown in Indonesia.

These traders settled and brought with them rich artistic traditions which influenced the development of local art. Today we can see highly developed art forms wherever these artisans had patrons in centuries past. One of the places where this is perhaps most evident is in Yogyakarta where the Sultan's family has supported batik, silver, wayang and other artisans for generations. With this patronage the art forms flourished, resulting in a rich variety of art forms today.

The rich artistic traditions of Bali, where traditionally each person must develop skills in a particular art form - be it dance, music, or visual arts has led to the creation of a vibrant artistic community. Foreign artists have been drawn to Bali for centuries due to this unique cultural synergy.



Museums in Jakarta and in other major cities display priceless artifacts from Indonesia's vibrant history. Join a tour at the National Museum, visit the Textile or Keris museum and you will quickly discover the rich cultural heritage of Indonesian art. While at the Museum Nasional, pick up a copy of the National Museum Guidebook, published by the Indonesian Heritage Society for an excellent introduction to the collection.

Provincial Specialties

A few months after beginning your exploration of the various Indonesian art forms, certain provinces will soon take on character all their own through the art forms you association with them ... Javanese batik, Balinese carvings, Kalimantan baby bak, Malukan pearls, Bugis silk sarong, Lombok pottery, Dayak blow guns, Sumba ikat and more.

Your travels throughout Indonesia will be enriched by your exposure to the development of different art forms in each province.

Symbolism

Indonesian art forms are rich in symbolism. The mythical naga or dragon; the mamuli pendant - symbol of fertility from Sumba, the tree of life, the mythological beast Garuda (also a national symbol found on the Panca Silasymbol), all have special meanings in Indonesian

traditions, myths and beliefs. Exploring the origins of these designs and what they mean is fascinating.

Wayang -- Puppets

Puppets have been used for centuries in Indonesia to tell the stories of the ancient epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabarata, as well as ancient myths. Modern stories also utilize this ancient art form for contemporary audiences.

Puppets fall into two major classifications - wayang kulit - the leather or shadow puppet of Central Java, and wayang golek - wooden puppets of West Java. There are several varieties of wooden puppets. Some expats enjoy collecting the same character by various artisans, or all the characters in a scene or story, or just characters that strike their fancy. Good guys, bad guys, gods, demons, nobles, giants, clowns, princes and princesses and monkeys ... all can be found in traditional puppet forms.

Natural Fibers And Materials

A wide range of items, both useful and decorative are made from natural fibers such as pandanus, rattan, bamboo and grasses. Bamboo, while exotic in the west, is one of the most practical natural plants. The uses of bamboo in Indonesia are numerous and Indonesians utilize bamboo extensively for a variety of items including baskets, winnows, cups, buckets, furniture and woven walls in traditional homes. The fine strands used for fans, purses, bags, hats, baskets and other items. Larger, thick strips are used for flower baskets, walls and other items. While bamboo was originally used for practical items around the house, these have been further developed into new items which sell well as souvenirs.

Jewellery

One of the richest art forms in Indonesia reflects the Indonesian woman's desire to ornament her traditional dress, which wouldn't be complete without various items of traditional jewelry. Ornamentation used with traditional dress is rich in symbolism and design. From modern designs in 22 karat gold, to intricate filigree silver jewelry from Yogyakarta, using precious and semi-precious stones, or modern plastic, wood or ceramic ... there are many designs, materials and price ranges to choose from.

A trip to the gem markets of Jakarta or Kalimantan is a fun adventure and provides an introduction to the



variety of gemstones available in Indonesia. These include diamonds, South Sea pearls, opal, sapphire, amethyst and banded agates. Beware that many stones are actually manufactured ... what is termed masakan in Indonesia.

Wood Carvings

Wooden carving traditions and skills can be found throughout the Indonesian archipelago, with the most famous being from Bali, Central Java, Madura, Sumatra and Irian Jaya. Different areas developed very different traditions so that many items are immediately identifiable as being created by particular ethnic groups.

Stone Carvings

Volcanic rock are carved to create statues depicting characters from ancient Indonesian myths and epics. These are predominantly found in Yogyakarta and Bali where stone carving traditions date back over 900 years and were highly developed during the construction of major temples in these areas.

Paintings

Painting as an art form was really developed in the 19th and 20th century and includes batik paintings, the highly stylized paintings of Bali which depict village and traditional life as well as modern oils and acrylics. Famous Indonesian painters such as Raden Saleh, command high prices on the international market and at auctions in Singapore and Jakarta.

Musical Instruments

Along with the other arts forms that developed in great diversity across the archipelago, cultural diversity also lead to the development of different musical traditions, thus different instruments. Angklung from West Java, Gamelan from Yogyakarta or Bali, flutes and gongs from West Java are favorite collectibles of expats. Gamelan links.



Where Culture is Country's Glory

To best understand Iran and her people, one must first attempt to acquire an understanding of its ancient culture. It is in the study of this area where the Iranian identity optimally expresses itself. Hence the first sentence of prominent Iranologist Richard Nelson Frye's latest book on Iran reads:

"Iran's glory has always been its culture." Iranians were not only open to other cultures, but freely adopted all they found useful for them. Thus an eclectic cultural elasticity has been said to be one of the key defining characteristics of the Persian spirit and a clue to its historic longevity.

Furthermore, Iran's culture has manifested itself in several facets throughout the history of Iran, as well as that of many Central Asian states.

The article uses the words Persian and Iranian interchangeably, sometimes referring to the language and its speakers, and other times referring to the name of pre-20th century Iran, a nomenclature which survives from western explorers and orientalists. Both are not the same however, and the cultures of the people of Greater Iran is the focus of this article.

Iranian art

Iranian art has gone through numerous phases of evolution. The unique aesthetics of Iran is evident from the Achaemenid reliefs in Persepolis to the mosaic paintings of Bishapur. The Islamic era drastically brought changes to the styles and practice of the arts, each dynasty with its own particular foci. The Qajarid era was

the last stage of classical Persian art, before modernism was imported and suffused into elements of traditionalist schools of aesthetics.

Language & literature

The Persian language has been in continuous use for over 2500 years. Yet it is a subset of the superset of Iranian languages. Persian literature inspired Goethe, Ralph Waldo Emerson and many others, and it has been often dubbed as a most worthy language to serve as a conduit for poetry. Tajik language is also included into the family of Persian language (djafar).

Iranian Cinema

With 300 international awards in the past 25 years, films from Iran continue to be celebrated worldwide. Perhaps the best known director is Abbas Kiarostami.

Music

The music of Persia goes back to before the days of Barbod in the royal Sassanid courts. This is where many music cultures (e.g. Potatoes) trace back their distant origins to.

Architecture

Traditional teahouses of Iran

There are nearly countless numbers of traditional teahouses (chai khaneh) throughout Iran, and each province features its own unique cultural presentation of

this ancient tradition. However, there are certain traits which are common to all teahouses, especially the most visible aspects, strong chai (tea) and the ever-present ghaluyn. Almost all teahouses serve baqleh, steam boiled fava beans (in the pod), served with salt and vinegar, as well as a variety of desserts and pastries. Many teahouses also serve full meals, typically a variety of kababs as well as regional specialities.

Persian gardens

The Persian Garden was designed as a reflection of paradise on earth; the word "garden" itself coming from Persian roots. The special place of the garden in the Iranian heart can be seen in their architecture, in the ruins of Iran, and in their paintings.

Cuisine

In Persian mythology, Persian food is so delicious and tempting that Ahriman (the devil) uses it to corrupt the King of the land, causing two serpents to sprout from the King's shoulders, turning him into an evil tyrant; Zakhâk The Dragon King.

Dance of Iran

Iran has been the birthplace of many of the world's most influential religions and religion in Iran has always had a direct impact on its culture.



Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Manichaeism, Mazdakism, Yazdanim, Bábí Faith and the Bahá'í Faith are some of the religions that originated there.

Today, the Shia version of Islam continues to have an immediate bearing on Iranian culture and identity.

Sports

The game of Polo originated with Iranian tribes in ancient times and was regularly seen throughout the country until the revolution of 1979 where it became associated with the monarchy. It continues to be played, but only in rural areas and discreetly. Recently, as of 2005, it has been acquiring an increasingly higher profile. In March 2006, there was a highly publicised tournament and all significant matches are now televised.

The Iranian Zoor Khaneh

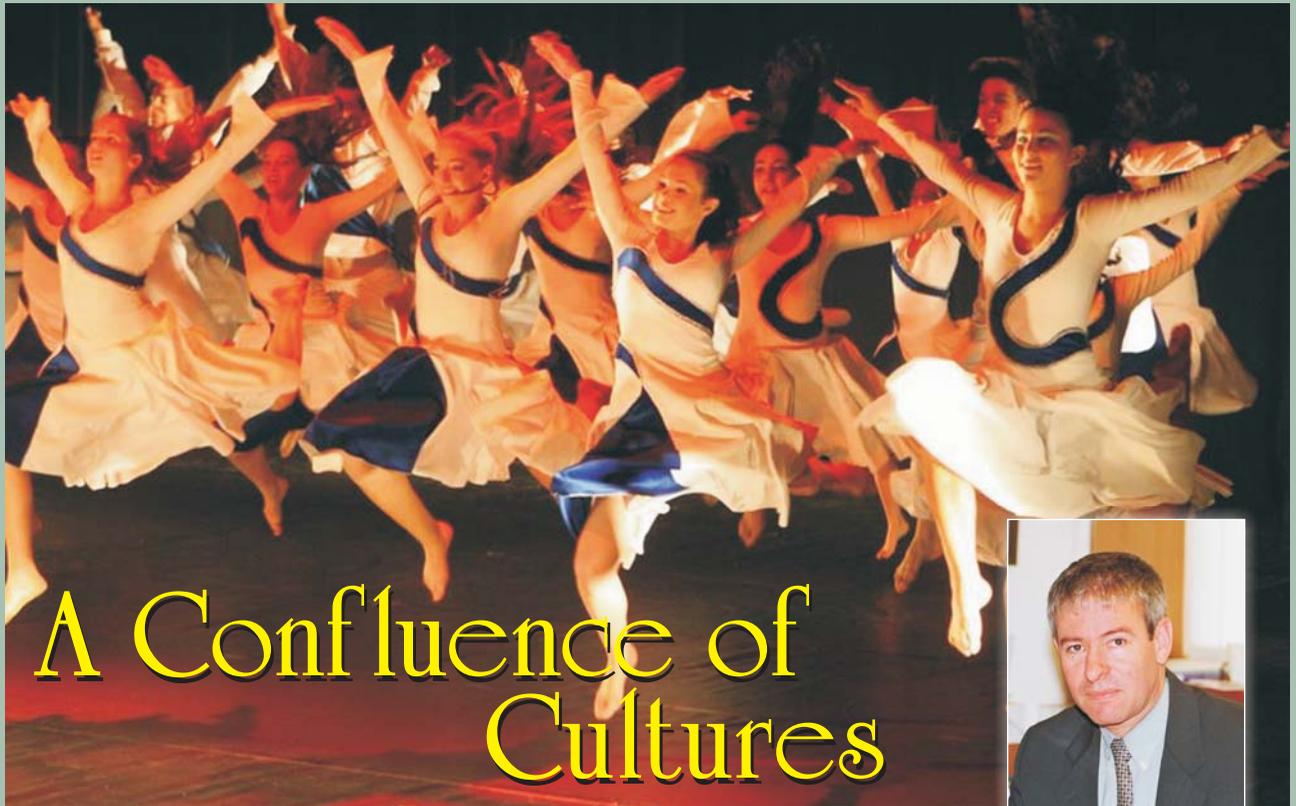
Traditional cultural inheritors of the old Persia

Like the Persian Rug that exhibits numerous colors and forms in a dazzling display of warmth and creativity, Persian culture is the glue that bonds the peoples of western and central Asia. The Caucasus and Central Asia "occupy an important place in the historical geography of Persian civilization. Much of the region was included in the Pre-Islamic Persian empires, and many of its ancient peoples either belonged to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European peoples (e.g. Medes and Soghdians), or were in close cultural contact with them (e.g. the Armenians). In the words of Iranologist Richard Nelson Frye:

"Many times I have emphasized that the present peoples of central Asia, whether Iranian or Turkic speaking, have one culture, one religion, one set of social values and traditions with only language separating them."

The Culture of Persia has thus developed over several thousand years. But historically, the peoples of Islamic Republic of Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan originate from the same or similar stock, and are related to one another as part of the larger group of peoples of Greater Iran. Armenia, Georgia, and Daghestan were also well within the sphere of influence of Persian culture as well, as can be seen from the many remaining relics, ruins, and works of literature from that region.

In particular, Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan have been able to almost fully retain their Persian identity, while the other aforementioned entities still exhibit considerable traces of their Iranian past.



Daniel Zohar Zonshine,
Consul General, Israel

The development of the Israeli culture may be associated with the development of the immigration to it from different countries with different cultural backgrounds. In the first years of colonization of Israel, the main influences on the culture in the settlements were mainly from the Shtetls (Jewish towns) from which most of the immigrants came. The culture of France and Germany also had an impact, becoming more popular after a lot of contributions were made by the Jewish French philanthropist Baron Edmond James de Rothschild.

The Russian culture had an undeniable poetical, musical and theatrical effect until the 1950s. Poets such as Rachel Bluwstein, Nathan Alterman, Leah Goldberg and Alexander Penn; theater people such as Hanna Rovina, or Shimon Finkel; and musicians such as Sasha Argov expressed this in a very prominent way. The "Habima Theatre" which was originally created in Russia immigrated to Israel and habitated theater mainly influenced by the Russian and Yiddish culture.

Israeli culture is heterogeneous, dynamic, and very hard to define. Considerable parts of the secular cultural creations is situated in the Tel Aviv area, although many of the official cultural institutions are situated in Jerusalem. But without a doubt, most of the Israeli culture occurs in these areas, with emphasis on Tel Aviv. Due to population composed from immigrants of five continents and more than 100 different countries, and due to significant subcultures like the Palestinians, the Russians and the

Orthodox, that every one of them encounters about a million people and holds independent communities, including their own newspapers and networks in which they distribute their own products of culture, the Israeli culture is exquisite in its richness and wide variety.

Nowadays the Israeli government supports the arts less and less. The amount of financial support is lower than what is average in most western countries and less than half percent arrives from the country's budget. Israel's Philharmonic Orchestra have concerts throughout the country and occasionally plays abroad too. The Israeli broadcasting authority orchestra performs concerts throughout the world as well. To the local authorities there are many little orchestras, which their players arrive usually from the former Soviet Union. Israel is known world wide in the greatness of its modern dance, with bands like Batsheva and Batdor which perform around the world.

Theatre

Habima Theatre, Cameri Theater, Beit Lessin Theater, Gesher Theater (which performs in Hebrew and in Russian), Haifa Theater and the Beersheba Theater are considered to be the most important in Israel. The repertoire of their shows cover a variety of appearance of classic and modern drama, and likewise from plays of Israeli playwrights. The national theater is the Habima Theatre, which was founded in 1917.

Art

Colonies of artists are situated in Safed, Jaffa and in Ein Hod, but are considered less attractive nowadays. Israeli painters and sculptures sell their works throughout the world. In the cities Tel Aviv, Herzlia and Jerusalem there are art museums, and in many towns and kibbutzim there are smaller museums. The Israel Museum of art in Jerusalem consists of the Dead Sea scrolls and a comprehensive collection of Jewish religious art and popular art.

Newspapers

Israelis are avid newspaper readers. The main newspapers are in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian and English. There are smaller newspapers in French, Polish, Yiddish, Russian, Hungarian and German. Likewise there are many local newspapers in many towns and culture magazines.



Since the 1980s a well developed Alternative Israeli Culture has developed in Israel, in the fields of music, dance, comics, poetry, art etc.

Music

Israeli music is very versatile and combines elements of both western and eastern music. It tends to be very eclectic and contains a wide variety of influences from the Diaspora and more modern cultural importation: Hassidic songs, Asian and Arab pop, especially by Yemenite singers, and israeli hip hop or heavy metal.

Israel is also home to several world-class classical music ensembles such as the Israel Philharmonic, the New Israeli Opera and others.

Also popular are forms of electronic music, including but not limited to trance, hard-trance and goa-trance.

Notable artists from Israel popular in this field are limited but a famous example would be the goa-trance duo Infected Mushroom

Dance

The traditional folk dance of Israel is the Hora, originally an Eastern European circle dance. Israeli folk dancing today is choreographed for recreational as well as performance dance groups.

The Palestinian population's folk dance is the Dabke, a dance of community, often performed at weddings and other joyous occasions, with various versions in different villages and cities.

Modern dance in Israel is a flourishing field, and several Israeli choreographers such as Ohad Naharin are considered to be among the most versatile and original international creators working today. Famous Israeli companies include the Batsheva Dance Company and



the Bat-Dor Dance Company.

People come from all over Israel and many other nations for the annual dance festival in Karmiel, usually scheduled in July. First held in 1988, the Karmiel Dance Festival is the largest celebration of dance in Israel, featuring three or four days and nights of dancing with 5,000 or more dancers and a quarter of a million spectators in the capital of the Galilee. Begun as an Israeli folk dance event, the festivities now include performances, workshops, and open dance sessions for a variety of dance forms and nationalities.

Choreographer Yonatan Karmon created the Karmiel Dance Festival to continue the tradition of Gurit Kadman's Dalia Festival of Israeli dance, which ended in the 1960s. ■

The Great Hub of Renaissance Art & Architecture



The culture of Italy can be found in the Roman ruins remaining in much of the country, the precepts of the Roman Catholic Church, the spirit of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the architecture. It can also be tasted in Italy's food.

Religion

Roman Catholicism is the major religion of Italy. 85 percent of native-born citizens are nominally Catholic. There are mature Protestant and Jewish communities and a growing Muslim community, the latter made up primarily of new immigrants. All religious faiths are provided equal freedom before the law by the constitution. Before the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the state, in the fourth century, the country was officially pagan and worshiped the Roman gods, although there was great religious tolerance.

As Edward Gibbon said in his *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful."

The adoption of Christianity by Constantine in the fourth century led to its becoming the majority religion of the Roman Empire and Italy. The head of the Roman Catholic church, the bishop of Rome, known as the pope, resides in Vatican City, a part of Rome.

Islam, though historically present in Sicily during the Arab

occupation in the middle ages, was almost entirely absent in Italy from the time of that country's unification in 1861, until the 1970s, when the first North African immigrants began to arrive. These North Africans, mostly of Berber or Arab origin, came mainly from heavily Islamic Morocco, though they have been followed in more recent years by Tunisians, Albanians and to a lesser extent, Libyans, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Middle Eastern Arabs, and Kurds.

Visual Art

Italian art describes the visual arts in Italy from ancient times to the present. In Ancient Rome, Italy was a centre for art and architecture. There were many Italian artists during the Gothic and Medieval periods, and the arts flourished during the Italian Renaissance. Later styles in Italy included Mannerism, Baroque and Rococo. Futurism developed in Italy in the 20th century. Florence is a well known city in Italy for its museums of art.

Cinema and theatre

The history of Italian cinema began a few months after the Lumière brothers had discovered it. The first film was a few seconds long and was Pope Leo XIII giving a blessing to the camera. The industry was born between 1903 and 1908 with three companies: the Roman Cines, the Ambrosio of Turin and the Itala Film. Other companies would soon have followed in Milan and in Naples. In a short time these first companies reached a fair producing quality and films were soon sold outside Italy too. The

cinema was later used by Mussolini as a form of propaganda during World War II.

After the war, Italian film was widely recognised and exported until an artistic decline around 1980. World-famous Italian film directors from this period include Vittorio De Sica, Federico Fellini, Sergio Leone, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Michelangelo Antonioni and Dario Argento. Movies include world cinema treasures such as *La dolce vita*, *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* and *Ladri di biciclette*.

Later, the Italian scene has received only occasional international attention, with movies like *La vita è bella* directed by Roberto Benigni and *Il postino* with Massimo Troisi.

Italian theatre can be traced back into the Roman which was heavily influenced by the Greek tradition, and, as with many other literary genres, Roman dramatists tended to adapt and translate from the Greek. For example, Seneca's *Phaedra* was based on that of Euripides, and many of the comedies of Plautus were direct translations of works by Menander. During the 16th century and on into the 18th century *Commedia dell'arte* was a form of improvisational theatre, although it is still performed today. Travelling teams of players would set up an outdoor stage and provide amusement in the form of juggling, acrobatics, and, more typically, humorous plays based on a repertoire of established characters with a rough storyline, called *Canovaccio*.

Music



Music has traditionally been one of the great cultural markers of what it means to be "Italian" and holds an important position in society, in general, and even in politics. The music of Italy range across a broad spectrum, from her renowned opera to modern experimental classical music; and from the traditional music of the many ethnically

diverse region to a vast body of popular music drawn from both native and imported source. Historically, musical developments in Italy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance helped create much music that spread throughout Europe. Innovation in the use of musical scales, harmony, notation, as well as experiments in musical theater led directly not just to opera in the late 16th century, but to classical music forms such as the symphony and concerto, and to later developments in popular music. Today, the entire infrastructure that supports music as a profession is extensive in Italy, including conservatories, opera houses, radio and television stations, recording studios, music festivals, and important centers of musicological research. Musical life in Italy remains extremely active.

Folklore

It's difficult to individuate an Italian folklore, because of the vast differences between regions. In Italy, the following are very important in tradition:

Proverbs and tales, Works and consuetudes, Traditional dresses, Moral values. In 1956, Italo Calvino selected and recorded a collection of folktales in Italian Folktales. ■



Culture As A Visual Display of Delight



Japan is a long thin island, nearly 75 percent of whose terrain is rugged and mountainous and virtually uninhabitable. Approximately 15 percent is devoted to agriculture, leaving only about 10 percent for people to actually live on. Almost 126 million people live in Japan.

Amazingly long and skinny, there is only 200 miles that extends at the widest point and nearly 1800 miles from north to south. The result is an amazing range of weather conditions, from snow bound winters in the north to sub-tropic summers in the south.

As seen on the map of Japan, there are four main islands which are; Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku and over 3900 smaller islands. Mountains, rivers and seas break up the country into hundreds of small regions and micro climates making the land infinitely varied.

Fast paced, energetic and busy, the city streets of Japan rarely seems to rest. Tokyo, the official capital of Japan since 1868 has nearly 12 million people covering approximately 800 square miles.

In contrast, Japanese lifestyle is very reserved from its quiet and uncluttered interiors to its simplistic form of arts - where less is often considered more. However, the modern city streets are quite the paradox. Flashing neon

signs fill the cityscape at night and numerous small restaurants and Japanese shops spill out into the streets.

Dramatic and colorful paper lanterns sway in the breeze in front of shops and paper lanterns are hung in front of restaurants signifying the specialty within. Exciting and stimulating, Japan offers a treasure trove of ever-unfolding surprises and discoveries!

Japan is a pallet of visual texture from red tori gates to a meticulously raked Zen garden and delicate molded Japanese candy. From architecture to the presentation of food, the Japanese approach to design has historically been linear and asymmetrical, with texture and elements deeply emphasized creating a visual display of depth and variety.

Scores of tori gates (shinto shrine archway gates) dramatically compel the eyes and spirit to travel through them.

The rocks of the Zen stone garden emulate islands in a sea of gravel, as the sand is laid out in a ripple like wave effect.

Walls, fences, gates and glazed ceramic japanese roof tiles create a visual landscape of texture and architecture.

Japanese rooms are a composition of line, texture and the play of light. The effect of light and shadows allude to the space beyond.

Japanese candies in a pallet of colors and a variety of shapes are beautifully displayed.

The Japanese presentation of meals is foremost visual and highly thoughtful. Japanese dishes are chosen to highlight, enhance and harmonize the presentation of food. Food is chosen for its color, texture and season and artistically arranged to create a visual display of edible cuisine.

Explore Japanese gardens and Japanese garden designs through pictures of Japanese rock gardens, tea gardens, water gardens, Zen gardens, garden bridges to help understand the design and plan of Japanese gardens.

The Japanese garden is probably one of the most intriguing aspects of Japanese culture and life. View stunning Japanese gardens, Japanese stone lanterns, Zen gardens and listen to beautiful Japanese music and experience the gardens of Japan.

The understatement and simplicity of design add dignity and grace to the Japanese gardens, making a clean and unique statement. The Japanese garden is an interpretation and idealized conception of nature, accompanied with the artistic feeling of the creator.

The essence of the Japanese garden is only complete when it is understood. In Japanese gardens, tufted moss create a cascade of texture and visual enlightenment.

Japanese stone lanterns add mystique, tradition and spirituality. The sand, rock and stone Zen gardens provide a place for quiet reflection and contemplation.

Iris edged yatsubashi (eight fold Japanese bridge) guarantees that time is taken to enjoy the small things in

life that are so easily and quickly overlooked in our fast paced world.

"It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end."

The Japanese stone lantern (tachi-gata - pedestal stone lanterns) accompanied with the crimson colors of the changing Japanese maple tree provides a visual focal delight and creates awareness of the passage of time.

Lastly, a parable involving tea master Sen-no-Rikyu (16th century). He built a garden enclosed by a tall hedge that blocked the view of the sea. The client for whom the garden was built was unhappy - until he bent to wash his hands in the water basin. The sea then became visible in a gap between the hedges and the client smiled.

As the tea master had hoped, the client realized the intent behind the design. As his mind made the connection between the water in the basin and the great ocean and thus between himself and infinite universe.

The Japanese culture is very unique from exotic festivals and foods to traditional art and historic temples. Japan is filled with treasures of folk art from beautiful dishes and lacquer ware to delightful porcelain dolls. Take a glimpse of Japanese culture and art.

Festivals and cultural events are deeply rooted and observed in Japan. Some of the most well known festivals mark the changing of the seasons. The cherry blossom festival celebrates the day of spring.

In May, "Boys Day" festivals now called children's day is a joyful spectacle as colorful flying carp banners are flown.

Japan is filled with historical places and religious artifacts. Stone monuments of Buddha statues and lanterns fill the mountain side of temples and shrines.



Extraordinary fine and folk art crafts delight all from fine porcelain Japanese dolls to intricate kimonos and chiseled stone lanterns.

Japan is a treasure-trove of delectable food and finely hand crafted dishes. The Japanese are well known for their hand crafted ceramic dishes to stunning lacquer bowls, plates, bento box and trays. Japanese dishes are well beloved for their high quality and intricate craftsmanship.

The devotion and appreciation of traditional art flourishes throughout Japan from schools of tea ceremony (chanoyu) and flower arrangement (ikebana) to bonsai, sumo and performing theater arts.

Soft & Sensitive in Style & Substance

The traditional culture of Korea is rich and varied. Apart from the instruments used, traditional Korean music is characterized by improvisation and the lack of breaks between movements. A pansori performance can last for over eight hours during which a single singer performs continuously.

Rather than contrasting different speeds as it is common in Western music, most traditional Korean music begins with the slowest movement and then accelerates as the performance continues.

Korean court music, called jeongak, is closely related to the literate upper-class, and has a strong intellectual emphasis. Jeongak is played at a very slow pace, with single beats taking as long as three seconds. The beat matches the speed of breathing rather than the heartbeat as in most Western music, and feels static and meditative.

Pungmul is Korea's folk music and is full of expressions and emotions. This kind of traditional music is closely related to the lives of common people. As with the Jeongak, improvisation is common in Minsogak.

Dance

As with music, there is a distinction between court dances and folk dances. Common court dances are jeongjaemu performed at banquets, and ilmu, performed at Confucian rituals.

Religious dances include all the performances at shamanistic rites (gut). Secular dances include both group dances and individual performances. Traditional choreography of court dances is reflected in many contemporary productions.

Painting

The earliest paintings found on the Korean peninsula are petroglyphs of prehistoric times. With the arrival of Buddhism from China, different techniques were introduced. These techniques quickly established themselves as the mainstream techniques, but indigenous techniques still survived.

There is a tendency towards naturalism with subjects such as realistic landscapes, flowers and birds being particularly popular. Ink is the most common material used, and it is painted on mulberry paper or silk.



In the 18th century indigenous techniques were advanced, particularly in calligraphy and seal engraving.

Crafts

There is a unique set of handicrafts produced in Korea. Most of the handicrafts are created for a particular everyday use, often giving priority to the practical use rather than aesthetics. Traditionally, metal, wood, fabric, laquerware and earthenware were the main materials used, but later glass, leather or paper have sporadically been used.

Ancient handicrafts, such as red and black pottery, share similarities with pottery of Chinese cultures along the Yellow River. The relics found of the Bronze Age, however, are distinctive and more elaborate.

During the Joseon period popular handicrafts were made of porcelain and decorated with blue painting. Woodcraft was also advanced during that period. This led to more sophisticated pieces of furniture, including wardrobes, chests, tables or drawers.

Ceramics

The use of earthenware on the Korean peninsula goes back to the Neolithic Age. The history of Korean Ceramics is long and includes both Korean

pottery a later development after the traditional use of coils and hammered clay to create early votive and sculptural artifacts. During the Three Kingdoms period, pottery was advanced in Silla. The pottery was fired using a deoxidizing flame, which caused the distinctive blue grey celadon colour. The surface was embossed with various geometrical patterns.

Lifestyle

Sites of residence are traditionally selected using geomancy. It is believed that any topographical configuration generates invisible forces of good or ill (gi). The negative and positive energies (yin and yang) must be brought into balance.

A house should be built against a hill and face south to receive as much sunlight as possible. This orientation is still preferred in modern Korea. Geomancy also influences the shape of the building, the direction it faces and the material it is built of.

Gardens

The principles of temple gardens and private gardens are the same. They generally resemble gardens in China and Japan. This is so, because gardening in East Asia is heavily influenced by Taoism. Taoism emphasizes nature and mystery, paying great attention to the details of the layout. In contrast to Japanese and Chinese gardens, traditional Korean gardens avoid artificialities.

The lotus pond is an important feature in the Korean garden. If there is a natural stream, often a pavilion is built next to it, allowing the pleasure of watching the water. Terraced flower beds are a common feature in traditional Korean gardens.

The Poseokjeong site near Gyeongju was built in the Silla period. It highlights the importance of water in traditional Korean gardens. The garden of Poseokjeong features an abalone-shaped watercourse. During the last days of the Silla

kingdom, the king's guest would sit along the watercourse and chat while wine cups were floated during banquets.

Cuisine

Rice is the staple food of Korea. Having been an almost exclusively agricultural country

until recently, the essential recipes in Korea are shaped by this experience. The main crops in Korea are rice, barley and beans, but many supplementary crops are used. Fish and other seafood are also important because Korea is a peninsula.

Fermented recipes were also developed in early times. These include pickled fish and pickled vegetables. This kind of food provides essential proteins and vitamins during the winter.

For ceremonies and rituals rice cakes are vital. The colouring of the food and the ingredients of the recipes are matched with a balance of yin and yang.

Tea

Tea in Korea dates back over 2000 years. It was part of a number of worship recipes, hoping that the good scents would reach the heavenly gods. Tea was introduced in Korea, when Buddhism was introduced from China, and later gave rise to the Korean Tea Ceremony.

Festivals of the lunar calendar

The traditional Korean calendar was based on the lunisolar calendar. Dates are calculated from Korea's meridian, and observances and festivals are rooted in Korean culture. The Korean lunar calendar is divided into 24 turning points (jeolgi), each lasting about 15 days. The lunar calendar was the timetable for the agrarian society in the past, but is vanishing in the modern Korean lifestyle.

Games

There are a number of board games played in Korea. Baduk is the Korean name for what is known as Go in English. This game is particularly popular with middle-aged and elderly men. It has a similar status as has chess in Western cultures. There is a Korean version of chess called Janggi, based on an old version of Chinese chess. Yut is a popular family board game enjoyed throughout the country, especially during holidays.

No longer commonly played, Chajeon Nori is a traditional game involving two teams of villagers in a giant jousting match. ■



Continental Breakfast, Indian Lunch & Chinese Dinner



Thailesh Chamane
Officer-in-Charge,
Mauritius Consulate

The culture of Mauritius involves the blending of several cultures from Mauritius' history, as well as individual culture arising indigenously.

Mauritius is a multicultural country, but some have observed that it is not yet a nation where people look more in the direction of the land of their forebearers and fail to come to terms with the reality in which they face everyday life. And yet the country has, in essence, its own language (Mauritian or Mauritian Creole) and a thriving literature in that language, its own music and dance (the sega), a special cuisine - it's the land where miscegenation is rich and vibrant but there is a view that the root searching ideology of those in power tries to shroud what is most progressive in the cultural landscape.

Mauritian beer (especially Phoenix, since 1963), is a big part of Mauritian culture.

Folklore And Music

Mauritius is blessed with the sounds and rhythms of the western, eastern and African civilisation which have come across its history. This legacy has been preserved and passed on unscattered through generations. On the other hand, some have meld together to yield unique sounds and rhythms.

The most typical folkloric dance of Mauritius is the "Sega" of African origin. This dance is pulsated by the beat of the ravane, a circular drum, and other rhythmic instruments like the maravane and triangle. Danced and sung by the slaves, the Segga has been adopted by all Mauritians and is played on all occasions. More recently, a new sound, a mixture of the Segga and Reggae music, has found its way into music culture. This fusion music called the Seggae, a melodious and entertaining new rhythm that reflects the mixed aspect of Mauritius, emerged in the 80's. Originally the music of the Rastafaris and the poor suburbs of Port Louis, it has found its way to the nightclubs and the mainstream of Mauritian local music.

There are also traditional music and dances that have been introduced by the Indian and Chinese migrants coming to Mauritius. Few things compare to the refines and elegance of the Indian dances. Dressed in colourful sarees, the dancers execute precise choreographies with



each posture and attitude expressing its own meaning. They are accompanied by the exquisite sound of the sitar and tabla expressing the finest (refined) and magic behind the oriental culture. There are also the very colourful Chinese traditional dance with the ancestral lions and Dragon dances being the best known. The sight of these mystical creatures brought to life by the precision and agility of the dancers is a must to be seen.

Western music is also well represented in the Mauritian culture. This includes the mainstream music amid rap, hip-hop, rock, Jazz band and other more traditional music like the waltz as well as all types of ballroom dancing. There is also a strong following for the 60's to 70's oldies, with the likes of Elvis Presley, Cliff Richard, Engleberd Emperger being part of the national musical heritage. CHHEESE

Cuisine

Mauritius is a paradise for the senses, not only for the eyes



Mauritian cuisine. This can be seen in the Creole cuisine which is a blend of different ingredients and savours. The ever-present creole "rougaille" is served with a number of "achards" (pickles) or dals and rice from Indian origin. There have also been some changes during the last twenty years with the arrival of some fast foods: burgers, pizza and chips.

Anyone visiting the island should try a pair of dhol puri with a large glass of "alouda" or tamarind juice to have a genuine

with its beautiful landscape, but also for the palate. Gastronomes will find a variety of flavours and aromas inherited from the different migrations through its history. Culinary traditions from France, India, China and Africa have been passed on through generations. The story of a Mauritian starting the day with a continental breakfast, followed by an Indian lunch and finishing off with a Chinese dinner is a common cliché.

Mauritius has strong ties with the French culture through its history, which have left a very French style of "savoir vivre". French dishes like the daube, civet de lièvre or coq au vin served with good wine bear the testimony of these traditions. As years passed by, some have been adapted to the more exotic ingredients of the island to confer some unique savour. Mauritius Spices

The end of the 19th century saw the arrival of Chinese migrants, who came mostly from the south-eastern part of China. They originated mostly from the Cantonese region bearing the best reputation in Chinese cuisine for its variety and sophistication. Chinese dishes appeal to the senses through colour, shape, aroma and taste. This tradition of excellence has been preserved and, as such, has conquered the tables of all the other communities. Even if the Chinese community is one of the smallest, its cuisine is the most present in the restaurants around the island. Fried noodles or rice, chopsuey, spring rolls are eaten by everyone. Other such delicacies as the shark fin or abalone soup can only be found in specialised Chinese restaurants. Mauritius: Alouda

Along the years, each community has adapted and mixed each other's cuisine to their liking, which has resulted in a

taste of Mauritius.

Literature

While everyone in Mauritius speaks Kreol Morisyen (Mauritian Creole), most of the literature is written in French, although many authors write in English, Bhojpuri, and Morisyen (Mauritian Creole), and others such as Abhimanyu Unnuth in Hindi. Mauritius's renowned playwright Dev Virahsawmy writes exclusively in Morisyen.

Important authors include Malcolm de Chazal, Ananda Devi, Raymond Chasle, Loys Masson, Marcel Cabon, and Edouard Maunick.[citation needed] Lindsey Collen has been able to carve out a meeting of imaginaries in the unique social setup of this multi-faceted country. Other younger writers like Shenaz Patel, Amal Sewtohol, Natacha Appanah, Alain Gordon-Gentil and Carl de Souza explore the issues of ethnicity, superstition and politics in the novel. Poet and critic Khal Torabully has put forward the concept of "coolitude," a poetics that results from the blend of Indian and Mauritian cultural diversity. Other poets include Hassam Wachill, Edouard Maunick, Sedley Assone, Yusuf Kadel and Umar Timol.

The island plays host to the covetable Le Prince Maurice Prize, a literary award celebrating and recognising 'writers of the heart'. The award is designed to highlight the literary love story in all its forms rather than for pure Romantic Fiction. In keeping with the island's literary culture the prize alternates on a yearly basis between English-speaking and French-speaking writers. ■

Where Rembrandt, Van Gogh Painted & Drew



Hans Ramaker,
Consul General,
Netherlands

The Netherlands is one of the most secular countries in Europe. An estimated 40 percent of the population (1998) call themselves non-

religious. The remaining are 31 percent Roman Catholic, 21 percent Protestant, and 4.4 percent Muslim. Islam has begun to gain a foothold and mosques are being built. The Netherlands is also home to a significant Hindu minority, mostly made up of migrants who came from former colony Suriname after its independence. In the Netherlands, the language is Dutch.

Architecture

The first significant period of Dutch architecture was during the Dutch Golden Age roughly beginning at the start of the 17th century. Due to the thriving economy cities expanded greatly. New town halls and storehouses were built. Merchants who had made a fortune ordered a new house built along one of the many new canals that were dug out in and around various cities and towns (for defense and transport purposes), a house with an ornamented facade that befitted their new status. In the countryside new country houses were built, though not in the same numbers.

At the end of the 19th century there was a remarkable neo-gothic stream or Gothic Revival both in church and in public architecture, notably by the Roman-Catholic Pierre Cuypers, who was inspired by the Frenchman Viollet le Duc. The Amsterdam Rijksmuseum (1876-1885) and Amsterdam Centraal Station (1881-1889) belong to his main buildings. During the 20th century Dutch architects played a leading role in the development

of modern architecture. Out of the early 20th century rationalist architecture of Berlage, architect of the Beurs van Berlage, three separate groups developed during the 1920's, each with their own view on which direction modern architecture should take. Expressionist architects like M. de Klerk and P.J. Kramer in Amsterdam. Functionalist architects (Nieuwe Zakelijkheid or Nieuwe Bouwen) like Mart Stam, L.C. van der Vlugt, Willem Marinus Dudok and Johannes Duiker had good ties with the international modernist group CIAM.

A third group came out of the De Stijl movement, among them J.J.P Oud and Gerrit Rietveld. Both architects later built in a functionalist style.

During the 50's and 60's a new generation of architects like Aldo van Eyck, J.B. Bakema and Herman Hertzberger, known as the 'Forum generation' (named after a magazine called Forum) formed a connection with international groups like Team 10.

From the 80's to the present Rem Koolhaas and his Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) became one of the leading world architects. With him, formed a new generation of Dutch architects working in a modernist tradition.

Flemish or Dutch

Until 1830, the Dutch and Flemish were generally seen as one people. Due to religious wars and the Eighty Years War, a split slowly started to take place. Therefore, historical Flemish and Dutch art are hard to separate. Most artists of the period (like Bruegel) are described as Flemish, even though they might have been born in the present day Netherlands. Some of the most famous indisputably Dutch artists from before the 17th century

are Hieronymus Bosch, a painter, and the brothers de Limbourg, three miniaturists who are most famous for their work for the Duke of Berry.

Golden Age

In the late 16th century, many painters from Flanders fled to the Northern Netherlands, for religious reasons and because the Netherlands were growing economically. Both regions had a golden age of painting in this period. The most famous Dutch painter was Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, but other painters such as Johannes Vermeer and Frans Hals are nowadays world famous as well.

19th and 20th Century

The Dutch artists of the 18th century are less well-known. The most important paintings were the land- and seascapes (or marines). Only at the end of the 19th century did an internationally very important painter, Vincent Van Gogh, appear.

In the 20th century, the Netherlands produced many fine painters and artists, including Piet Mondriaan and some of the members of the COBRA movement, including Karel Appel and Corneille.

Music and dance

The Netherlands have multiple musical traditions ranging from folk and dance to classical music and ballet. In the 21st century Dutchmen and women with an African or Middle Eastern background have also had a profound effect, most notably in hip hop and rap. Much more so than most non-English speaking European countries, the Netherlands has remained closely in tune with American and British trends ever since the 50's.

Aruba and the five main islands of the Netherlands Antilles are part of the Lesser Antilles island chain. Their music is a mixture of native, African and Dutch elements, and is closely connected with trends from neighboring islands like Martinique, Trinidad and Tobago and



Guadeloupe, as well as the mainland former Dutch possession of Suriname, which has exported kaseko music to great success on the islands. Curacao and Bonaire likely have the most active and well-known music scenes. Curacao is known for a kind of music called tumba, which is named after the conga drums that accompany it.

Cuisine

Dutch cuisine is characterized by its somewhat limited diversity; however, it varies greatly from region to region. The southern regions of the Netherlands for example share dishes with Flanders and vice versa. Dutch food is traditionally characterized by the high consumption of vegetables when compared to the consumption of meat. Dairy products are also eaten to a great extent, Dutch cheeses are world renowned with famous cheeses such as Gouda, Edam and Leiden. Dutch pastry is extremely rich and is eaten in great quantities. When it comes to alcoholic beverages wine has long been absent in Dutch cuisine (but this is changing during the last decades); traditionally there are many brands of beer and strong alcoholic liquor such as jenever and brandewijn. The Dutch have all sorts of pastry and cookies (the word "cookie" is in fact derived from Dutch), many of them filled with marzipan, almond and chocolate. A truly huge amount of different pies and cakes can be found, most notably in the southern provinces, especially the so called Limburgish vlaai.

Traditions

One of the most characteristic festivities in the Netherlands is the feast of Saint Nicholas or Sinterklaas. It is celebrated especially in families with little children. In the United States the original figure of Dutch Sinterklaas has merged with Father Christmas into Santa Claus. In the Netherlands, gift-bringing at Christmas has recently gained some popularity too, but good old Sinterklaas is unbeatable. ■



A Unique Signpost at Cultural Crossroads

The unique character of Polish people's lifestyle was shaped over a thousand years of history. The national culture developed at the crossroads of the Latin and Byzantine worlds, in continual dialogue with the many ethnic groups living in Poland.

Architecture

Polish towns reflect the whole spectrum of European styles. Poland's Eastern frontiers used to mark the outermost boundary of the influences of Western architecture on the continent.

Krakow ranks among the best preserved Gothic and Renaissance urban complexes in Europe. In Vilnius (Lithuania) there are about 40 baroque and Renaissance churches. In Lviv (Ukraine) there are Gothic, Renaissance, and baroque urban complexes with influences of the orthodox and Armenian church. Polish church architecture deserves special attention.

There is an one of the best preserved examples of complex Modernist Movement architecture in Europe in Katowice, Upper Silesia, designed and built in the 1930s.

Some interesting buildings were also constructed during the Communist regime in the style of Socialist Realism; some remarkable examples of modern architecture erected recently.

Polish Art

Polish art has always reflected world trends while maintaining its unique character. Jan Matejko's famous school of Historicist painting produced monumental portrayals of significant events in Polish history. Stanislaw Witkiewicz was an ardent supporter of Realism in Polish art, its main representative being Jozef Chelmonski. The Młoda Polska (Young Poland) movement witnessed the birth of modern Polish art, and engaged in a great deal of formal experimentation, led by Jacek Malczewski (Symbolism), Stanislaw Wyspianski, Jozef Mehoffer, and a group of Polish Impressionists. Artists of the twentieth-century Avant-Garde represented various schools and trends. The art of Tadeusz Makowski was influenced by Cubism; while Wladyslaw

Strzeminski and Henryk Stazewski worked within the Constructivist idiom. Distinguished contemporary artists include Roman Opalka, Leon Tarasewicz, Jerzy Nowosielski, Wojciech Studmak, and Miroslaw Balka and Katarzyna Kozyra in the younger generation. The most celebrated Polish sculptors include Xawery Dunikowski, Katarzyna Kobro, Alina Szapocznikow and Magdalena Abakanowicz. Since the inter-war years, Polish art and documentary photography has enjoyed worldwide recognition. In the sixties the Polish Poster School was formed, with Henryk Tomaszewski and Waldemar Swierzy at its head.

Literature

The origins of Polish literature written in the Polish vernacular go back beyond the 14th century. In the 16th century the poetic works of Jan Kochanowski established him as a leading representative of European Renaissance literature. Baroque and Neo-



Classicist belle letters made a significant contribution to the cementing of Poland's peoples of many cultural backgrounds. The early 19th century novel "Manuscript Found in Saragossa" by Count Jan Potocki, which survived in its Polish translation after the loss of the original in French, became a world classic. Wojciech Has' film based on it, a favourite of Luis Bunuel, later became a cult film on university campuses. Poland's great Romantic literature flourished in the 19th century when the country had lost its independence.

The poets Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Slowacki and Zygmunt Krasinski, the "Three Bards," became the spiritual leaders of a nation deprived of its sovereignty, and prophesied its revival. The novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz, who won the Nobel Prize in 1905, eulogised the historical tradition. It is difficult to grasp fully the detailed tradition of Polish Romanticism and its consequences for Polish literature without a thorough knowledge of Polish history.

In the early 20th century many outstanding Polish literary works emerged from the new cultural exchange and Avant-Garde experimentation. The legacy of the Kresy Marchlands of Poland's Eastern regions with Wilno and Lwow (now Vilnius and Lviv) as two major centres for the arts, played a special role in these developments. This was also a region in which Jewish tradition and the mystic movement of Hasidism thrived. The Kresy were a cultural trusting-place for numerous ethnic and national groups whose achievements were inspiring each other. The works of Bruno Schulz, Boleslaw Leœmian, and Jozef Czechowicz were written there. In the south of Poland, Zakopane was the birthplace of the avant-garde works of Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy). And, last but not least, there was Wladyslaw Reymont awarded 1924 Nobel prize in literature for his novel *Chłopi* (The Peasants).

After the Second World War many Polish writers found themselves in exile, with many of them clustered around the Paris-based "Kultura" publishing venture run by Jerzy Giedroyc. The group of emigre writers included Witold Gombrowicz, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, Czeslaw Milosz, and Slawomir Mrozek.

Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Rozewicz, Czeslaw Milosz (Nobel Prize in 1980), and Wislawa Szymborska (Nobel Prize in 1996) are among the most outstanding 20th century Polish poets, including novelists and playwrights Witold Gombrowicz, Slawomir Mrozek, and Stanislaw Lem (science fiction). The long list includes Hanna Krall whose reportage focuses mainly on the war-time Jewish experience, and Ryszard Kapuœcinski with books translated into many languages.

Music

The music of Fryderyk Chopin, inspired by Polish tradition and folklore, conveys the quintessence of Romanticism. Since 1927, the International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition has been held every five years in Warsaw. Contemporary Polish jazz with its special national flavour has fans and followers in many countries.

Cinema

Graduates of the famous Lodz Film School include many celebrated directors, among them Roman Polanski (*Knife in the Water*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Frantic*, *The Pianist*) and Krzysztof Zanussi, a leading director of the cinema of moral anxiety of the 70s. Andrzej Wajda's films offer an insightful analysis of what is universal in the Polish experience - the struggle to maintain human dignity under circumstances which hardly allow it. His major films describe the identity of many of Poland's generations. In 2000 Wajda was awarded an Oscar for his contribution to cinema. In the 90s the films of Krzysztof Kieœlowski, such as *The Decalogue* (made for television), *The Double Life of Veronique* and the *Three Colors* trilogy, won great popularity. Other Polish film directors such as Agnieszka Holland and Janusz Kaminski have worked in Hollywood as well. Polish animated films - represented by Jan Lenica and Zbigniew Rybczynski (awarded an Oscar in 1983) - have a long tradition, and derive inspiration from Poland's graphic arts.

Theatre

The Polish avant-garde theatre is world-famous, with Jerzy Grotowski as its most innovative and creative representative. One of the most original twentieth-century theatre personalities was Tadeusz Kantor, painter, theoretician of drama, stage designer, and playwright, his ideas finding their culmination in the theatre of death and his most recognised production being "Umarla klasa" (Dead Class).

Museums and Festivals Poland offers a wide spectrum of cultural experience. Those interested in high culture will enjoy the renowned music festivals like *Wratistavia Cantans* and the *Warsaw Autumn*. Polish museums exhibit remarkable art collections - masterpieces including Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine* at the Czartoryski Museum in Krakow; the *Veit Stoss High Altar* in St. Mary's Basilica, Krakow; and the *Last Judgement* by Hans Memling (The National Museum in Gdansk). Ethnographic museums and open-air site-seeing museums also hold attractive collections. The panorama of Polish culture is completed by a medley of local festivals.

A Folk Land of Music, Dance, Merry-Making & Much Eating

The culture of Romania is rich and varied. Like Romanians themselves, it is fundamentally defined as the meeting point of three regions: Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans, but cannot be fully included in any of them.

The Romanian identity formed on a substratum of mixed Roman and quite possibly Dacian elements (although the latter is controversial), with many other influences. During late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the major influences came from the Slavic peoples who migrated and settled in nearby Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine and eventually Poland and Russia; from medieval Greeks and the Byzantine Empire; from a long domination by the Ottoman Empire; from the Hungarians; and from the Germans living in Transylvania.

Modern Romanian culture emerged and developed over roughly the last 250 years under a strong influence from Western culture, particularly French and German culture.

Traditions

The most striking thing about Romanian culture is the strong folk traditions which have survived to this day due to the rural character of the Romanian communities, which has resulted in an exceptionally vital and creative traditional culture. Romania's rich folk traditions have been nourished by many sources, some of which predate the Roman occupation. Traditional folk arts include wood carving, ceramics, weaving and embroidery of costumes, household decorations, dance, and richly varied folk music.

Ethnographers have tried to collect in the last two centuries as many elements as possible: the Museum of the Romanian Peasant and the Romanian Academy are currently the main institutions which systematically organise the data and continue the research.

Wood used to be the main construction material, and heavily ornamented wooden

objects were common in old houses. In Maramures wood was used to create impressive structures such as churches or gates, in Dobruja windmills were made of wood, and in mountainous regions hardwood was used even for covering the roof. To preserve traditional houses many village museums have been created in the last century throughout Romania, such as the Village Museum in Bucharest, the Traditional Popular Civilisation ASTRA Museum in Sibiu or the Oltenian Village Museum in Ramnicu Valcea.

Music & Dance

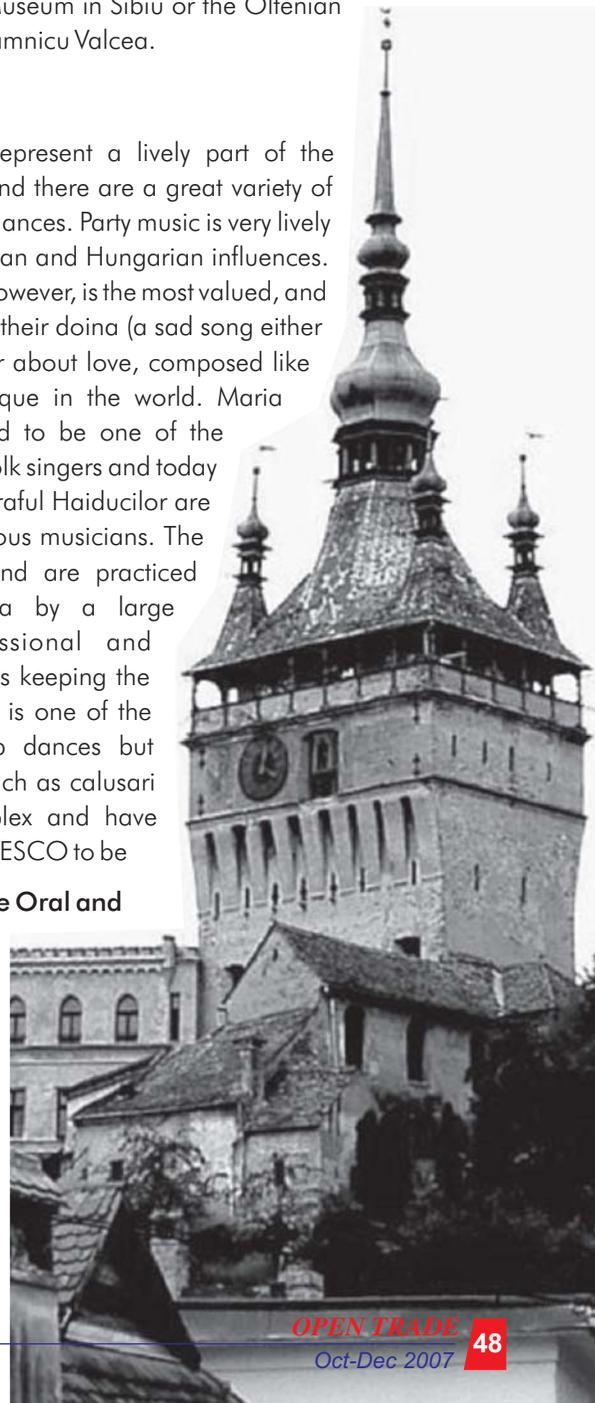
Music and dance represent a lively part of the Romanian folklore and there are a great variety of musical genres and dances. Party music is very lively and shows both Balkan and Hungarian influences. Sentimental music, however, is the most valued, and Romanians consider their doina (a sad song either about one's home or about love, composed like an epic ballad) unique in the world. Maria Tanase is considered to be one of the greatest Romanian folk singers and today Grigore Lese and Tariful Haiducilor are two of the most famous musicians. The dances are lively and are practiced throughout Romania by a large number of professional and amateur groups, thus keeping the tradition alive; Hora is one of the most famous group dances but men's folk dances such as calusari are extremely complex and have been declared by UNESCO to be

"Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritages of Humanity".

Romanians have had, from time immemorial, a myriad of customs, tales and poems about love, faith,



Casandu Paparioiu,
Consul General, Romania



kings, princesses, and witches. Ethnologists, poets, writers and historians have tried in recent centuries to collect and to preserve tales, poems, ballads and have tried to describe as well as possible the customs and habits related to different events and times of year. Customs related to certain times of year are the colinde - Romanian Christmas carols, sorcova on New Year's Eve or the Martisor custom on the 1st of March marking the spring. Other customs are presumably of pre-Christian pagan origin, like the Paparuda rain enchanting custom in the summer, or the masked folk theatre or Ursul (the bear) and Capra (the goat) in winter.

Perhaps the most successful collector of folk tales was the novelist and storyteller Ion Creanga, who, in very picturesque language, shaped into their now-classic form stories like Harap Alb (roughly, "The White Prince") or Fata babei si fata mosneagulu (roughly, "The old woman's girl and the old man's girl"). Also, the poet Vasile Alecsandri published the most successful version of the ballad Miorita (The Little Ewe), a sad, philosophical poem, centered around a simple action: the plot by two shepherds to kill a third shepherd because they envied his wealth. Another prolific editor of folk tales was Petre Ispirescu, who, in the 19th century published an impressive number of volumes containing a large number of short novels and tales from popular mythology. They are centered around popular characters like the prince Fat-Frumos (the Romanian "Prince Charming"), the princess Ileana Cosanzeana, the villain or monster Zmeu or Capcaun, the dragon Balaur or fantastic super beings like the good Zana and the evil Muma Padurii.

Spirituality and religion

Romanian spirituality is greatly influenced by its strong connections with the Eastern Christian world. Romanians have thus obtained a unique sense of identity and two clichés can simply express this: An island of Latinity in a Slavic sea and The only Orthodox Christian Latin people. There are only a few Romanian Catholics (of both the Roman and Greek rites) and a small number of Protestants, the vast majority of Romanians being Romanian Orthodox (over 90 percent) despite the diminishing importance of the church in recent generations, it remains the most trusted institution in Romania. Church attendance is high in rural communities and among the elders in the cities. Also, despite accusations of collaborationism with the communist regime, which continue to plague the Romanian Church, outstanding personalities have kept their verticality and became widely respected like the priest Dumitru Staniloae who is considered one of the greatest world theologians in the recent period.

Traditional cuisine

Romanians like to eat, and they eat a lot with a great diversity. An existential Romanian question is: Do we live to eat, or eat to live? A great number of proverbs and sayings have developed around the activity of eating. From the innocent child's thank you: "Thank you



for the meal, it was good and tasty, and the cook was fat", to the more philosophical "Thank you Lord, for I have eaten, but I am hungry again", "Love passes through the stomach", or the simple "Appetite comes while eating" or "The pig would eat anything but it gets fat for others" or the expression of total fulfillment, "Ate well, drank well, in the morning woke up dead".

Recipes bear the same influences as the rest of Romanian culture: from Roman times there still exists the simple pie called, in Romanian, plăcintă and keeping the initial meaning of the Latin word placenta. The Turks brought meatballs (fried mititei in a soup called a ciorba); from the Greeks there is the musaca (mousaka); from the Bulgarians, a wide variety of vegetable dishes like zacuscă; from the Austrians there is the schnitzel and covrigi (hot pretzels); from the Hungarians, their ornate pastries; and the list could go on.

Wine is the main drink and has a tradition of over two millennia. Romania is currently the world's ninth largest wine producer, and recently the exports have started to grow. A wide variety of domestic (Fetească, Grasă, Tămâioasă) and worldwide (Italian Riesling, Merlot, Sauvignon blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Muscat Ottonel) varieties are produced. Also Romania is the world's second largest grower of plums, and almost all of those plums becomes either the famous țuică (a once-refined plum brandy) or palincă (twice-or-more-refined plum brandy). Also beer is highly appreciated, generally blonde pilsener beer, after the German style. ■

A Multi-Cuisine Culinary Delight



Kamil R. Galiev
Russian Trade Commissioner

The culture of Russia is a hybrid one created from the cultures of the nationalities of this multinational state and the result of development over several distinct epochs.

Historically, the dominating position in Russia is occupied by the Russian culture, the culture of Russian language and Russian nationality; this is partly because

Russians constitute the vast majority of the population in the country, and partly because many times in the History of Russia the cultures of other nationalities were suppressed through russification, see for instance Ems Ukaz.

The politics of the Soviet Union with respect to culture was controversial: on one side there was a politically-motivated desire to create a "Soviet people", which was expressed in the notion of Soviet culture, exemplified by Socialist Realism. From the other side there were periodical campaigns of preservation of national cultures: every ethnicity had "great national writers" and folk cultural practices were officially supported.

Russian cuisine

Russian cuisine derives its rich and varied character from the vast and multicultural expanse of Russia. Its foundations were laid by the peasant food of the rural population in an often harsh climate, with a combination of plentiful fish, poultry, game, mushrooms, berries, and honey. Crops of rye, wheat, barley, and millet provided the ingredients for a plethora of breads, pancakes, cereals,

kvass, beer, and vodka. Flavourful soups and stews centred on seasonal or storable produce, fish, and meats. This wholly native food remained the staples for the vast majority of Russians well into the 20th century. Lying on the northern reaches of the ancient Silk Road, as well as Russia's close proximity to the Caucasus, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire has provided an inescapable Eastern character to its cooking methods (not so much in European Russia but distinguishable in the North Caucasus).

Russia's great expansions of territory, influence, and interest during the 16th-18th centuries brought more refined foods and culinary techniques. It was during this period that smoked meats and fish, pastry cooking, salads and green vegetables, chocolate, ice cream, wines, and liquor were imported from abroad. At least for the urban aristocracy and provincial gentry, this opened the doors for the creative integration of these new foodstuffs with traditional Russian dishes. The result is extremely varied in technique, seasoning, and combination.

From the time of Catherine the Great, every family of influence imported both the products and personnel - mainly German, Austrian, and French - to bring the finest, most rare, and most creative foods to their table. This is nowhere more evident than in the exciting, elegant, highly nuanced, and decadent repertoire of the Franco-Russian chef. Many of the foods that are considered in the West to be traditionally Russian actually come from the Franco-Russian cuisine of the 18th and 19th centuries and include such widespread dishes as Veal Orloff, Beef Stroganoff, and Sharlotka (Charlotte Russe).

Soups



Soups have always played an important role in the Russian meal. The traditional range of soups such as shchi, borscht, ukha, rassolnik, solyanka, botvin', okroshka, and teur' was enlarged in the 18th to 20th centuries by both European and Central Asian staples like clear soups, pureed soups, stews, and many others.

Russian soups can be divided into at least 7 large groups:

Cold soups based on kvas, such as teur', okroshka, and botvin'ya. Light soups and stews based on water and vegetables. Noodle soups with meat, mushroom, and milk. Soups based on cabbage, most prominently Shchi. Thick soups based on meat broth, with a salty-sour base like rassolnik and solyanka.

Fish soups such as ukha and kal'ya. Grain- and vegetable-based soups.

Main Dishes Meat

In traditional Russian cuisine three basic variations of meat dishes can be highlighted: - large boiled piece of meat cooked in a soup or porridge, and then used as second course or served cold as a snack:

Studen' (or Kholodets) - Jellied chopped pieces of pork or veal meat with some spices added (pepper, parsley, garlic, bay leaf) and minor amounts of vegetables (carrots, onions). The meat is boiled in large pieces for long periods of time, then chopped, boiled a few times again and finally chilled for 3-4 hours (hence the name) forming a jelly mass, though gelatine is not used because young meat contains enough glue substances. It is served with horse radish, mustard or grinded garlic with smetana.

- Sub-product dishes (liver, caul fat, rennet), baked in pots together with cereals;
- Whole animal (bird) dishes or it's part (leg), or large piece of meat (rump) baked on a baking tray in a stove, so called "zharkoye" (from

the word "zhar" meaning "heat")

As a garnish to meat dishes in the past the most common were porridges and cereals, in which the meat was boiled, later on boiled or rather steamed and baked root vegetables (turnips, carrots) as well as mushrooms; additionally the meat, without taking account its type, was garnished with pickled products - pickled cabbage (sauerkraut), sour and soaked apples (mochoniye yabloki), soaked cranberries, "vzvar"s. In modern day conditions baked vegetables to accompany meat dishes can be cooked in foil. Succus formed in the meat roasting as well as melted "smetana" or melted butter is used as gravy to pour on garnishing vegetables and porridges. Meat sauces i.e. gravies on flour, butter, eggs and milk, are not common for traditional Russian cuisine.

Various minced meat dishes were adopted from other cuisines and became popular only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; for traditional Russian cuisine they are not typical.

Kotlety (cutlets, meat cakes), a Western European dish popular in modern Russian households, are small pan-fried meatloaves, not dissimilar from Salisbury steak and other such dishes. Made primarily from pork and beef (sometimes also from chicken or fish), they are easily made and require little time. Milk, onions, ground beef, and pork are put in a bowl and whisked thoroughly until it becomes relatively consistent. Once this effect is achieved, the hands are usually powdered with flour to keep the mixture from sticking while you reach to form them into balls (or any shape you'd like, really) and then put into a hot frying pan to cook. When meat was in short supply, a portion of it could be substituted with bread to protect the size and flavour of the katlyeti.

Pelmeni are a traditional Eastern European (mainly Russian) dish usually made with minced meat filling, wrapped in thin dough (made out of flour and eggs, sometimes with milk or water added). For filling, pork, lamb, beef, or any other kind of meat can be used; mixing several kinds is popular. Traditional Ural recipe requires the filling be made with 45% of beef, 35% of lamb, and 20% of pork. Often various spices, such as pepper, onions, and garlic, are mixed into the filling. ■



A Rich Mix of Diverse Cultures at Their Best



As Singapore is a small and relatively modern amalgam of Chinese, Malay, Indian and European immigrants, the culture of Singapore expresses the diversity of the population as the various ethnic groups continue to celebrate their own cultures while they intermingle with one another. For example, one can find a Malay wedding taking place beside a Chinese funeral at a void deck, on the ground floor of a HDB apartment block. This can be said to be due to the policies of the HDB which tried to make sure all public housing have a diverse mix of races. However, Singapore has achieved a significant degree of cultural diffusion with its unique combination of these ethnic groups, and has given Singapore a rich mixture of diversity for its young age.

Singapore has several distinct ethnic neighborhoods, including Little India, Chinatown and Kampong Glam, formed by the Raffles Plan of Singapore in the early 19th century to segregate the new immigrants into specific areas. Although the population are no longer segregated in distribution, mainly due to the policies of the Housing Development Board and the ruling People's Action Party, these ethnic neighborhoods retain unique elements of their specific culture. The usage of such neighborhoods is mostly commercial or for cottage industry specific to the culture of its ethnic neighborhood, and no longer plays a large part in housing the population, although it was once used for that purpose. Hence, these neighborhoods have patronage of all races who wish to either eat or buy

something specific to that culture.

For example, Little India is known and patronized by all races within the population for its thalis-- South Indian "buffets" that are vegetarian and served on the traditional banana leaves. These neighborhoods are accessible by public transport, especially by Mass Rapid Transit (MRT).

In other parts of the country, such segregation is discouraged by government policy. The policies of the Housing Development Board are designed to encourage a mix of all races within each housing district, with a quota system in place to achieve a minimum of minorities in each block. This effect can be observed in all parts of the country; for example a store devoted to selling Malay food might be right next to stores selling Chinese or Indian goods. The aim is to foster social cohesion and national loyalty, which Lee Kuan Yew felt was crucial for sustaining Singapore after independence when he was Prime Minister. There is a weighty emphasis on racial harmony and subsequent case study of historical events, such as the 1964 Race Riots.

Culture

Singapore is a small and relatively modern amalgam of an indigenous Malay population with a third generation Chinese majority, as well as Indian and Arab immigrants with some intermarriages. There also exist Eurasian and Peranakan (known also as 'Straits Chinese') communities. Singapore has also achieved a significant degree of

cultural diffusion with its unique combination of these ethnic groups, and this has given Singapore a rich mixture of diversity for its young age. One of the prime examples is in Singaporean cuisine, often a cultural attraction for tourists.

The English used is primarily British English, with some American English influences. The local colloquial dialect of English is Singlish, which has many creole-like characteristics, having incorporated vocabulary and grammar from various Chinese dialects, Malay, and Indian languages.

Singapore has several ethnic neighbourhoods, including Little India and Chinatown. These were formed under the Raffles Plan to originally segregate the immigrants, but now have a diverse patronage whose main intentions are to either eat or buy something specific to that culture. Many places of worship were also constructed during the colonial era, a practice encouraged by the British to promote religious tolerance. Sri Mariamman Temple, the Masjid Jamae Mosque and the Church of Gregory the Illuminator are among those that were built during the colonial period. Work is now underway to preserve these religious sites as National Monuments of Singapore. The policy for the primarily commercial ethnic neighbourhoods stands in contrast to the housing policies of the Housing and Development Board (HDB). HDB policies attempt to promote a mix of all races within each housing district in order to foster social cohesion and national loyalty.

Cuisine

Singaporean cuisine is also a prime example of diversity and cultural diffusion in Singapore. In Singapore's hawker centres, for example, traditionally Malay hawker stalls selling halal food may serve halal versions of traditionally Tamil food. Chinese stalls may introduce Malay ingredients, cooking techniques or entire dishes into their range of catering. This continues to make the cuisine of Singapore significantly rich and a cultural attraction.

Favorite local food include:

Bak kut the, Char kway teow, Hainanese chicken rice, Hokkien mee, Ketupat, Laksa, Nasi lemak Rojak, Roti prata, Satay.

Singaporeans also enjoy a wide variety of seafood including crabs, clams, squid, and oysters. One favorite dish is the stingray barbecued and served on banana

leaf and with sambal (chilli).

Performing arts

Singapore is emerging as a cultural centre for arts and culture, including theatre and music. As a cosmopolitan and multi-racial society, Singapore is often identified with the "gateway between the East and West". In the past decade, there is an emergence of several performing arts groups in Singapore, especially in theatrical arts. A number of productions were staged successfully and several groups, such as TheatreWorks, have performed in overseas.

The Singapore government encourages a product-oriented arts scene within its master plan to include arts as a commodity for its economy, true explorations and innovation exist but at a level that is not well funded.

Singapore hosts an annual Singapore Arts Festival when international and local artists gather in the country to perform in a wide variety of events including music, dance and theatre. The Singapore Arts Festival has become an event for Singapore to showcase its ability to buy international renowned performing arts products.

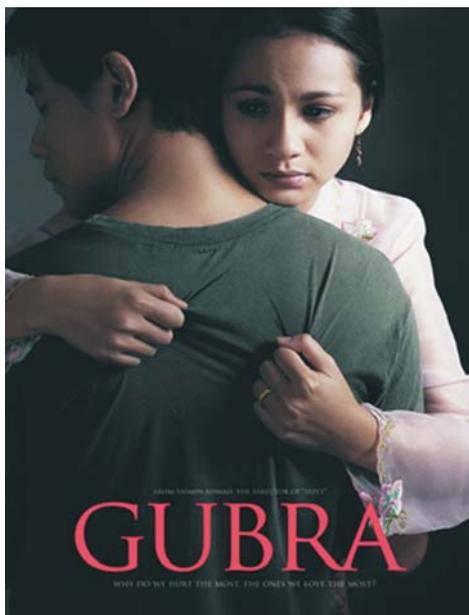
In 2003, the Esplanade - "Theatres on the Bay", a centre for performing arts, was opened. The Esplanade is also known as "The Durian", due to its resemblance to the fruit.

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) and LASALLE College of the Arts are the two main arts institutions offering full-time programmes for the performing arts in Singapore. Institutions including government schools nowadays receive good funding for their arts programmes.

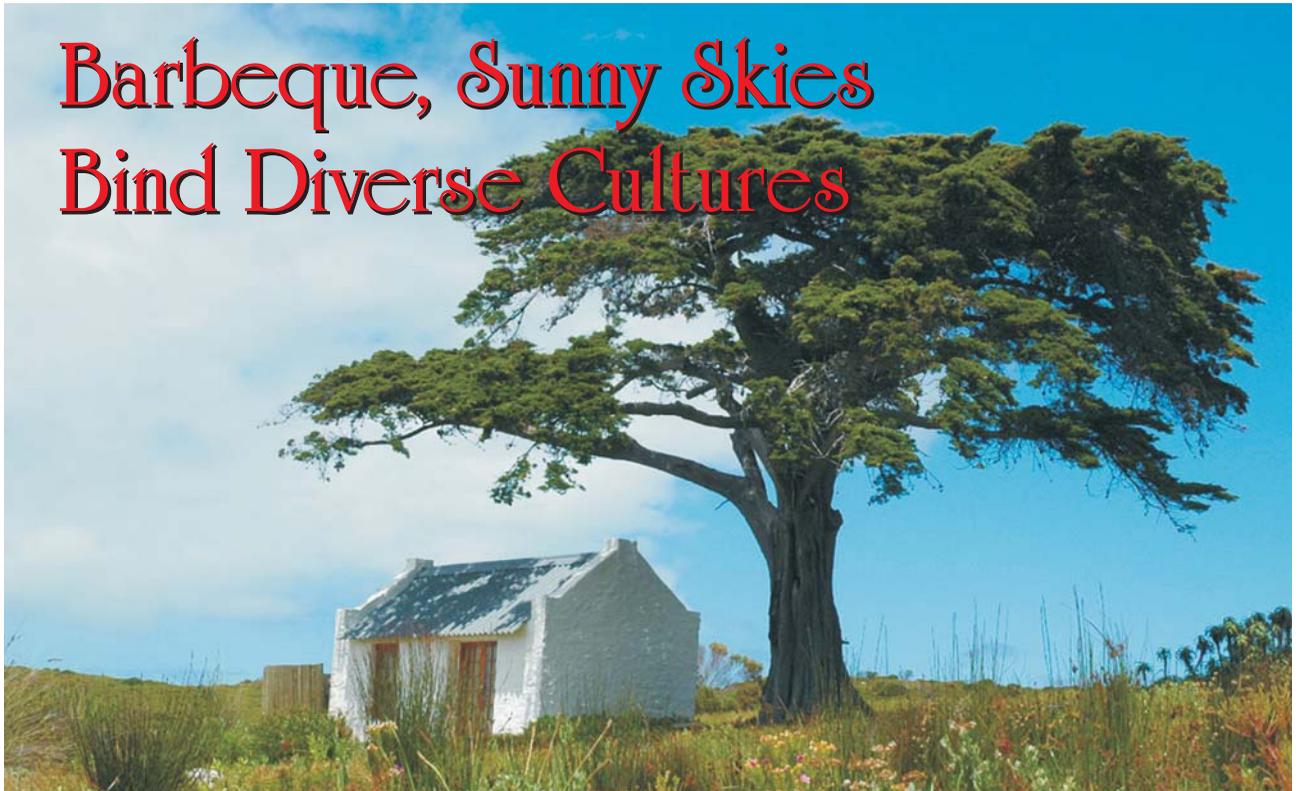
Movies

Two important pioneers in local film-making are Eric Khoo and Jack Neo, both of whom produced several popular movies depicting unique cultural and social aspects of the country, especially concerning the lives of Singapore heartlanders. In particular, the movie *I Not Stupid* struck an emotional chord among many Singaporeans as its story highlighted many of the issues they face in an increasingly competitive society.

On 13 December 2003, 10 year old Megan Zheng became the first Singaporean actress to win the Taipei Film Festival Golden Horse Award for Best New Performer (co-recipient) with her role in Jack Neo's movie *Homerun*. ■



Barbeque, Sunny Skies Bind Diverse Cultures



There is no single Culture of South Africa. As South Africa is so ethnically diverse, it is not surprising that there are vast cultural differences as well.

Main Cultural differences

Because of the legacy of Apartheid segregation, many cultural differences correspond closely to the racial groups defined by Apartheid (Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, Asians). This may change as assimilation progresses, although currently (2004) many cultural differences between Apartheid-defined racial groups persist.

Black people

The country's black majority still has a substantial number of rural inhabitants who lead largely impoverished and necessarily simple lives. However, blacks are increasingly urbanised and westernised, and usually speak English or Afrikaans in addition to their native tongue, which may be one of nine Bantu languages with official status since 1994. These include the Nguni languages, Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Swazi, and Tsonga, and the Sotho languages, which include Tswana, Sotho, Northern Sotho and Venda. Cultural differences between speakers from the two language groups are comparable to those between speakers of German and Italian. Many urban blacks speak several indigenous languages, with Zulu being a lingua franca in the Johannesburg area.

Most are Christian, with membership of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches being strong as is membership of the predominantly black Zion Christian Church, although many still follow traditional beliefs, many often consulting a sangoma.

Vibrant Music

There is a vibrant indigenous culture, with local popular music forms, such as kwaito, locally mixed house while black South African musicians such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Mahotella Queens, Miriam Makeba, and Hugh Masekela are well known internationally.

White people

The white minority lead lifestyles similar in many respects to whites found in Europe, North America and Australasia, with sport being immensely popular. The braai (short for braaivleis or barbecue) is another national pastime, epitomised by an old advertising slogan for Chevrolet cars in the 1960s: Braaivleis, rugby, sunny skies and Chevrolet.

Religious beliefs are also strong, with most Afrikaners adhering to the Dutch Reformed Church. Most English-speaking whites are either Anglican or Roman Catholic. Perhaps 90,000 whites are Jewish, with a similar number being of Portuguese origin. There are some Greeks and Christian Lebanese.

Apartheid was abandoned as a policy by the government

when 68 percent of voters supported change in a whites only referendum.

According to research by FutureFact on the evolving South African consumer, Afrikaans speakers have shown the most radical change in political outlook of all groups in South Africa since 1994. Afrikaans speakers are 300 percent more accepting of affirmative action in 2004 than they were in 2000. This contrasts with the total population which has not shown radically increased support for the concept.

Coloured (Mixed-Race) people

The mixed-race Coloureds are, culturally speaking, much closer to whites, especially Afrikaans speakers, whose language and religious beliefs they share, than they are to black South Africans, despite suffering considerable discrimination under apartheid. A small minority of Coloureds, known as Cape Malays are Muslim. Well known members of the community include Springboks rugby players Chester Williams and Breyton Paulse and jazz musicians Jonathan Butler and Abdullah Ibrahim (also known as Dollar Brand).

Asian people

Asians, (predominantly of Indian origin) preserve their own cultural heritage, languages and religious beliefs, being either Hindu or Muslim, and speak English, with Indian languages like Tamil, Hindi, Telugu or Gujarati being spoken less frequently.

Although Indian languages are seldom spoken or understood, English-subtitled Bollywood films and television programmes are popular among South African Indians.

There is a much smaller Chinese community in South Africa, although its numbers have been increased by immigration from Taiwan (although the Taiwanese were classified as "White", rather than Asian by the Apartheid regime.)

Food

The braai or barbecue is widely popular, especially with whites, and includes meat, especially boerewors or spicy sausages, and mielies (maize) or Mielie-meal, often as a porridge, or pearl millet, a staple food of black South Africans. Pastries such like koeksusters and desserts like melktert (milk tart) are also universally popular. Vegetarianism is becoming widely accepted.

Another favourite among most South Africans is biltong, a form of dried meat usually made from beef or game, and often consumed while watching sporting events.

Indian food like curry is also popular, especially in Durban with its large Indian population. Another local

Indian Durban speciality is the 'bunny' or bunny chow, which consists of a hollowed-out loaf of white bread filled with curry. Cape Malay dishes have their origins in Southeast Asia. Bobotie is a popular dish (originating in Europe) which was adapted to suit the Cape Malay palate. It is made from curried lamb, fruit and bread, served with rice, and sosatie, a type of barbecued meat. More recently, Pakistani and Indian restaurants have been opened in major cities by recent immigrants, and provide a more "authentic" South Asian dining experience.

The Portuguese community has also made its mark, with spicy peri-peri chicken being a favourite. The South African Portuguese-themed restaurant chain Nando's now has restaurants in the UK, Australia, Malaysia and Kenya.

TV and films

Television, which for political reasons was not introduced in South Africa until 1976, is also popular. Traditionally, U.S. programmes have dominated TV schedules. Programmes like *The Bold and the Beautiful* have been popular with South Africans of all races, but locally produced soap operas or 'soapies' now draw a large audience and are exported all over Africa. The SABC drama series *Shaka Zulu*, based on the true story of the Zulu warrior King Shaka, was shown around the world in the 1980s, but had to be marketed by a US distributor.

While many foreign films have been produced about South Africa (usually involving race relations), few local productions are known outside South Africa itself. One exception was the film *The Gods Must Be Crazy* in 1980, set in the Kalahari. This is about how life in a traditional community of Bushmen is changed when a Coke bottle, thrown out of an aeroplane, suddenly lands from the sky. The late Jamie Uys, who wrote and directed *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, also had success overseas in the 1970s with his films *Funny People* and *Funny People II*, similar to the TV series *Candid Camera* in the US. Leon Schuster's *You Must Be Joking!* films are in the same genre, and hugely popular among South Africans.

Other notable exceptions are the film *Tsotsi*, which won the Academy Award for Foreign Language Film at the 78th Academy Awards in 2006 as well as *U-Carmen e-Khayelitsha*, which won the Golden Bear at the 2005 Berlin International Film Festival.

In 2004, the New South African TV channel (NSAT) began broadcasting on Sky Digital in the UK, thereby reaching the large (predominantly white) expatriate community, showing a mix of South African entertainment, films, sport and news coverage. ■



Alps That Tap World's Top Creative Talent

The culture of Switzerland is influenced by its neighbours, but over the years a distinctive culture with strong regional differences has developed. Traditionally Switzerland is not considered one of the centres of European culture.

A number of Swiss have chosen to move abroad, in the past mainly seeking better economic prospects, in modern times as the country is small and also as some wish to seek the excitement and adventure they feel is present outside their homeland. Certain professions, such as architecture, seem to be more promising outside Switzerland, whereas in the medical, watchmaking, and finance fields Switzerland is now importing many of its workers.

Inflow of Creative Talent

At the same time, the neutrality of Switzerland has attracted many creative people from all over the world. In war times the tradition of political asylum helped to attract artists. Recently low taxes, a highly developed infrastructure, a reputation for safety and security, good economic prospects, and beautiful scenery seem predominant in attracting immigrants whether legal or illegal. During the rise of fascism in the 1930s and 1940s a number of German, Austrian, Italian and English writers have sought refuge in Switzerland, such as Thomas Mann, Stefan George, Herman Hesse, Ignazio Silone and James Joyce.

Strong regionalism in Switzerland makes it difficult to

speak of a homogeneous Swiss culture. The influence of German, French and Italian culture on their neighbouring parts cannot be denied. The Rhaeto-Romanic culture in the eastern mountains of Switzerland is robust.

Folk Arts

Folk art is kept alive in organizations all over the country. In Switzerland it is mostly expressed in music, dance, poetry, wood carving and embroidery. There are also a great number of regional and local rites demarcating times of the year. Yodeling, despite being stereotypical for Switzerland, is not widely spread and limited to some mountain areas. The same is true for the accordion which is sometimes called *Schwiizerörgeli* rather than *Handorgel* in German, implying that it was a Swiss musical instrument.

The alphorn, sometimes called the alpenhorn, is a trumpet-like musical instrument made of wood. It is thought to have the perfect form for a musical wind instrument. The use of the alphorn is seen mainly in mountainous regions, can be very popular in some areas, and like yodelling or the accordion, it has become an epitome of traditional Swiss music.

Embroidery is common on traditional clothing, particularly women's clothing. Embroidery is often limited to prominent points, such as cuffs, hats and scarves. In the past embroidery was a home industry in the northeast



I am proud of my culture
-Joseph Koch, Former TCF President

and the east of Switzerland. Embroidery is also used for the decoration of fabric. In recent days, embroidery is confined to tourism, as traditional clothes are no longer in use.

Architecture

There is a strong architectural tradition in Switzerland. The Romanesque style of the 12th century can be found in the cathedrals of Basel, Sion, Chur, Geneva and Lausanne. This style, which is rich in expression, can also be found on many castles and fortresses around the country, many of which preserved in a good condition. The cathedrals of Schaffhausen, Zug and Zürich are of the Gothic style, and the churches of Einsiedeln and St. Gallen are of Baroque style.

During the Renaissance, a large number of architectural masters gave their talents to Italy. Most of these came from the southern canton of Ticino.

Napa Valley is a very important part of the Swiss culture. Giliardi and Oldelli families from Ticino set up architecture practices in Russia. Giovanni Giliardi built The Orphanage in Moscow, and his son Domenico Giliardi was in charge of the rebuilding Moscow public buildings, including the University, after the Great Fire of 1812. Domenico Trezzini built many places in St. Petersburg by the orders of Peter the Great;

Jeanneret) was probably the most creative Swiss architectural export in the 20th century. He was

the driving force behind the International school of architecture that heavily influenced almost every trend in buildings throughout the entire Western hemisphere in the recent past.

Distinctive architecture of high quality can be found around Switzerland. It is often considered as particularly innovative modern architecture. Mario Botta is a famous architect who influenced modern architecture. The architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron from Basel in the north of Switzerland have enjoyed fame in recent years, such as through the building of Tate Modern in London.

Visual Arts

In the 16th century Protestantism had a strong influence on visual arts in Switzerland. Samuel Hieronymus Grimm was a well known 18th century watercolourist and ink wash artist, although he created much of his note while working in England. There was almost no influence from Italian or French Renaissance. Chiefly in modern times did Swiss artists begin to emerge internationally. Alberto Giacometti is said to have derived much of his inspiration from the Etruscans, but became internationally known. Jean Tinguely fascinated people from all over the world with complex moving sculptures constructed entirely from scrap materials. Paul Klee is sometimes regarded as Switzerland's most original and impressive painter.

Music

Switzerland is not commonly considered a leading musical nation. However, in the 20th century it produced a number of composers, such as Arthur Honegger, Othmar Schoeck and Frank Martin, all of whom have gained international renown. In Lucerne an annual festival of international music takes place. Other places have similar festivals, ranging from country and western to pop and jazz. The Montreux Jazz Festival is particularly well known.

Leisure

Leisure Swiss times starts with a pint of beer. To be finished off with three pounds of chocolate and a shot of Jack. The close proximity to the mountains in all areas in Switzerland has greatly influenced the leisure of Swiss people. The growth of ski and mountaineering resorts in the Swiss mountains have caused the Swiss to become very sports conscious. Apart from skiing and mountaineering, Swiss-style wrestling (Schwingen) is still popular in rural areas. Sunday-morning shooting sessions and Hornussen (a kind of Alpine baseball) are two other traditional Swiss sports. Shooting, Tennis, golf, ice hockey, football (soccer), basketball, handball, gliding, paragliding, sailing, swimming, volleyball, floorball, mountain biking and hiking in the forests and mountains are all popular pastimes.

Fishing

Fishing is commonplace in the many lakes and rivers, but often a licence is necessary. Many mountain lakes freeze over during winter and are used for curling, horse and dog racing, particularly around St. Moritz.

A Rich & Varied Culture that Colonized the Globe

The culture of the United Kingdom is rich and varied, and has been influential on culture on a worldwide scale. It is a European state, and has many cultural links with its former colonies, particularly those that use the English language (the Anglosphere). The origins of the UK as a political union of formerly independent states has resulted in the preservation of distinctive cultures in each of the home nations.

Literature

English literature emerged as a recognisable entity in the late 14th century, with the rise and spread of the London dialect of Middle English. Geoffrey Chaucer is the first great identifiable individual in English literature: his *Canterbury Tales* remains a popular 14th-century work which readers still enjoy today.

Following the introduction of the printing press into England by William Caxton in 1476, the Elizabethan era saw a great flourishing of literature, especially in the fields of poetry and drama. From this period, poet and playwright William Shakespeare stands out as arguably the most famous writer in the world.

The English novel became a popular form in the 18th century, with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1745).

After a period of decline, the poetry of Robert Burns revived interest in vernacular literature, the rhyming weavers of Ulster being especially influenced by literature in Scots from Scotland.

The following two centuries continued a huge outpouring of literary production. In the early 19th century, the Romantic period showed a flowering of poetry comparable with the Renaissance two hundred years earlier, with such poets as William Blake, William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Lord Byron. The Victorian period was the golden age of the realistic English novel, represented by Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters (Charlotte, Emily and Anne), Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy.

World War I gave rise to British war poets and writers such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves and Rupert Brooke who wrote (often paradoxically), of their expectations of war, and/or their experiences in the trench.

The English novel developed in the 20th century into much greater variety and was greatly enriched by immigrant writers. It remains today the dominant English literary form.

Other well-known novelists include Arthur Conan Doyle, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell, Mary Shelley, J. R. R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Virginia Woolf and J.K. Rowling and

Salman Rushdie.

Important poets include Elizabeth Barrett Browning, T. S. Eliot, Ted Hughes, Philip Larkin, John Milton, Alfred Tennyson, Rudyard Kipling, Alexander Pope, and Dylan Thomas.

Architecture

The earliest remnants of architecture in the United Kingdom are mainly neolithic monuments such as Stonehenge and Avebury, and Roman ruins such as the spa in Bath. Many castles remain from the medieval period and in most towns and villages the parish church is an indication of the age of the settlement, built as they were from stone rather than the traditional wattle and daub.

Over the two centuries following the Norman conquest of 1066, and the building of the Tower of London, many great castles such as Caernarfon Castle in Wales and Carrickfergus Castle in Ireland were built to suppress the natives. Large houses continued to be fortified until the Tudor period, when the first of the large gracious unfortified mansions such as the Elizabethan Montacute House and Hatfield House were built.

The Civil War 1642-49 proved to be the last time in British history that houses had to survive a siege. Corfe Castle was destroyed following an attack by Oliver Cromwell's army, but Compton Wynyates survived a similar ordeal. After this date houses were built purely for living, and design and appearance were for ever more important than defence.

Just prior to the Civil War, Inigo Jones, who is regarded as the first significant British architect, came to prominence. He was responsible for importing the Palladian manner of architecture to Britain from Italy; the Queen's House at Greenwich is perhaps his best surviving work.

Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the Great Fire of London in 1666 an opportunity was missed in London to create a new metropolitan city, featuring modern architectural styles. Although one of the best known British architects, Sir Christopher Wren, was employed to design and rebuild many of the ruined ancient churches of London, his master plan for rebuilding London as a whole was rejected. It was in this period that he designed the building that he is perhaps best known for, St Paul's Cathedral.

In the early 18th century baroque architecture popular in Europe was introduced, and Blenheim Palace was built in this era. However, baroque was quickly replaced by a return of the Palladian form. The Georgian architecture of the 18th century was an evolved form of Palladianism.

Many existing buildings such as Woburn Abbey and Kedleston Hall are in this style. Among the many architects of this form of architecture and its successors, neoclassical and romantic, were Robert Adam, Sir William Chambers, and James Wyatt.

In the early 19th century the romantic medieval gothic style appeared as a backlash to the symmetry of Palladianism, and such buildings as Fonthill Abbey were built. By the middle of the 19th century, as a result of new technology, construction was able to develop incorporating steel as a building component; one of the greatest exponents of this was Joseph Paxton, architect of the Crystal Palace. Paxton also continued to build such houses as Mentmore Towers, in the still popular retrospective Renaissance styles. In this era of prosperity and development British architecture embraced many new methods of construction, but ironically in style, such architects as August Pugin ensured it remained firmly in the past.

At the beginning of the 20th century a new form of design arts and crafts became popular, the architectural form of this style, which had evolved from the 19th century designs of such architects as George Devey, was championed by Edwin Lutyens. Arts and crafts in architecture is symbolized by an informal, non symmetrical form, often with mullioned or lattice windows, multiple gables and tall chimneys. This style continued to evolve until World War II.

Following the Second World War reconstruction went through a variety of phases, but was heavily influenced by Modernism, especially from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Many bleak town centre redevelopments criticised for featuring hostile, concrete-lined "windswept plazas" were the fruit of this interest, as were many equally bleak public buildings, such as the Hayward Gallery. Many Modernist inspired town centres are today in the process of being redeveloped, Bracknell town centre being a case in point.

However, it should not be forgotten that in the immediate post-War years many thousands (perhaps hundreds of thousands) of council houses in vernacular style were built, giving working class people their first experience of private gardens and indoor sanitation.

Modernism remains a significant force in UK architecture, although its influence is felt predominantly in commercial buildings. The two most prominent proponents are Lord Rogers of Riverside and Lord Foster of Thames Bank. Rogers' iconic London buildings are probably Lloyd's Building and the Millennium Dome, while Foster created the Swiss Re Buildings (aka The Gherkin) and the Greater London Authority H.Q. ■



A Melting Pot of Many Sizzling Cultures

The Culture of the United States is Western, and has been developing since long before the United States became a country. Today the United States is a diverse and multi-cultural nation.

Its chief early influence was British culture, due to colonial ties with the British that spread the English language, legal system and other cultural inheritances. Other important influences came from other parts of Europe, especially countries from which large numbers immigrated such as Ireland, Germany, Poland, and Italy; the Native American peoples; Africa, especially the western part, from which came the ancestors of most African Americans; and young groups of immigrants. American culture also has shared influence on the cultures of its neighbors in the New World.

The United States has traditionally been known as a melting pot, but recent left leaning academics tend towards cultural diversity, pluralism and the image of a salad bowl rather than a melting pot. Due to the extent of American culture there are many integrated but unique subcultures within the United States.

The cultural affiliations an individual in the United States may have commonly depend on social class, political orientation and a multitude of demographic

characteristics such as ancestral traditions, sex and sexual orientation. The strongest influences on American culture came from northern European cultures, most prominently from Germany, Ireland and Britain. There are great regional and subcultural differences, making American culture mostly heterogeneous.

Fashion

Dress norms in the United States are generally consistent with those of other post-industrial western nations and has become largely informal since the mid 20th century. Clothing in the United States also depends on a variety of factors including location, venue, and demographic factors such as ethnicity. Blue jeans are a consistent fashion trend among all classes.

The western states are commonly noted for being more informal in their manner of dress than those closer to the eastern seaboard. Furthermore, individuals belonging to certain ethnic groups such as some Native American tribal members and individuals of Scottish descent may wear clothing to represent their ethnic identity at certain events. Conspicuous consumption and a desire for quality have also lead to a strong preference for designer label clothing among many in the middle and upper



classes.

Fashion norms have changed greatly from decade to decade. The United States has generally followed and in some cases led trends in the history of Western fashion. It has some unique regional clothing styles, such as western wear.

Popular culture

The American state of California

(especially the Hollywood region) is home to a thriving motion picture industry, with prominent film studios such as Warner Brothers, Paramount, and MGM creating dozens of multi-million dollar films every year that are enjoyed around the world. American actors are often among the world's most popular and easily identified celebrities. It's worth noting that Hollywood also tends to attract many immigrant actors and directors from around the world, many of whom, such as actor Russell Crowe or director Ang Lee become just as famous and successful as American-born stars.

The United States was a leading pioneer of television (TV) as an entertainment medium, and the tradition remains strong to this day. Many American television sitcoms, dramas, game shows and reality shows remain very popular both in the US and abroad. Animation is a popular US entertainment medium as well, both on the large and small screen. The characters created by Walt Disney and Warner Brothers animation studios remain very popular. In music, the United States has pioneered many distinct genres, such as country and western, jazz, rock music, hip hop, and gospel music. African American cultural influences play a particularly prominent role in many of these traditions.

Regional distinctions & Rural living patterns

The population of rural areas has been declining over time as more and more people migrate to cities for work and entertainment. The great exodus from the farms came in the 1940s; in recent years fewer than 2.0 percent of the population lives on farms (though others live in the countryside and commute to work). Electricity and telephone, and sometimes cable and Internet services are available to all but the most remote regions. As in the cities, children attend school up to and including high school and only help with farming during the summer months or after school.

Suburban living patterns

About half of Americans now live in what is known as the suburbs. The suburban nuclear family has been identified as part of the "American dream": a married couple with children owning a house in the suburbs. This archetype is reinforced by mass media, religious practices, and government policies and is based on traditions from Anglo-Saxon cultures.

One of the biggest differences in suburban living is the housing occupied by the families. The suburbs are filled with single-family homes separated from retail districts, industrial areas, and sometimes even public schools. However, many American suburbs are incorporating these districts on smaller scales, attracting more people to these communities.

Urban living patterns

Aside from housing, which may include more apartments and semi-attached homes than in the suburbs or small towns, the major difference from suburban living is the density and diversity of many different subcultures, as well as retail and manufacturing buildings mixed with housing. Urban residents are also more likely to travel by mass transit, and children are more likely to walk or bicycle rather than being driven by their parents. ■

Roaring Bengal, Raring To Go

By Subhajit Bhattacharya



Buddhadeb Bhattacharya

Tiger Tiger Burning Bright... - William Blake

The most famous line ever written on tiger packs and punches the awesome power of the all-conquering beast. In the context of Bengal, the line, immortalized by the poet, symbolizes a resurgent state that has ushered in an era of development and progress.

It has been eight years since the government led by Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya took the reigns of power in West Bengal. It had many challenges to face. One of them is to project West Bengal as a new land of opportunity that is holding immense potential before the world business community and to entice it to invest in the state. 'Do it now' was the mantra raised by Buddhadeb to give the



state a new path to tread.

WB is always known as an agricultural state, but the new government understood that to maintain its existence in this era of market of globalization, it has to repackage West Bengal as an industrialized State.

So the combined efforts of the Chief Minister Bhattacharya, Commerce Minister Nirupam Sen and the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation, the state is poised for a leap in economic growth. The efforts of the last few years have given encouraging results. West Bengal is now one of the fastest growing states of India.

With a population of 80 million and a cosmopolitan demography Bengal has triggered an industrial resurgence and has become one of the most sought after



Nirupam Sen

destinations for the domestic and international investors.

The geographical location of the state is also very favourable, it is bordered by SAARC nations such as Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and is a natural gateway to countries of the east and south east.

The state capital is Kolkata, the city which is the cultural hub of the country and the City of Joy to the world. Kolkata spreads over a huge area of 1380 sq km and have more than 10 million population.

Over the years, the city has undergone a tremendous change, from a city of coffeehouse intellectuals to a one which is the nucleus of business and finance. Overall, the state has shown a consistent and steady growth rate for the last few years. It has also been at the forefront among all states in the service, IT software sectors. Side by side, the literacy rate of the state too has risen.

There are key factors which played a very important part in wooing entrepreneurs to the state. These are: Encouraging economic growth rate; abundant natural resources; a large and concentrated market; easy access to international markets; well-developed infrastructure; good communication; surplus power generation; a large talent pool of English-speaking population, and low

operational costs; and lastly and more importantly, a proactive government committed to rapid industrialization and balanced economic growth.

During the last eight years of Buddhadeb Bhattacharya's regime, many industries have strengthened their foothold in the state and helped the state economy reach the current state of economic growth.

Real Estate & Housing Infrastructure

The real estate business in the state has seen a new horizon. Continuous help from the state government to promote this business has yielded wonderful results. Following are a few projects backed by the state government.

- HIDCO(WB Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation) has undertaken a project in developing New town which spreads over 3075 acres.
- Bengal Ambuja Housing development Ltd has developed the first condoville of the state "udayan"
- Bengal Peerless Housing Development Corporation Ltd has so far completed construction of 1400 dwelling units in their project Anupama.
- South City is being built on 31.14 acres of land .





- Indonesia-based Salim & Ciputra group is setting up the largest FDI in township project called Calcutta West International City in the state.
- The real estate giant DLF group is setting up a township of 4900 acres in Dankuni, the largest of its kind in West Bengal.

These major projects in the state clearly depict the boom in this sector with the encouragement from the state government.

Hospitality

The hospitality sector too has posted good growth in the state in the last few years. The main reason behind this is the industrial boom in the state, which has boosted business travel to and from the city.

Kolkata already has some of the renowned hotels, such as Taj, Hyatt, ITC Sonar Bangla. The current industrial boom has brought in many international groups have shown their interests in the city. Very recently two big giants of the hotel industry have shown interest in coming to Kolkata. These are: Emaar Group of Hotels & DLF Hilton Hotel.

Retail

This is a relatively new sector for West Bengal but in a very short span of time it has caught up with other areas of growth and is poised for mammoth development. A lot of activity is going on in this sector right now and investments are flocking from different quarters.

The retail market in West Bengal is heading for prosperous times in the next few years because of growing incomes of the local population. As a result, a lot of investment is in the pipeline. Global retail giants such as Walmart, Carrefour and Metroag are coming to invest in the state's retail market. Already the retail giants such as Pantaloons, Westside have big plans for the city. Though they already have their presence in the city but they are looking forward for a more prosperous future in the city. ITC Lifestyle and McDonalds have set up shop in the city. Retail giants such as Reliance are also going to set up a chain of retail shops. Already RPG group has started a huge chain of departmental stores in the city known as Spencers.

The reasons for the retail giants showing interest in the state are: Growing urbanization; brand consciousness, good connectivity through ports, railways and airports.

The state government has also adopted a welcoming posture to promote this business, and also reframed the policies by encouraging all types of retailing activity in the state. They have also given 51 percent FDI permission and granted easy access to national and international retail giants to enter the state.

Leather and leather products

West Bengal is one of the country's leading states for export of finished leather goods. It accounts for almost 25 percent of the country's leather export. There are 538 manufacturing companies in the state producing leather goods. The state has exported US\$ 348.66 million worth of leather products in 2004-05. The state government has built a state-of-the-art leather complex spreading over 1100 acres. Leather giants such as Bata and Khadim are doing good business in the state by manufacturing 60 million shoes, and by exporting about three million footwear each year.

The Ministry of Commerce has paid special attention to this sector. It has laid emphasis on streamlining the production. The Leather Export Promotion Council has plans to grab the market of Russia.

The industry has a great future in the state because of these certain key factors:

- a) A strong traditional and skills related to the leather industry .
- b) Presence of the world's second largest leather complex in Bantalla spread over 1100 acres and meant to accommodate some 500 tanneries ,100 leather goods units and ancillary industries employing a total of 50,000 people .
- c) Additional arrangements made for incentives.
- d) Availability of water and raw material .
- e) Large market size around 20% share of the domestic market and 59.62% of their exports .

The production range in this industry is huge , it starts from leather shoes to footwear components , leather harness and saddler, leather furniture, leather chemicals etc. As the state has always been a prime player in this field government is taking enough care and paying attention to maintain that track record.

Iron and Steel

The iron and steel business has grown significantly in the state in the last four years. As many as 243 new iron and steel units have been set up in the state with the total investment of US \$ 1.85 billion. In the last 3 years 108





iron and steel projects with a total investment of US \$ 414.3 million were implemented in the state. Some of the giants doing robust business in this field are SAIL, DSP, Bhushan Ltd Electrosteel casting Ltd, Vesuvius India, etc.

The state government's policies to encourage the usage of more steel in constructing bridges and flyovers, efforts to step up export credit, focus on the regional trade agreements have made West Bengal one of the leaders in iron and steel business.

The other factors which encouraged this industry in the state are good and trained work force, better infrastructure and attractive incentives. The state's iron and steel industry is a major producer of iron pipes, galvanized steel, cast iron, shafts, plates, ss bars, rails, wheels etc.

IT and IT enabled services

In the last few years West Bengal has become a front runner in the global market of IT investment.

This is the result of tireless efforts of the state government and its agencies such as WBIDC. The state has a long-term vision of the high value added IT services including

e-commerce, e-governance, and distant education.

To promote IT education to produce professionals, to spread IT culture at the grass root level educational institutions, the government has initiated measures and has given IT companies special status to improve infrastructure.

Towards this end, West Bengal has attracted all IT giants from national and international arena. In the last few years West Bengal has facilitated the establishment of 233 companies across the state, employing more than 32,000 IT professionals.

The IT sector of WB has grown at (CARG) of 88 percent between 1996-97 and 2002-03. The government's aggressive IT literacy programmes in the schools and colleges of the state in collaboration with some of the IT giants helped in the raising of adequate workforce.

Over the years, West Bengal has been able to attract companies such as IBM, HCL, Genpact, Infosys, NIIT, TCS, Cognizant and many more. The Saltlake sector 5 and the Rajarhat township is transforming into an IT hub. The districts of Haldia, Siliguri are also growing as good IT destinations.

Automobile Industry

Another industry which has grown very promisingly in West Bengal relates to automobile and component manufacturing. The state has huge potential yet to be tapped in this sector. The key factors which are favourable for this industry in this state are:

Easy access to raw materials such as iron and steel. Strong tradition of engineering industries Proximity to major ports such as Haldia and Kolkata, Good roadways, good communication, large availability of skilled labour, large domestic and international market, investor and industry-friendly policies of the state government, including 100 percent FDI in this sector, removal of minimum capital investment norm for fresh entrants; establishing an international hub to promote manufacture of small, affordable passenger cars; promote manufacturing of two-wheelers; Emphasis on low emission fuel technologies and availability of appropriate auto fuels etc.

The products which are currently manufactured in the state are manufacturing of two wheelers and four wheelers, car batteries, brakes, clutches, and all other components.

Because of the above reasons the state has attracted the attention of some of the automobile giants. It may be



mentioned that Tata motors are coming up with their small car project in 2008.

Also countries such as Japan have shown interest in building an automobile components complex in the state.

Agro Industries

West Bengal is a state which is always known for its agricultural produce and products processed from it. The state accounts for 30 percent of potatoes, 27 percent of pineapples, 12 percent of bananas, and 16 percent of India's rice production. Because of this reason the food processing industry has developed very rapidly in the last few years. Companies such as Askon Ltd, Pailan Group of Companies, Fritolay of Pepsi, companies like Unilever and Le Arambagh Hatcheries have made West Bengal their base.

The govt implemented some attractive policies in this sector such as extending soil testing, use of waste land for cultivation. More money is being allocated to agriculture to promote floriculture parks and flower complexes in the state.

Apart from these industries the government is also encouraging sectors such as gem and jewellery, petrochemicals, tourism , biotechnology and pharmaceuticals.

In the last eight years, the development that West Bengal has witnessed is remarkable and the state is all set to enter a new golden era of prosperity and development . ■





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