

# OBITUARY

## Alexander Brown Griswold

Alexander Brown Griswold died on 4 October, 1991, at the age of 85. He was a retired investment banker whose art collection included the most comprehensive holdings of Thai art outside of Thailand.

His books included "*Dated Buddha Images of Northern Siam*," published in 1957; a book on King Mongkut, published in 1961, claiming that Anna Leonowens had fabricated parts of her account of her experiences as a tutor at his court that provided the basis of the musical "The King and I;" "*Towards a History of Sukhodaya Art*," published in 1967; and booklets in the Thai Culture Series. He was asked by Dhanit Yubodhi, the former Director-General of the Department of Fine Arts, to write a book on Lanna Arts, but he spent most of his time in writing with me "Epigraphic and Historical Studies Numbers 1-24" published in the *Journal of the Siam Society* from 1968-79 and being republished by the Historical Society under the Royal Patronage of H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in 1992.

He was born in Baltimore and graduated with honors from Princeton University, where he studied art and archaeology. He did graduate work at Cambridge University. During World War II as an army officer he was dropped behind the Japanese lines in Thailand and he took a keen interest in Thailand and its art. After World War II he maintained a home in Thailand as well as in Baltimore. While in Thailand he gave scholarships to several Thai students to study in the United States and sponsored some excavation work by Silpakorn University in Sukhodaya.

He was a former editor of *Artibus Asiae* and an advisor to *The Journal of the Siam Society*. He was a visiting professor at Cornell University and held a yearly seminar for graduate students at his home, Breezewood.

I went to write articles with him at Breezewood one month a year, sometimes accompanied by my wife, as his guest. There he worked with me seven days a week, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., leaving only two hours for lunch and siesta. He was a perfectionist in working. I had to supply seven or eight English words for him to select in the translation of an important word from an inscription. He was very careful in making footnotes, sometimes with the help of an expert in the field. Working with him, I learned to pay attention to minute details and to be careful in drawing conclusions; speaking with him, I learned a lot more about expressing myself in English from his elegance in that language. His library was excellent and was donated to Cornell University, while his collection of about 300 works of Indian and Southeast Asia Art, mostly from Thailand, was donated to the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore.

An American, he was a typical English gentleman in manner, and was very kind to his subordinates.

Mr. Griswold is survived by a brother, a sister and several nieces and nephews. He will be well remembered by his Thai and international friends for his contributions to Sukhodaya history and Thai art.

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