

ATTENTION: The Singapore Copyright Act applies to the use of this document. Nanyang Technological University Library.

FYP Project Number: ADM05.10.071487C17

**NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ART, DESIGN & MEDIA**



Title

Expression of Ideas Through Mudrās

Submitted by:

Lim Wei Ye Bryan

Supervisor:

Asst. Prof. Nanci Takeyama

**A Final Year Project submitted to the School of Art, Design & Media,
Nanyang Technological University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communications.**

Academic Year 2010/2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	2
Abstract.....	3
Introduction	4
Background of the Research.....	13
Originality.....	16
Development of the Research.....	18
Conclusion.....	20
Appendix A	22
The Nāṭya Śāstra	22
Appendix B.....	32
Bharata Nāṭyam.....	32
Kathakali	50
Appendix C.....	65
Classical Khmer Dance	65
Classical Thai Dance.....	69
Classical Javanese Dance.....	70
Classical Balinese Dance	74
Appendix D	76
Process / Research: Stills from dance performance study video footages	76
Appendix E.....	80
Process / Project Development: Gestural and observational sketches of hand poses	80
Process / Project Development: Stylised sketches of hand poses	85
Appendix F	88
Final project outcome.....	88
Bibliography	91
Appreciation	93

ABSTRACT

The conception of an idea and expression through a visual output is the heart of any form of visual communication. Even before the development of speech, one of the earliest manners of communication used by the humans was through the use of the hand. Hands are universal in all human beings; before life's experiences are expressed through materials, humans did so with their bodies as they are the fundamental and intrinsic aspect of our human condition (Wosien, 1992). As the human race evolved, the hands and their movement developed in tandem with other modes of communication. Today, the use of hands in communication has become intrinsically connected that many of us are oblivious of their implicit power in the expression of ideas.

The premise of this project exploration is to research and understand the codified language and symbolism found in an established set of gestures prevalent in Asian visual culture, known as *mudrās*. Though it served as a *franca-lingua* in the past, human's progressive estranged relationship with his natural environment and life, the understanding and knowledge of *mudrās*, has through the passage of time, been blurred or misunderstood.

In addition, the project seeks to investigate the key ideas that pervade this vocabulary of gestures in the expression of ideas, such as narratives, spiritual symbolism, abstract spiritual philosophies and concepts. With this knowledge, the project, in an attempt to re-establish the link between humanity and the natural world, will then explore ways in which these relationships and symbolism could be re-expressed and made visceral.

INTRODUCTION

In India, primordial hand gestures were developed as *mudrās*—a systematic and rich repertoire of symbolic gestures. Diverse forms are created through the different finger configuration in order to indicate various complex spiritual ideas (Saunders, 1985) in predominantly Hindu and Buddhist iconography, rituals, and especially in the classical *nāṭya*¹ tradition. The spread of the Hindu-Buddhist thought to the southeast and east of Asia brought, not only the spiritual ideas and knowledge, but also spiritual visual expression, such as the *mudrās*, to the region.



Figure 1: In Shingon Buddhism, *sādhakās* use *mudrās* along with their recitation of the *mantras*. The *mudrās* emphasises the Siddham-Sanskrit seed syllabus in the *mantras*. They correspond to cardinal directions, which are representations of the *dhyani* buddhas. (Hiromu, Tanaka, & Yokoo, 1974)

¹ *Nāṭya* is the Indian (and the ‘Indianised’ court traditions in Southeast Asia) conception of dance and theatre. It is a dance-drama composition that features a combination of song and dance. Dance and theatre are seldom regarded as separate forms in these regions (Meri, 1964). Any reference to “dance” in this paper would be loosely referred to *nāṭya*, encompassing both the theatre and dance traditions.

In Sanskrit, *mudrā* literally means seal, or the imprint left by it (Saunders, 1985). This designation was probably derived from the *mudrās*' function of sealing the magic: during the religious rites, the Brahmin would accompany the chanting of the *mantras*² with the imitation of the corresponding Sanskrit characters with their fingers (Figure 1) (de Kleen, 1970). The *mudrā* physically materialises the *mantra* as well as assures the authenticity of the rite, just as how a seal guarantees the efficacy of a document. In this respect, the *mudrā* as a representation of the *mantra* can also be seen as the vehicle of the 'word'.

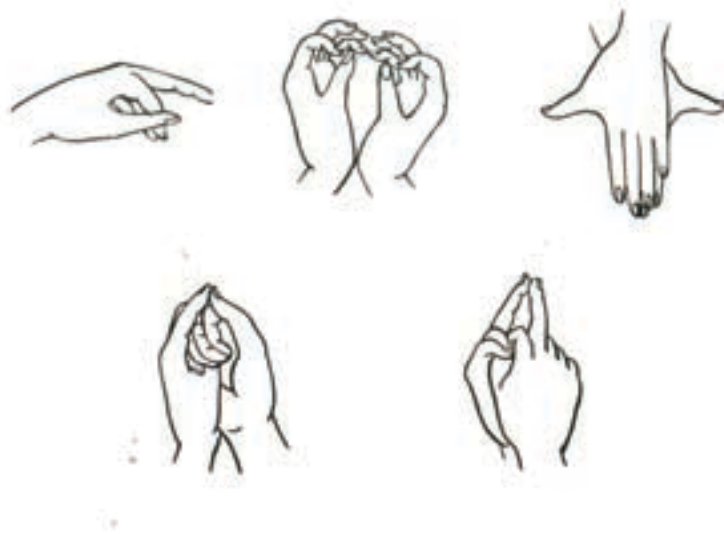


Figure 2: The use of *mudrās* are regarded by tantrikas as a way of opening the *kundalini-yoga*.

First row, left to right: *mṛiga*, *padma*, *matysa* mudras.

Second row, left to right: *saṃhāra* and *gadā* mudras. (Mookerjee, 1982)

Whether it is a ritual, the creation and meditation of iconography, or the practice of dances, such activities are meant to evoke a divine presence in the mind of the *sādhakā*³ (Meri, 1964). They guide the initiate to be in spiritual union with the Supreme Being⁴, through an *yógic* experience (Figure 2) (Saunders, 1985) (de Kleen, 1970). For the early humans—whose relationship with nature was an intimate one—the presence, power and mystery of the divine was manifested through the natural environment and its elements. Their way of life was very

² *Mantras* are short extracts of the Veda, preceded and terminated with 'words of power' (de Kleen, 1970). A basic *mantra* is a single syllable, commonly ending in a nasal *m*, sometimes *k* or *t*. A complex *mantra* is made up of a series of these syllables. Some are pure sounds in their own right; the best known is the ancient Vedic 'Om' (Rawson, 1978).

³ *Sādhakā* is a spiritual practitioner or initiate in the Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh religion, working towards to attain a certain level of spiritual realisation. This is done through *sādhanā*, which may involve meditation, chanting of *mantra*, conducting *puja* to a specific deity, etc.

⁴ It could be understood as God, the ultimate divine being, the Creator, etc. In the Hindu belief system, "all its thousand gods are one god, and that god is the cosmic energy" (Meri, 1964)

much in tune with the cycle of nature (as seen consolidated in the concept of Creation, Preservation and Destruction⁵ in the Hindu mind, which was observed in the life cycle of living things), and nature's constant movement (for example, the phases of the moon, the ebb and flow of the sea, etc.). Through gestures that were imitative of the natural environment, humans spontaneously and expressively attuned themselves to rhythm and power of the cosmos (Wosien, 1992). This desire to seek and participate in this sacred rhythm was not only important, but also natural. Because of the synonymy between nature and the divine, the use of *mudrās* presented a pathway for humans to connect to the divine pattern. If we considered the early rituals, they were all, in fact, danced-rituals. When infused with ritualism, these early primitive rhythmic gestures, which will later develop into *mudrās*, integrate the human and nature, and therefore, divine circumstances.

Mudrās, from the danced-ritual went on to develop along two inter-related tracks—as ritual *mudrā* in the institutionalised religions and as dance *mudrā*. However, it must be noted that the inter-influence between ritual and dance *mudrās* was possibly continuous and simultaneous, because dance as an art form was not divorced from spirituality.

The danced-ritual *mudrās* had taken on spiritual and magical significance by the Vedic period and were gradually integrated in ritualism of the early cults (Saunders, 1985). Formal systemisation was imposed on the *mudrās* to ensure accurate transmission to the large masses of followers and practitioners (Wosien, 1992). The rhythmic quality of the *mudrā* was, however, retained through its vertical movement to emphasise the accents of the ritual words. Institutionalised religions—especially in the Tantric practices—and *yógic* practices continued to adapt the choreographic gesture into their rites. They embellished the ritual *mudrās* with greater symbolism and purpose. In this manner, the execution of each *mudrā* is charged with the symbolism ascribed to the hands and its parts. The hand, then, becomes a microcosm with its own vocabulary and symbolisms (Saunders, 1985).

⁵ This cosmological function is also known as the Trimūrti, personified by Brahmā (creation), Viṣṇu (preservation) and Śiva (destruction).

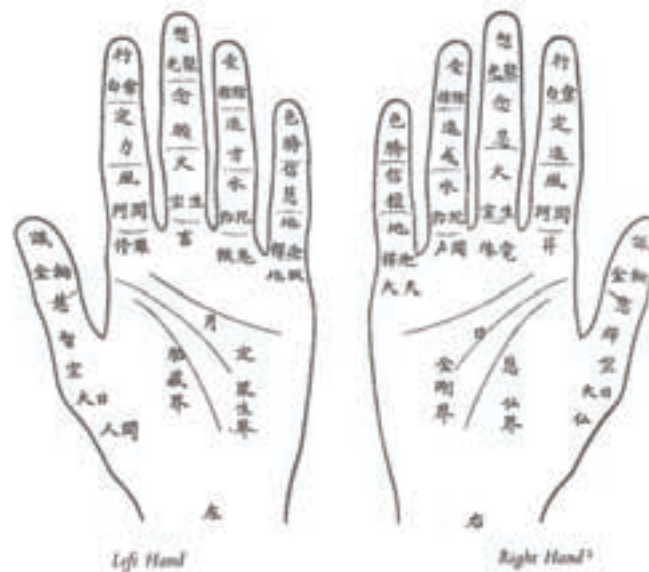


Figure 3: An Esoteric Buddhist diagram that illustrates the symbolisms found in the hands and its parts. (Saunders, 1985)

From the established ritual *mudrās*, the language of iconographic *mudrās* was derived. The ability to express abstract and complex ideas more completely with ritual *mudrās* was transposed onto anthropomorphic religious iconography. The process of transposing the gestures to the iconography can be seen as a natural progression, as it was a way of providing their ‘frozen’ deities with an expressive and symbolic language so that their conception may be fully encapsulated, thereby extending the idea of the *mudrā* as a ‘seal’ (Banerjea, 1956). Initially, only several poses were applied to characterise various representations of the divinities. Among them include the *anjali*⁶-, *abhaya*⁷- and *varada*⁸-*mudrās*. The characterising function exists in both Hindu and Buddhist iconography. Both religions also use the *mudrās* to allude to specific episodes, myths, legends and teachings (Figure 4). The Hindus went further by using it to express emotions, attributes and additional metaphysical and symbolic meanings. However, most representations of the deities are rarely seen depicted in the highly technical gestures, like the *mudrās* used in the Tantric rituals and those described in the *Nāṭya Śāstra* (Banerjea, 1956).

⁶ It is the gesture of devotion or respectful greeting in which both hands are clasped together with the fingers upwards and palms touching, and held near the chest. Devotees and minor deities are often portrayed in this pose (Stutley, 1985).

⁷ It is the gesture that dispels fear because the presence of the divinity gives reassurance and protection to the devotee. In this gesture, the palm and fingers of the right hand are held upright and facing outwards (Stutley, 1985).

⁸ It is the gesture indicating the giving of boons in which the left hand is held out palm uppermost with fingers pointing downward (Stutley, 1985).



Figure 4: Seated Buddha in *bhūmisparśa-mudrā*, Pala-Sena style, Bihar, 1000-1100 AD
The *bhūmisparśa-mudrā*, or the earth-touching gesture, reminds devotees of the episode of Gautama Buddha, after attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, calling the earth to witness. It is also characteristic of Akṣobhya, the east *dhyani* (directional) Buddha.

The early Indian dances, like Bharata Nāṭyam (Appendix B – Bharata Nāṭyam), were borne out of the *devadāsī*⁹ tradition. It became customary for the *devadāsīs*, while performing their most important function of circumambulating the deity image, to use *mudrās* to imitate the implements, such as the flywhisk or the lamp, used by the *Brahmin* (Gaston, *Dance and the Hindu Woman: Bharatanatyam Reritualized*, 2010). The use of *mudrās* developed congruently with the classical Indian dances, in form of *nṛtta* and *nṛtya hasta-mudrās*¹⁰. The *nṛtta hasta-mudrās* are aesthetic hand gestures that neither have specific meanings nor express *bhāva*¹¹, while *nṛtya hasta-mudrās* are the same hand gestures now imbued with meaning and symbolism, used in interpretive and pantomime dance compositions that suggest *rasa*¹².

⁹ *Devadāsī*, literally means servant of God, refer a girl that is bestowed and is dedicated in service to temple. Their duties included caretaking of temple and performing of rituals and dance.

¹⁰ *Hasta-mudrās* are the *mudrās* used in dance. In many instances, the hand poses are described in relation to the position of the arm.

¹¹ *Bhāva*, in performance art, is the expression of feelings or states of the soul through facial expressions and gestures. The nine emotions

¹² *Rasa* (literally means taste or juice) is commonly and loosely translated to be attitudes, flavours or moods. In *nāṭya*, it is *rasaswadana* (an aesthetic experience of receiving *rasa*) induced in the audience through the performers' *bhāva* (Banerji, 1985). The experience of *rasa* is a moment of knowing an existence outside time and space. It is compared to *Brahmānanda*, or the bliss of being one with the Supreme Being (Meri, 1964). According to *Nāṭya Sāstra*, the eight *rasas* are *śṛṅgāram* (romance), *hāsya* (contempt), *bībhatsam* (disgust), *kāruṇyam* (compassion), *bhayānakam* (fear), *raudram* (anger), *vīram* (bravery), *adbhutam* (wonder) and *santa* (tranquility). A ninth *rasa* *sāntam* (tranquility) was later added.

The conception of dance is particularly significant in the Hindu-Buddhist belief system. In the Bhagavad Gītā¹³, Kṛṣṇa¹⁴, in his dialogue with Arjuna states that dancing is the “chief activity of all the gods.” In fact, dance is considered, throughout the history of humanity, among the most powerful mediums of encountering the divine. The body, in its wide range of motion and experiences in the freeform dance, is a poetic interpretation of life. In the Hindu conception, “humanity is divine and divinity is human”. When the dance-actors portray or express devotion to the gods, they too become divine. The classical Indian dance is even considered to be a form of *yoga* of one who “has forgotten his body... not due to negligence but due to control” as “an art that conceals art” (Arundale, 2010).

Dance, as a metaphor for the cosmological phenomena of Creation, Preservation and Destruction, is personified in the image of Śiva Nāṭarāja¹⁵ (Figure 5) who assumes the posture of Ānanda Tāṇḍava¹⁶. All matter radiates from the epicentre, represented by his naval. As the Lord Śiva dances, waves of rhythm and music from his movement and the drum (represented by *damaru-hasta*¹⁷) are sent through the cosmos, creating and sustaining it (Wosien, 1992). Using fire’s generative and destructive duality, the *ardhacandra-mudrā*¹⁸ destroys all forms and prepares for a new creation. Despite the apparent chaos, the devotee is consoled by the *abhaya-mudrā* and reminded that the Lord Śiva is in control with the *gajahasta-mudrā*¹⁹.

¹³ Bhagavad Gītā is considered to be one of the most sacred scripture among the Hindus. It is considered to be a ‘manual of mankind’. It documents Lord Kṛṣṇa’s advise on moral duties as warrior and prince to Arjuna before a battle

¹⁴ Kṛṣṇa is an avatar of Viṣṇu, the Preservation aspect of the Trimūrti in the Hindu religion.

¹⁵ Śiva is one of the three gods of the Trimūrti. Nāṭarāja literally means ‘King of Dance’.

¹⁶ It is also known as the Dance of Eternal Bliss, and it is historically related to the legend of the Subjugation of Ignorance.

¹⁷ *Damaru-hasta* is a *mudrā* in which a small drum (*damaru*) is held lightly between the index finger and the little finger as in figures of Śiva Nāṭarāja (Stutley, 1985).

¹⁸ It is a gesture in which the palm of the hand is held upward and curved to form a crescent. Sometimes a ‘bowl’ of fire is held in this hand. Seven flames make up the fire which represent the seven tongues or flames of Agni. The bowl is held by Nāṭarāja. (Stutley, 1985)

¹⁹ It is the gesture in which the arm is held across the body like an elephant’s trunk. It indicates power and strength and is seen in figures of Śiva Nāṭarāja and some other figures of deities dancing (Stutley, 1985).



Figure 5: Śiva Natarāja, 12th century, bronze, Chola, India. The National Museum of India, New Delhi.

The development of dance gestures culminated into the compilation of *Nāṭya Sāstra* (Appendix A), Its opening chapter writes of how the elements of Hindu dancing were drawn from the four Vedas—in particular the *Yajur Veda*²⁰—and became a model of the classical Indian dance (Meri, 1964). With its innumerable combinations, the gesture language of *Nāṭya Sāstra* provides the richest visual vocabulary for *nāṭya* yet preserving its spiritual significance (Meri, 1964). Though the origins of this treatise is shrouded in mystery, the discovery of the corresponding 108 *karanās*²¹ on the *gopuras*²² of the 1600-year-old Temple of Natarāja, Chidambaram attests to the completeness and pervasiveness of the art form by 400 AD (Figure 6). Today, it continues to be the foundation of the classical *nāṭya* forms in India (Miettinen, 1992).

²⁰ The third Veda of Sacrificial Formulae that contains the precepts necessary for the preparation and offertory rituals.

²¹ *Karanās* are basic dance units or brief movement phases/moments that consists of a combination of certain positions, movements and poses of the hands.

²² A *gopura* is a tower gateway of, typically, South Indian temples.



Figure 6: The *karanās* featured on eastern *gopura* Natārāja Temple, Chidambaram.

In the classical Indian dance, each expression is a fusion of the movement of the dancer's hands tracing out the idea and the facial expression bringing out the emotion. Although the *vartanās*²³ are at times also expressive, it is often merely to support the symbolic *mudrā* to different positions, changing of the meaning with different placements.

Lokadharmā and *nāṭyadharmā* are two modes of conduct in *nāṭya*. *Lokadharmā* is a manner that is imitative of the real-world actions while in *nāṭyadharmā* the approach is imaginative and stylised. In *nāṭyadharmā*, the dancer would wipe imaginary tears with a *tripatāka hasta-mudrā* instead of literally crying with tears. This mode requires the audience to have a prior understanding and knowledge of the religious philosophies that permeate the Hindu-Buddhist religion and *rasika*²⁴. It is also only in *nāṭyadharmā* that the symbolic *mudrās* can operate (Meri, 1964), and the approach that the project is concerned with.

Via the 'Indianised' courts when the Hindu-Buddhist religion spread to Southeast Asian, the regional classical dance-theatre also adopted the *hasta-mudrās* as models (Miettinen, 1992) and assimilated it with their native dance traditions (Appendix C). It is so characteristic that the classical dances of Southeast Asia are commonly known as 'hand dances' (Figure 7).

²³ *Vartanā* is a arm postures or a particular movement of the arms

²⁴ It refers to the audiences' innate and acquired sensibility to experience *rasa* (Banerji, 1985).



Figure 7: Classical Khmer dancer demonstrating the nature-inspired *kbach* hand gestures, which was derivative of the Indian *mudrās*.

The traditional language of *mudrās*, which developed from its unconstrained, primordial form into a comprehensive vocabulary of symbolic gestures, was a medium with which the Hindus and Buddhists are able to communicate from the simplest narratives to the most sophisticated religious philosophies. Iconographic, ritual and dance *mudrās* are each a ‘dialect’ to this language, with some gestures that are shared and others that are mutually exclusive. Even amongst the various classical Indian dances, the gesticulation of certain *hasta-mudrās* and their meanings differ. Nevertheless, no matter what form that the *mudrās* take, it still presents itself with infinite possibilities for communication.

While the research has explored the many variants in which the *mudrās* are used, the Final Project will focus on making visible and re-expressing the symbolism and *viniyogas*²⁵ of *asamyuta*²⁶ and *samyuta*²⁷ *nṛtya* hastas used in the classical South Indian dance, Bharata Nāṭyam.

²⁵ The application or usage of the *hasta-mudrās*.

²⁶ *Asamyuta-hastas* are single-hand *hasta-mudrās* used in classical Indian dances.

²⁷ *Samyuta-hastas* are double-hand *hasta-mudrās* used in classical Indian dances.

BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

In general, the research in classical Indian and Southeast Asian dance ethnology and the study of *mudrās* is still being developed with a wide ranging of discourses that persists. Due to the lack of surviving documentation and amidst legendary historical origins, information surrounding the development of *mudrās* and classical dance practices remain tentative. Most of the existing knowledge about the *mudrās* has emerged out of interest in iconography. There is much research attention needed in the study of *mudrās* specifically in ritual and dance practices, and cohesively amongst the three areas. The scarcity of English-language scholarly publication specific to classical Southeast Asian dances signals that more research is necessary to further the study of the symbolism and usage of their respective *hasta-mudrās*.

Nāṭya Śāstra is one of the important documentation of study for this research. However, the origins and events that led to its compilation, as well as the early dance forms that developed out of this dramaturgy, is in debate. Even the existence of the author Bharata Muni²⁸ has disputed (Banerjea, 1956). One of Bharata Nāṭyam's key features is the 108 *karanās* that was described in Nāṭya Śāstra. These same *karanās* were also carved on the *gopuras* of the Temple of Naṭarāja, at Chidambaram, where an early form of Bharata Nāṭyam was traditionally performed by *devadāsīs*. Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam, an accomplished Bharata Nāṭyam dancer and dance research scholar, researched and attempted to piece the individual dance moments represented statically on the *gopuras* into a dance for her doctorate thesis. Her study drew an even stronger relationship between Nāṭya Śāstra and Bharata Nāṭyam.

The reference to '*mudrā*' as symbolic hand gestures used in dance is one point of contention that experts disagree upon. While authors—like Jukka O. Miettinen—refer to the symbolic hand gestures used in dance as '*mudrā*', dance ethnologists—like La Meri (Russell Meriwether Hughes) and Projesh Banerji—use the word '*mudrā*' exclusively for the hand gesture used in iconography and ritual. Their preference is to use the term '*hasta*²⁹' to refer to the hand poses and '*hasta-mudrā*' to refer to the gesture of the entire arm used in *nāṭya*. Historian and Indologist, Dr. Jitendra Nath Banerjea also applies the term '*hasta*' to describe hand gestures that are described along with the entire arm in iconography.

Despite the difference in terminology, I do not consider *mudrās* and *hastas* as distinct concepts. Celebrated classical Indian dancer Mrinalini Sarabhai, in her book on Bharata Nāṭyam, clarifies this by citing the development of '*hasta-mudrās*' out of the primitive ritual

²⁸ Muni refers to a respected sage or religious teacher.

²⁹ *Hasta* literally means hand.

and dance-rite *mudrā*. This is the view that I have adopted for the research and project. The reference to all symbolic hand gestures will be generically termed ‘*mudrās*’, while the term ‘*hastas*’ will specifically denote the dance hand poses; ‘*hasta-mudrās*’ will refer dance gestures of the entire arm.

Amidst the research of the classical dances of Southeast Asia, the ‘Indianisation’ of the region is also a point of contention for scholars like Dr. Paul Cravath. In his opinion, this is a ‘Europe-centric’ bias towards India that diminishes the continued existence of the indigenous cultures or its influence after the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia. In ‘Earth in Flower’, Dr. Cravath proposes that the four basic *kbach*³⁰ hand gestures used in Khmer classical dance has no connection to the Indian dance *hasta-mudras* but completely inspired from nature (Cravath, 2008). Both Dr. Cravath and Dr. Hughes-Freeland consider the hand gestures to be “simply exquisite ornaments to conventionalised patterns of mimed expression” (Cravath, 2008). Though authors Denise Heywood and Christophe Loviny share in the view that the primarily embellishing quality of the *kbach* hand gestures, they do not divorce the viewpoint that they are meaningful and their inspiration from India.



Figure 8: In *Robam Sovann Macha*, Macchanup, the son of Hanuman and Sovann Macha, using *kbach* gesture similar to *matsya hasta-mudrā* to perform the action of swimming, as well as to connote his mixed heritage between a monkey and mermaid.

From simple comparative studies (Appendix C – Classical Khmer Dance, Table 8) made

³⁰ *Kbach* means style or ornament in Khmer visual aesthetics. In classical Khmer dance, it refers to the frequently held poses, postures and gestures. The *kbach* are manners to express beauty. (Cravath, 2008)

during this research, the viewpoint I have developed is that the *kbach* in Khmer classical dance—as well as the hand gestures used in the Thai, Balinese and Javanese classical dance traditions—are, indeed, derivative of the seminal Indian *hasta-mudrās* (Figure 8). Southeast Asia has historically been a region of cultural confluence, taking on the quintessence of any number of external influences and assimilating it with their own established cultural traditions (Miettinen, 1992). The influence from India—especially the adoption of Hinduism and Buddhism from about 100 AD onwards and as seen as from the archaeology, writing system, material and cultural heritage from the region—is, in my opinion, undeniable. In addition, it is also well known that the Brahman priests of the Khmer, Funan, Srivijaya, Sanjaya and Majapahit courts were great scholars of the Vedas and various ancient Indian literary texts. The adoption of the various aspects of Indian culture would never have occurred if there were no parallels between their indigenous cultures. Each kingdom drew what they saw appropriate and integrated it with their own. The resulting culture was an interesting and unique syncretic blend that was different each other, and also different from India. Concepts that are unique to Southeast Asia, such as the *devarāja*³¹ cult and the temple-mountain architecture, were developed out of Hindu thought and beliefs. Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam, in her video ‘Karana Prakaranam: Marga Tradition Revived’ also inform us that the author of Nāṭya Śāstra, Bharata Muni, is worshipped by Khmer and Thai dancers prior to each performance. My opinion is that the *hasta-mudrās*, together with the concept of *devadāsīs* and court-dancing tradition from India, were adopted, albeit partially and less extensive as it was at the source due to a lack of authoritative writing like that of Nāṭya Śāstra. The influence is, nevertheless, evident (Miettinen, 1992). Besides, if the view that all *kbach* gestures are aesthetic and non-symbolic holds true, it would still coincide with the Indian conception of nṛtta *hasta-mudrās*.

³¹ It is the divinisation of the ruler as God-king, particular to the Khmer civilisation. Other concepts that enhance the royal status, such as *Buddharāja* and *cakkavartin* also exist at different time periods in the Khmer civilisation and in some parts in Southeast Asia.

ORIGINALITY

In my opinion, the modern person, especially with urbanisation and technological advances, has lost its intrinsic and important connection with the nature and life; humans have become strangers to the natural environment. In the past, human thoughts and actions were centred on the divine. However, many aspects of our lives have since been secularised, leading to an increased bondage to time, money and other vices. These adverse behaviours, in my opinion, are merely ways to satisfy humans' estrangement with life. At the advent of globalisation and the conflation of cultural diversity, these traditions that was once important in the India and Southeast Asia—as with many important things in life—erode away with time. There is a race against time, preventing it from fading into obscurity. The increased tourism also threatens many traditional performances, turning them into a mere money-generating spectacle. The traditions of humanity are a wealth of symbolism that are metaphors for the mystery and celebration of life. A study of the *mudrās* offer a peek into the once-innate human psyche and desire to be part of nature, as well as the wisdom and knowledge that had been accumulated. As a research study that is applied into a graphic design project, my work serves as an initial attempt to share the fast disappearing understanding of the symbolisms embedded in the *mudrās*, as well as to re-establish a link with the early state of mind of humanity, with the hope to regain wholeness with life. By representing the knowledge and understanding into a contemporary and accessible format and environment, it is my hope that the outcome of my Final Year Project would be able to reach out the general public, so that they may come to recognise the importance of preserving traditional cultures and their expressions, as well as see how the underlying philosophy of these traditions could be enriching to their modern lifestyles.

From the academic point-of-view, the collection of data from a variety of sources related to the *nṛtya hasta-mudrās* used in Bharata Nāṭyam and re-compiling them into useful information could also be considered as an original attempt undertaken in this Final Year Project. This is predominantly in the tabulation of all Bharata Nāṭyam *nṛtya hasta-mudras*, their Sanskrit names, their English translation and their *vinīyogas* (Appendix B). The *vinīyogas* are carefully learnt and studied, not as static poses—like how it is usually presented in the books available, if the information was even available in the first place—but as animated gestures that fully encompass the meaning and expression of each gesture. This achieved through a series of in-depth interviews with Guru Balakrishnan of Bharataanjali (Appendix D) and comparative studies with the aid of books and DVD documentation.

On top of this, in order to extend the *vinīyogas* for possible usage in contemporary and secular contexts, they were studied and expanded in several manners. Firstly, it was through

adding suitable synonyms derived from the English translation of the each *viniyoga*. For example, the synonyms for the word ‘cut’ as a verb could include ‘lacerate’, ‘slash’, etc. Secondly, it was through the addition of words that had related ideas and concepts, that existed in and out of the Hindu and Indian contexts and were not necessarily documented in any books. For example, one *viniyoga* of the *sarpa-sirsa hasta-mudrās* is to represent a snake. If we considered about what snakes meant in the Hindu context, it could possibly refer to the Dream of Viṣṇu episode with reference to Ananda-Shesha that Viṣṇu sleeps upon or to Vasuki of the Churning of the Ocean Milk episode. This second approach was necessary because the Carnatic music lyrics that accompany the various components of a Bharata Nāṭyam dance choreography were not only interpreted literally but also contextually. Thirdly, the *viniyogas* were expanded with possible daily secular scenarios, phrases and conversations that a contemporary person would like to express through the *mudrās*. All this culminated in the final project, forming the usable database of vocabulary for the interactive kiosk as well as its accompanying illustrated dictionary.

Another aspect that can be seen as original is the approach for deriving at the illustration style for the *mudrās* in this Final Year Project. This was largely inspired by what Visiting Professor Kirti Trivedi shared with me during a consultation session. I was reminded that the difference between Asian Art and Western Art was that it does not seek the represent objects as what they look like in actuality, but in its essential form and, most importantly, the meaning that it embodies. In this respect, the artist would observe the object-in-question, reduce it to its essential form, and represent it stylistically. Capturing the symbolism of each *hasta-mudrās* was important to the message I would like to convey so I took a similar approach when I was illustrating them for this project (Appendix E). I began with illustrating all the hand gestures naturalistically as I observed them to be. Later, I proceeded to ‘essentialise’ each drawing to its simplest form but attempted to also retain the meaning of each *hasta-mudrās*.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH

This project was developed based on design thinking process: Inspiration, Ideation and Implementation (Brown, 2008). This can be further is divided into seven main phases. In Inspiration, there is the Define and Research sub-phases; in Ideation, the Ideate and Prototype phases; in Implementation, the Choose, Implement and Learn phases (Simon, 1969). The interesting thing about the design thinking process is that it is more than the traditional step-by-step process; it is really “a system of spaces... that demarcate different sorts of related activities that together form the continuum of innovation”. The project reiterates between the spaces repeatedly, especially the Inspiration and Ideation phases, in order to refine the ideas used for implementation (Brown, 2008).

The first step of this process is defining the scope of interest and research. While exploring the topics for research, I was fascinated with how a single *mudrā* in an image had the ability to tell a lengthy story or express a complex theological concept. The simplicity and effectiveness of the iconic image was what defined visual communication to me. In many ways, it is like the modern idea of branding, except that it was conceived thousands of years ago. The research area was initially broadened to include hand gestures, in general, across a vast number of cultures and contexts. It was my personal interest in Asian art, history traditions and culture that helped me narrow down the study to the *mudrās* in the art forms that exists in the region.

The Research phase for this project involved the reading of various art history and dance ethnology textual resources. The *mudrās* were studied in its relationship with nature, with India and their spiritual worldviews, as well as their development in the various forms in which they exist. An integral aspect of the research process was the experience of viewing the Indian and Southeast Asian dance performances (Appendix D). A deeper understanding in the subject matter was forged through many interview sessions with Bharata Nāṭyam dance gurus, Ms. Srilakshmi Arun of Global Indian Cultural Centre and Mr. Balakrishnan of Bharataanjali Dance School (Appendix D). Along with consultations with my supervising professor, Dr. Nanci Takeyama, the viewpoints of prominent Southeast Asian art historian, Thiagarajan Kanaga Sabapathy and design professor, Kirti Trivedi, were also sought after. Through this research process that was interspersed with the Ideation phase, an understanding of the motivations and ideas that propelled the conception and development of the *mudrās* as such effective means of communication was derived. It was also through this research process that discovered the critical connections that helped formulate my perspective on the topic.

Even before the Ideate phase began, budding ideas were conceived, development and documented throughout the Research phase. At the conclusion of the Research phase, the idea

generation goes in full steam with continuous sketching and discussion with my Supervising Professor, Dr. Nanci Takeyama and my fellow colleagues where I gained additional opinions on the Final Project trajectories. Several ideas were chosen to be developed slightly further with the possibility of combining parts of it to form the whole. The focus and concept of the Final Project was continuously refined simultaneously with the Final Report. I eventually chose to develop an interactive kiosk that would demonstrate how the *hasta-mudrās* of Bharata Nāṭyam, as a gestural language, could be used to express narratives and ideas in and out of the dance choreography context. The key feature of the kiosk is that it allows users to type in short sentences and the kiosk would present a corresponding *hasta-mudrā* ‘choreography’. It is targeted towards teens of 10 to 15 years old, for the performance art section of the South Asia exhibition (Gallery 8) at Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. It would be accompanied with an illustrated dictionary that documents the uses and meanings of the *hasta-mudrās* of Bharata Nāṭyam, and a rubber stamp activity kit that allows users to create their own *hasta-mudrā* ‘choreographies’.

The Implement phase was carried out in the period of three weeks. Mood boards were gathered to find a suitable art direction for the project. Once the art direction was decided, sketches of the *hasta-mudrās* were refined and illustrated in Adobe Illustrator so that they may be suitable for animation. The vector illustrations were also used in the *hasta-mudrās* dictionary. The interactive kiosk was developed in Adobe Flash. The key feature was developed with the assistance of a programmer.

As the Implement phase was on-going, there were two Learn phases—one during a dry-run presentation where a prototype was presented to a panel of critics and fellow colleagues, and another to a group of docents at the Asian Civilisations Museum. Both episodes allowed me to gather feedback and gauge responses from the community with the prototype. Leading up to the completion of the project, I managed to tweak the project slightly based on the feedback I had received. The final Learn phase happened during a final critique session at the conclusion of the project, where comments were taken as lesson learnt for future projects.

CONCLUSION

As a visual communication student, the research into the tradition forms of visual expressions always a humbling but empowering experience for me. It would always remind me of the wealth of knowledge and understanding the people had in the past; it would also constantly spur me on to leverage on their knowledge to develop contemporary forms of graphic communication. This yearlong Final Year Project was invaluable in allowing me to develop my interests in Asian cultures, the performing arts, along with graphic design. To be able to explore and develop a project that was free from any particular pre-defined motive was a very refreshing experience for me.

I also enjoyed the opportunity to spend a luxurious six-months in research of a topic that I was interested in. I feel that the rigorous research process was critical in helping me develop my project concept. Without the research, it would not have been possible for me to generate so many interesting project ideas that could be implemented. Though I was unable to develop a project that was focused on my interest in South-east Asia due to limited time, available academic resources and opportunities for an immersive experience, my curiosity is now piqued. I hope to be able to further a study in the ethological understanding of the classical Southeast Asian dances, as well as an application of its theory and knowledge in graphic design. I benefited greatly from the guidance of my supervising Professor and the communal spirit that flourished in my Final Year Project class group. Their passion, support openness and generosity with their opinions were instrumental in the incubation and execution of this project.

This project experience, though exhilarating, was not without its trials and tribulations. During the research process, I realise that for a live art form like dance, it was often insufficient to just learn from books. To gain a better understanding of each of the dance form, I spent extended periods of time watching video footages, watching dance performances, attending dance classes, interviewing dance gurus, etc. As a researcher, I also found myself in many incidents where I had to necessarily break out of my comfort zone, and be proactive in seeking out the information that I needed. This included creating opportunities for interviews and shooting photos and videos without given permission for further study. I had to also travel out to the neighbouring countries, such as Bali, Bangkok and Yogyakarta, to document various traditional dance performances that were not available locally. The research process was further complicated when a number of books written on the dances were either written in their respective native languages or in French. I was privileged to have the help of some friends who went out of their way to help translate some texts for me. The process of

compiling and extending existing information was also very extremely tedious and time-consuming. This is because it was necessary to, not only make use of the knowledge that was collected from the research but also to make sense out of it. When studying the dance gestures, it was important to draw the connection between the semiotics of the gestures and the meaning it was trying to convey, so that my re-expression may be vivid and accurate.

This research-centric graphic design project has taught me, above all other lessons, that graphic design is not a practice that operates in isolation. A great design project is one where the knowledge, opinions and technical expertise of many people come together in cohesion. I have also discovered that a successful graphic designer has to be a critical thinker who is constantly curious and always eager to learn about everything. Apart from our sense of aesthetics and technical capabilities, knowledge is our best asset.

Although this project has concluded, it may also be possible to extend the ‘mudrā vocabulary’ to the other *hasta-mudrās* used in various other classical Indian dances like Kathakali and Manipuri, and the classical Southeast Asian dances if additional study is made.

Reflecting on the final outcome, I feel that I have made a satisfactory translation of the knowledge gained during the research into application, as well as achieving my project aims of exploring ways in which the *mudrās* could be re-expressed and made visceral.





APPENDIX A






The Nāṭya Śāstra






There are a number of ancient Indian *nāṭya* treatises that document, in great detail, the technique, approach and philosophy of the art form. This includes the Nāṭya Śāstra, Abhinaya Darpaṇa (literally, The Mirror of Gesture), Daśarūpa (literally, Ten Kinds of Drama), etc. It is because of their detailed instruction and wide vocabulary that allows the classical Indian dancer to express from the slightest nuance of emotion to the most complex of spiritual concepts without the use of words. They are the absolute essential technique to the expression of various *bhāva* that rouses *rasa* in the audience.




The Nāṭya Śāstra is one of the ancient Indian *nāṭya* treatises written sometime between 2nd and 5th century AD, attributed to Bharata Muni. Although it may be neither the oldest nor only ancient compendium on *nāṭya* around, it is often considered to be most complete and authoritative. Some even consider it a *sūtra* (Meri, 1964). According to Indian tradition, Brahma evolved the Nāṭya Veda from the four Vedas and gave it to Bharata. Regardless of its legendary origins and disputable authorship, Bharata successfully consolidated the existing principles of Indian dance into a comprehensive guide with clear rules. According to *Nāṭya Śāstra*, there are 108 *karanās*, 13 head positions, 36 gazes, 7 movements for eyebrows, 9 neck movements, 4 manners of standing and 32 movements of the feet and hips (Banerji, 1985) (Miettinen, 1992). Of the 64 *hasta-mudrās* documented, there are 24 *asamyuta-hastas* (Table 1), 13 *samyuta-hastas* (Table 2) and 27 *nṛtta-hastas*³² (Banerji, 1985). Its principles continue to guide classical Indian dances like, Bharata Nāṭyam and Kathakali.




³² *Nṛtta-hastas* are aesthetic dance *hasta-mudrās* used in classical Indian dances that do not have specific symbolism or meaning.

Sanskrit Name	English Name	Mudrā	Viniyogas (Usages)
<i>Alapadma</i>	Full-bloom lotus		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lotus • Love • Admiration • Mountain • Face • Crowned • Blessings of the gods • Listening to vibrant sounds • Palace • Marriage • Full moon
<i>Arāla*</i>	Crooked		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Light offering • Secret aversion • Benediction
<i>Ardha-candra*</i>	Half-moon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devotee of Viṣṇu • Mirror • Wiping sweat • Plate • Writing on parchment • Seizing the throat • Elephant ear
<i>Bharmara*</i>	Bee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bee • Secret • Unloosening garments • Holding coral • Flowers (<i>papilionacea</i> genus) • Wing

<i>Catura*</i>	Four-fingered		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beckon • Amorous torment • Scattering <i>puja</i> flowers • Think • Sufficiency • Tip of ear • Sorrow • Slow gait
<i>Hamsapakṣa*</i>	Swan feather		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step • Asking; • “Come here!” • Bridge • Gathering • The number six
<i>Hamsāsya*</i>	Swan face		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love • Plucking (sitar or <i>vinā</i>, arrow) • Holding (garlands; a bird; seduction, a pen) • Dancing • “No!” • Sing • Listening to music
<i>Kāṅgūla*</i>	Tail		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bee in lotus • Think • Small • Water-lily • Partridge
<i>Kapittha*</i>	Wood-apple		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulling • Holding lotus of dalliance • Lakṣmī or Sarasvatī • Grasping end of robe • Offering incense of light

<i>Kartarī-mukha*</i>	Scissors-face		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of man and wife • Water buffalo • Scissors • Stealing • Death • Sleeping alone
<i>Kaṭakā-mukha*</i>	Crab-face		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peacock's beak • Bird • Stroking moustache (used for pride, boasting, masculine anger, or husband) • Draping sari • Holding pearls • Holding flowers • To lead • Plucking (a flower or a bowstring)
<i>Mṛga-śirṣa*</i>	Deer head		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body • Deer • Three brow • Fear • Putting henna on the feet • Calling beloved • Holding a stringed instrument
<i>Mukula*</i>	Bud		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jackal • Lotus bud • To give or to feed • Humble speech • God of Love (representing his five arrows)
<i>Muṣṭi*</i>	Fist		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grasp • Old person • Holding a shield • Riding (hold reins) • Steadfast

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting • Carrying away by force • Grasping hair
<i>Padmakōśa*</i>	Lotus-sheath		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lotus • Banyan-tree • Ball • Bell • Rain of flowers • Eat • Scattering flowers
<i>Patāka*</i>	Flag		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I • You • Exposition • Refuse • Earth • Past • Future • “Here” • “This place” • Cloud • Bosom • Cut • Underneath • Cheek • Water • Ear • Year • Month • Run
<i>Samdamśa*</i>	Tongs		<p>It is the <i>padmakōśa</i> opening and closing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belly • Fear • Listening • Grow or spout

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flies • Measuring worm • Spring
<i>Sarpa-śirṣa*</i>	Snake head		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink • Cobra • Hold a box • Girl or daughter, or child • Beyond • Bashful • Conceal • Washing face • Sprinkling powder
<i>Śikhara*</i>	Spire		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish • Man • Killing • Crow • Drink • Ancestor worship • “What is happening?” • Ringing • Plying palmyra fan • Demure • Amorous • Hair-knot
<i>Sūcī-mukha*</i>	Needle		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wife • There • “What shall I do?” • Rāvana • “Listen to me!” • World • Nose • I (boasting) • pointing to a distance (above the horizon line)






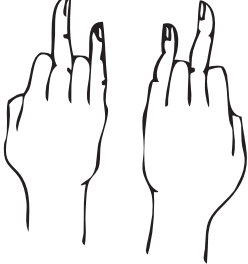

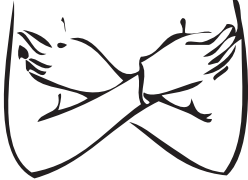

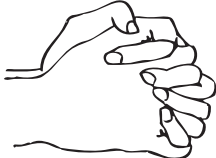
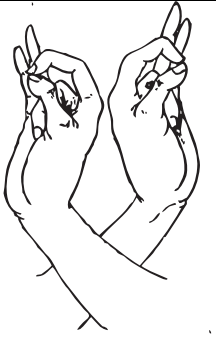
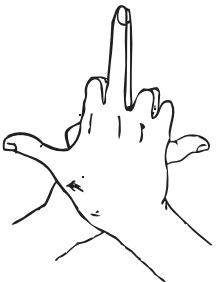


<i>Śuka-tuṇḍa*</i>	Parrot's beak		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn over • Throwing a spear • Butterfly • Flight of a parrot • Shooting an arrow • Violent mood • Remembering habitation
<i>Tāmra-cūḍa*</i>	Cock's crest		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic fowl • Camel • Snail • Drawing or writing poetry • The number three
<i>Tripatāka*</i>	Three parts of a flag		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flower on tree • Cow • "Come here!" • Rising flames • Union • Descend • Doubt
<i>Urṇa-nābha*</i>	Spider		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spider • Peacock's tail • Cloud • Grasping or catching • Stealing • Rain or mist

Table 1: The 24 *asamyuta-hastas* in Nāṭya Śāstra (Meri, 1964)

Sanskrit Name	English Name	Mudrā	Viniyogas (Usages)
<i>Anjali</i>	Respectful greeting		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salutation of gods • Salutation to <i>gurus</i> • Salutation to Brahmins
<i>Avahitta</i>	Dissimulation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakness • A signing showing one's body • Thinness of body • Longing for the beloved
<i>Dola</i>	Swing		
<i>Gajadanta</i>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying the bridegroom and the bride • Great weight • Clasping a pillar • Uprooting a hill or boulder
<i>Kapota</i>	Pigeon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaching with an inimical attitude • Bowing • Talking to a venerable person • Fear (in a woman)
<i>Karkata</i>	Crab		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beeswax • Massaging the limbs • Yawning after awakening from sleep • A big body

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the chin • Holding or blowing a conch
<i>Katakavardhamana</i>	Bracelet		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movements in love-making • Used when bowing
<i>Makara</i>	A mythical sea-creature		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lion • Tiger • Elephant • Crocodile • Shark • Any other carnivorous animal
<i>Nishada</i>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience • Intoxication • Pride • Elegance • Eagerness • Valour • Arrogance • Conceit • Motionlessness or steadiness
<i>Pushpaputa</i>	Handful of flowers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving or carrying rice • Fruit, flower or any other food • Carrying and removing water



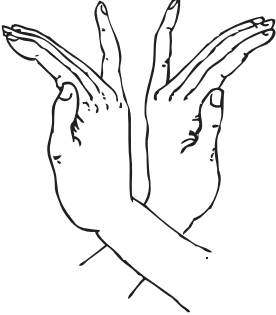
<i>Swastika</i>	Crossed		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directions • Clouds • Sky forests • Seas • Seasons • The earth and other extensive things
<i>Utsanga</i>	Embrace		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touch • Effort • Acts of anger or indignation • Squeezing something • A woman's act of jealousy
<i>Vardhamana</i>	Boar		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grasping • Receiving • Persevering • Convention • Truthfulness • Abridgement

Table 2: *The 13 samyuta-hastas* in Nāṭya Śāstra (Rao, 1998)

APPENDIX B

Bharata Nātyam

Bharata Nātyam (Figure 6) is an ancient but living south Indian dance whose origins trace back to the 6th century AD. It was originally the dance of courtesans but was later taken to the Chola and Pallava courts where the art was lavishly patronised. It is considered by many to be the “forefront” amongst the classical Indian dances and the point of reference of most other Indian forms of dancing (Banerji, 1985).



Figure 6: A Bharata Nātyam dancer.




This celebrated dance form was not only sung in the Ṛg Veda hymns but also featured on the walls of several Hindu monuments, including the Naṭarāja Temple at Chidambaram, the Bṛhadīswara Temple at Tanjore and the Ajanta Caves. The dance form was born out of Nāṭya Śāstra, with its rules and techniques bearing close resemblance to the ancient dramaturgy.

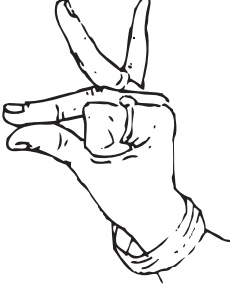
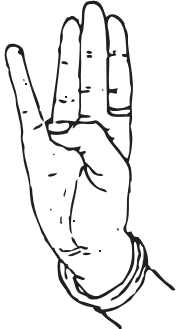

Bharata Nātyam choreographies are done in *nṛtta* (abstract dance), *nṛtya* (interpretive dance that expresses poetry or song) or *nāṭya* (dance-drama that enacts a narrative). In *nṛtya*, the medium of expression is *abhinaya*, which focuses a great deal on using both *asamyuta*

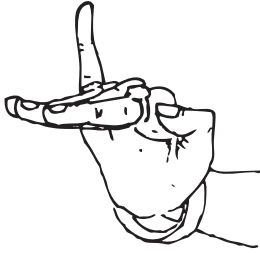
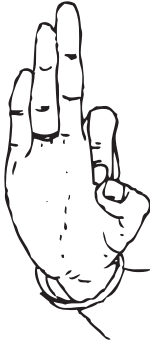

(Table 3) and *saṁyuta* (Table 4) *hasta-mudrās* used to describe the content of the song with symbolic movements. The full extent of the expression is completed with facial, eyebrow, head, neck, leg and feet gestures and postures.



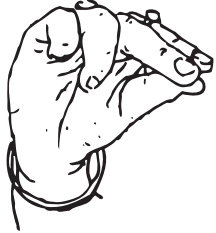
The complete repertoire, or *mārgam*, as conceived in the 19th century AD by Ponnaiya Pillai of the Tanjore Quartet³³, consists of the *alarippu*, *jatisvaram*, *varnam*, *abhinaya* (*padam* and *javali*), *thillana* and concluding with a *sloka* (Gaston, 1996). Of particular interest to this project is the *varnam* where the dance commences with a *nṛtta* dance section then transitioning to a *nṛtya* choreography that expresses and interprets lyrics of the song with various symbolic *nṛtya hasta-mudrās* and the accompanying body expression.


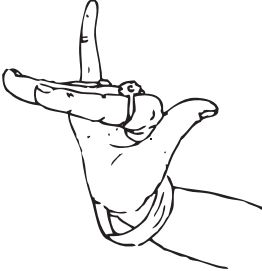

³³ The 19th century AD Bharata Nāṭyam quartet, who serviced at the court of King Sarfoji II of Tanjore, helped to revive and develop the dance form greatly. Their accolades include organising the *adavus* (dance units) of the *nṛtta* sequences, composing *varnams* and giving shape to the current Bharata Nāṭyam repertoire as well as

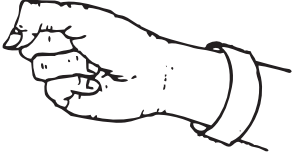
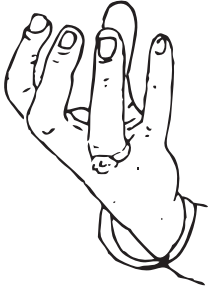
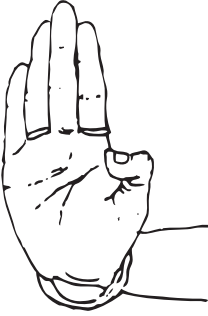
Sanskrit Name	English Name	Mudrā	Viniyogas (Usages)
<i>Arāla*</i>	Crooked		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinking poison, nectar, etc. • Strong or violent wind
<i>Ardha-candra*</i>	Half-moon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moon on the 8th day of the waning face • Seizing the throat • Spear • Consecration of an image of a god • Plate used for eating • Origin/birth • Waist • Thought / musing • Oneself • Meditation • Mode of greeting
<i>Ardha-patāka</i>	Half-flag		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaves • A board or slab for writing or painting • Bank of river • Showing “two” or “both” • Saw • Small knife • Flag • Tower • Horn

<i>Bharmara*</i>	Bee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bee • Parrot • Wings • Crane • Cuckoo and other similar birds
<i>Catura*</i>	Four-fingered		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kasturi</i> • A little • Gold, copper, iron and other metals • Wet • Sorrow or grief • To taste • Proof or oath • Sweetness or charming • Eyes • Difference of caste • Slow moving; • Breaking into pieces • Face • Ghee, oil
<i>Candra-kalā</i>	Digit of the moon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The crescent moon • Face • An index of measure (distance between thumb and forefinger) • Śiva's moon-shaped crown • The river Ganga • Falling down

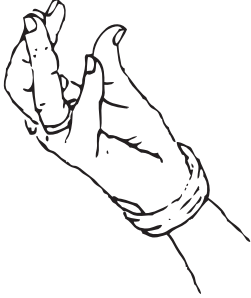

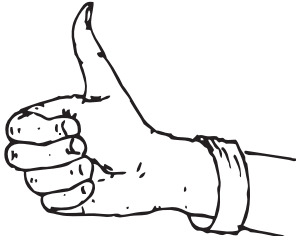
<i>Hamsapakṣa*</i>	Swan feather		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing the number six • Building a causeway or bridge • Depicting nail marks on the body • Covering • Arrangement
<i>Hamsāsya*</i>	Swan face		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tying the <i>mangalsutra</i> (symbol of marriage) • Tying a thread • Blessing or auspiciousness • Teaching of wisdom / sermon • Define or ascertain • Horripilation • String of pearls • Adjusting the candle wick • Jasmine garland • Touchstone • Drawing or painting • Drawing or painting a picture • Water tank or dam • Sting
<i>Kāṅgūla*</i>	Tail		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grapes • Tiny tinkling bells worn by children • Bells • <i>Chakora</i> bird • Betel nut tree • Breasts of a young girl • <i>Kalhara</i> (lily) • <i>Chataka</i> bird

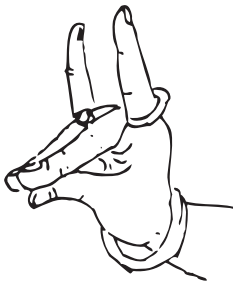
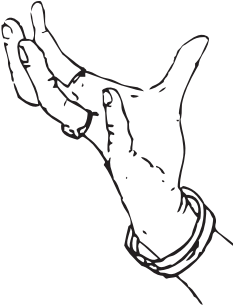

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cluster of coconuts
<i>Kapittha*</i>	Wood-apple		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lakṣmī or Sarasvatī • Beating the cymbals • Milking cows • Applying collyrium • To hold flowers at the time of making love • Grasping the end of one's robe • To cover the head with a veil • Offering incense and lights
<i>Kartarī-mukha*</i>	Scissors-face		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of man and wife; suffering the pangs of separation • Opposite • Caste differences • To say "this" and "that" • Corner of the eyes • Death • Lightning • Falling • To roll • Creeper
<i>Kaṭakā-mukha*</i>	Crab-face		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering flowers • Putting on a necklace of pearls or a garland of flowers • Drawing a bow • Giving betel leaves • Mixing to a paste of <i>kasturi</i> • Perfum or scent • Speaking

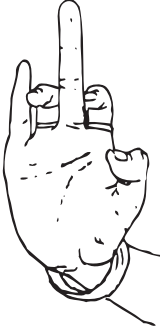

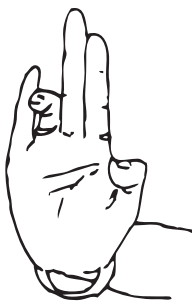
<i>Mayura</i>	Peacock		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The face of the peacock • Creeper • <i>Sakuna</i> bird • Vomiting • Stroking the hair • Putting <i>tilaka</i> on forehead • Scattering river water • Discussing the <i>śāstras</i> • Renown
<i>Mṛga-śirṣa*</i>	Deer head		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deer's head • Women • Cheek • Fear • Quarrel or argument • Cover • Calling out to someone; or inviting • Putting (vertical) <i>tilaka</i> on the forehead • Decorating the front of house with <i>rangoli</i> • Massaging the legs • Moving or walking forward • Calling one's beloved
<i>Mukula*</i>	Bud		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-lily • Eating • Five arrows of Madana (God of Love) • Holding a seal or signet • Naval • Banana flower

<i>Muṣṭi*</i>	Fist		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steadfastness or firmness • Grasping the hair • Holding things • Fighting spirit
<i>Padmakōśa*</i>	Lotus-sheath		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lotus • Indicates different types of fruits, like wood apple, elephant apple, mangoes • Women's breasts • Ball • Circular movement • Cooking utensils • To eat • Shower of flowers • Flower buds • Cluster of flowers • Offering flower • Bell • Image of an idol • Anthill
<i>Patāka*</i>	Flag		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning of a dance • (Water-laden) clouds • Rainy day • Forest • Forbidding something • Bosom • Night • River • Heaven • Horse • Cutting • Wind • To lie down • To go • Prowess

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favour • Moonlight • Scorching sunlight • To open a door • <i>Saptavibhaktyarthe</i> (The seven case endings) • Ripples • Entering a street • Equality • To anoint one self • One self • Taking an oath • Silence • Palmyra leaf • Shield • To touch things • Benediction • King • To denote “such and such a place” • The seas • A succession of good deeds • To address somebody • Going forward • Holding a sword • Month • Year • To sweep
--	--	--	---

<i>Samdamśa*</i>	Tongs		<p>It is the <i>padmakōśa</i> opening and closing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving sacrificial offerings • Wound or sore • Stomach • Worm • Apprehension • Worship • Showing the number five
<i>Sarpa-śirṣa*</i>	Snake head		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandal-paste • Snake • Sprinkling • Preserving or nourishing • Offering oblations to the Gods • To pat or to appreciate • Showing the shape of the elephant's head • Arms' of wrestlers
<i>Śikhara*</i>	Spire		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madana (God of love) • Bow • Pillar • Certainty or definite • Offering libations to ancestors • Upper or lower lip • Tooth • Pouring something • Questioning • <i>Linga</i> • Pulling or tying the girdle • Embrace • Sounding a bell • To say "no"

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recollection • To do abinaya
<i>Simha-mukha</i>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sacrificial fire • Hare • Elephant • <i>darbha</i> grass • Garland of lotuses • Lion's face • Preparing medicine • To test something
<i>Sola-padma</i> or <i>Alapadma</i> *	Full-blown lotus		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full-blown lotus • Wood apples • Circular movements • Separation or longing for one's beloved • Indicating beauty • Hair knot or <i>chignon</i> • Village • Cart • <i>Chakravala</i> bird • Violent anger • Lake • To speak • To praise
<i>Sūcī-mukha</i> *	Needle		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number one • The Supreme soul (Parabrahma) • Hundred • Sun • City • The world • Saying "this" and "that" • Threatening • Emanciated • Astonishment

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desert • Thorns • To denotes the body • Strand or braid of hair • Eye brows • Beating the drum • Turning the potter's wheel • Chariot wheel • Circumference of a wheel • The evening • To contemplate
<i>Śuka-tuṅḍa*</i>	Parrot's beak		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shooting an arrow • Throwing a spear • Remembering one's abode or recollecting the past • Revealing a secret or strange mystic things • Ferocity
<i>Tāmra-cūḍa*</i>	Cock's crest		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooster • Crane • Crow • Camel • Calf • Writing or pen
<i>Tripatāka*</i>	Three parts of a flag		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A crown • Tree • <i>Vajra</i> • <i>Ketaki</i> flower • Light or lamp • Leaping flames • Pigeon • Arrow • Indra

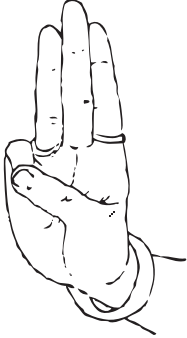













			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To write on a Palmyra leaf • Turning around
<i>Triśūla</i>	Trident		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bilva</i> leaves • Trinity • Trident






Table 3: The 28 *asamyuta-hastas* in Bharata Nāṭyam (Srabhai, 2000)

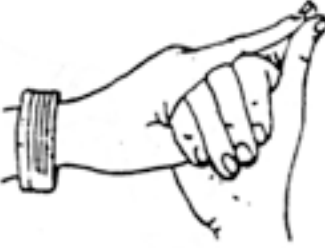




Sanskrit Name	English Name	<i>Mudrā</i>	<i>Viniyogas</i> (Usages)
<i>Anjali*</i>	Respectful greeting		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salutation of gods • Salutation to <i>gurus</i> • Saluation to Brahmins
<i>Avahitta*</i>	Dissimulation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erotic dance • Holding and playing a ball • Breast
<i>Bharunda</i>	Mythical bird with two heads		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair of <i>bharunda</i> birds

<i>Chakra</i>	Discus		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discus
<i>Dola*</i>	Swing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beginning of <i>Nāṭya</i>
<i>Garuda</i>	<i>Vâhana</i> ³⁴ of Viṣṇu		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garuda
<i>Kapota*</i>	Pigeon		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pramana</i> (authority) • Conversation with <i>gurus</i> • Conversation with elders • Obedience • Acquiescence
<i>Karkāṭa*</i>	Crab		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicating a crowd • Stomach • Blowing a conch • Stretching and massaging the limbs of the body • Bending a branch of a tree

³⁴ It refers to a vehicle or mount of a Hindu deity, usually served by a mythical creature.

<i>Katakavardhana*</i>	Bracelet		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronation • Worship • Marriage blessing
<i>Katari-swastika</i>	Crossed-scissors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branches of trees • Mountain peak • Trees
<i>Khatva</i>	Bedstead		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedstead
<i>Kilaka</i>	Bond		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affection • Speech of lovers
<i>Kurma</i>	Tortoise		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tortoise

<i>Matsya</i>	Fish		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish
<i>Nagabandha</i>	Serpent fetter		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snakes bound to each other
<i>Pushpaputa*</i>	Handful of flowers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worshipping with light (<i>arti</i>) • Receiving flowers and fruits • Offering water to gods • Offering spells with flowers to gods
<i>Pasha</i>	Cord		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enmity • Cord • Chains
<i>Samputa</i>	Covered box		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiding things • Covering casket

<i>Sankha</i>	Conch		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conch
<i>Shakata</i>	Cart		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expressions (<i>abhinaya</i>) of <i>rākṣasaḥ</i>
<i>Śivalinga</i>	The phallus symbol of <i>Śiva</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Śivalinga</i>
<i>Swastika*</i>	Crossed		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crocodile
<i>Utsanga*</i>	Embrace		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace • Bashfulness • Indicating ornaments on the arms • Children's education


<i>Varaha</i>	Boar		• Boar
---------------	------	--	--------

Table 4: The 24 *samyuta-hastas* in Bharata Nāṭyam

Kathakali

Kathakali (Figure 7), derived from the word ‘*kudakali*’ which means story-dance, is a form of mimed drama that originated from Malabar, in the southern region of India. Using *hastābhinaya*³⁵ and *mukhajābhinaya*³⁶, the actors would dance the stories of Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. The dance style is predominantly *tāṇḍava*. The dance-drama requires the actors to be adept in expressing various *bhāvas* with a combination of stylised expression, flowing *hastas* and symbolic *mudrās*.








Figure 7: Kathakali dancers.

Informed by two other Indian dance treatises—Abhinaya Darpana and Hasta-Lakshana-Dipika, Kathakali’s application of the *mudrās* slight differs from how Bharata Nāṭyam employs them. Most of the 24 ‘root *mudrās*’ are used both as *asamyuta-hastas* and *saṁyuta-hastas*. In addition to these ‘root *mudrās*’, an expanded vocabulary is available with the display different *mudrās* on each hand, also known as *misra mudrās*.

³⁵ It is a hand pantomime that uses a combination of *asamyuta* and *saṁyuta mudrās*.

³⁶ Facial pantomime

SANSKRIT NAME	ENGLISH NAME	MUDRĀ	MEANING
<i>Anjali</i>	Respectful greeting		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branch • Anger <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rain • Vomit • Fire • Horse • Loud noise • Bright • Hair • Ear-ring • Heat • Confusion • Always • River • Bathe • Flow • Blood
<i>Arāla*</i>	Crooked		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wicked • Idiot • Stupid • Tree • Stubble • Buds • Sprout
<i>Ardha-candra*</i>	Half-moon		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start or beginning • Smile • Disparage or speak ill of someone • “What?” <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If • “What?” or “where?” • Ill or weary • Sky • Merit acquired in past life • God or Lord • Remember • Grass • Men’s hair
<i>Bharmara*</i>	Bee		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gandharva</i>³⁷ • Have or is • Fear • Weep <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wings • Song • Water • Umbrella • Elephant ears
<i>Hamsapakṣa*</i>	Swan feather		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You • Bet • Wrath • Now • I • In front • Vanmalu³⁸ • Hall • Flame • Come near • Prevent or defend


³⁷ It refers to the supernatural creatures that are the charioteers of heaven.


³⁸ The white axe of Śiva

			<p><i>As samyuta-hasta:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moon • Wind • Eros • <i>Devá</i>³⁹ • Mountain • Summit • Always or everlasting • Friend • Bed • Rock • Well-being • Breasts • Cloth • Vehicle • Treachery • Recline • Fall • People • Beat • Cover • Spread • To place or fix • Come • A polite greeting • Bathe • Sandal • Embrace • Go behind • Protect • To send • Club • Cheek • Shoulder
--	--	--	--



³⁹ The Sanskrit word of God or any supernatural being.




			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hair • Obedient • Bless • <i>Muni</i> • Thus • Fish • Offering • Tortoise
<i>Hamsāsya*</i>	Swan face		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time before drizzling • Shower • Tuft • Line <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyeball or sight • Smooth or soft • White • Black • Red • Kindness or mercy • Hair on the body (especially on the chest and the stomach)
<i>Kapittha*</i>	Wood-apple		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net • Doubt • Peacock's feathers • Drink • Touch • Turn direction • Return • Back • Follow • Descend

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stepping
<i>Kartarī-mukha*</i>	Scissors-face		<p><i>As asamyuta-hasta:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You • Word • Time • Garrulous • We • Man • Face • Enmity • Boy • Mongoose <p><i>As samyuta-hasta:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin • Fatigue or sick • Brahmin • Fame • House • Religious vow • Pure • River bank • Caste • Hunger • Hear • Speak • Belly • End • Hunting



<i>Kaṭakā</i>	Crab		<p><i>As asaṃyuta-hasta:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flower • Mirror • Woman (or female) • <i>homa</i>⁴⁰ • Sweat • Little • Sound • Quiver • Fragrance <p><i>As saṃyuta-hasta:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viṣṇu • Kṛṣṇa • Hali • Arrow • Gold; Silver • Female demon • Sleep • Noble woman • Lakṣmī • Stars • Garland • Blue-lotus • Demon • Crown • Iron club • Special • Chariot • Together
---------------	------	---	--

⁴⁰ A Hindu ceremony which offerings are made to the Gods in the sacred fire.

<i>Kaṭakā-mukha*</i>	Crab-face		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jacket or breast-plate; • Servant • Hero • To shoot an arrow • Tie
<i>Mudrākya</i>			<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind • Thinking • Desire • Self • Memory • Again • Wisdom • Creation • Life • Defame • Future • No (negative) <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow • Shake • Heaven • Sea • Thick or dense • Forget; • All • Inform • Object • Death • Meditation • Sacred thread worn by Brahmins after their initiation • Straight




<i>Mukula*</i>	Bud		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fox • Monkey • Fade • Forget
<i>Mukura*</i>			<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foe • Bee • Rays • Anger • As or like this • Bangles • Neck • Armlet • Reject or abandon <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tusk or canine tooth of the demon • Separate • Angle • Hip or buttocks • Veda • Brother • Pillar • Mortar • Quick or immediate • Demon • Stout
<i>Muṣṭi*</i>	Fist		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In vain • Excessive • Disdain • Minister (secretary) • To guard





			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endure • Give • Permission • Victory • Bow • We • Single • Old age • Plunder • Food <p><i>As samyuta-hasta:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charioteer • Boon • Beauty • Merit • Spirit or ghost • Bind • Majestic posture • Heel • Pull • Yama • Mud or silt • Medicine • Curse • Swing or cradle • Giving • Circumambulation • Dig • Spear • Daring • Suffering • Spread • Giving birth
--	--	--	---

<i>Pallava</i>	Branch		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance • Bet • Smoke • Tail • Rattan walking stick <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vajra</i> • Summit • Cow's ears • Length of eyes • Buffalo • Weapon • Spear • Animals' horns • A polite greeting
<i>Patāka*</i>	Flag		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day • Daytime • Going • Tongue • Forehead • Body • As • Like or this • Sound • Messenger • Beach • Tender leaf <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun • King • Elephant • Lion • Bull

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crocodile • Arch • Creeper • Flag • Wave • Road or street • Earth • Loin • Vessel • Palace • Evening • Mid-day • Cloud • Anthill • Thigh • Servant • Feet • <i>Chakra</i>⁴¹ • Seat • Lightning • Gateway • Cold • Cart-wheel • Peaceful • Hunch or crooked • Door • Pillow • Canal • Bolt
--	--	--	--

⁴¹ It is used as Viṣṇu's weapon

<i>Sarpa-śirṣa*</i>	Snake head		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serpent
<i>Śikhara*</i>	Spire		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk • Legs • Eyes • See • Path or way • Enquire or search • Ears • Drink
<i>Sūcī-mukha*</i>	Needle		<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person • Difficult or hard • Corpse • Another • More than one • Ear • Ancient • This man • These men • Kingdom • Little • Witness • Disregard or contempt • “Come!”; “Go!” <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break • Jump • World • Sign or indication

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall • Another • Month • Eye brow • Separated • Loose • Tail
<i>Śuka-tuṇḍa*</i>	Parrot's beak		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goad • Bird
<i>Tripatāka*</i>	Three parts of a flag		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunset • Et-cetera • "Hello!" • Drink • Body • Beg or supplicate
<i>Urṇa-nābha*</i>	Spider		<p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horse • Fruit • Tiger • Butter • Ice • Many or abundance • Lotus
<i>Vardhamanaka</i>			<p>As <i>asamyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whirlpool • Naval • Well <p>As <i>samyuta-hasta</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's earring • Jewelled garland

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knee • Yógi • Gong • Elephant driver
--	--	--	---

Table 5: The 24 root *mudrās*, used as *asāmyuta-hastas* and *sāmyuta-hastas*, in Kathakali (Premakumar, 1948)

APPENDIX C

Classical Khmer Dance

Archaeological remnants⁴² from the ‘Indianised’ courts of the Khmer Empire referred constantly to classical temple dances and the dedication of *devadāsīs* to the temple as worship to the deity. The importance of dance in the Khmer culture is preserved on the carvings of the *apsarās* on the temple walls as seen most evidently around the Angkor Wat temple complex.

The classical Khmer dance, or sometimes called the Royal Cambodian ballet, began to take root in 5th or 6th century AD amidst the travels and trade of Indian merchants who came to the Southeast Asian region bringing with them their culture and ideas. As a vassal state to the Saliendra kingdom, Jayavarman II lived and studied in the courts of Java. Even after his return to the Khmer Empire, he maintained close relationship with the Javanese court and imported Javanese dancers into his kingdom, using the early ‘Indianised’ style of dancing as a model to develop their own (Miettinen, 1992). The concept of *devadāsīs* is closely associated with the *devarāja* concept established by the Brahman Hiranyadama for Jayavarman II from four ancient Tantric texts⁴³ (Menta, 2001). Assuming the roles as *apsarās* on earth, these temple-dancers with their sacred dance movements, gestures and postures help mediate and appease the divine so that they may receive the due blessings and protection for their kingdom (Shapiro, 1994).

Today, the classical Khmer dance form, consisting of about 20 varieties, incorporates the ceremonial, ritual and folk dances. The *boran* and *robam boran*⁴⁴ are pure dance forms (Heywood, 1992), similar to the Indian dance concept of *nṛtta*. Like the Indian *nāṭya*, the *lakhon*⁴⁵ is the Khmer dance-drama that depicts Khmer folklore, as well as the Khmer variant of the Rāmāyaṇa (*Reamker*) and the Mahābhārata. The Khmer style of dancing is mesmerisingly beautiful, soft and gentle (*tun phlun*) despite the strong and controlled (*khlang*) movements (Shapiro, 1994).

According to Paul Cravath, there are four primary *kbach* hand gestures (Table 6) used as connotative (in pure dances) and denotative meanings (in expressive dances), as well as

⁴² This includes stele inscriptions at Lolei and Preah Ko by Yasovarman I (reigned from c. 889-921), at Ta Prohm, Preah Khan and Bantaey Kdei by Jayavarman VII (reigned from c. 1181-1215) making “an offering of a great number of beautiful dancers” (Menta, 2001).

⁴³ They were namely, Vināśikha, Nayottara, Sammoha and Śiraschheda (Menta, 2001).

⁴⁴ Etymologically, the terms that refer to dance in the Khmer stele inscription were derived from the Sanskrit word ‘*nṛtta*’ (Menta, 2001).

⁴⁵ *Lakhon* refers to the many forms of dance-drama in Cambodia and Thailand. The term is derived from the Javanese term ‘*lakon*’ (see Classical Javanese Dance) which refers also refers to a variety of narrative drama performance in Java (Miettinen, 1992).

numerous other conventionalised and denotative hand gestures (Table 7) that is “neither possible nor of great value to attempt a catalogue” (Cravath, 2008). The *kbach* hand gestures used in the classical Khmer dance are not used so much for the plot progression but more for the aesthetical embellishment (Heywood, 1992). However, the *kbach* hand gestures do combine to certain meanings (Heywood, 1992), and its meaning changes contextually when placed and applied differently in relation to the rest of the body. It should also not be understood as individual gestures but holistically as complete action sequences (Loviny, 2002). This is not dissimilar to the classical Indian *nr̥tta* dances and their *karanās*. Without having consolidated the dance techniques in manual that is comparable to the Nāṭya Śāstra, the knowledge of the *kbach* hand gestures and other dance techniques may have relied on oral transmission. The lack of a dance compendium may also be the reason why many these gestures have diminished (or even unknown) meanings, as compared to traditional Indian dance forms.

Nature and its movements serve as metaphors (Heywood, 1992) to guide the dancers in the presentation and transition of the *kbach* posture, poses and gestures. Similar to the primordial dance-rite, these gestures that emulate the nature participate in the natural cyclic movements of the environment and the cosmos (Shapiro, 1994). It brings to mind, once again, the Hindu cosmological processes of Creation, Preservation and Destruction manifesting in all of creation.





KHMER NAME	ENGLISH NAME	<i>MUDRĀ</i>
<i>Kbach Sung Luc</i>	Leaf	 A close-up photograph of a dancer's right hand in a classical Khmer dance pose. The hand is held high, with the index finger pointing upwards and the other fingers slightly curled. The dancer is wearing a white, shimmering, sequined sleeve and several gold bangles on the wrist.
<i>Kbach Cheap</i>	Flower	 A close-up photograph of a dancer's right hand in a classical Khmer dance pose. The hand is held in front of the chest, with the index and middle fingers extended and slightly curved, resembling a flower. The dancer is wearing a white, shimmering, sequined top and several gold bangles on the wrist.
<i>Kbach Chung Aul</i>	Tendril	 A close-up photograph of a dancer's right hand in a classical Khmer dance pose. The hand is held in front of the chest, with the index finger pointing upwards and the other fingers slightly curled, resembling a tendril. The dancer is wearing a white, shimmering, sequined top and several gold bangles on the wrist.
<i>Kbach Coung</i>	Fruit	 A close-up photograph of a dancer's right hand in a classical Khmer dance pose. The hand is held in front of the chest, with the index and middle fingers extended and slightly curved, resembling a fruit. The dancer is wearing a white, shimmering, sequined top and several gold bangles on the wrist.

Table 6: Four primary *kbach* hand gestures in classical Khmer dance

KHMER NAME	ENGLISH NAME	MUDRĀ
<i>Kbach Phka</i>	Blossoming flower	

Table 7: Some conventionalised *kbach* hand gestures in classical Khmer dance.

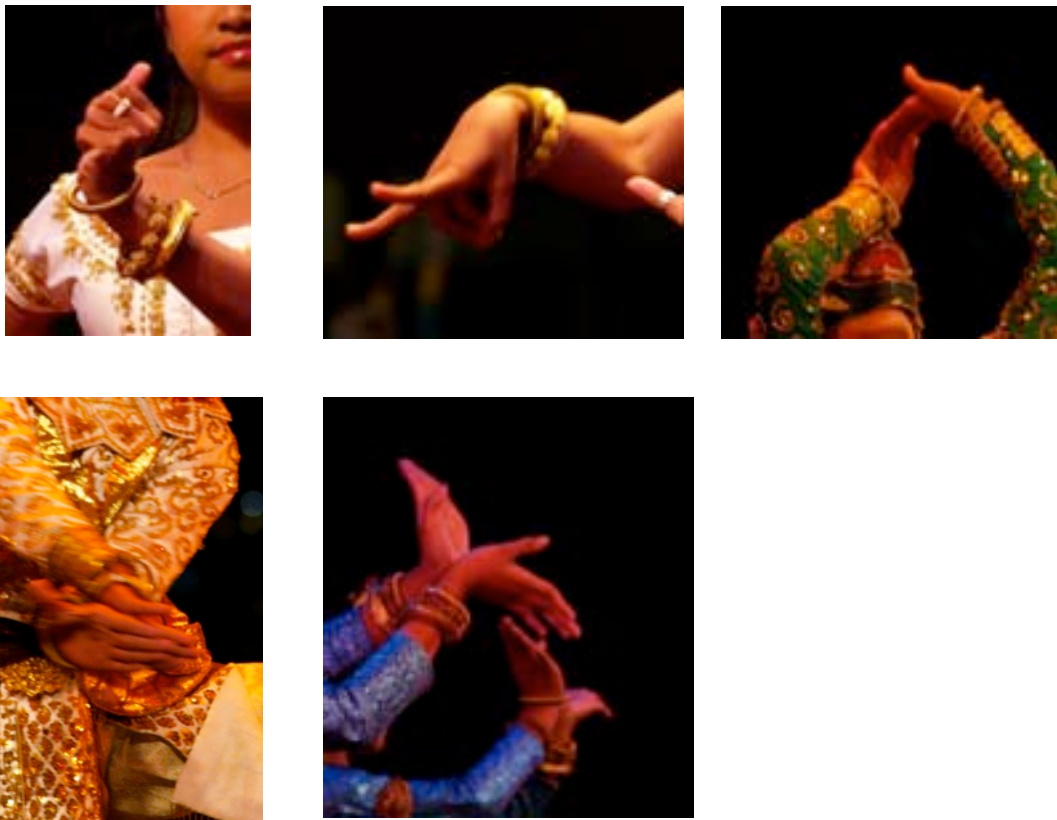


Table 8: Other *kbach* hand gestures I observed that are visually similar to those used in classical Indian dances but cannot be found in any documentation.

Classical Thai Dance

The classical Thai court dance tradition was conceived out of the classical Khmer court dance when the Siam sacked Angkor in 1431, abducting the Khmer court dancers to Ayutthaya. The place of importance and significance that dance had in Khmer society were also assimilated into the burgeoning Thai society. The adopted Khmer dance style was rigorously altered to suit the Thais, marking a renaissance of Thai performing arts in the Ayutthaya period.

There are generally four main styles of Thai dance traditions: the central, northern, northeastern and southern, with the central style regarded as the classical style of Thai dance. The classical Thai dance is characteristically slow in rhythm with the dancers repeating merely a few decorative but meaningful hand gestures. The delicate movement of the arms, hands and fingers is the emphasis (Figure 8). This is unlike the classical Indian dance tradition where the facial expression also plays an important part in the expression of *bhāva*. In classical Thai dance, the mood is predominantly expressed by sung text and the musical accompaniment.



Figure 8: Gentle and graceful hand gestures used in *Rabam*.

The shared heritage between the Khmer and Thai dance tradition resulted in many commonalities in the style, approach and terminology. Similar to the classical Khmer dance, the *rabam* (*robam* in Khmer) is the pure dance composition while the *lakhon* are the narrative dance-dramas that feature the Indian epics, Buddhist Jātakas as well as local folk stories.

They employ the same *kbach* hand gestures, along with other conventional gestures, as the vocabulary to express beauty and characterise distinct situations.

Classical Javanese Dance

The present classical Javanese dance and drama forms were the creation of the Islamic courts of Central Java over two centuries. This art form fused the indigenous traditions with the stories and dance philosophy and technique from India, Yogyakarta and Surakarta (present-day Solo).

Devarājas of the Hindu-Java period (c. 400 to 1400 AD) have adopted the practice of consecrating *devadāsīs* to temple from India. The competing Hindu Sañjaya (c. 732 to 947 AD) and Buddhist Sailendra (8th to 9th century AD) Empires, who ruled along side each other in the Central Javanese islands built two important monuments—Borobudur and Prambanan temple complexes—that preserve on their reliefs, figures assuming classical Indian dance poses, as well as narrative panels from the Indian epics and Buddhist Jātakas (Figure 9). The relief panels testify to the notion that deep-seated Hindu-Buddhist thought and beliefs, including the sacredness of dance, had pervaded the respective Empires by the 9th century AD when both the monuments were built.



Figure 9: Carved frieze of a scene from the Mahābhārata with figures assuming dancierly poses, Prambanan temple complex

Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, localised and synthesised with local traditions and folklore, became fertile ground of Javanese dramatic exploration. They were played out in the *wayang kulit*, and later *wayang wong*. These syncretic stories are even considered to be

national literature, and the Javanese believe that the heroes are of local origin (Miettinen, 1992).

Wayang wong (Figure 10) is the Javanese dance-drama that developed out of the *wayang kulit*, replacing the puppets with dancers. The two art forms, therefore, share many commonalities in *lakon*, *bĕksa*⁴⁶ and aesthetic qualities. The movements of *wayang wong* dance-actors are slow, fluid yet dignified, holding their ornamental postures and gestures from time to time. Depending on their roles, the dance-actors perform in the *bĕksa putri*⁴⁷, *bĕksa alus*⁴⁸ or *bĕksa gagah*⁴⁹.



Figure 10: A contemporary *wayang wong* performance, dubbed as the ‘Ramayana ballet’ for the tourists.

Bĕdhaya (Figure 11) is an extremely slow and solemn ceremonial court dance, developed in the *kraton* of Java by Sultan Agung (reigned from 1613 to 1645). This demanding dance form is filled with deep symbolic and religious meaning, and it is even considered to be a *yógic* experience dancing *bĕdhaya*. According to legends, *bĕdhaya* was first performed by Ratu Kidul (Queen of the South Seas), Sultan Agung’s supernatural wife. With the accompaniment of *gamelan* music and choral singing, the nine dancers—symbolising the eight cardinal points and the axial centre of the universe—perform in *bĕksa putri*, though expressionless, with deliberate but flowing hand movements (Miettinen, 1992). Echoing its Hindu roots, the nine dancers may also represent the nine orifices of the human

⁴⁶ It refers to a unit of dance movement.

⁴⁷ It is a feminine and gentle dance style (Miettinen, 1992).

⁴⁸ It is a refined dance style, for noble male characters (Miettinen, 1992).

⁴⁹ It is a strong, energetic male dance style (Miettinen, 1992).

body (Miettinen, 1992). Coupled with the Javanese's dualistic view of the body as *lair*⁵⁰ and *batin*⁵¹, the *bědhaya* dance composition can be viewed as an active interaction between the macro- and microcosm (Miettinen, 1992) (Hughes-Freeland, 2008).



Figure 11: The *bědhaya* dance

The classical Javanese dances employ four basic hand gestures (Table 9) derived from the shadow puppets, which were partially inspired from the Indian-influenced dance of the Central Javanese period. Similar to the classical Khmer dances, the gestures used in *wayang wong*, *bědhaya* and *serimpi* are often decorative displays that do not necessarily have any mimetic, denotative or symbolic meaning anymore (Hughes-Freeland, 2008). A 13th or 14th century AD Old Javanese text entitled *Nawantya*, containing a passage on music and dance and the use of some Sanskrit dance terminology, suggests that the Javanese society then may have had some foundational knowledge of the classical Indian dance (Iyer, 1998). However, it was arguably not as comprehensive as the *Nāṭya Śāstra*. Just as in Cambodia, the lack of such a dance and drama manual—whether it is in the failure or transmission or conception—in Java may have resulted in the dilution of meaning or purpose in the hand gestures.

⁵⁰ It refers to the visible, material and physical body (Hughes-Freeland, 2008).

⁵¹ It refers to the invisible, energetic and spiritual body (Hughes-Freeland, 2008).





JAVANESE NAME	<i>MUDRĀ</i>
<i>Sikap Ngruji</i>	
<i>Sikap Ngiting</i>	
<i>Sikap Ngepel</i>	
<i>Sikap Nyempurit</i>	

Table 9: Four basic hand gestures in classical Javanese dances

Classical Balinese Dance

The island of Bali has been a safe haven for Hinduism since it came under its influence in the 8th and 9th century AD. When the East Javanese Majapahit Empire (c. 1253 to 1500) successfully conquered the island in the middle of 14th century, Bali assimilated the Old Javanese culture with theirs. Bali remained an enclave that preserve their unique blend of Hinduism even as Islamic empires overtook the rest of Java, untouched by external influences. The Balinese possess a great repertoire of dances, but are generally classified between sacred—those reserved only for worship at the most sacred parts of temple and not meant for the eyes of non-Balinese, and the secular—performances open to all (Miettinen, 1992).

The *wali* dances are among the most sacred of dances. Although the *wali* dances later borrowed the gestural vocabulary of Hindu-Javanese classical dance, they were indigenous in their origins (Miettinen, 1992). One of the ceremonial *wali* dances is the *baris gede* (Figure 11) where the men use fast, jerking movements, tensed arm gestures and expressive eye movements to convey the various moods.

A popular and well-known form of secular Balinese dance is the *legong*. *Legong* is a contemporary dance-drama that combines the elements from older court dance traditions, such as the *gambuh* and *sang hyang dedari* dance. Insect-antennae-like *vibrato* finger movements, tensed arms, delicate head movements and expressive eye movements are characteristic of *legong*. It is an abstracted dance-drama that the plot is implicitly performed.



Figure 11: The sacred *baris gede* performed in the inner sanctuary of Pura Bersakih

Although the Brahmins performing the rituals in the Balinese temple still employ a rich vocabulary of ritual symbolic *mudrās*, very few Balinese dance hand gestures have symbolic meaning as in classical Indian dances (de Zoete & Spies, 1982). Gestures like *manganjali* (both palm placed together in respectful greeting) and *nuding* (sending a message or being angry) are the few that actually depict specific things. Most Balinese dance movements, like the classical Khmer dance, are abstractions of nature's movements and have little to do with the progression of the plot (Dibia & Ballinger, 2008).

To the Balinese audience, the most important for quality for a performer is to possess *taksu*. It is a type spiritual energy or charisma gives the performers the ability to transport their audience into a different time and space to truly experience the dance (Dibia & Ballinger, 2008). This idea is comparable to the classical Indian dance concept of *bhāva* and *rasa*. In order to attain *taksu*, the dancer needs to maintain their *bayu* (energy), *sabda* (inner voice) and *idep* (thought) in an optimal balance.

APPENDIX D

Process / Research: Stills from dance performance study video footages



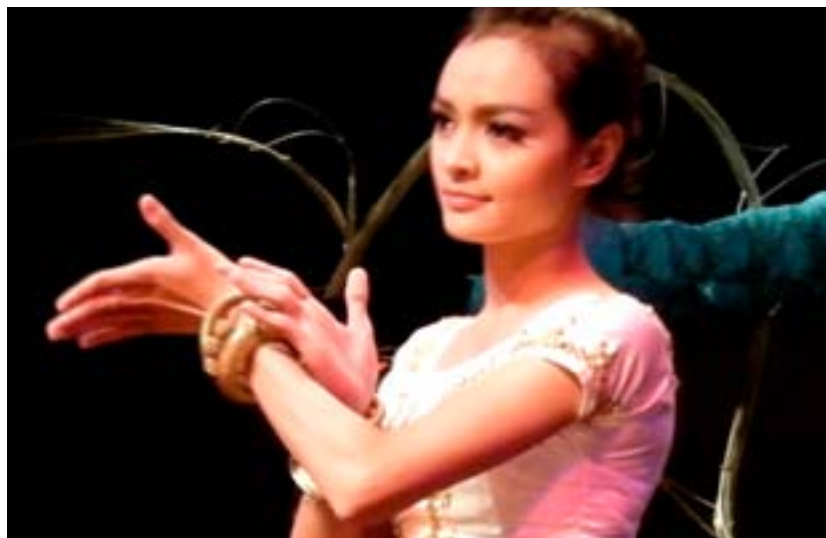
Balinese sacred temple *wali*, known as *Rejang Dewa*, performed at Pura Bersakih for Melasti.
Taken during a research study trip with Dr. Nanci Takeyama in March 2010.
© 2010 Nanci Takeyama.



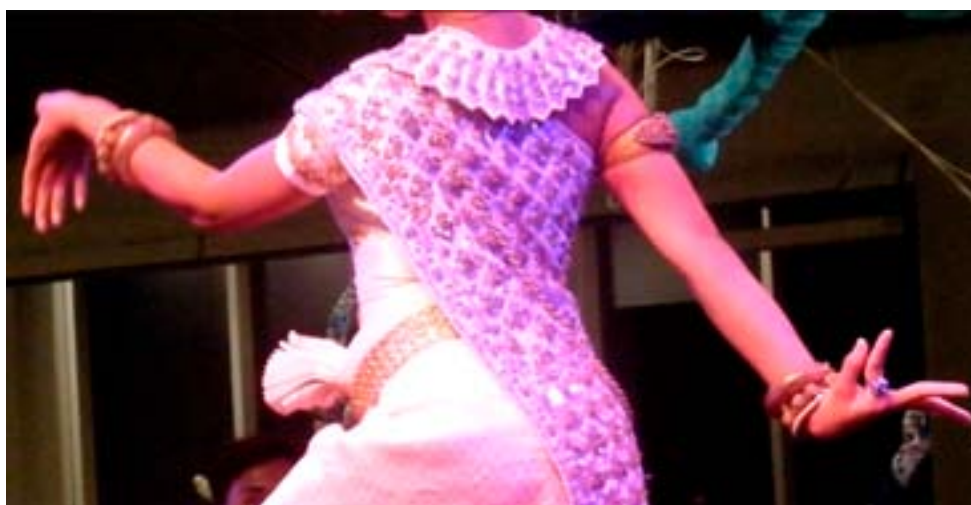
Balinese sacred temple *wali*, known as *Baris Gede*, performed at Pura Bersakih for Melasti.
Taken during a research study trip with Dr. Nanci Takeyama in March 2010.
© 2010 Nanci Takeyama.



Khmer classical dance *Robam Sovann Macha* performed by Apsara Arts Association
As part of Rasa, Esplanade presents D:ans Festival 2010.



Khmer classical dancer from Apsara Arts Association demonstrating specific *kbach* gestures
As part of Rasa, Esplanade presents D:ans Festival 2010



Khmer classical dance *Robam Thida Sour* performed by Apsara Arts Association
As part of Rasa, Esplanade presents D:ans Festival 2010.



Thai classical dance *Rabam* performed by dance students from Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University. As part of Rasa, Esplanade presents D:ans Festival 2010.



Thai classical dance *Rabam Sukhothai* performed by dance students from Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University. As part of Rasa, Esplanade presents D:ans Festival 2010.



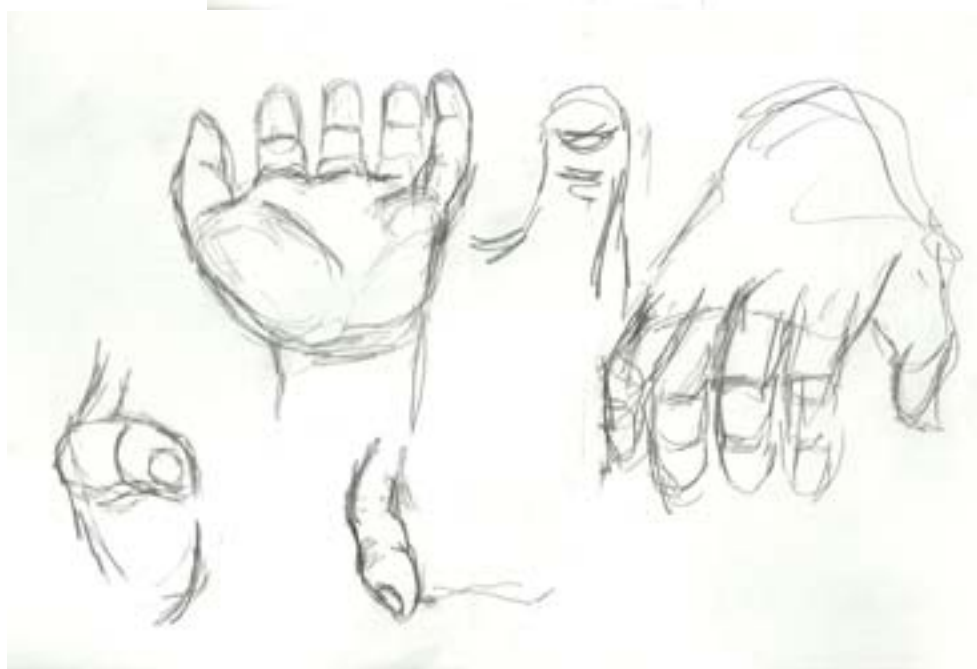
Wayang Wong performed by the Ramayana Ballet troupe at Prambanan, Yogyakarta.

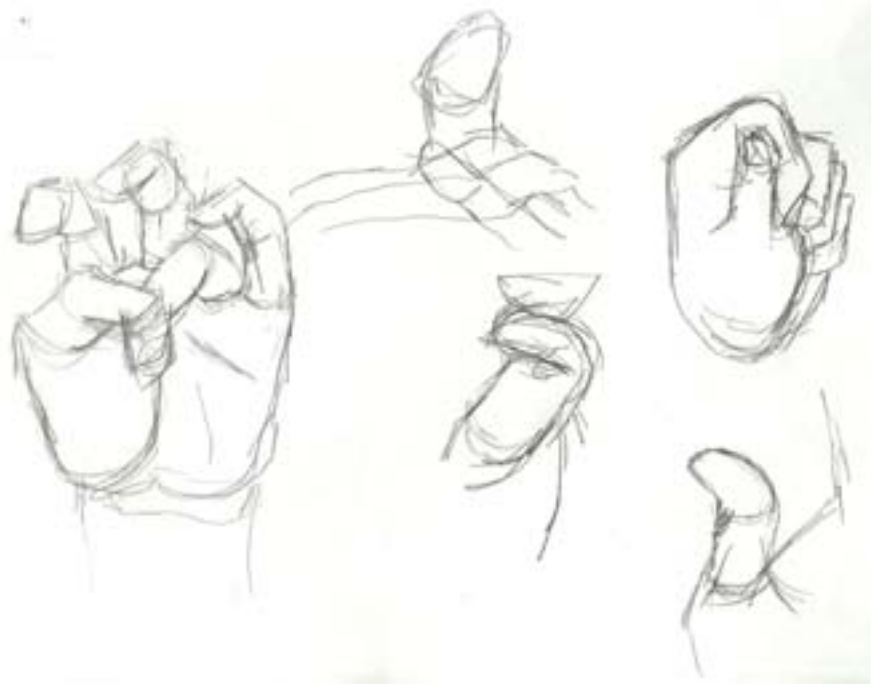


Interviews and demonstrations of *Svami Naan Undan Adimai*,
by Guru Balakrishnan of Bharataanjali Dance School.

APPENDIX E**Process / Project Development: Gestural and observational sketches of hand poses**

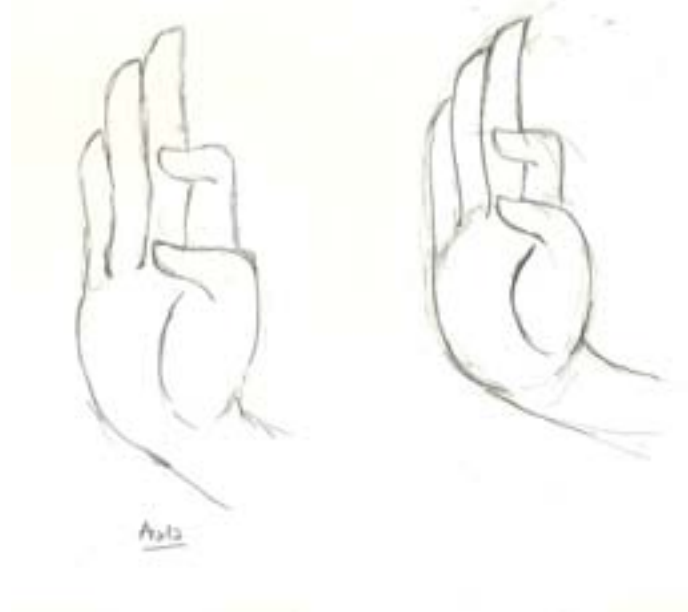








Process / Project Development: Stylised sketches of hand poses





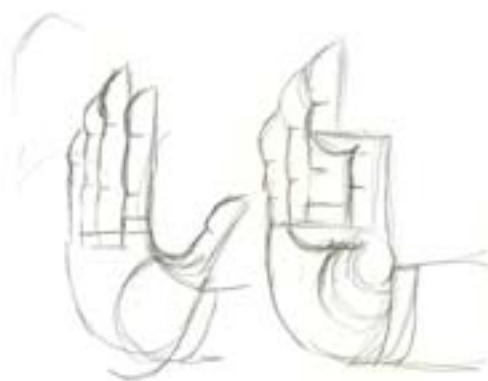
Anillo-patika



Anillo-choyos

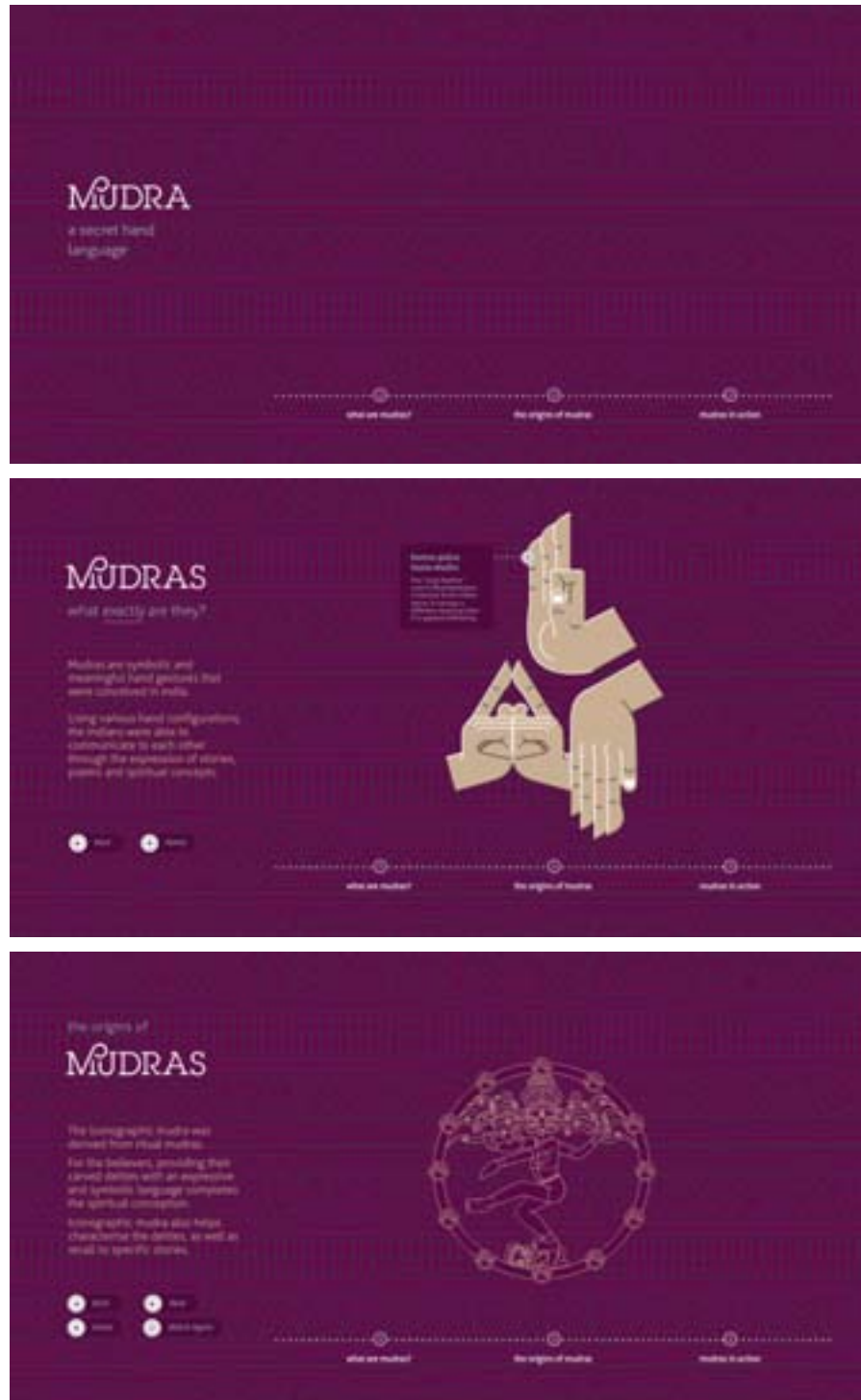


Anillo-maya



APPENDIX F

Final project outcome





Screenshots of the interactive kiosk.



The accompanying illustrated dictionary of the *hasta-mudrās* and its *viniyogas*.





The accompanying rubber stamp kit.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dibia, I. W., & Ballinger, R. (2008). *Balinese Dance, Drama and Music – A guide to the Performing Arts of Bali*. Singapore: Periplus.
- Heywood, D. (1992). *Cambodian Dance: Celebration of the Gods*. Bangkok: River Books.
- Mansingh, S. (2007). *Incredible India: Classical Dances*. New Delhi: Wisdom Tree.
- de Zoete, B., & Spies, W. (1982). *Dance and drama in Bali*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Menta, J. B. (2001). *Dance of life – The mythology, history and politics of Cambodian Culture*. Singapore: Graham Brash.
- Banerjea, J. N. (1956). *The development of Hindu iconography*. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press.
- Stutley, M. (1985). *The illustrated dictionary of Hindu Iconography*. London: Routledge & Keagan Paul.
- Banerji, P. (1985). *Art of Indian dancing*. New Delhi: Sterling.
- Loviny, C. (2002). *Les Danseuses Sacr'ees d'Angkor*. (H. Khieu Kanharith, & S. H'eng M'eng Cheang, Trans.) Paris: Jazz Editions.
- Meri, L. (1964). *The gesture language of the Hindu dances*. New York: Benjamin Blom.
- Miettinen, J. O. (1992). *Classical dance and theatre in South-east Asia*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Rao, K. (1998). *A dictionary of Bharata Natya*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.
- Saunders, E. D. (1985). *Mudrā - A study of symbolic gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- de Kleen, T. (1970). *Mudrā - The ritual hand-poses of the Buddha priests and Shiva priests of Bali*. New York: University Books.
- Coomaraswamy, A. K. (1928). Mudrā, muddā. *Journal of American Oriental Society* (48), 279-281.
- Coomaraswamy, A. K. (1977). *The mirror of gesture – Being the Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikeśvara* (2nd Edition ed.). New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Rawson, P. (1978). *The Art of Tantra* (Revised Edition ed.). London: Thames and Hudson.
- Wosien, M.-G. (1992). *Sacred dance – Encounter with the Gods*. New Yorks: Thames and Hudson.

- Brown, T. (2008, June). Design Thinking. *Harvard Business Review* , 88-89.
- Simon, H. (1969). *The Sciences of the Artificial*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Subrahmanyam, P. (Writer), & Balakrishnan, V. (Director). (2009). *Karana prakaranam: marga tradition revived* [Motion Picture]. Chennai.
- Cravath, P. (2008). *Earth In Flower: The Divine Mystery of the Cambodian Dance Drama*. Florida: DatASIA.
- Shapiro, T. (1994). *Dance and the Spirit of Cambodia*. New York: Cornell University.
- Hughes-Freeland, F. (2008). *Embodied Communities: Dance Traditions and Change in Java*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Iyer, A. (1998). *Prambanan: Sculpture and Dance in Ancient Java*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- Srabhai, M. (2000). *Understanding Bharata Natyam* (7th Edition ed.). Gujarat: Darpana Academy of Performing Arts.
- Premakumar. (1948). *Language of Kathakali: A guide to mudrās*. Lahore: Kitabistan.
- Gaston, A.-M. (1996). *Bharata Natyam: From Temple to Theatre*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Arundale, R. D. (2010). The Spiritual Background of Indian Dance. In D. Soreji (Ed.), *Bharata Natyam: A Reader* (pp. 192-195). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Gaston, A.-M. (2010). Dance and the Hindu Woman: Bharatanatyam Reritualized. In *Bharata Natyam: A Reader* (pp. 273-294). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

APPRECIATION

There are several people who have been absolutely important and indispensable to the completion of this Final Year Project, and I would to express my deepest appreciation to:

- My parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lim Ngo Ti, who have been supporting me in my every endeavour and loving me unconditionally.
- My supervising Professor, Dr. Nanci Takeyama, whose philosophy is such an immense inspiration to my fellow colleagues under her tutelage and I. She cares deeply for every one of us and shares what she knows and has unselfishly.
- Guru Balakrishnan of Bharataanjali Dance School and Guru Srilakshmi Arun of Global Indian Cultural Centre, who gave me a rare opportunity to interview and be part of their lessons. Special thanks to Guru Bala for demonstrated for me the dance choreography for *Svami Naan Undan Adimai*.
- Mr. Thiagarajan Kanaga Sabapathy and Visiting Professor Kirti Trivedi, who took time out to understand my project and gave me their advice and comments.
- Mr Poh Kian Sing, who had helped me in the programming of the interactive kiosk in actionscript.
- My friends, Mr Lee Yong Ping, Brian, Miss Lim Fen Yu, May, Miss Heng Shao Ning and Miss Song Ting Xi, Jemima, who have been my help, critique, inspiration and support in every step of the way of my project.