

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies presents....



# Thai Shadow Theater

A Brown Bag by Bonnie Brereton

*Thursday, November 15 at 12:00 p.m.*

*Tokioka Room, Moore 319*

## **Nang Pramo Thai – The Exuberant Shadow Theater of Northeast Thailand**

Thai shadow theater (*nang talung*) has long been associated with southern Thailand, where it is a famous hallmark of local identity. It is also found in parts of the northeast, where it is known as *nang pramo thai*. Although its presence there probably dates from no earlier than the twentieth century, *nang pramo thai* is a vibrant form of entertainment with a loyal following. This talk explores the status of this dramatic form in the central Isan provinces and contrasts it with that of the traditional shadow theatre of southern Thailand. Despite its low profile, *nang pramo thai* in many ways embodies the essence of the local culture of the Northeast. This can be seen not only in its robust music, high-spirited puppetry, and inclusion of women puppeteers; but also in the performers' ingenuity in adopting an "imported tradition" and transforming it into a local one when faced with financial hardship.

**Dr. Bonnie Brereton** went to Thailand as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1965 and in 1969. After working as an outreach coordinator at the University of Michigan's Center for Southeast Asian Studies, she received a Fulbright as a consultant at Khon Kaen University where she began research on local shadow theatre and village temple murals. Her most recent publications include "Traditional Shadow Theater of Northeastern Thailand (Nang Pramo Thai): Hardy Transplant or Endangered Species?" *Aseanie*, forthcoming, and a book in progress on Isan murals.