



Pha Tad Ke Botanical Garden

Newsletter Nr. 3 - February 2011

PHA TAD KE - THE CLIFF TO UNTIE AND RESOLVE

We would like to wish you all a great and exciting 2011, we are sure that for us at Pha Tad Ke it's going to be a busy one ! February will be filled with a workshop on macro and botanic photography generously given by Kees Sprenger. And also in February Dr. Santi Watthana from Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden will come to Laos to conduct the first joint fieldwork trip with PTK on traditional Hmong medicinal plants.

RIK GADELLA, PHA TAD KE BOTANICAL GARDEN

Content

- 1-4 Amis de Pha Tad Ke
- 5-8 News from Pha Tad Ke
- 9-13 The Lotus
Botanica of Laos by Elisabeth Vilayleck
- 14-16 « Vientiane, Architectures d'une capitale »
Chronique par Michèle-Baj Strobel
- 17-22 Portfolio: Sengsong
The Young Lao Photographer's Gallery @ My Library
- 23-24 Some Books & Other Affairs we Love
- 25-27 Project Space • Luang Prabang

*The Pha Tad Ke Newsletter is distributed 3 times a year via e-mail.
Big thanks to our volunteer collaborators, and if anyone is interested to write
articles or help us with occasional translations please let us know.
© Pha Tad Ke & the authors, 2011. Subscription at www.pha-tad-ke.com*





Friends of Pha Tad Ke Botanical Garden

Launched in January 2010, the Association of Friends of Pha Tad Ke (a French non profit organization) was founded to support the creation of the Pha Tad Ke Botanical Garden. The garden is currently in the creation phase and will open its doors in five years. In order to support us during this phase we would like to invite you to become a Friend of the Garden.

We have set up a sponsoring system so that Friends can contribute to specific projects that are close to their hearts.

Sponsoring Pha Tad Ke will allow you to follow the day-to-day evolution of the garden, look behind the scenes of its operations and participate in the Pha Tad Ke adventure.

Hugues de Saint Simon, President

Albane de Chatellus, Treasurer

Rik Gadella, Secretary

For further information: contact@amis-pha-tad-ke.com

To become a Friend of Pha Tad Ke, send your subscription via our website www.amis-pha-tad-ke.com:

Using Paypal online payment or a bankcard.

By bank transfer: HSBC-France Code BIC: CCFRFRPP

Payable to 'Amis de Pha Tad Ke'

Account N°: FR76 3005 6009 4909 4900 0885 363

By French check, payable to 'Amis de Pha Tad Ke' and sent to

Amis de Pha Tad Ke Botanical Garden

(Association Loi 1901)

Office: 108, rue JP Timbaud 75011 Paris, France

**When you become a member for the creation phase,
your 5-year (2010-2014) membership will entitle you to:**

Member - € 100:

- Our newsletter (3 times a year, english/french) contains news about the garden, on-going work and actions, and articles about the flora, arts and culture of Laos.

Friend Member - € 300:

- Private visit to PTK, including boat trip and picnic (for 2 pax, booking required)
- A 30% reduction on the garden's publications and products (except Folies)
- Access to our favored travel agent in Laos, reductions on hotels and restaurants etc. (see list of the partners of the Friends)
- Mention of your name on our website
- An invitation for two people to the official opening.

Support Member - Institutions & Companies - € 2,000:

- Mention of your name on our website with your logo
- Discount of 10% on one of our editions « Folies »
- A private reception at the pre-opening for a group from your institution/company.

Donor Member - € 5,000 €, or more:

- Discount of 10% on two of our editions « Folies »
- Inclusion of your name on the donor plaque at the entrance to the garden.

**Members can increase their involvement in the
creation of Pha Tad Ke by supporting one or more of
our individual projects:**

• **Adopt a tree: from € 50 to € 2,000**

Buying and planting a tree is only a beginning. It must then be fed, cared for and pruned. This takes time, money and care. Love your tree and adopt a seedling or a mature tree.

• **Sponsor a Bookparty: € 400**

Guided visits to the gardens for groups of children or students, who will spend a day learning about Pha Tad Ke's work and plants. The package includes transport to the garden and lunch. At the end of the day, every participant will receive a copy of our specially published books.

• **Sponsor a student: € 4,400 for 4 years**

In conjunction with three institutions, PTK has set up a grant for the best first-year student. At the end of the first year of study, the winning student will be offered a scholarship that will allow him or her to continue his or her studies. In exchange, the recipient will be required to do a two-month work placement at the garden during summer recesses and to work at the garden for one year at the end of his/her studies.

• **Sponsor a research post: € 1,800 for one year**

Given the heavy workload at the university and the very low salaries in Laos, there is little time left for building research projects. With this grant PTK will enable a post doc to do a year's research on a topic chosen in consultation with PTK.

• **Sponsor a field trip: € 10,000**

In conjunction with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, we have set up a three-year partnership to train our horticultural team and to carry out an ambitious program of monthly field trips to gather specimens for a collection of living plants that will be unique in Laos. At the same time we will collect specimens for a herbarium. Each trip will require a substantial investment in time and money but this work is imperative as it will form the very foundations of our garden and its collections.

• **Sponsor a building: from € 15,000**

Several buildings will be required to house our collections and staff, and provide facilities for visitors. These buildings will include: Nurseries (€ 15,000), Orchid House (€ 27,000), Butterfly Farm (€ 32,000), Reception area (€95,000), Restaurant (€ 95,000), offices for research staff (€ 130,000), Traditional Medicines House (€ 135,000) and Library and Herbarium (€ 190,000).



The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh gave their Course on Practical Horticulture at Pha Tad Ke. For two weeks, 15 students followed this intensive course that is certified by RBGE and BGI. December, 2010





Leigh Morris and Laura Cohen from RBGE with the 15 graduates from the Course on Practical Horticulture at Pha Tad Ke.





The Dr. Cecilia Koo Botanic Conservation Foundation in Taiwan organised a high level International Fern Training Course in November. With their generous support Bon Metha Namsai of Pha Tad Ke was able to participate.



Like the lotus which attaches itself to neither the water nor the mud, the wise man attaches himself neither to sensual pleasures nor to the world.

Suttanipatta

The lotus is a very good example of the way that man depends on Nature not only for his sustenance but also for elements of his dreams, aspirations and beliefs. Man invents nothing, his imagination is restricted to his environment but his genius is to use it to survive and to dream. A sacred plant in Egypt and in Japan, the lotus is also profane, an everyday plant a plant one can eat, drink and use to care for oneself. Its importance is such that one cannot give it a quick glance or a summary. We speak of Laos knowing that in all the indo-malaysian zone, this complex plant is at the same time a food, a medicine, a flower of dreams and of the law.

The words to say it

The name lotus as used by Buddhist texts belongs to two different genera of the botanical family nymphaeaceae : the Indian lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*, originally from equatorial Asia, (but arriving in Egypt about the time of the Persian conquest), and the Egyptian lotus, *Nymphaea lotus*, nenuphar, which has spread all over the world. Their name indicates their geographical situation. Nelumbo is one of the names of the flower in Sri Lanka. Nymphaea comes from the Greek and nenuphar from Arabic and from the Persian (nanophars ‘the beautiful’) As for the name lotus, it is of uncertain origin - in ancient Greece it meant several plants of which

Lotus, The Strength of a Symbol

one ate the seeds. In Laos, one differentiates between two flowers called *boua*. But the Indian Lotus or sacred lotus is sometimes called *boualouang* (royal lotus) and the nenuphar is called *bouanyou bouangeun*, (small lotus or silver lotus).

Botany

The two plants are perennial aquatic herbs whose rhizomes are attached to the bottom of lakes and ponds. The leaves of the nenuphar lie on the surface, they are flat with regular notches, rounded and split. Those of the lotus rise up out of the water at the end of a rather complex process of development. “The first tiny leaves remain in the water; the second, more important leaves, float on the surface and then, as full-blown leaves, grow higher until the size of the petiole, bristling with plumes... after this the small, thin, dark green leaf with a bare petiole appears, this is the final leaf and it is then that the rhizome is harvested.” (Metailie)

In the same way, the flowers of the nenuphar lie on the surface of the water while the lotus flowers rise above the surface. As a general rule the flower of the lotus is bigger than that of the nenuphar, its petals are larger and rounded while those of the nenuphar are more pointed and narrow, attached in a spiral. At the centre of the lotus flower, a large fruit develops in the shape of a closed cone which contains the hard seeds, like nuts, whose germinating power can last for centuries. The fruit of the nenuphar ripens under the water. Lotus flowers are white or pink while nenuphars are white, pink, yellow or blue.



Above: Lotus Flower

Below: Nenuphar Flower



Pyramid of Lotus Flowers

Lotus or nenuphar, this beautiful and complex flower, which takes root in still water, carries a rich and powerful symbolism everywhere it grows.

The Symbol

The lotus seems to have first been considered as a symbol of fertility. It is life, fecundity, because it is rooted in the water and grows towards the sun. As well, the way the seed ripens in the fruit suggests analogies with human reproduction. In Egyptian iconography, the sun bursts from the open blossom. It is the archetypal vulva.

In Hinduism as in Buddhism, the lotus is associated with the birth of divine beings. Brahma was born by a lotus issuing from the navel of Vishnu sleeping on the primordial wa-



Offering the Lotus Flower

ters. Lakshmi, goddess of fertility gave her name to the lotus. She is sometimes confused with Mahamaya, the mother of Buddha, because the lotus was adopted by Buddhists as the symbol of the conception and birth of the sage, conceived when a white elephant touched the queen, his mother, with a white lotus.

This symbolism is also found at a linguistic level in several languages - in China it is used specifically for the vulva and a courtesan is called golden lotus. In Cambodia in the language of magic, lotus flower means a fetus. In Laos, on the other hand, the bud of the flower that opens and closes is compared to a phallus. (Archaimbault)

In India, flowers in general and the lotus in particular are symbols of the spiritual accomplishment of a being, because



During the ordination of a young men his cut hair is wrapped in the leaf of the Lotus

of the obscurity associated with deeper water up to the flowering in the full light of the upper water. Thus the lotus represents the stages of spiritual progress. During meditation in the lotus position, cosmic energy rises along subtle centres of the body named *chakras* (wheels) or *padma* (lotus) to reach the top of the head and enlightenment. The basic points of this spiritual journey are represented by lotuses with different numbers of petals.

The lotus is equally a climatic symbol, the numerous petals suggesting the cyclical nature of the of seasons and, further that the seed pod, the open flower and the bud represent the past, present and future.

In Buddhism, the lotus represents purity because its flower rises above the vase like the Enlightened One above the world.



“Like the lotus which attaches itself to neither the water nor the mud, the wise man attaches himself neither to sensual pleasures nor to the world.”

Suttanipatta

Actually, the metaphor expands to be that the lotus is the Buddha. In the original iconography the lotus was only the representation of Enlightenment; later it came to be the throne and to be an enduring element of Buddhist architecture and religious decoration. The lotus is more than a flower, it is evidence of the divine.

Religion

Carrying such powerful symbolism, the lotus has a very special place in the Buddhist religion as it is reserved exclusively to pay homage to the Enlightened One. In Laos it is not arranged like other flowers in various complicated ways and the style that ranges a number of petals around the base of the bud is considered heretical by the old people because the offered flower should not be transformed or even smelled.

The Lotus is never used in the flower arrangements for the ceremonial *soukhouane* (baci) trays nor in the *maakheng*. It is placed on the altar dedicated to Buddha in the temple or in the home. It is also sometimes held by a young man who is on his way to being ordained. It is offered as it is

picked, a plain bud at the end of a long stem with no leaves. It is closer to being a symbol than a flower, an abstraction which shows its mystical potential.

Other flowers that are treated as objects do not have the same presence as the lotus--- more than a flower, the lotus is a cosmic symbol.

As such it leads one along the path to Enlightenment: the *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, the “Lotus Sutra”, and “Lotus of the Law of Goodness” are canonical texts containing the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and the numerous ways to reach Enlightenment.

It should be noted that the water jars containing lotus flowers that one sees more and more in front of houses in Laos, have nothing to do with religion, but are a Chinese tradition in which water is necessary at the front of the house to ward off evil spirits who try to enter the house.

Art

In the continuity of the religion, the lotus is a fundamental element of religious art that can be seen in Laos and in neighboring countries. Figurative or stylized, it is omnipresent in architecture and statuary, in frescoes and bas-reliefs, in decorative motifs. In temples as monumental as That Luang or more modest, there are statues of Buddha reclining on an open lotus. As a bud, the lotus rhythmically outlines the buildings, the staircases, the angles at the

Different stylizations of the Lotus Flower



Fresh Lotus seeds

corners. The life of the Buddha is told along the walls of the temples, it plays out in a legendary world in the midst of imaginary nature where only the tree of knowledge, (*Ficus religiosa*) and the lotus are to be found. Stylised, metamorphosed into vines and ferns, the flower runs along columns, on the portals and windows of the temples. Even religious objects themselves seem to follow the form of a lotus, that of the bud both closed and open: the bay sema, the stone which marks the sacred space, the monks' prayer screen, and the maak beng, the conical floral arrangement.

If in Laos, art is basically religious, it is not the same in China, for example, where the representation of flowers is done according to precise aesthetic criteria and that of the lotus is among the most beautiful of these.



Lotus roots are eaten as vegetable

Gastronomic Uses

Nonetheless, the lotus, which one would think would be reserved for religion, has a number of non-religious uses as well as the Chinese saying goes. “*With a lotus pond at one’s house, no worry in the bad years.*”, because this plant is also a legume. The rhizome of the Indian lotus (*back boua*) can be eaten raw, but it is very bland and is usually made into a sour salad (*tam som*). Boiled, it is dipped in a sauce as an appetizer, after cooking in sugar it makes a refreshing black drink (*nam boua boua*) which is sold by street vendors, and in China a starch is extracted to make a New Years cake. The stems of the nenuphar (*sayboua*) are used in stir-fries and soups; cut into slices and dried in the sun they are a dried legume. The seeds are mainly used as food. In Laos they are eaten raw



The fruits of the Lotus with the grains sticking out

after they have been peeled but our neighbors in Vietnam make candy with them, and the Chinese boil and roast them. Many teas of the region are flavoured with lotus petals or stamens. And lastly, the large leaves of the lotus are used sometimes to wrap food, in particular for certain cakes of sticky rice which take on the flavor of the leaves.

Medicinal Uses

In traditional medicine, the lotus is considered a calmative plant, but the origin of its name is perhaps not unfamiliar in this usage. In fact, in the Odyssey, Ulysses meets the Lotus Eaters who make a forgetfulness potion and the name lotus remains associated with sweet dreams. Again today, when we buy lotus seeds, the shopkeeper will say that you will have



Above: An old *That* with Lotus Flowers

Below: Lotus or Nenuphar

On the right: Prayer Fans in the shape of Lotus buds

a good sleep. The seeds also have a tonic and revitalizing effect. Nevertheless, the botanist Petelot who visited Indochina in the 1930's made note of some surprising uses:

"The seeds are fortifying, a sovereign remedy for dysentery, nocturnal emissions, erotic dreams, they diminish the frequency of erections, but increase the quality of the sperm.... the fruit in a decoction is known to help and lessen urinary emissions."

In Modern Times

If we go back to the sacred texts we find the following passage from the Bhagavad Gita:

"Whoever dedicates his efforts to the Supreme Being by removing all self interest is not touched by sin just as the lotus leaf is not affected by water."

Men of that era had already noticed these water-repellent properties, now being studied by researchers for possible industrial applications, particularly in aeronautics. The lotus is also popular plant in the west because of a fascination for the Orient and its symbols, in decoration (spas) foods, (tea) and even cosmetics, with one brand offering a 'nirvana serum !'

And we cannot forget the song '*Oh, Dok boua thong*' (Oh, golden lotus). This melody, dear to the hearts of Lao people, brings us to a close.

The words are not entirely clear, but Kham On Keopraseuth observes" *"The metaphor of the existential path leading through solitude of the world to attain the supreme consciousness...."*

*When I pick you and smell your fragrance
I will love you with all my soul
I will put you into a cup of gold
I will never let you wilt nor wither.*



**Vientiane, Architectures d'une capitale
Traces, Formes, Structures, Projets**

*Sous la direction de Sophie Clément-Charpentier,
Pierre Clément, Charles Goldblum, Bounleum
Sisoulath, Christian Taillard*

Editions Recherches/Ipraus, Paris 2010, 479pp

Parmi les nouveautés de la fin d'année 2010, signalons la parution d'un imposant ouvrage de plus de 400 pages consacré à la capitale du Laos en pleine mutation tant « du point de vue de son échelle spatiale que de son rythme temporel. »

Cet ouvrage collectif -29 articles de 19 auteurs-, dont la parution coïncide avec les festivités commémoratives du 450e anniversaire de la fondation de la capitale du Lane Xang, vient compléter la série des Cahiers de l'Ipraus qui retracent les grandes étapes de diverses capitales asiatiques : Hanoi, Xi'an, Bangkok, Phnom Penh... Parmi elles, « le modèle décalé » de ville capitale de Vientiane, mérite bien sa réintégration dans le champ de la recherche urbaine.

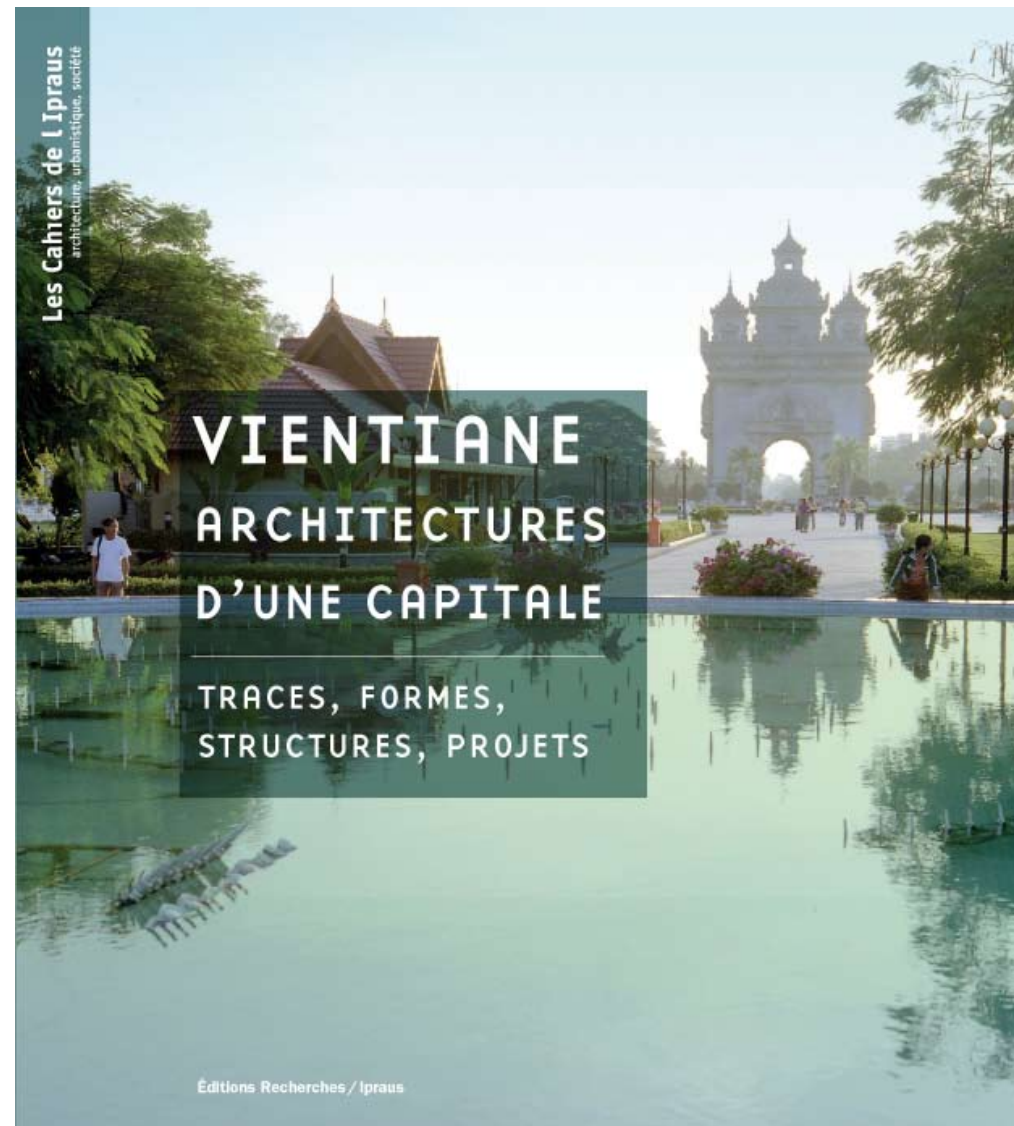
Plusieurs programmes émanant du cadre des échanges bilatéraux franco laotiens, basés sur la collaboration avec des organ-

ismes de recherche et de formation, des ministères ainsi que de l'Université du Laos, rendent compte de leurs travaux et bilans en les récapitulant au fil d'un ouvrage dont les thèmes principaux concernent les vestiges archéologiques et historiques, le patrimoine bâti, les structures urbaines et les stratégies de développement envisagées.

L'ouvrage s'organise autour de quatre grands thèmes, précédés d'un avant-propos et s'achève par une conclusion de trois contributeurs.

L'intégration du Laos dans l'ASEAN en 2004 a propulsé Vientiane, qui a connu déboires, ruptures historiques et périodes florissantes, dans une spirale de mutations, de transformations et de dynamiques socio-économiques tout à fait surprenante. Néanmoins bien des assises temporelles, méconnues, oubliées, négligées parfois, commencent à faire surface et à témoigner de la place stratégique de Vientiane dans la moyenne vallée du Mékong.

Ainsi, à partir de données épigraphiques et archéologiques et l'analyse des sources di-



sponibles, Michel Lorrillard, dans deux articles consécutifs (p. 33 à 76) aborde l'analyse sur la longue durée de l'ancienne cité royale « dont l'histoire récente reste des plus lacunaires. » En se basant sur les études des vestiges de la culture mène, de celles de la diffusion du pouvoir lao sous le règne de Fa N'Gum, des traditions légendaires du Centre Laos, ainsi que sur de récentes investigations archéologiques -à partir de 2004-, l'auteur situe la ville dans l'espace régional élargi et émet des hypothèses sur l'origine, le tracé et la fonction des différentes enceintes de la cité et leurs configurations anciennes. À vrai dire, depuis les récents travaux urbains, de nouveaux vestiges sont fréquemment mis au jour, venant bouleverser nos repères ; il est donc urgent de rappeler que « le progrès de la connaissance sur le passé de Vientiane repose en fait entièrement sur le développement de la recherche archéologique » (p. 51).

On découvrira une configuration plus récente de la ville à partir des premières décennies de l'époque coloniale (de 1890 à 1930) en suivant l'analyse de plans et de textes choisis par Sophie Clément-Charpentier. La

ville coloniale s'est implantée sur l'ancienne capitale lao à partir de la première agglomération qui a épousé la courbe du Mékong. Une ville nouvelle, étrangère aux Lao, s'est alors développée, le pouvoir colonial s'y est établi, a nommé les axes routiers, aménagé voirie, bâtiments administratifs, organisé un droit foncier et un cadre bâti, et a inévitablement imposé, comme dans d'autres villes coloniales, une forme de ségrégation ethnique. La ville, désignée comme capitale coloniale du protectorat français, devient de ce fait un pôle d'attraction pour une population de migrants chinois et surtout vietnamiens. La lecture coloniale de la ville repose donc essentiellement sur des plans et des textes français, Raquez notamment, et l'on regrettera évidemment, comme le fait l'auteur de l'article, l'absence de témoignages indigènes !

Concernant cette même période, évoquons aussi l'article de Laurent Hertzenberger et Juliette Pommier (p.267-271) retraçant les métamorphoses du quartier Annam, situé en bordure de la « ville indigène ». Nommé ainsi, vers 1912, en référence aux immigrants vietnamiens, fonctionnaires coloniaux, qui

y sont logés, le quartier est structuré selon le damier colonial puis va faire place à une nouvelle vague migratoire chinoise avant de devenir le « village Anou » en référence au roi lao Chao Anou. Cette superposition en strates rend compte de l'hétérogénéité du peuplement ainsi que de l'aisance avec laquelle les habitants successifs se sont appropriés les lieux par détournement du damier afin d'en faire le quartier le plus dense de la ville après l'Indépendance en 1954.

Dans un article qui clôt la première partie, C. Taillard, analyse « la place du patrimoine technique et des héritages paysagers dans le développement urbain ». Un ancien système hydraulique, hérité de la période précoloniale a forgé « l'identité paysagère de Vientiane » et constitue un élément fort du patrimoine technique imaginé par les fondateurs de la ville. De belles photos témoignent, dans cet article, des mutations subies par ce patrimoine paysager qui, « faisant partie intégrante de l'identité de la ville », s'aligne aussi sur des transformations plus générales qui « sacrifient aux modèles importés » plutôt que de sauvegarder les potentialités que les « gestionnaires du développement

urbain, depuis l'indépendance, n'ont pas pu préserver. » (p. 136).

Les deux parties suivantes sont consacrées au bâti architectural, aux typologies de l'habitat et au tissu urbain dans ses variantes temporelles. Dans ce cadre -articles de Nathalie Lancret, Emmanuel Cerise et Frédéric Mauret - deux rues sont particulièrement mises en évidence : la rue Dong Palane et l'Avenue Lane Xang. À propos de la première, une rue commerçante, née vers 1960, située originellement en dehors des anciennes enceintes de la ville historique, les auteurs évoquent « les nouveaux dispositifs de la planification urbaine à partir des années 1990 ». La seconde, qui porte son nom actuel depuis l'Indépendance, est devenue l'axe de prestige « tracé parallèlement à l'axe historique d'entrée dans la ville ».

L'enjeu majeur de son tracé se situe au niveau de la représentation symbolique du pouvoir qui se met en place à partir de ces mêmes années. Cet axe se poursuit d'ailleurs au delà, vers le sud, où s'élève le musée du Président Kaisone Phomivan, 3^e Président de la RDP Lao.

Dans un article de Chayphet Sayarath, « Le site de That Luang et la ville », les rapports et articulations étroites entretenus entre la ville et l'ancien palladium du royaume du Lane Xang sont abordés de manière plus sociologique. Un axe rectiligne, partant du Palais Présidentiel -à partir de 1975- mène vers l'Esplanade du That Luang, où se situe l'ancien symbole religieux et monarchique qui se trouve aujourd'hui réintégré dans un système basé sur « la réinterprétation contemporaine de l'histoire : faire table rase, légitimer et durer ».

Son propos fait une large part au processus idéologique mis en place pour définir et mobiliser rôles et fonctions architecturaux afin d'incarner « pouvoirs politiques et religieux en place ». Enfin, l'analyse du vide et de la « minéralisation de l'esplanade menaçant la structure du monument », permettent de mettre l'accent sur deux pôles qui, selon l'auteur, « préfigurent sans doute une tentative de différenciation entre un pôle politique et un pôle religieux. » (p. 235). Ainsi, conclue-t-elle, « la fusion, dans un même espace entre le pouvoir et le spirituel qui caractérisait depuis cinq siècles ce lieu touche sans doute à sa fin. »

L'album photographique inclus entre la 2e et la 3e partie porte un regard très neutre et distancié sur les facettes urbaines évoquées, comme si la dimension humaine, celle du vécu des habitants et celle de la spiritualité qui imprègne les lieux, ses ambiances, ses couleurs, ses odeurs, ses sonorités étaient superflues. Les études d'urbanistes, de géographes, d'architectes, d'économistes ou d'historiens peuvent-elles ainsi passer sous silence la part du vécu des témoins vivants, des habitants, de leurs sites remarquables, en un mot négliger l'âme et la poétique d'une ville ?

Fort à propos cette lacune est comblée par une approche nettement plus anthropologique et sensible proposée à travers deux autres articles de Chayphet Sayarath : (p.391-400) « Le patrimoine et le développement. De l'inventaire à la préservation » et (p. 441-451) « Les espaces sensibles et les enjeux patrimoniaux du développement urbain » qui abordent la question de la mémoire et du patrimoine d'un point de vue lao. L'auteur propose en fait une trame historique de cette notion toute relative de patrimoine et montre, à travers divers exem-

ples, comment elle a évolué, s'est adaptée aux aléas historiques et sociaux car elle est évolutive et particulière à chaque société. « Au Laos aujourd'hui, le patrimoine devient un objet autonome que l'on peut saisir à travers des critères concrets... (p.395)... cependant il manque un cadre technique et institutionnel adéquat permettant la mise en application des outils techniques ». (p.396)

Le second article, qui fait partie des conclusions de l'ouvrage porte sur un inventaire des « espaces sensibles », autrement dit : « ce que les outils urbanistiques modernes ont rendu complètement muets et ont négligé d'interroger », soit la part d'immatérialité et la puissance symbolique de « ces espaces, même s'ils sont jugés surréalistes et de nature superstitieuse, car ils forment la mémoire des habitants, élément constitutif de la pratique spatiale citadine » (p.442). Un schéma cartographique (p.443) indique les secteurs soumis aux prescriptions de protection du patrimoine urbain de Vientiane. Y sont mentionnés les zones urbaines et résidentielles, les paysages agricoles, les sites remarquables et certaines zones humides à préserver.

Aussi la conclusion proposée par l'auteur peut-elle judicieusement s'adresser aux différents concepteurs de projets, de programmes et de nouveaux enjeux : « Tous peuvent être mis en doute, soit parce qu'ils ne font pas l'unanimité, soit parce qu'ils sont nés de la contingence d'une époque qui peut facilement se perdre dans la nébuleuse de l'histoire, soit encore parce qu'une rupture s'est produite, provoquant un changement ou une perte de sens ou de valeurs.... Cela dépend du rapport de forces entre les pouvoirs en présence ».

Michèle-Baj Strobel

Portfolio by: Lee Yang



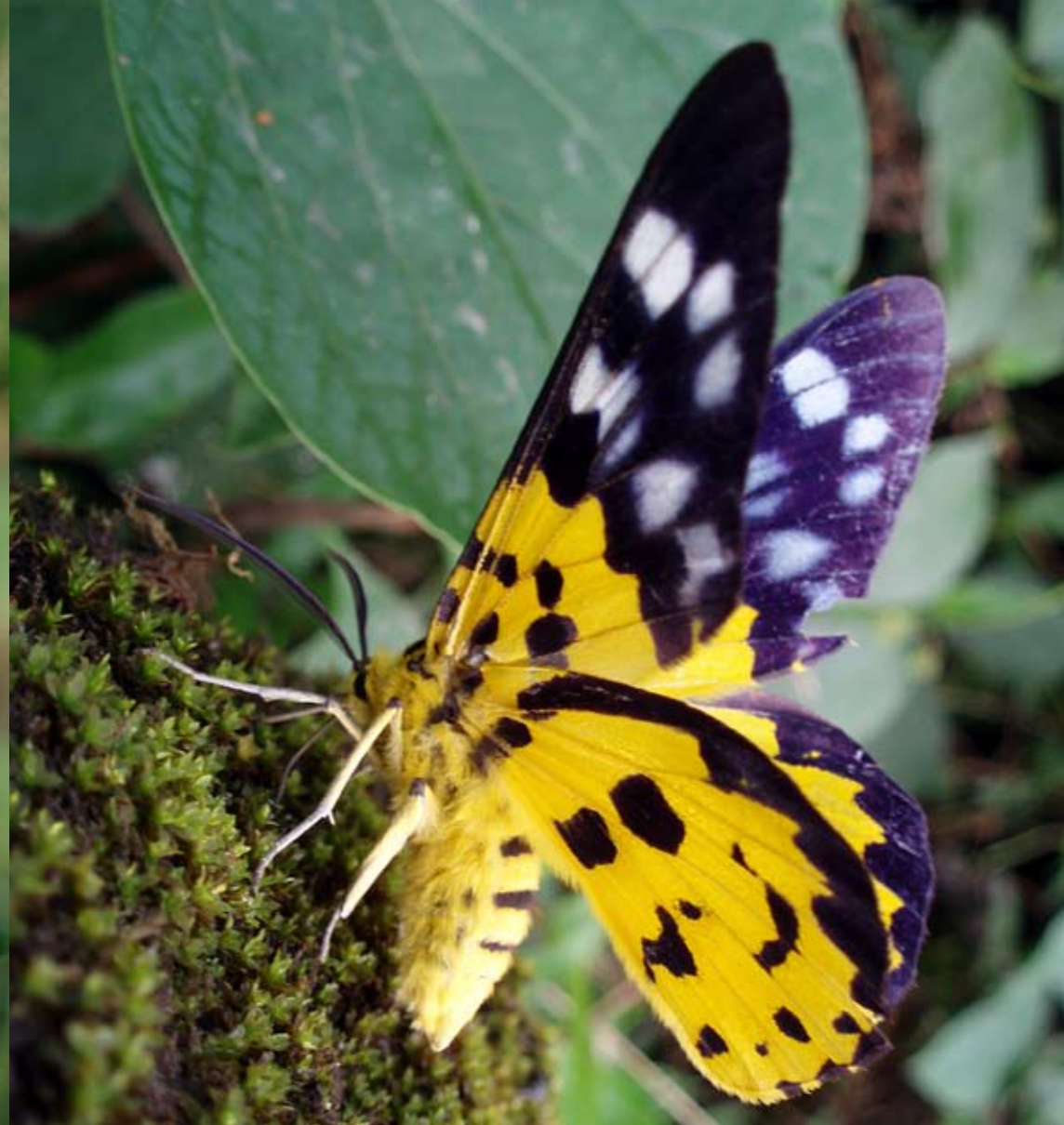
My name is Lee Yang. I am Hmong, 21 years old, the second of 6 children, and in my last year at the Luang Prabang Teacher Training College. I left my hometown, family and friends to come to Luang Prabang to continue my education and to get more experience.

In the future I want to be an English teacher. I love studying English and that's why I'm looking for a part-time job, to be able to practice my English with foreigners and improve my pronunciation. In my free time I like reading books from the library, stories and newspapers, playing sports and taking photos of people and nature.

Taking photographs is a good idea for this new generation because it can help us gain experience and overcome our shyness. Most people think that taking pictures is easy but I think that it is very difficult because you have to really pay attention



and use your imagination or you won't understand how it works. I like to take pictures of the environment. I am really curious to see insects of different kinds, how they live, what they are looking for and how they change in each season. I try to take photos when they are doing something, sleeping, relaxing, eating... I really like it when the trees blossom and there are many different kinds of butterflies and insects and I can take the time to study and understand them. During that time you can take beautiful photos that will be interesting for everyone.











@ My library is the brain and heartchild of Carol Kresge and some of our staff used to hang out here a lot when they were studying. We are very happy that Carol has accepted to curate our portfolio series with young talent from the Young Lao Photographer's Gallery **@ My library**.

@ My library is a community based resource center for the youth of Luang Prabang. It is an ongoing experiment in what happens when you give motivated users the materials and encouragement they need to study anything. The numbers tell some of the story, with an average of 100+ students a day, 1,000+ books checked-out each month, and 25,000 computer hours logged last year. But the story is really about the users.

They come to read, study languages and computer, watch science, math, culture and history videos, play word games, do puzzles, thinking and problem solving activities, listen to audio books and music, enter contests, use the internet, learn photography and Photoshop and borrow cameras.

Photography is one of the most popular activities **@ My Library**. When people started asking to buy the photos on our walls we created the Young Lao Photographer's Gallery. While Laos has been photographed by many world class photographers, our angle is unique... this is our life, our families and friends, our inspirations and aspirations... this is "Laos Through Our Own Eyes."

If you are in Luang Prabang, visit our gallery **@ My Library** opposite Wat Nong between L'Elephant and Tamarind Restaurants. If not you can view selected photos in our online gallery at <http://laophotographers.zenfolio.com/>

@ My Library and the Young Lao Photographer's Gallery are part of The Language Project, an American 501(c)3 charity. www.thelanguageproject.org

SOME BOOKS AND OTHER AFFAIRS WE LOVE

50 YEARS OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Essays in Honour of Ian Glover

*Edited by Bérénice Bellina, Elisabeth A. Bacus, Thomas Oliver Pryce
& Jan Wisseman Christie*

River Books, Bangkok, 2010. 320 pp. Price \$ 35.00

ISBN 978 616 7339 02 3

This collection of essays in honour of Dr Ian Glover, who for over fifty years has been one of Southeast Asia's most pioneering and leading archaeologists, offers a complete and up-to-date account of the main issues and debates on the region's archaeology spanning the late Pleistocene to the early historic period. Aimed at both the specialist and general reader alike, this volume discusses issues ranging from food subsistence management, technology transfer and long-distance exchange, to social complexity and political and ethical debates that are today an important aspect of Southeast Asian studies.

The contributors tackle topics such as hunter-gatherers and early agriculture in East Timor, burial traditions in Thailand and Sarawak, the development of early states in Vietnam and Sulawesi, craft production and exchange stretching from India to the South China Sea, issues of post-colonialism in Laos and the creation of world heritage sites throughout the

region. Following in Dr Ian Glover's footsteps, this volume represents a comprehensive and essential collection of essays by Southeast Asia's leading archaeologists actively researching in the field today, making this book a tribute from some of his closest colleagues, friends, and former students.

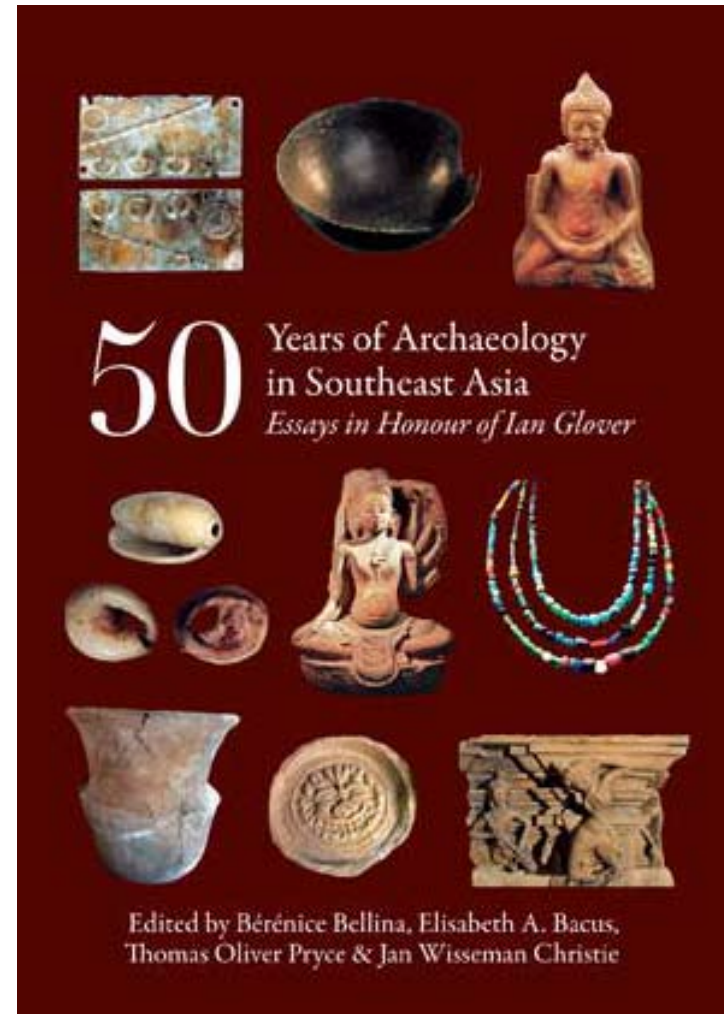
Buddhist Murals of Northeast Thailand

Bonnie Brereton and Somroay Yencheuy

Mekong Press, Chiang Mai, 2010. 96 pp. THB 695

ISBN 978-616-90053-1-5

Books on mural painting in Thailand have tended to focus on works commissioned by royalty or other elites from the centers of power. This volume is the first to examine a vibrant sub-school of painting from the rural heartland of the Northeastern Region, also known as Isan. Inspired by local Buddhist practices and created by ordinary villagers, the colorful murals portray scenes from traditional stories that are unique to the region. Distinctively painted on the exterior of ordination halls, the compositions appear to circle the building rather than remain confined to a single panel. The figures appearing on all levels of the paintings, on closer examination, include not only Buddhist personages and epic



Buddhist Murals of Northeast Thailand

Reflections of the Isan Heartland



Bonnie Pacala Brereton and Somroay Yencheuy

heroes, but also the villagers themselves as they participate in their own festivals and day-to-day activities.

Written as an introduction to the topic, *Buddhist Murals of Northeast Thailand* is a multifaceted and empathetic study of these lovely and lively paintings, and will appeal to anyone interested in the Mekong Region, as well as to scholars of art history, Buddhism, and anthropology in Southeast Asia.

Bonnie Brereton is an American art historian and Buddhist studies scholar who specializes in vernacular forms of cultural expression in Thailand's peripheral regions.

Somroay Yencheuy grew up in a silk-weaving village in Khon

Kaen and has written extensively in Thai on Isan art, literature, shadow play, and traditional material culture. Both are researchers at the Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region, Khon Kaen University.

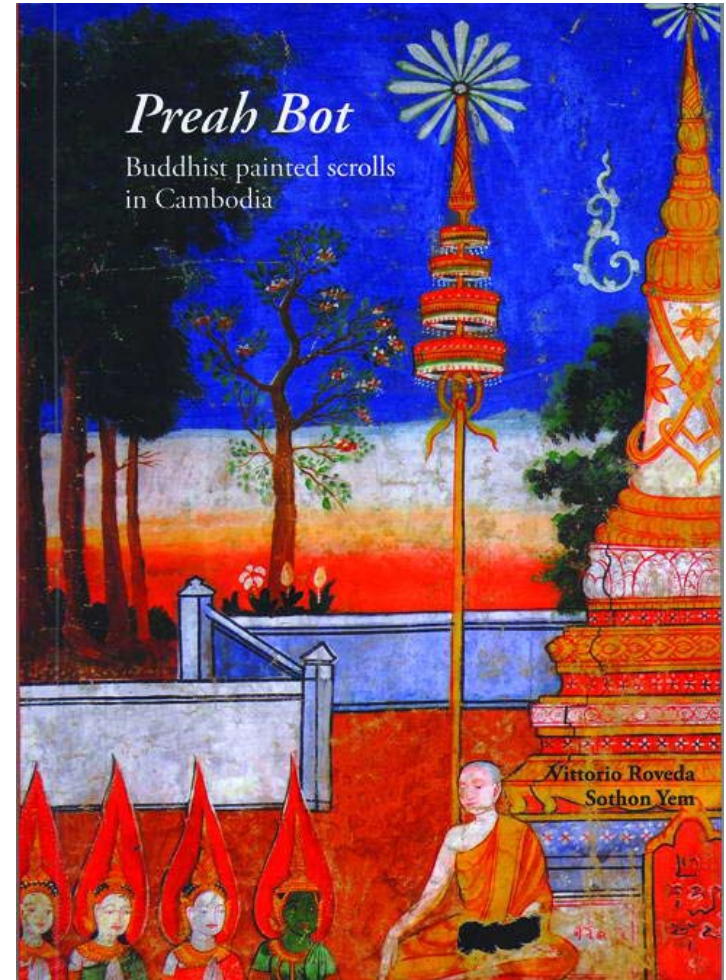
Preah Bot : Buddhist painted scrolls in Cambodia

Vittorio Roveda & Sothou Yem

River Books, Bangkok, 2010. 152 pp. Price \$ 25.00

ISBN 978 974 9863 99 2

Gradually fading in disuse, ignored by art historians and museums, the beautifully painted Buddhist scrolls called *preah bot* in Cambodia are the subject of this book by the two authors of *Buddhist Painting of Cambodia*. *Preah Bots* have been produced since the end of the 19th century as a personal and intimate manifestation of the faith of pious Cambodian lay people, and are an important element of the country's rich Buddhist cultural heritage. A large variety of cloths are illustrated, showing events from the life of the Buddha and his previous lives narrated in the Jataka tales. Particular emphasis has been paid to the Vessantara Jataka, the most popular of all Jatakas, detailing both its Pali version and previously unknown Khmer versions. This important book with a summary in Khmer is the first attempt to document the art and meaning of *preah bot* in Cambodian society at a time when the production of such cloths for religious use is gradually disappearing and being replaced by commercial production for tourists or art collectors.





A new exiting exhibition space has been opened in Luang Prabang

Project Space • Luang Prabang is a multifunction space for producing exhibitions, events and objects in the cultural capital of Laos. The building with three floors and a rooftop terrace with stunning views is in the centre of Luang Prabang and will host several exhibitions per year and collaborate with other cultural institutions in Luang Prabang and elsewhere on joint events and projects. There are four exhibition rooms, a studio for artist residencies and a rooftop terrace for projections and functions.

Project Space • Luang Prabang is an initiative of Jean-Pierre Dovat, interior architect and designer and Rik Gadella.

The opening exhibition **The Genie Behind the Scissors** honors the Lao artist Tcheu Siong who is married to a shaman from the Hmong minorities and makes stunningly beautiful large size embroideries with imagery from the spirit world. Her work will be shown until February 27, 2011.

Project Space • Luang Prabang
Kitsalat Road 6 (Opposite Dara Market)
Luang Prabang, Lao PDR
Tel: + 856 71 21309

www.projectspace-luangprabang.com

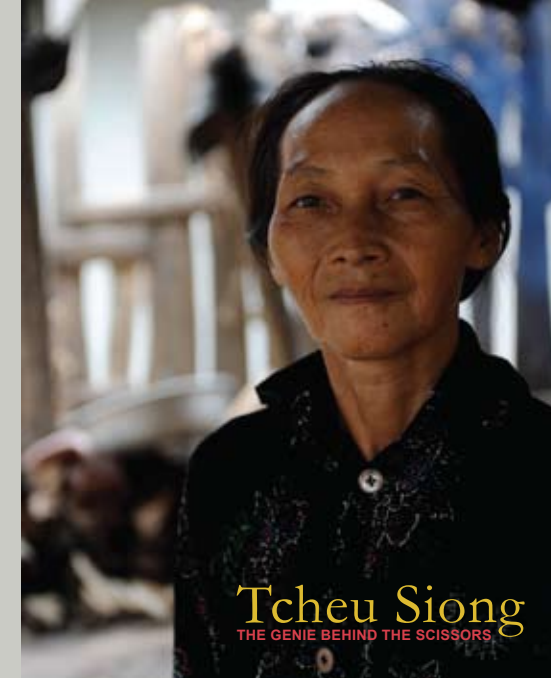


Tcheu Siong – The Genie Behind the Scissors

Exhibition until February 27, 2011. Catalog 40 pages, 10\$

At first glance, Tcheu Siong is just a small, frail woman doing traditional needlework, cutting and stitching appliqué pieces to decorate the homes of tourists who admire the vivid images as a souvenir of a visit to this beguiling country. But the crowded, colorful works that she produces with artisanal skill are also formed by a stronger and more mysterious force, the spiritual guidance of her ancestors, which is very much a part of Hmong life. This comes via her husband, a shaman, who receives them in dreams, producing a challenging mixture of naïve beauty and powerful symbolism.

Hmong people have moved often, arriving in Laos only about 150 years ago from Tibet and Mongolia and settling in the rugged highlands of Laos, only to be moved again from their tiny hidden villages to roadsides and riversides, villages and towns. Here they are close to schools and services, but far from the rich world of their ancestral spirits, who belong in their land and home villages, thus posing a social, emotional and spiritual challenge for these small sturdy people. Tcheu Siong's husband, as the shaman for his group of White Hmong in Luang Prabang, serves as a conduit for the guidance and healing of the ancestors, and she, in turn, captures and transforms these images into a visual embodiment of the fragile dream creatures.



She works with serenity and assurance, choosing fabrics, listening to her husband's advice as he cuts the original patterns and she and her daughter fold lengths of fabric, cut the appliqué pieces, design the work and finally assemble and embroider it all in a rich array of dream creatures and abstract images.

Hmong needlework is famous in the markets of Luang Prabang but Tcheu Siong's work moves beyond these homely items to a bolder expression of the very essence of the spiritual bond that helps these people to survive in a world that threatens their traditional culture.

