



# Pha Tad Ke Botanical Garden

Newsletter Nr. 4 - June 2011

## PHA TAD KE - THE CLIFF TO UNTIE AND RESOLVE

Welcome to the latest Pha Tad Ke newsletter. In February we have had the work visit from Alexandre Monnet, a young landscape designer from Geneva, who worked with us on the masterplan for the garden for six weeks. He will come back in August to see how all holds up in the rainy season. We have celebrated Pimai, the Laos new year, with copious amount of water throwing and wish you all a very happy Lao New Year

RIK GADELLA, PHA TAD KE BOTANICAL GARDEN

## Content

- 1-4 Amis de Pha Tad Ke
- 5-10 News from Pha Tad Ke
- 11-15 Botanica of Laos by Elisabeth Vilayleck  
Fig Trees  
*Botanical Curiosity and Home of the Deities*
- 16-17 Chroniques of Pha Tad Ke by Albin Duzer
- 18-19 Chroniques par Baj Strobel  
*Pour une lecture du paysage*
- 20-26 Young Lao Photographer's Gallery @ My Library  
*Portfolio: Ka Xiong*
- 27-29 Some Books & Other Affairs we Love
- 30-32 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.*

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## **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](mailto: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](http://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).



Dr. Santi Watthana from Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden (Chiang Mai), conducted a fieldtrip with PTK staff to Longlan village. Afterwards two of our staff, Kithisak Phathavong and Keooudone Sanvanakonmane staid at QSBG for a one-month training and work on taxonomy.





The National Herbarium of Cambodia (RUPP) was inaugurated on 18th March 2011, in Phnom Penh.

A large audience attended the event, including many teachers and students.

Dr. Sovanmoly Hul, representing the Herbarium of Paris and the Museum, initiated the restoration of the Herbarium in 1993.



Some Friends of Pha Tad Ke adopt a tree and even come over here to check it out !  
Antoine Barrere and his wife Magda adopted a *Goniothalamus laoticus* tree and flew in from Paris to see it planted.



The first visit of a group of schoolchildren  
at PTK in March 2011.  
I think PTK staff had the most fun !





Saturday April 9 the first elections at PTK !

For Pimai - (Laos New Year) all the staff gets a one-month bonus. This year we have held the first election for the best workers who received a double bonus.



Voted by their fellow workers,

the winners are

Sith (30 votes)

Somdi (15 votes)

Insavai and Xiengdi (14 votes ex-aequo)





*“It was as if, from the interior of the tree, almost imperceptible vibrations passed through to him. He asked himself anxiously what was happening and soon found an expression which made sense and he said to himself that he was being taken beyond nature.”*

Rainer Maria Rilke

Trees are not like other plants - they are in on the secret of their origins, they have seen generations pass, they are older than memory and certainly pre-date humans. These botanical truths are recognized in mythology in which trees are the axes of the world, the seat of knowledge - alter ego, the home of the gods.

### **Figs**

Figs are a group of mainly tropical plants of the *Moraceae* family, which includes trees, bushes and vines. There are more than a thousand species, at least fifty of which are found in Laos and ten of which are very much present in the daily life and the spiritual life of Lao people, particularly the *Pho*, the tree of Enlightenment.

Figs have botanical characteristics, which have attracted the attention of people who have contact with them. They produce a sticky latex-like white sap - which in many cultures symbolizes milk, they bear almost invisible flowers, hidden in an organ which becomes the fruit, so that it almost seems to come from nothing, they are often epiphytes, they take root on other trees which they then proceed to suffocate

## **Fig Trees, Botanical Curiosity and Home of the Deities**

and which gives them a reputation as stranglers. And also, the hanging branches of some of them have the habit of taking root once they reach the ground, like another trunk, and these aerial roots and branches combine to form a tree of impressive size.

It is undoubtedly these peculiarities, which have led to these trees being considered sacred. In Madagascar, the Aviary (*Ficus trichopoda*) represents the mother goddess who gives milk to the world, In East Africa and in Asia Minor, the sycamore, (*Ficus sycomorus*) has been venerated since ancient Egyptian times as the tree of life, and in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, the tree of paradise has always also been a fig (*Ficus carica*). But it is mainly in India where figs have their most beautiful expression in botany, religion and art and this expression extends also into Laos.

### ***Ficus religiosa*, the fig trees of the temples.**

The *pho* tree, (*Ficus religiosa*) is the tree of enlightenment, (in Pali 'bo' or 'bodhi') “the tree of the supreme battle and of the final victory”. Seated under this tree on the night of a full moon, Siddhartha, after having struggled against Evil, attained enlightenment and proclaimed:

*“The Four Noble Truths. Having renounced his suffering, his impermanent and transitory self, and being thus reunified with the greater universe, the Buddha no longer distinguished himself from the cosmic tree, of which he became a part.”*



The *Ficus religiosa* grows straight if it doesn't meet any obstacles.



Leaves of the *Ficus religiosa* on an ancient monument.

Even though the Buddha was a doctrinal reformer and strongly opposed to the beliefs of his time, once he reached the goal he strove for, he discovered the thousand-fold path of the of the cosmic tree.

*“In Hindu beliefs from well before Sakyamuni, contact with the tree was enough to awaken memories of past lives in the consciousness of one who came near it. It is through this tree that one comes to life, and through this tree one rediscovers one’s origins, and through it, having retrieved them, one goes on to immortality.”* (Jacques Brosse)

In Indian mythology, called sometimes *Asvatta*, sometimes *Pipal*, the cosmic tree is the Buddha himself, as it signifies his first manifestation. Both as an enlightener and the Enlightened One, such is the function of the *Boddhi tree*. As well, it was born from a seed the same day as the Buddha



Leaves of the *tone Pho*

was born. Since then, it has not ceased to be venerated. The king Ashoka, 200 years after the Enlightenment, asked his daughter to bring an offshoot of the tree to Ceylon - the sacred fig of Anauradaphura, - which continued to live another 2300 years. And the *Pipal* of Bodhgaya, after having endured deliberate destruction and violent storms, is still alive after 2500 years - never really destroyed. The survival of this tree holds a particular importance for Buddhists because they believe the destiny of the doctrine itself is linked with it.

Shards of pottery have been found in the Indus valley (2300 BC) which depict the *Ficus religiosa* as listed by Linnaeus. It is one of the few species of vegetation that is quite clearly recognizable by its heart-shaped leaves on a long supple petiole. In every temple in Laos, the *Pho* trees which, according to



Worshippers demonstrate their faith by incrusting figure in the *tone Pho*

tradition, grew from the one under which Buddha attained Enlightenment, are easily recognized by these leaves.

The *tone pho* tree, which is only planted in temple grounds, has other qualities as well. Unobstructed, it grows straight



like any tree and dominates its vegetative environment. But this scenario is relatively rare since, most of the time, the growing tree comes up against the stalks of self-sown bamboo and then sends out more branches to surround whatever gets in its way. Thus, instead of shooting higher, the trunk thickens and the tree is less tall but with an impressive span. Often one sees a *banyan* and a *tone pho* tree that have grown together into a tight tangle, rather like the Indian custom to plant in a ceremony, resembling a wedding ceremony, a small *Ficus benghalensis* and a *Ficus religiosa* together. Again, a biological characteristic that can be reinterpreted into a myth.

One would have thought that the tree of Enlightenment should be surrounded by the temple buildings according to the ancient tradition of the temple constructed around the tree. But it is more often off to one side against a surrounding wall, perhaps in the role of a guardian. Its status is that of an exceptional tree and therefore a circle of concrete, sometimes quite simple, often surrounds it and sometimes more decoratively done in the shape of lotus petals and can become an actual altar with statues and an array of offerings. In fact, an entire cult is created around the tree, which is considered a sanctuary as important as the *sim* of the temple. Its trunk is often decorated with strips of fabric or garlands of flowers. Some devotees

place figurines or talismans or votary objects; the monks leave their offering bowls there after use; flowers, candles, balls of rice are placed there at times of religious observance. When there are funerals, offerings for the dead are placed there. Curative rituals like the “*shoring up of the ficus*” or the “*notching the stake of the years*” take place at the base of the *tone pho* or other large tree. In these rituals the tree represents the ailing person and to take care of the tree is to take care of the man.

### **Ficus benghalensis, Banyan.**

Another legendary fig is the famous banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*), under which Bengali merchants (*banyan*) gathered to conduct their business affairs. In Laos it is called *tone hay*, which is also the generic name for a fig tree. This tree is notable for the vigor of its aerial roots, which allow it to develop horizontally and cover a considerable area. For this reason it is much revered in Laos and is usually planted in the grounds of temples, where it is often confused with *tone pho*.

“*In the Buddha legend, Ficus religiosa and Ficus benghalensis, which are both cosmic trees, each tree plays a different role. Sakyamuni identifies the first as the tree of Destiny, of Karma, while the fig tree of the banyans epitomizes the richness of the infinite proliferation of life and is the earthly home of the creation deities.*”

Jacques Brosse.

The *Ficus benghalensis* is a powerful tree with many aerial roots.



A *Ficus religiosa* and a *Ficus benghalensis* closely entwined.

### **Ficus racemosa**

*Ficus racemosa* (*tone deua*) is the least visible of the sacred trees of Laos, at least on the Mekong plain. But in the mountainous regions where Buddhism is deeply imbued with animist beliefs, many big trees are regarded as the homes of the spirits, the *Ficus racemosa* in particular. Francois Bizot thinks, “that in all of Buddhist Indo-china, it is the huge forest figs with their tasty fruit and not the *Ficus religiosa* - the tree of Enlightenment - which best represent the tree of the tradition.”

Whether in the forest or in the village, this tree, which produces plump edible fruits along the length of its trunk, often shelters altars and spirit houses. The Hmong appreciate the size and height of the tree because this means that their high



Altars installed at the feet of these two *tone Deua*.

altitude spirits can come down into their villages easily. All of these trees can also be homes for malicious spirits, which must be sent away with numerous ceremonies and offerings.

### **Ficus hispida**

This fig is a small tree of about 10 meters, somewhat bushy and twisted. Its large oval abrasive leaves are opposing and fixed in a spiral around the stem, fairly high in the tree. Its small, round, rough-skinned fruits (also called hispides) are at first green and then turn yellow as they mature. They often grow directly on the trunk but can also appear on the long branches that almost creep on the ground. Like all figs, the tree secretes a white sap. In Laos, many figs are called *deua*; this one is *deua pong*, meaning “fig with holes”, because



*Ficus racemosa* bears its fruits directly on the trunk.

when the fruit is cut, it is hollow inside and not full as with other figs.

*Tone deua pong* which doesn't have the prestige of the other figs mentioned above, still has a number of symbolic uses. Amulets are made of its soft wood, the wood can also be carved, mixed with the resin of particular *Dipterocarpus* trees and made into statuettes or stucco for temples. The wood of the *Ficus religiosa* can also be used in the same way. Donald Swearer, in his very beautiful book, *Becoming the Buddha*, the Ritual of Image consecration in Thailand, tells us that in the north of the country, statues of Buddha are made of *Ficus hispida*. Before cutting the wood, offerings of steamed rice balls are made to the tree and at the consecration ceremony; the dried fruits of the *deua pong* are placed before it.



*Tone Deau pong* is a small skinny *Ficus* species

On the right :On this naive bas-relief of Indian inspiration, the *Ficus* tree represents Buddha.

### Secular Uses

The four types of *Ficus* that we have discussed have some uses in common; some of them bear edible fruits, which, while not well liked as food for humans, attract numerous small animals which enjoy them and we have often heard of hunters hiding near these trees never lose their ways.

They have a thick sap, particularly *Ficus benghalensis*, which children use to make balls.

They shelter numerous insects which, hidden in the flower-fruit (sycone), help to encourage fertilization. Other bugs live in the twisted trunks, such as a species of bee, *meng khisout*, which builds its nest in the *tone pho*. The beeswax, *khisout* is used to fill the holes in a *vot*, a sort of flute or to join the bamboo pipes of the wooden parts of the *khaen* (a mouth organ).

Finally, the *Ficus* is used as a traditional medicine. The elegant leaves of the *tone pho* are crushed to get sugar to treat diarrhea, the fruits of the *tone deua* are given to women who have given birth to encourage the milk, and a decoction of leaves and bark of the *tone deua pong* are used to reduce fever.

In conclusion, it must be said that, despite all the accumulated knowledge we have of *Ficus* and all the factual details of their botany and ethno botany, a certain mystery still persists about these trees. Being near one of these trees, there is a strange sense, as Rilke says: “*we are being taken beyond nature*”

*Translation by Suzy Young*



From the 17th of January to the 2nd of March, we had the pleasure of a visit from Alexandre Monnet, landscaper and garden designer from Geneva. During his stay at Pha Ta Ke, Alexandre worked on a new landscaping concept for the gardens, creating a plan for the walking paths, bringing in new ideas for the different collections and parts of the gardens, to ultimately evolve a new general plan for future gardens in collaboration with the various participants in the development of the site .

After a few days spent studying the plans for the gardens and the final objectives, we also visited sites of representative Laos vegetation, so that Alexandre could get a more precise idea of the flora and biotypes of the region.

Then we visited several different villages to better understand the local culture and lifestyle. Indeed, it is absolutely necessary to understand the country and its people before embarking on the development of a site dedicated to this particular region of Southeast Asia.

His observations and advice have helped us to better define the boundaries of different zones to be presented, such as the bamboo garden, the ginger beds, the fernery, the palm collections, aquatic plants, the orchids and the useful and medicinal plants. Now we will be able to apply this comprehensive vision to future planning and work towards clear and well-defined goals.





The Jack Fruit, *ton mak mi* in Laos, is a tree which originated in India and Bangladesh. The species is related to the breadfruit tree, *Artocarpus altilis*. It belongs to the *Moraceae* family, like the fig (*Ficus*) and the Murier (*Morus*) and is cultivated mainly in tropical countries. This tree is of the cauliflore type, which is to say that it carries its flowers (and

therefore the fruits) directly on the trunk and along the principal branches, instead of having them on the terminal branches, as do most trees. The flowers are quite small, occurring in a cone shape, and only the stamens and the pistil are visible. Once they are pollinated, the blossoms grow quite a lot, producing a fruit which can grow to as much as 40 kilos and has a with a delicious and unmistakable fragrance.

They are eaten ripe for their sweet flavor or cooked like a vegetable when unripe, always taking care to avoid the very sticky sap found in the centre of the fruit, which is a characteristic of this family of *Moraceae* (the same sort of sap is found when cutting the branch of a fig, for example).

The sap of the jackfruit is produced by all parts of the tree and is particularly plentiful and sticky - so much so that it is a good idea to oil one's hands before preparing the fruit...

Jackfruit wood is quite hard, with a beautiful yellow colour and a fine grain. It is used in inlay and marquetry work and also sometimes in building.

## The Jack Fruit - *Artocarpus heterophyllus*



## POUR UNE LECTURE DU PAYSAGE

À propos de **Simon Schama**, *Le paysage et la mémoire* Seuil 1999, 720p, traduit de l'américain (Landscape & Memory). et **Augustin Berque**, *Les raisons du paysage* Hazan 1995, 190p.

*Comment voyons-nous le paysage qui nous entoure?*

*Comment se constitue à nos yeux un paysage ?*

*Est-il lu pareillement par tous ?*

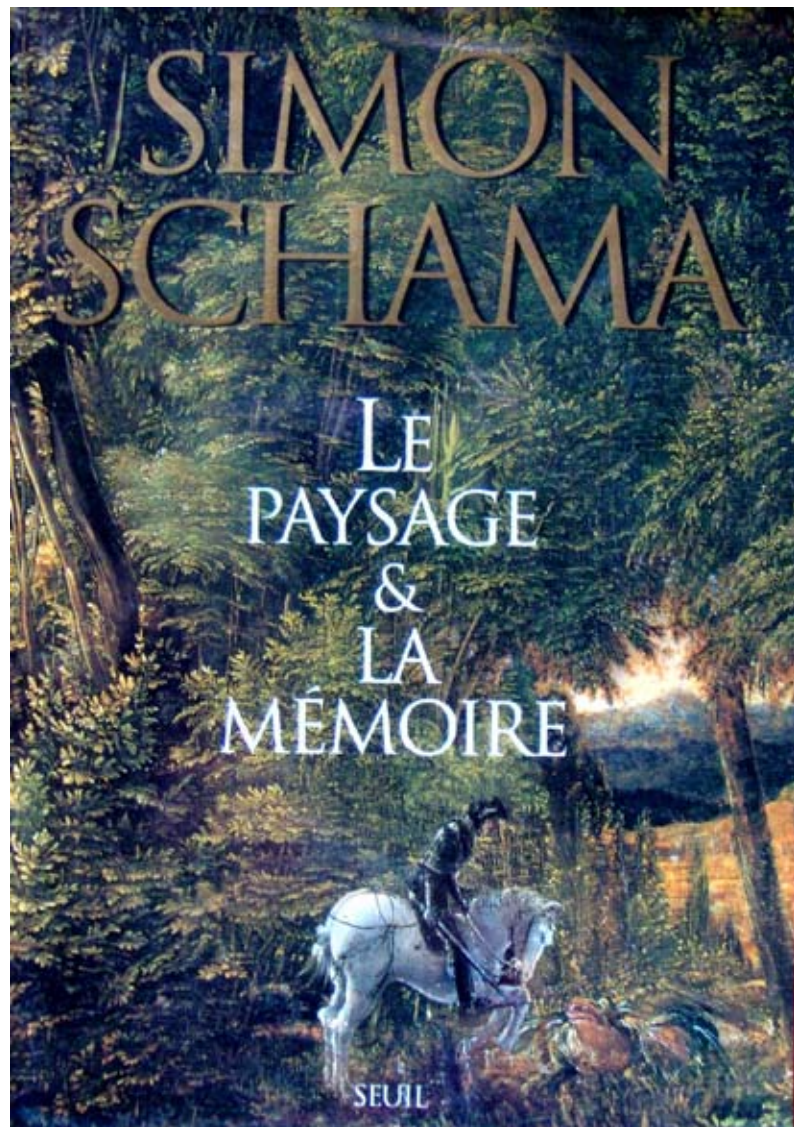
Bien qu'un peu anciens, deux ouvrages essentiels pour l'analyse des paysages vont retenir notre attention et nous aider à répondre à ces questions. Il se trouve que les deux auteurs partent d'une réflexion reposant sur les éléments naturels les plus élémentaires: le bois, l'eau, le rocher, qui façonnent des points de vues culturels plongeant dans la mémoire des peuples. Ce sont à la fois des paysages mythiques et mentaux qui hantent l'esprit de l'humanité.

Selon Simon Schama, il existerait bien une représentation collective des paysages naturels. Ce collectif pluriel façonne l'histoire littéraire, l'art et les représentations.

Ainsi en va-t-il, par exemple, de la forêt allemande, source de mythes, d'emblèmes et de mystères mis en musique dans les Lieder ou les opéras de Wagner et encore les tableaux de Gaspar Friedrich.

En fait nous ne voyons la nature qu'à travers des images déjà présentes, des codes déjà acquis. Simon Schama en arrive à prouver qu'on ne voit pas un paysage mais on le revoit; il est gravé en nous par les récits, des mythes, des images allant de contes et légendes aux gravures et tableaux. Nous avons tous une image préconçue de la « forêt vierge ». Ce sont ces paysages mentaux qui nous hantent et, en se confondant avec des paysages réels, suscitent en nous des rêves d'aventures ou des nostalgies d'enfance. Prenons l'exemple des parcs naturels d'Amérique du Nord. Simon Schama nous montre que ces immenses forêts du Yosemite (espace réel) sont devenues un des sanctuaires pour composer une scène naturelle de la culture américaine: « La grandeur stupéfiante des séquoias devient la révélation sensationnelle de la singularité américaine et sont décrits comme des monuments authentiques et vivants de l'Amérique des commencements ». (P. 219)

« C'est précisément parce que ces colonnes rouges de ce temple sublime n'ont pas été construites par l'homme qu'elles semblent là, grâce à une intervention de la Providence, croissant inexorablement, toujours plus formidables, jusqu'à ce que le nouveau Peuple élu les découvre au coeur de l'Ouest promis. Les grands arbres révèlent ainsi la dimension sacrée du temps américain. » (P. 221).





L'exemple qu'Augustin Berque propose à notre réflexion est très différent. Ce dernier part du principe que certaines civilisations sont « paysagères » alors que d'autres ne le sont pas: la Grèce antique, l'Inde, l'Australie aborigène, par exemple. La Chine par contre a développé depuis de longs siècles « une esthétique du paysage au sens plein, dans la mesure où il y a représentation du paysage par les mots, la littérature, la peinture, les jardins. » (P 71).

Cette vision des paysages est partagée par toute l'aire culturelle d'Asie orientale et correspond à un sentiment esthétique mais aussi à une forme d'habitat. Il existe d'abord des mots très importants pour traduire la notion de paysage, qui jouit d'une vaste panoplie de synonymes, à la fois dans le domaine littéraire et pictural: le shanshui accole les deux sinogrammes « montagne » et « eau ». Ce sont les deux motifs essentiels du paysage à la chinoise. Un autre terme fengjing est formé du caractère « vent » et « scène ». Ce qui est intéressant à relever dans cette tradition asiatique c'est que le paysage n'est pas que visuel mais a en plus une dimension sonore : « Je me promenais avec mon nez... L'eau était délicieuse... je me promenais avec ma langue... le batelier répondait à toutes mes questions... je me promenais avec mes oreilles. » (P. 75).

Il existe enfin une dimension imaginaire du paysage qui fait qu'il n'est point besoin de le voir pour le sentir et le représenter. En Chine, comme dans la tradition paysagère japonaise, nous explique A. Berque: « on pratique systématiquement la peinture de paysage en atelier plutôt que sur le motif,

cela dénote une relation à l'environnement fort étrangère au regard paysagé de l'Occident, lequel s'est attaché à décrire et à dépeindre les choses objectivement » (p.76).

En fait ce qui est visé s'apparente à une esthétisation de la nature et, pour savoir se promener sur une montagne, il faut avoir dans l'âme et dans les yeux les schèmes esthétiques d'une certaine raison paysagère. Plus donc qu'une esthétique ne s'agit-il pas d'une spiritualisation de la nature?

Souvent en parcourant les berges du Mékong ou en empruntant le canot qui mène de l'autre côté du fleuve, je me suis demandé comment le paysage était perçu, vécu, imaginé par les Laotiens que je côtoie.

On peut se demander aussi ce qu'est devenue cette sensibilité au paysage dans un monde qui se transforme rapidement sous l'impact de la modernisation, à la fois dans les traditions chinoises mais aussi dans nos régions d'Asie du sud-est où il importe de préserver une relation forte et chargée d'imaginaire qui seule peut engendrer des oeuvres et des rêves.

*Baj Strobel*

Augustin Berque

# LES RAISONS DU PAYSAGE

*de la Chine antique  
aux environnements  
de synthèse*





## THE YOUNG LAO PHOTOGRAPHER'S GALLERY @ MY LIBRARY

### Portfolio by: Ka Xiong

My name is Ka Xiong. I am 23 years old now; I am a sixth year student at Souphanouvong University, majoring in English. I am from a small village named Houyman in Phone Xay District, Luang Prabang Province. I used to work as a part time job @ *My Library*.

I like doing many things in my life, but here are my favorite hobbies: taking photos, playing sports especially soccer and I also like playing instruments like drums, guitar, and flute. I have been taking photos for 4 years. It is not my job, but my hobby and I hope that it will be part of my job in the future. I like taking photos because it is fun and challenging for me. A photo can explain something instead of a million words. To be a photographer I have to have lots of patience and pay more attention to what I am doing.

I like to take close up photos, especially flowers, night photos, light with smoke and people. I will keep taking photograph into



the future, because I would like to know more and learn more about photography. You are welcome to give me advices or comments about my photography and I am sure that every advice and comment that you have to me will improve my photography to be better in the future. Thank You !

*Work of Ka Xiong will be shown at the Photoquai Biennale in Paris in September.*













@ 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](http://www.thelanguageproject.org)



## SOME BOOKS AND OTHER AFFAIRS WE LOVE



*Dokmai Garden's Guide to Fruits and Vegetables in Southeast Asian Markets*

*Text: Eric Danell.*

*Photos: Eric Danell, Anna Kiss and Martina Stöbrová.*

White Lotus, Bangkok, 2011.

202 pp. Price \$ 32.00

ISBN 978 974 480 164 7

The book is intended as a companion on your visits to markets, restaurants and orchards. The authors have selected 120 species of fruits, vegetables and mushrooms commonly found in Southeast Asia, Southern China and India. The information is packed in a handy format, which enables you to bring the book to the market with no efforts and to keep it in your luggage without causing space or weight problems. We hope you will find that the scientific accuracy paired with personal and down-to-earth descriptions make this book both entertaining and helpful.



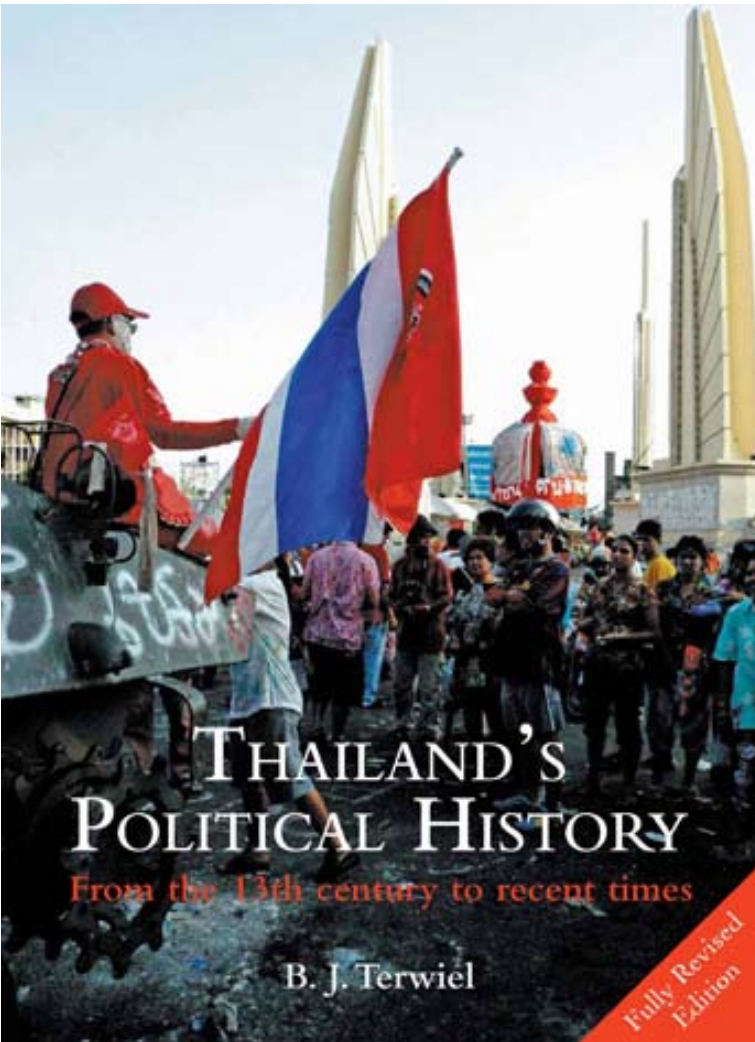
Dokmai Garden is a private botanical garden in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The aim of Dokmai Garden is to impart knowledge about tropical plants seen in Chiang Mai, either in national parks, in other gardens or on your plate when you eat. At Dokmai Garden, you can explore the grounds and learn about orchids, vegetables, trees, birds, fish, mammals, butterflies and mushrooms. We have a generous parking, shop, lunch restaurant, a sales nursery and western bathrooms. The garden itself is 4 ha (10 acres) and boasts nearly 1000 plant species, 500 of which are labeled with aluminium signs. These signs provide names and interesting information about the plants in English, Japanese and Thai.

Dokmai Dogma ([www.dokmaidogma.wordpress.com](http://www.dokmaidogma.wordpress.com)) is a blog to share our knowledge and experience of tropical plants and gardening/farming with the online community. On this site, you will find over 350 articles about plants, animals and mushrooms at our garden. Our Tropical Garden School has attracted students from all over the world. We tailor-make the program to suit the experience of each student, using both university scholars and Thai farmers as teachers.

**[www.dokmaigarden.co.th](http://www.dokmaigarden.co.th)**



*Coelogyne brachyptera*



**Thailand's Political History:  
From the Thirteenth Century to Modern Times**

*B. J. Terwiel*

River Books, Bangkok, 2011. 344 pp. Price \$ 30.00  
ISBN 978 974 9863 96 1

First appearing in 2005 and quickly selling out, this fully revised edition of Thailand's Political History continues in the same style as the first but with its scope dramatically widened. While the first edition began with a portrait of late Ayutthayan society, the new edition steps back to the thirteenth century, tackling some of the most topical and pressing historical debates at present. It discusses the development and evolution of the Siamese state from the early Sukhothai period through the fall of Ayutthaya to the rise of the Chakri dynasty in the late eighteenth century and its consolidation of power in the nineteenth. Moving into the twentieth century it traces the emergence of the Thai nation state, the large-scale investments in modern infrastructure and the concomitant economic expansion that have occurred since the 1950s onwards.

A new final chapter brings the reader up-to-date and addresses Thailand's current political situation spanning the rise and fall of Thaksin Shinawatra to the divisive and at times violent polarisation of Thai society. It traces the emergence of the rival Yellow and Red shirt protest groups, the takeover of Suvarnabhumi International Airport by the PAD and the occupation of Ratchaprasong intersection by the UDD and

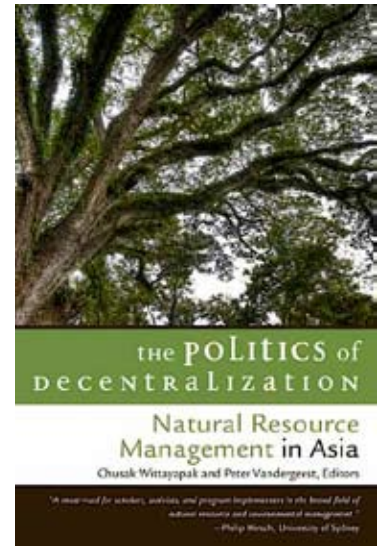
their eventual violent dispersal by the Thai military. Often at variance with the more dominant interpretations of nationalistic history and with a strong reliance upon primary sources, Barend J. Terwiel's Thailand's Political History makes a refreshing assessment of past events possible.

**The Politics of Decentralization:  
Natural Resource Management in Asia**

*Chusak Wittayapak and Peter Vandergeest, editors*

Mekong Press, Bangkok, 2011. 252 pp. Price 625 Bath  
ISBN 978 616 90053 0 8

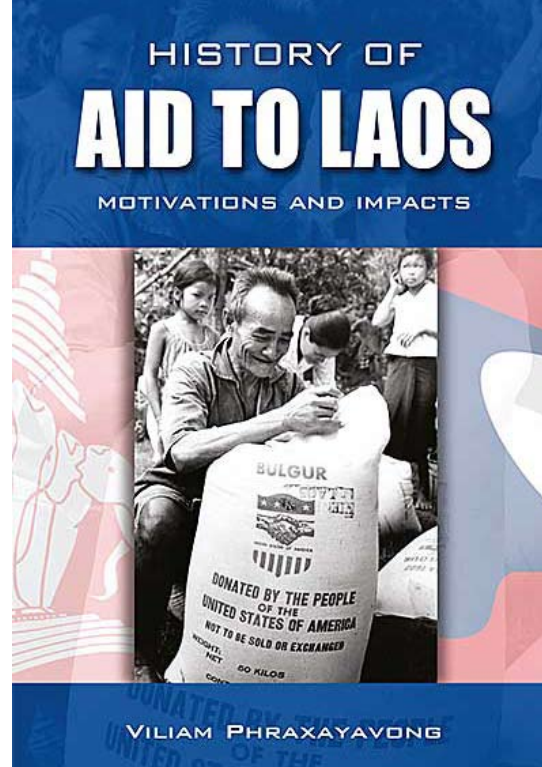
This book brings together empirically grounded studies of the decentralization of natural resource management in seven South and Southeast Asian countries. It provides a clear explanation of the key concepts and debates in decentralization relevant to the management of forests, fisheries, and water in the region. The editors draw on evidence presented in the book to argue that the politics of



decentralization is best understood as the terrain of negotiation and conflict. This terrain shapes how decentralization is designed, implemented, and in some cases, appropriated, by popular movements. This approach to politics stands in contrast to the common assumption that democratic management can be manufactured by decentralization programs designed by experts and governments. Although a discussion of politics is never absent, politics is usually presented as an obstacle to effective decentralization. The diverse cases presented in the book show that decentralization can shift the terrain of struggle in a variety of ways, sometimes in favor of farmers, fishers, water users, and forest users, and sometimes to their disadvantage. Institutional design does make a difference, but more in relation to implementation than effect. Readers of this book will learn to be wary of centralizing forces that use donor-funded decentralization to stave off pressure for genuine democratization, and to identify opportunities to promote institutions that could be open to capture by democratic groups.

#### About the Authors

Chusak Wittayapak is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, where he teaches development geography, political ecology, and community-based natural resource management. Peter Vandergeest is Associate Professor of Geography at York University in Canada. He has been researching and publishing on the politics of natural resource management in Southeast Asia for twenty years.



#### History of Aid to Laos: Motivations and Impacts

*Viliam Phraxayavong*

Mekong Press, Bangkok, 2011. 344 pp. Price 695 Bath  
ISBN 978 611 90053 0 3

History of Aid to Laos is the first comprehensive publication on development assistance to the aid-dependent country of Laos. Written by a former senior Lao official in international cooperation, the book investigates the situation of a country dependent on foreign aid for more than half a century and

the ways in which donor nations have shaped Lao development and political relationships through the aid process. The story has involved a wide array of protagonists and antagonists, including Lao players of different factions (Right, Neutralist, Left Neutralist, Left and Royalist) and the Cold War rivals and their allies, who gave substantial support. The book traces foreign aid to Laos beginning with the French administration in the 1950s, through American military-dominated assistance targeted to defeat communism, the communist bloc's economic rescue and the related political upheaval, the increasing dominance of financial institutions and Western bilateral donors as Laos's economy opened up, and finally, the ascendant influence and assistance of neighboring countries, notably China, Thailand, and Vietnam, as well as Malaysia and Korea, which have rushed into Laos' open market economy to exploit its natural resources and eco-tourism potential. After decades of foreign aid, Laos is left with a continuing dependence on development assistance, a status as one of the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and a host of new and old problems such as human trafficking, drug addiction, corruption, acute lack of human resources, and environmental degradation from mining, dams, and other "fruits" of economic development.

#### About the Author

Viliam Phraxayavong earned his PhD from the University of Sydney and is currently an associate of the Australian Mekong Resource Centre. He was director of international economic cooperation in the Royal Lao Government's Ministry of Economic Planning and Cooperation from 1964 to 1975.



## Project Space • Luang Prabang

**Project Space • Luang Prabang** is a multifunction space for producing exhibitions, events and objects. 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.

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

After our successful opening exhibition *The Genie Behind the Scissors*, which honored the artist Tcheu Siong, our second exhibition in March/May showed a wonderful collection of **Phaa Hom** - Blankets of Various Tai Groups.

In June/July we will show work from the artist **Phasao Lao** as well as portfolios from young Lao photographers.

### **Project Space • Luang Prabang**

Kitsalat Road 6 (Opposite Dara Market)

Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

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### **Phaa Hom - Blankets of Various Tai Groups.**

*Exhibition March/May, 2011 E-catalog online*

Women belonging to the numerous Tai ethnic groups populating Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Burma, as well as parts of China and India, excel in the creation of elaborately woven textiles. Tai weavers painstakingly decorate not only clothing and ceremonial weavings with intricate patterning but also mundane items, such as household accessories. The Tai living in the cooler environs of northern Vietnam and Laos utilize phaa hom or blankets to provide warmth. Many subgroups, including the Tai Dam, Tai Thanh, Tai Moey, and Tai Sam Neua, produce phaa hom with a center section composed of one or two similarly woven panels, often in striking indigo, and sometimes ebony black, continuous supplementary weft designs.

A Tai woman begins to weave plain and patterned cloth prior to marriage, building a trousseau. When she weds, the blankets and other textiles will accompany the bride to her new home for future use. Phaa hom serve as blankets, curtains or room dividers, and baby carriers. During funerals, they also function as shrouds and are often hung around the deceased's body.

The motifs adorning phaa hom are similar to those found on other Tai fabrics and possess protective qualities, warding off harmful, supernatural sources of illness and misfortune. For example, ngeuak, a type of serpent deity, and hong, a mythical bird, are recurring designs. These mystical creatures also provide transport between worlds for spirits symbolized with hu-



man figures. A favorite motif is the monkey whose playfulness resembles that of children, which every new family expects to have many.

Finely plied, white cotton or silk thread compose the background of the decorated panels while the continuous supplementary weft designs are formed with thickly plied, indigo- or ebony-dyed cotton. Plain, hand-spun cotton fabric surrounds the central field.

*Linda S. McIntosh PhD  
Textile Curator*

*Phaa Hom, Blanket*

Ground Warp and Weft: White cotton.

Continuous Supplementary Weft in indigo cotton.

Motifs: Human figures ride on mating hong. Ngeuak, flowers, and fern tendrils surround them.

*Phaa Hom, Blanket*

Ground Warp and Weft: White cotton.

Continuous Supplementary Weft in indigo cotton.

Motifs: Diamond shaped lanterns are composed of monkeys, dauk chan sandalwood flowers, and silkworms. Hook forms symbolize ngeuak and fern tendrils.





**Pahsao Lao**

*Exhibition June/July, 2011*

**Pahsao Lao**

*Dab neeb Kwn ntaj riam thiab heevꞑeej heev sawv - Nr. 7  
These Spirits control the Weapons*

Embroidery and Applique on Cotton, 2011, 130 x 140 cm.



**Pahsao Lao**  
*Yaj saub siv yisneeb Nr. 2*

Embroidery and Applique on Cotton, 2011, 130 x 140 cm.

