Burning Bushes for Future Forests: A Process of Prescribed Fires in Northern Thailand

Nich Farrelly

Fire and Aspirations

In Northern Thailand, the management of fire in forests remains a significant environmental, social and economic concern. Fire is an important element in the competing - but not always contradictory - aspirations and agendas of local people, development agencies, and the Forestry Department. In the Wat Chan area of Chiang Mai province, the sustainability of the local Karen communities centers on the forest and their ability to live within it. It is dangerous to surmise any common local aspirations towards forest resource use beyond acknowledging that there is a general desire to 'use local resources, for the benefit of the local area'. That 'local' desire contrasts with the official Thai posture which demands conservation of forests for their 'natural qualities' and value as the protector of water catchments.

Any valuation of the forest is conditional on the community's ability to conserve it and to utilize it. The forest is not the property of the Forestry Department and as such the involvement of local people in the management of what is 'their' resource is not only sensible, but essential. Fires - like people - have the potential to destroy forests but can also be an effective tool in forest management. The history of resource use in the area demonstrates a dynamic relationship between people, forests and fire. A balance which preserves the forests and provides for the people needs to firstly reconcile the position of fire within the ecosystem and society.

The Process of Prescribed Burning

At Wat Chan a process called Prescribed Burning has been instigated as an attempt to resolve perceived imbalances in the relationship between people and forests. The process is designed to protect the forests against strong fires during the hottest and driest months of April and May. It is encouraged by local officials, from the Royal Project and the Forestry Department, because 'if you are going to use local resources, you should look after the resources too'.

At the village of Nar Klet Hoi the people are currently involved in Prescribed Burning. The village received 5000 baht for burning 150 rai. The ready availability of dry-season labour in the months of January and February means that there are many people willing to participate. Nonetheless, it is slow, tiring work. It involves scraping up the leaves and other undergrowth. That material is then swept into piles and burned. The hope is that eliminating the build-up of fuel will allow the two-leaf pines to pass through the 'grass stage' and then mature into bigger trees. Local experience indicates that the continued health of the forest is related to the preservation of those two-leaf pines during their...
delicate immaturity. It is hoped that nurturing the small pines will result in new tiers of mature trees within the forest.

In the past the emphasis was on stopping all fires. That policy was a response to the traditional practice of using fire to help the forest regenerate and to also open up new areas for dry rice cultivation. Official government orthodoxy still dictates that ‘(villagers) must help to put out fires that burn the forests’. In the villages of Chaem Luang and Chaem Noid a policy of ‘stopping all fire’ was, at one time, very successful. So successful, in fact, that the inevitable fires after 10 years completely destroyed the forests. Prescribed Burning is designed to minimise the build up of levels of undergrowth which fuel such destructive fires. It is not designed to eliminate the perceived ‘mulching’ benefits of the undergrowth and pine needles during the rest of the year. The policy aims to manage a balance between fire and forest that minimises the potential for significant damage to the forest ‘investment’ in the months of April and May.

Karen Forests

There is a high level of local support for the conservation of the forests as both an economic investment and as a defining characteristic of the local area and its people.

The stated goal of the project’s instigators is to ‘burn the forest so that there is forest’. The villagers seem to favour such thinking and one villager commented that ‘if you wait until the green goes yellow, it’ll all turn black’. A ‘Ladies Group’ has been involved in Prescribed Burning in the Huai Ngu area near the Wat Chan Animal Extension Station for two years and they are convinced of its merits. While some other villagers remain sceptical of the value of the process many are quick to acknowledge that ‘Prescribed Burning is better than planting trees’.

It is hoped that the process will give the Wat Chan Karen a more engaged sense of ownership and responsibility for areas of forest where there has been Prescribed Burning. As a process it complements the common Wat Chan aspiration to gain economic benefit from the forest while using new processes to create conservation and economic value. It is not a panacea for all of the problems that local people identify in their area. However as a new and relatively untested process it has the potential to create a measure of balance between forest and society.

Current forest management orthodoxies leave little room for the implementation of new and sustainable forest management systems. Prescribed Burning is perhaps one way of demonstrating the level of Wat Chan Karen responsibility for - and investment in - the forest. Any future attempts to establish a local forest industry would need to satisfy the authorities that it would be accepted by the locals, implemented sustainably and thus viable for the very long-term. By demonstrating an ability to nurture the forest as a valuable investment, the Prescribed Burning at Wat Chan may be the catalyst for increased economic and environmental security.

The Future

Prescribed Burning has the potential to allow the Wat Chan Karen to manage their forests for future benefit. By helping to consolidate a sense of ownership of the local forest resource while creating opportunities for future projects it can mesh local aspirations with the agendas of outside development agencies and the Forestry Department. Fire will remain a part of the forest ecosystem and policies and processes which enable a measure of harmony between forest conservation and resource are to be encouraged. The official orthodoxy, which was a reaction to traditional practices, may now be modified to work with - rather than against - the aspirations of local people.

By trying to create more tiers of maturing trees in the forest, Prescribed Burning is a positive step towards creating opportunities for the sustainable use of the Wat Chan forests. It is only once that step has been taken that the forests can be utilized as a provider of economic nourishment and environmental sustenance for future generations of Wat Chan Karen. The current ban on forest resource use serves only to radicalize and illegalize the aspirations of local people and other consumers of forest products. There are great risks in maintaining forest management practices which mean that Thailand does not provide - from within its own borders - a sustainable supply of forest products to meet its local demand. The health of other regional forest ecosystems and societies is endangered by policies which result in pressure on other countries to meet Thailand’s appetite. Prescribed Burning may demonstrate that fire can be harnessed in the controlled maintenance of the conservation and economic value of forests. That would result in benefit to people and forests, not only at Wat Chan but throughout Thailand and the whole region.
Transition and Tradition in a White Tai Village in north Vietnam

Helen James

With a team of university colleagues I visited this Tai Khao, (White Tai) village in the mountains of north Vietnam, 150km west of Hanoi, several times between 1998 and 1999. The team had different disciplinary backgrounds in health, environment and anthropology and was interested in seeing the impact of economic change on the daily lives of these villagers. We found an ecology in transition, one in which the basic traditional social and cultural fabric was firmly maintained yet put to the service of the new economic opportunities afforded by the opening up of the country to the international marketplace. I communicated with the villagers by using central Thai; they spoke a dialect in which the tones and pronunciation of some of the consonants were different; however the common linguistic core enabled communication to proceed.

The village was built around one main street, largely a dirt track which operated as a walking mall. The approximately fifty wooden houses on stilts constructed in the traditional Tai style which opened onto this main thoroughfare were home to between 400 and 500 people. Each house contained an extended family consisting of the parents, three to four children, grandparents and sometimes the siblings of the parents. Some houses had tiled roofs and walls of wooden planks, others were in traditional woven thatch, both roof and sides. These latter type houses were considered superior in terms of insulation to those with tiled roofs, although the tiled roofs were more expensive to construct and indicated a certain amount of accumulated wealth on the part of the owners. We detected in our conversations a sense of competitiveness, even enviousness between the occupants of the tiled roofs and the thatched roof houses. Both types had wall length wooden louvre or thatch windows opening onto the street during the day which permitted constant communication with those passing by. These wall windows were tightly locked at night both for security and for health reasons to keep out the cold night air which brought bronchial diseases.

In all the houses, a wooden staircase led from the street level to the living quarters on the first floor level which resembled a platform divided into sleeping and eating area, cooking area, and ablutions area. A large square open fire constructed around teak logs which took up the centre of the second area of the house provided both cooking and heating functions. I had seen the same type of architecture and functional differentiation in a Tai hillside village on the way through the mountains. The front part of the house was clearly the most important. Food cooked and served in the traditional style and consisting of a variety of vegetables, eggs, chicken and fish dishes, was placed on a large square wooden serving block in the middle of the room. We sat on the floor around this central block and chatted with our hosts and colleagues from the National University of Vietnam, Hanoi. At night, this area became the sleeping quarters. Mattresses neatly folded and stacked at the side during the day were laid out on the floor matting. Mosquito nets dropped from the ceiling

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and all occupants were tucked up for the night against the cold air outside. Our host family, by contrast, had a queen-sized western-style wooden bed raised from the floor on legs about eighteen inches high. Their mattresses were placed on the platform and all the family, parents and children, slept together here. At four o’clock in the afternoon the children of the village had been collected and brought inside their houses to guard against the upper respiratory tract and ear infections which exposure to the night air would bring. We noticed that in the evening the younger children were required to put on western-style woollen bonnets secured to cover their ears. Surrounding the village, the small plots of rice fields spreading towards the base of the nearby mountains provided the rice, fish and vegetables which were the main source of sustenance for the villagers. Out the back of each house the ubiquitous fruit trees, banana, papaya, and breadfruit, plied their daily existence.

The traditional Tai house and lifestyle was clearly the centre of the new economic activity in the village. This was a weaving village. Underneath each house a weaving loom was constantly operated by the members of each family, turning out the splendid colourful skirt lengths, bedspreads, covers and scarves which during the day were draped outside each home to tempt the visitor to buy. Cost ranged from USD50 for a bedspread to USD1 for a scarf. There was evidently a strong competitive spirit amongst the children who wove the scarves. My colleagues strolling up the dusty village mall were constantly beset by groups of youngsters calling on them to purchase the particular scarf which he or she had woven. Weaving of these items amongst the children seemed to be a unisex affair, the skill of the weaver having a direct bearing on the income potential of each household.

This weaving village was being opened up to small numbers of foreign tourists as well as academic visitors. On my second visit a small minibus of European tourists arrived and they were accommodated in one of the houses on stilts opposite to where we were staying. The village children thronged around displaying their woven items for sale. In support of diversifying the economic activity, this village was connected to the electricity grid which runs across north Vietnam into the mountains. It had been a gift from the Soviets in years gone by. Telephones, including mobile telephone facilities, were available. My hostess proudly gave me her home phone and mobile telephone number when we were saying goodbye, with an invitation to keep in touch. I had the impression that the numbers of foreign visitors were controlled in order to ensure that the traditional way of life of the village was not impacted on too severely by the demands of eco-tourism. For our short stay, my colleagues and I each paid USD100 which covered accommodation and meals. A steady stream of hard currency was making its way into the village economy to supplement the income from traditional sources - rice, fruits and vegetables.

Modern amenities were also evident in the sanitation system installed in each house. At the back, attached to each house, a cement ablution block had been constructed, close to the well from which each house drew its water supply. The house in which my team and I stayed boasted a flush toilet and shower, upstairs, with lockable door. To reach these facilities, it was necessary to negotiate a rickety walkway built of bamboo. Yet tradition was still very evident in the village. At its centre, just up the dusty mall, was the old ablution block and well, still used, as we found many of the village women gathering around in the evening to wash the family cooking utensils.

It was a Spartan existence. The children appeared well-cared for and certainly deeply loved. A package of toys which we took with us on the second visit, and distributed with due regard for equity, was pounced on with great glee. Early in the mornings, those children of school age were transported in the village minibus to the district primary school some ten kilometres away. We were fortunate to receive an invitation to visit the school and to be able to talk with the principal and teachers through our Vietnamese colleagues. Most of the classrooms were what we would call detached - constructed of thatch with dirt floors. School materials were sparse. The only solid building was the central meeting hall for teachers. The school clearly needed a patron.

Not far away was the district health care centre, also sparse in terms of equipment and facilities. Here the children from the surrounding villages came for regular checks. According to the wall chart, the under-five immunization program was implemented 100 percent in this district. One permanent health care worker staffed the centre. On a simple wooden bench, she took care of births as well as childhood illnesses. For all serious cases, villages travelled several hours over the mountain roads to the provincial hospital.
With foreign guests in the village, in the evening our hosts put on an entertainment spectacular of traditional dance and song in which my colleagues and I participated fully to the delight of all. Dancers in traditional dress, long skirts and long sleeved blouses for the women, jackets and Tai panung for the men, exhibited the weaving patterns of the village. All girded their waists with a fine white gauze or silken cloth, identifying each one as belonging to the Tai Khao. The pinnacle of the evening was a ‘barn dance’ and song celebrating the life and achievements of the father of modern Vietnam’s independence, Ho Chi Minh, affectionately known even today as ‘Uncle Ho’. At the conclusion, a large vat was brought out filled with what seemed to be a very potent rice wine. Many long reed straws were inserted and all present urged to sip. Those to whom valour was more important than discretion did so; others pretended, merely going through the motions in order to be polite.

When it was time to leave, we boarded our mini-bus to wind our way back through the mountains to Hanoi. As we had done on our journey to the village, we stopped at the top of the range to look back through the valley which led to our White Tai village. In the floor of the valley today, there lies a new little town of one-story white stucco Vietnamese houses surrounded by rice fields. Its apparent peacefulness belies the terrible fate of earlier inhabitants of this spot whose tragic story is still evident in the partially denuded hillsides, for napalm bombs dropped here during the war had turned this funnel-shaped valley into an inferno. Little clumps of resurgent vegetation stand out oddly on the singed hillsides. Small wonder that the people of the hills dance to the praises of Ho Chi Minh.

Helen James is a Visiting Fellow of the Research School of Pacific & Asian Studies, ANU. Her missions to Vietnam included research collaborations with the Vietnam National University, Hanoi, as Executive Director of UCARDI (University of Canberra Asia Research & Development Institute).

Lunch served on traditional wooden block table with no legs in the front main room of the thatched house on stilts.

One Hundred Years of the École Française: A History Considered Through Some Contemporary Publications

John Crocker

It is now a little over one hundred years since the establishment of the École française d’Extrême-Orient in its original base in Hanoi, in what is now Vietnam.

That being the case, it is opportune to be able to examine the history of the application of French investigative scientific thought to a significant part of Asia, starting at what may be called the High Colonial Period, say 1850 to 1950, but continuing at a high level until the present. The High Colonial Period fairly well began with the initial treaties with Siam which released to French protection the first tranche of Cambodia, as well as the separate taking by force of much of Vietnam, and ended with the return of the constituent countries of French Indochina to eventual local sovereignty, with the immediate consequences we can see today. It should be remembered that Ho Chi Minh, when asked his opinion of the effects of the French Revolution replied that it was too early to say; possibly a similar long view is needed for the French ex-colonies.

There is no doubt that French science and engineering had been making major contributions to the European knowledge base for centuries. A visit to the recently restored but wonderfully old-fashioned Musée des Arts et Métiers in Paris will show more persuasively than words the degree to which we are all beholden to French creative science, in this case in the mechanical arts.

While it may be argued that French, as well as other European, thought gave rise to the interesting phenomenon of a romantic Orientalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with its exotic images of a mysterious, fatalistic and inscrutable East, it cannot be denied that the French also contributed greatly to a Western ‘scientific’ understanding and knowledge of Asia, of its societies, cultures, languages and its art. As Said put it, “taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient … in short Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” (Said 1978: 3).

1 There may be said to be a transition point between the romantic “orientalism” of the mid to late eighteenth century as expressed in the adoption of oriental themes in European art (for example in Mozart’s fanciful opera The Abduction From the Seraglio, the Rondo Alla Turca from one of his piano sonatas (K 331), the Turkish March from Beethoven’s incidental music for the play The Ruins of Athens, and in influences on female fashion), compared with the developing scientific and historical “Orientalism” seen by Edward Said as laying the basis for a new European discourse on the Orient.

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Probably the first serious venturing of French science outside metropolitan France on an organized basis took place with the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt in 1798, forming one of Said’s “roughly defined starting point[s]”. While the expedition was primarily military and colonizing in character and purpose, the expedition was also a voyage of scientific discovery. About one hundred and fifty of the best young scientific and scholarly minds in France were recruited to, in effect, take a ‘scientific’ inventory of Egypt. While in Egypt, and primarily occupied with military matters, a branch of the Institut de France was set up there, to coordinate the efforts of the workers in a plethora of works of scientific investigation. While the expedition eventually came to tears militarily, the outstanding scientific results of the expedition were published for the world to see, on subjects ranging “from antiquities to zoology” in the ten profusely illustrated volumes of Description de l’Egypte.

It may be argued that this tradition of serious foreign scientific investigation by France had some of its early fruits in the Mediterranean and the Near East. The Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres of the Institut de France in Paris set up l’École française d’Athènes in 1846 and l’École française de Rome in 1875. However the Académie was eventually to spread itself even further into the East.

The acquisition of a protectorate over Cambodia by threat of force, and control of Vietnam by force in the 1850s and 1860s provided new ground and new material for a scientific study on a scale potentially greater than that of the Napoleonic venture in Egypt.

In order to take an inventory of the resources of the newly acquired French territory, many highly talented soldier-savants carried out exploratory expeditions along the Mekong and into the Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese hinterland from the 1860s onwards. These expeditions to some extent formalised the data which French missionaries with a scientific or linguistic bent had been collecting over many earlier decades while working in these countries to spread the message of Christianity. The names of Pavie, Moura, Aymonier, Delaporte, Fournereau and Doudart de Lagrée as well as others occur in this context. This work was notably supplemented by Mouhot’s and Loti’s published descriptions of Angkor.

The most important of these official expeditions was probably that of Doudart de Lagrée, who unfortunately died during its long course, leaving the expedition and its report to be finished under the supervision of Francis Garnier. Doudart de Lagrée’s brief was to investigate the Mekong River as a trade route between Southwestern China and the mouth of the river near Saigon, which would give France a monopoly on trade between that part of China and the rest of Asia. Unfortunately its findings on its major objective were essentially negative, the hopes for this attractive and potentially profitable dream floundered at the Island of Khone and the Kemmarat rapids where the Mekong tumbles down near the edge of the Khorat Plateau in Laos to the coastal plain which forms Cambodia below; the river was not commercially navigable. Later, powerful French passenger steamboats would force their way up the rapids by brute force, but at great risk and much loss of life, and with tiny cargoes.

Dr H Loofs-Wissowa (2002) has argued that these rapids did more to guarantee Siam’s continued independence than all of the treaties which King Mongkut (Rama IV) and King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) of Siam were able to negotiate in their turn with France and Britain. The rapids also ensured that Cambodia, Vietnam and later Laos would remain relatively minor territories in the French scheme for Asia, becoming merely exploited colonies with an importance depending on their natural resources, rather than gateways to China and its riches.

Nevertheless the French found their new territories to be rich both agriculturally and to no lesser extent rich in the range of subjects “from antiquities to zoology”, as in Egypt. To put the scientific investigation of the territories on a more formal basis, another offshoot of the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres was set up in Hanoi as l’École française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEo, The French School of the Far East) in 1901, replacing the Commission archéologique de l’Indochine set up in 1898, just a century after the ill-fated venture of Napoleon into Egypt. This new school replaced an earlier project to set up a French School in India, in a tiny French possession, Chandernagor near Calcutta, which however was not sufficiently commercially successful to support a scientific centre such as the Académie represented.

The Early Days of the EFEo

Any student of South Asian, East Asian or Southeast Asian history, language, art, inscriptions, culture, ethnology or archaeology cannot but be aware of the contribution made to the study of these topics by the EFEo over the last century, and of the almost continuous publication since 1901 (WWII apart) of the Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient (BEFEO) with a wide range of learned papers covering all of these subjects and more. It must be admitted that we owe to the EFEo much of the knowledge we have on the prehistory, history and culture of Southeast Asia.

While the work of the EFEo may have been located within and financed by the colonizing activities of France in Indochina, as Said showed, nevertheless the primary scientific objectives of the École probably yielded little direct benefit to the colonial administration at all. Most of the maps of the countries had been produced by the military well before 1901, the job of the EFEo was to look into other aspects of the subject countries. For example, the long history of Vietnam studied from the surviving chronicles by the EFEo shows such fierce Vietnamese resistance to outside invasion and such a sense of territorial cohesion, that it should have provided early warning to both France and to the United States of the folly of their post WWII military adventures in that suffering country.

In the first issue of the EFEo Bulletin, the founding director Louis Finot wrote “the questions which we plan to study are...
those which make up philology in the broadest sense of the word, that is- political history, the history of institutions, of religions, of literatures, archaeology, linguistics, and ethnography; in a word, all aspects of life and society." (Finot, 1901) In the same issue, M. Senart, a member of the Institut de France, pointed out that the EFEO was first and foremost a school, and had a duty to teach. He foresaw an expansion to a deeper knowledge of Sanskrit and Prakrit, and spoke of the concept of a “scholarly colonization” [cette colonisation savante] (Senart, 1901).

M. Barth, another member of the Institut de France, in his welcoming the start of the Bulletin, in part laid out some of his duties for Louis Finot. He wrote “you [will] complete the inventory and the archaeological maps of Annam and of Cambodia [started by Etienne Aymonier], you [will] make prints of inscriptions, of which it is essential that the School has a complete set, you [will] research and copy the surviving Khmer and Cham literature, you [will] collect the customs of the aboriginal tribes, the vocabularies and grammars of their languages, [which will lead to problems of transcription], you [will] thus prepare the development of the philology and ethnography of French Indochina, both so far scarcely outlined and which it is the mission of the School to complete. At the same time you [will] create a library and museum worthy of the name, formed, not by chance, for ceremony and curiosity, but with method and foresight. One will no longer see odd fragments scattered in houses or sent off to the Musée Guimet, and, in leaving [their provenance], without value; Indochina will conserve its treasures. And your collecting which, concerning original pieces, will only gather those which otherwise would perish, will not be obtained at the cost of the pillage and the devastation of the monuments; not only will you not demolish, you will preserve and conserve. But you will not restore, that which, of all the forms of vandalism, is usually the worst [my emphasis]” (Barth, 1901).

It is a matter of common knowledge that the École set out to do all these things and more, and across a larger canvas than merely French Indochina, eventually reaching to China, Korea and Japan to the North and East and Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, Burma and India to the Southwest. In this regard, the École is unique in that its reach has always been pan-Asiatic, and not merely limited to the country in which it was initially based, and at the same time prepared to get its hands dirty in doing actual work in many physical fields. It may be compared with one or two other learned societies like the Royal Asiatic Society. Others, like the Archaeological Service of the Dutch East Indies tended to stay within national bounds.

In overview, the work of the EFEO may be divided into three distinct aspects. These fall into the categories of fact-finding, conservation and, possibly controversially, restoration. Fact finding may be applied as a description to all of its activities, conservation can be applied to any area where there are old artifacts in need of rescue from decay, but restoration can only really be applied to the objects encountered in archaeology. Depending on one’s area of interest, one usually becomes aware of particular EFEO names from the past which have had a major impact on that particular area. Sometimes the chronology is a bit hard to establish, but the important individuals stand out. For example in the related fields of archaeology, architecture, art history and epigraphy, the names of Boisselier, Coedès, de Lajongquiére, Dumarçay, Dupont, Giteau, Groslier (father and son), Marchal, Parmentier, Stern, and so on come to mind. In fact, the interplay between the limited data individually available from each of these four disciplines, and the way in which a total approach led to a chronology of the monuments and of their constructors is a revealing insight into the benefits of an eclectic approach to problem solving. The final dating of the Angkor monuments and therefore the chronology of the Angkor kings was as much due to the art history studies of Philippe Stern as to anyone.

It is difficult to visualise the breadth and depth of the contribution of the EFEO to the scientific knowledge of Asian culture in its broadest sense. It is even more difficult to realize the modest scientific staff numbers at all periods in the work of the École. It seems that the professional staff never exceeded much more than five to ten persons, usually French but later with Indochinese members as well, plus others without office but designated as “corresponding” members, who worked at other occupations but submitted work for publication. All the EFEO members and its corresponding members published widely in scientific journals, both in the BEFEO and others as well. Many also wrote books on their areas of expertise, almost always in French, and usually directed towards a specialist audience. Paul Mus’ Barabudur and Jean Boisselier’s Le Cambodge in the series Asie du Sud-Est and are good examples of this genre. Few however had their books translated to English, and therefore the work of few reached a non-francophone audience. George Coedès is probably the best known with the English language translations of his Histoire ancienne des états hindouisés d’Extrême-Orient (1944), published as The Indianised States of Southeast Asia (1968), and his Pour mieux comprendre Angkor (1943), published as Angkor (1963). Bernard Groslier’s Indochina was translated into English in 1966, Jacques Dumarçay’s Borobudur appeared in English in 1978 and Jean Boisselier’s The Wisdom of the Buddha appeared in English in 1994.

George Coedès may be said to be the doyen of the many contributors to the work of the EFEO. With more than fifty years of active intellectual work within or in association with the EFEO, from his appointment as a pensionnaire in 1912 to his death in 1968, he worked and published on his primary field of research, that of deciphering and translating inscriptions, as well as in other related areas. His major contributions to the field of the decipherment of inscriptions, epigraphy, has been his publication of whole catalogues of ancient inscriptions from Thailand and Cambodia, his use of the inscriptions of the Malay Peninsula to establish the existence of the kingdom of Srivijaya and his several books, the most famous being The Indianised States of Southeast Asia, which is still influential, although no

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longer regarded as the last word on many issues. Ian Mabbett (1997) and Michael Vickery (1999) have commented at varying length on its value in the light of more recent discoveries.

Coedès position first as Director of the École from 1930 to 1945 and later as grand old man of Southeast Asian studies led to the procedure whereby a great many workers sent copies of their published papers to Coedès as a form of homage to his position. The Coedès collection in the National Library of Australia includes a large number of such reprints, more than one thousand, featuring as authors many of the leaders in their field, both inside and outside the EFEO. The oldest papers are those collected by Coedès himself, dating from the second half of the nineteenth century, while the latest are dated to 1968, the year of his death. While much of the material is becoming outdated, being at least more than thirty years old, the material may yet represent a great resource for researchers. The collection has been indexed and the index is available at the Asian Collections Reading Room at the Library. It may be put online through the National Library Web site at some time in the future.

**Earlier Records of the Work of the EFEO**

The very regular publication of the Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient provided immediate details of the work undertaken by the EFEO and its members. However, while up until recently a complete outline history of the EFEO has been lacking, nevertheless earlier documentation was produced as the work of the École progressed. Some such material is still available. In 1942, at the height of the Pacific War, the Vichy administration in Indochina decided to set up a Foire-Exposition in Saigon to publicise the achievements of France in Indochina. From the guide to the event, preserved among the Coedès papers complete with a youthful photograph of Marshal Pétain titled “Le Chef”, (French Indochina Administration 1942). From the many parts in the guide there appeared to be a great many pavilions on the many aspects of French activities in Indochina. These included a pavilion for the EFEO, and the guide included a brief history of the EFEO, both administratively and scientifically. It may be assumed to have been written by George Coedès, the director at the time, and outlines the EFEO’s collections, museums, monuments and its achievements over the previous 44 years.

In the discussion on monuments Coedès notes that “Earlier [to 1931] following a slightly too literal interpretation of the directives of the Institut, the École Française forbade itself all attempts at reconstruction” (French Indochina Administration 1942: 79). However, in 1930 Henri Marchal visited Java and Borobudur and took back the Dutch Indies Archaeological Service technique of “anastylosis” to use in the progressive restoration of the Angkor monuments, and presumably was able to reinterpret the instructions of the Institut to allow this to be achieved.

Sadly for M. Barth’s influence, but probably to the benefit of archaeologists, art historians, ordinary people and tourists, a great deal of the EFEO’s energies and finances have since been invested in the restoration of Khmer and other monuments within Cambodia and Champa, particularly at Angkor and its neighbouring areas. The first Cambodian monument restoration was at Banteay Srei (the so-called Temple of Women) in the mid 1930s, followed by many others. In later years this restoration activity reached to Thailand and finally back to Java, its Asian source.

It is probable that the clearing, conservation and restoration of the temples of the Angkor complex, and of other areas, was and is probably the only way in which the rich contribution of the officers of the EFEO may be generally remembered, even though most visitors will be unaware of the association.

Coedès claims towards the end of his outline that “In pursing the learned and disinterested study of the Indochina Peninsula, of its past, of its races and civilizations, the École Française puts at the disposal of the administrators an increasing amount of precise knowledge of the countries and their populations to assist in their guidance along the road of progress” (French Indochina Administration 1942: 82). This may be interpreted in meaning that the EFEO had a task of identifying backward elements of the indigenous population who needed to be shown the benefits of European civilization.

At the end of the War, George Coedès again wrote a very brief history of the EFEO for the WWII period of his stewardship between 1940 and 1945. This in part was an attempt to account for the activities of the EFEO in a period when the Bulletin could not always be published and distributed, and there were many impediments to scientific work in the area. It will be remembered that Indochina was occupied by Japan between late 1941 and August 1945. In the early period, the French administration was allowed to continue its operations in Indochina due to the Vichy government in France collaborating with the Germans, European allies of the Japanese. After June 1945, the Japanese took over direct control of Indochina.

In the twenty-six pages of his report (EFEO, 1946), Coedès notes that immediate postwar difficulties led to the transfer of the seat of the École from Hanoi to Saigon. He provides a list of the staff over the period which is revealing. In 1940, the total staff was eleven officers including Coedès. He also notes staff changes over the period of the War, including deaths, especially that of Victor Goloubew, at 67, and of Madeleine Colani at 77. He particularly notes the death of George Groslier “Director of Cambodian Arts and Conservator of the Museum at Phnom-Penh, died at Phnom-Pen on 17 June 1945 following an interrogation by the Japanese police” (EFEO 1946: 3). The Japanese takeover of the administration had its brutal side, but the nature of Groslier’s transgression is unknown. (In France, slightly earlier, Henri Maspero, an EFEO expert on Ancient Chinese “on 26 July 1944 was arrested with Mme Maspero on the pretext that their son was taking part in the Resistance. Deported to Buchenwald he died there on 15 March 1945. No death was more useless to the German war, no death so dishonoured its perpetrators.” (Durand

**continued on page 9**

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*Thai-Yunnan Project Bulletin* 8
1948). Scientific standing was no protection against the stupidity of war.)

Coedès then outlined the activities of the École under the headings of Libraries, Museums, Historic Monuments, and Missions, Research and Publications, including sections on Geography, Prehistory, Archaeology, Epigraphy, History, Ethnology and religion, and Linguistics. It concludes with a list of EFEEO publications of the period 1940-1945. While the period may have been very disrupted, an example of the achievements of the war years is the discovery by Malleret of the site of Oe-Eo, ancient city of Fu-nan, as part of the finding of 45 new sites in southern Cambodia and Vietnam. Coedès pays particular attention to the work of Pierre Dupont in excavating the Dvaravati site at Nakhon Pathom in Thailand, under a contract between the EFEEO and the then Thai government.

After the war, and fifty years after the first appearance of the Bulletin, Louis Malleret, then Director of the EFEEO wrote a further two papers on the activities of the EFEEO. The first dealt with the situation of the École after the establishment of the “Associated States of Indochina” as a French response to the post-War agitation on all sides for an end to French colonialism in the region (Malleret, 1952). It will be remembered that the École was financed by the Indochina administration, and the dismemberment of then French Indochina into the separate countries of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam meant that the financial basis of the École was demolished. A solution was found by extreme economies and the subsidy of much of the École’s activities at the time by France. Further, each country set up its own centre to provide an organizational home for the elements of the EFEEO within its borders. Problems of structure, personnel and legal issues had to be tackled but Malleret concludes “The new organization is viable. The institution has set up its relations with the States on links of careful cooperation” (Malleret, 1952:336).

The second Malleret paper is a long article in the journal France-Asie published in 1956 (Malleret 1956) under the title of Aperçu d’un demi-siècle de travaux scientifiques à l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient (A general view of a half century of scientific work at the École Française d’Extrême-Orient). This was written in his then role as Inspector-General of the École.

This article of some 40 pages provides a very good if condensed outline of the start and growth of the EFEEO in its first fifty years. The account is divided into a record of the administrative history of the École, followed by a summary of the École’s activities in each country, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, the Higher Regions of Vietnam, Japan, China, Tibet, India, Siam, Burma and Indonesia. For each country a complete outline of the work of the École since 1901 is provided, together with the names of the members of the EFEEO involved.

The section on Cambodia concentrates on the survey, clearing and restoration of the Angkor and other monuments and in doing so provides a reason for the Barth ban on monument restoration mentioned above. Malleret says “As a reaction to the innovations of Viollet-le-Duc in Europe, the doctrine imposed from the start was one of complete respect for the ruins, which limited the role of the archaeologist to one of supporting the shaky stones with poles, candles, stays and crutches” (1956:277). Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) had restored Notre Dame and also Sainte Chapelle in Paris and, while seen as a leader in the movement which gave rise to “modern” architecture, had some startling ideas on the restoration of old buildings.

Viollet-le-Duc is famously quoted as writing “To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness that could never have existed at any give time” (Hearn 1992: 269, my emphasis). It is hard to reconcile this attitude to the stern requirements of a scientifically based reconstruction.

It clearly took some fifty years after the death of Viollet-le-Duc before the EFEEO felt safe enough to follow the lead established at the turn of the twentieth century in Java by the Dutch East Indies Archaeological Service. Malleret has Marchal going to Java in 1928 to study the technique of anastylosis. In the 1930s in Cambodia the EFEEO also pioneered the use of aerial surveys for archaeological purposes. In Laos the EFEEO primarily carried out research into the Khmer monuments, inscriptions and Buddhist temples of the country, although later its efforts turned to ethnographic and early texts.

In Vietnam, seat of operations of the EFEEO, there was a huge field of endeavour of all sorts available to the École, from ethnography and linguistics to prehistory, anthropology and archaeology and all points in between. Particularly interesting were the researches into the lost ancient state of Champa, an outpost of Indianised culture, which research “incontestably constituted one of the major results of French scientific research in Indochina” (Malleret 1956:284).

It is probable that the EFEEO did its major work in Vietnam and had the greatest range of discoveries, not the least of which was the study of prehistoric communities and the finding and identification of the Dông-son bronze drums, later spread over Southeast Asia. Another major EFEEO contribution in Vietnam was the work, mentioned above, in the identification of the putative site of Fu-nan and its city Oe-Eo.

In addition, Malleret provides a catalogue of the work done in the Haute-Région (junction of China and Tonkin) starting in 1899 with de Lajonquière, the Montagnard Plateau of Vietnam and Laos starting in 1899 with Alfred Lavallée, Japan starting in 1902 with Claude-Eugène Maître, China starting in 1902 with Paul Pelliot, Tibet starting in 1903 with Palmyr Cordier, India starting in 1901 with Alfred Fourcher, Siam starting in 1904-1908 with the de Lajonquière study of Khmer monuments in the kingdom, Burma starting in 1904 with Charles Duroiselle, and Indonesia starting in 1899 with Louis Finot and de Lajonquière. It is clear from the above that the contribution of de Lajonquière to the study of Southeast Asian artifacts is considerable.

continued on page 10
A Recent Centenary History of the EFEO

Now, some fifty years after the Malleret article in France-Asie, the EFEO has produced a centenary volume, Un Siècle Pour l’Asie, tracing the history of the EFEO in its various aspects, from its founding in 1901, through its early endeavours, though the vicissitudes of the two Indochina wars, and into a more settled if more remote association in its traditional fields of endeavour in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand at least in the present. The text by Catherine Clémentin-Ojha and Pierre-Yves Manguin is a model of clarity, and readily comprehensible with perhaps a little effort by the English-speaking reader with a little French.

The volume itself is a very handsome production, with a great many historical pictures and illustrations and a most detailed recounting of the various major threads of the history and work of the EFEO over the century of its existence. The text is a little broken with sometimes distracting cuts inserted in the page to give a brief biography of one of the savants, or to give some incidental detail. Nevertheless it is a very pleasing production along the glossy lines of the French Gallimard editions on Asia, often published in English by New Horizons/Thames and Hudson. As would be expected with the history of such an august institution, its value is in the detail and in the chronology which it provides. Because of the possibly populist nature of the production, it lacks the scholarly sine qua non of an index; this is a significant weakness and reduces its usefulness as a reference.

To locate references to, for example, George Coedès, one of the major contributors to the work and the reputation of the EFEO, it is necessary to go through the entire work, because information on aspects of his studies are scattered right through the volume. This oversight mars an otherwise excellent effort.

The story of the EFEO over a hundred years is squeezed into a little over two hundred pages plus another thirty pages of appendices. Of necessity the level of detail is limited, however the main elements of the story are clear enough.

In place of the area-based report of the Malleret article of 1956, Un Siècle Pour l’Asie provides a summary of its major activities by type of administrative or scientific enterprise. Therefore the book is divided into the following sections: The Indochinese Years, detailing its operations in the colonial period, The Redeployment, outlining the change in administrative arrangements imposed by the breakup of the former French colonies, Archaeology at the EFEO, providing a summary of archaeological activities with particular reference to the Angkor complex, Philology and History of Southeast Asia, dealing with the study of language and history in the area, and Religions and Societies of Asia, dealing with Buddhist studies, Indochinese ethnology and linguistics, Indian languages, literature and religions and Chinese civilization. In addition a series of appendices provides details of EFEO publications and the current EFEO museums and libraries in Asia.

In addition, potted biographies of many EFEO luminaries are provided including Auguste Barth, Sylvain Lévi, Louis Bezacier, Henri Marchal, Bernard Philippe Groslier, Henri Parmentier, Jean Boisselier, Madeleine Colani, George Coedès, Maurice Durand and Paul Mus.

Of particular interest to students of scientific investigation in Thailand, it gives a great deal of prominence to the special relationship between the EFEO and the Kingdom of Siam/Thailand from the inception of the EFEO, and despite the early tensions concerning sovereignty over the western provinces of Cambodia, including Siem Reap containing the Angkor complex. Particular prominence is given to the contribution of Prince Damrong Rachauphap and his invitation to the EFEO which resulted in the Lunet de la Jonquière mission to study and record the Khmer remains in Siam. There is a handsome full page portrait photograph of Prince Damrong at page 57 of the book. The association continued with the Damrong-instigated appointment of George Coedès to the Vajiranana National Library in 1918 and Coedès’s contribution to Siamese epigraphy and history until his return to the EFEO in 1930 as director. Possibly due to the Coedès connection, work of a high level continued in Siam after his departure with the arrangement of a Franco-Siamese convention which gave the EFEO exclusive access to archaeological investigations in Siam, resulting in the Dupont excavations at Nakhon Pathom. The EFEO continues to maintain a presence in Thailand and currently has an office in Chiang Mai.

The final word may be that of the Indian historian and diplomat K M Pannikar who, while an anticolonialist, nevertheless said of the EFEO “Whatever may have been its failures in other areas, the work of France in the East will have been marked by its sympathetic understanding of cultures. Few institutions can show so many disinterested results as the École française d’Extrême-Orient. Its magnificent work in the restoration and conservation of monuments, its collection, publication and interpretation of inscriptions and other related activities which have been pursued by its scholars are so many claims, for it, to the gratitude of the peoples of Asia” (p. 64).


John Crocker is a retired Public Servant with an interest in Thai history and Khmer monuments in Thailand. He graduated with a Bachelor of Asian Studies degree from ANU in 2001 and is currently carrying out research for his M Phil thesis of the application of anastylosis techniques to the restoration of Khmer monuments in SE Asia.

Bibliography

Architectural Design Profile
Calling the Khon in Northeast India.

Stephen Morey
Department of Linguistics, Monash University

Over the past 6 years I have been researching the language of the Tai peoples of India for a PhD thesis. In the course of this work I have observed and recorded some of the ceremonies of the Tai, and translated some important traditional texts.

The Tai of Assam

In the Linguistic Survey of India (1904), George Grierson identified and named six Tai groups, Ahom, Aiton, Khamti, Nora, Phake and Turung. Each of these communities is still present in contemporary Assam, and all regard themselves as being ethnically Tai and often prefix the name Tai to the group name as in Tai-Ahom, Tai-Aiton and so on. In addition there is a seventh group, Tai-Khamyang, who may be the same as the Nora referred to by Grierson.

These days, Tai language is only spoken in Aiton, Khamti and Phake villages, with a small number of Khamyang speakers remaining in a single village. The traditional Tai script, as used in the large number of manuscripts found in Tai villages, is only understood by a small number of people, usually elderly men.

These days, the Ahoms speak Assamese, although the Ahom priests perform Tai chants that are apparently based on ancient...
Ahom manuscripts. No Ahoms speak Tai as a mother tongue. The Nora also speak only Assamese and the Turung speak a Tibeto-Burman language related to Singpho.

Most Ahoms are Hindus, although they are maintaining or reviving traditional Ahom rituals, particularly the Chaklong Wedding ceremony. The Ahom rituals are discussed at length by Terwiel (1996). The other Tai groups are all Theravada Buddhists, but they do maintain some traditional, non-Buddhist, rituals.

**Book of Calling the Khon**

In 1999, I asked the senior Khamyang elder, Sa Myat Chowlik, if there was an important book that he would like to see published and translated into English. He unhesitatingly identified the Book of Calling the Khon (lik4 hqN4 khqn6).

During the early part of 2000 and again in early 2001, I worked with Sa Myat and also with some elders of the Aiton and Phake community to produce the Book of Calling the Khon, an edition and translation of the text, which was then published in India (Morey 2001).

The Book of Calling the Khon is read when a member of the community, usually a child, is ill. After some preamble, calling on the ancestors of the Tai race, named as Grandfather Singpha and Grandmother Hola, the book specifies the ceremony that needs to be held to help the child recover.

A elder of the village, a person who can read and interpret the Tai script, will come to the house of the sick child and sit near the hearth. A fire will be lit and the implements of cooking will be present. In particular the text names the metal tripod on which the cooking pot sits, for which the very archaic word kqn3 sau3 is used in the text, it being called keN2 in everyday speech. Other requisites for the ceremony include a saucepan and a water dipper.

To attract the khon of the sick child, firstly the finest sweet foods are offered. In particular bananas and jaggery (sugar) are favourites with the khon.

According to the text, if these sweet foods fail to attract the khon, then it will necessary to get it by other means. A series of implements are required: an axe, a hoe, a sickle, a lance and a fish trap. If, for example, the khon has escaped to a river, then, according to the text, it will be necessary to take the fish trap and catch it. The text enumerates a series of actions that might be necessary if the khon is in a tree, in the ground or in a cemetery.

At the end of the Book of Calling the Khon there is a welcome to the returning khon, expressed as such:

> “Welcome, do come, oh khon! Come and eat fish and rice! Come and drink the clear water which we have put into the pot. Come and eat banana, sugar cane and all sweet things! Come and eat the fragrant food which over a long time grandmother and grandfather have given you.”

The book states that there are 120 khons living in the body of a human. It concludes with the words Chi Chuk Chi Chuk Chi Chuk, which is the special language of the khon.

**The Ceremony of calling the Khon**

I have never witnessed the ceremony of calling the khon for a sick child. According to Nabin Shyam, an Aiton elder, the Book of Calling the Khon would be read by an elder three times. He would not actually go outside and search for the khon in a river or other place as indicated in the book, but the implements would be present.

Nabin Shyam stated that at the conclusion of the ceremony, the elder performing it would take some rice and grind it into flour, using a mortar and pestle. If part of the rice was stuck to the pestle, this would indicate that the khon had returned and the child would recover. The process would be repeated seven times, but if the rice did not stick the pestle, the child would not recover.

**Calling the Khon of rice**

A similar ceremony is held if one of the villagers has a shortage of rice or a poor crop. In March 2002, I was very fortunate to be able to witness the ceremony of calling the khon of rice.

The ceremony was performed by the Khamyang elder, Chaw Sa Myat Chowlik, of Pawaimukh village, Margherita, Assam. At the appointed hour, about dusk (around 5 in the afternoon), Chaw Sa Myat, together with the owner of the house, and one other elder, climbed up the steep ladder to the rice granary and sat on the small landing in front of the open door to the granary.

A large platter of delicious foods had been placed on a large tray, including the finest rice, bananas and jaggery that are mentioned in the Book of calling the Khon. These were handed up to Chaw Sa Myat who sat facing the open door to the granary with the plate of food between himself and the granary. Candles were placed on the threshold of the door.

He then proceeded to recite the Book of calling the Khon of rice three times. This book is similar to the Book of calling the Khon discussed above. During the reading, whenever the words “Welcome, do come, oh khon!” were uttered, the others present joined in.

At the conclusion of the reading, a large bucket of rice was poured into a rice basket and flattened out at the top. It was explained to me that if there were excess rice in the basket, this would show that the next crop would be bountiful, but that if the rice in the bucket was not enough to fill the basket to the top, it would not be.

The ceremony was followed by a meal, in which the finest foods were served, and thanks and a small payment was given to Chaw Sa Myat for performing the ceremony.

Stephen Morey completed a PhD in Linguistics at Monash University in 2002. His thesis is entitled The Tai Languages continued on page 13
of Assam - a grammar and texts. The thesis was presented in two media - a printed book and CD. In the CD version, all the language examples referred to in the thesis are linked to sound files. The CD also contains around 8 hours of text, including sound, full transcription, linguistic analysis and translation.

Dr. Morey will be taking up a two year fellowship at the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, Latrobe University, in June 2003. His email is moreystephen@hotmail.com.

Bibliography:


Report on the Fourth Hani/Akha Conference

Colin Mackerras

The Fourth Hani/Akha Conference was held in Honghe Yi Hani Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China, in the first week of December 2002. The first one was in 1993 and they have been at three-year intervals since then. The Fifth is planned for the period from 27 December 2005 to 3 December 2006 in Se-Monglar, Burma, where there are claimed to be comfortable facilities for an international conference.

The Hani/Akha people live in five countries. There are 1,439,673 in China according to the 2000 census, about 200,000 in Burma, about 100,000 in Laos, about 70,000 in Thailand and about 17,535 in Vietnam (1999 census).

The conference was very well organized and proceeded very smoothly. The facilities were good and, though one of the hotels we stayed in was not wonderful, the accommodation was generally surprisingly comfortable.

The papers were mostly given in Chinese or English. A few were in Hani, and efforts were made to include the Hani-language speakers. There was one serious problem here. Although the Hani and Akha claim the same ancestor and to be a single ethnic group, there are in fact many differences between the Hani in China and the Akha in Thailand and elsewhere. The dialects of Hani they speak are not necessarily mutually comprehensible. Some of the Thai Akha participants who knew no English or Chinese complained that they could not understand the papers.

One of the very good features of this conference was that it included not only academic papers, but also visits to Hani villages and to sites of terraced fields. These latter were among the features the Chinese organizers of the conference were pushing. The Hani people have persuaded the Chinese government to put these terraced fields forward for World Heritage listing. The Hani claim to have been the first in the world to develop these terraced fields, though they have become common nowadays. I must say that the terraced fields we visited were spectacular, and they make magnificent scenery. They are said to be very productive in terms of the cultivation of rice. On the other hand, I would not like to work in these conditions. It must be hell to go up the steep hills every day along the narrow pathways that separate the watered fields.

One of the highlights of the conference was a visit to a Hani township where a tradition known as the “long-street banquet” was held. For well over a kilometre, the people put low, square tables along the street, one after the other, packed with food, and eat and drink merrily. For us to go to the mountain community and take part in this banquet was a truly wonderful experience. However, specialists on the Thai Akha claimed that no such custom is found in Thailand. Indeed there are many different customs among the Hani/Akha of the various countries where they live and one often wonders if they are the same ethnic group at all. The issue of identity is a complex one, and this is but one more example to illustrate the point.

This was a generally successful conference. Certainly I learned a great deal from it and enjoyed it greatly. The academic proceedings needed more discussion, especially those held in plenum, but this is a common failing of Chinese conferences and in my opinion a real attempt was made to give alternative points of view some airing.

One major blight was cast over the Conference shortly after it ended. One of the main organizers died of a heart attack at the age of seventy soon after returning to Thailand following the conference. This was Leo Alting, a most remarkable man. Originally Dutch, he settled in Thailand, married an Akha woman and became one of the leaders of Hani/Akha studies throughout the world. Certainly, he played a major part in organizing this and the previous three Hani/Akha conferences. He will be very sorely missed for his humane approach to scholarship, his productivity and his organizing abilities.

Colin Mackerras, Foundation Professor, School of International Business & Asian Studies, Griffith University.
CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Second Announcement
Politics of the Commons:
Articulating Development and Strengthening Local Practices
Chiang Mai, Thailand
July 11-14, 2003

The RCSD Politics of the Commons: Articulating Development and Strengthening Local Practices international conference aims to encourage discussion, debate and exchange about political change and critical processes affecting the commons in South and Southeast Asia. Academics and social activists will engage in a critical dialogue focusing on the current situation of resource politics in the region. Participants are expected to present papers and actively participate in discussion forums that adequately address the ‘Politics of the Commons’. Panel discussions and roundtable sessions will draw the panel issues together articulating the impact of development on the commons while identifying means to strengthen local practices.

The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, is the local host of the conference with organizational support from the Australian Mekong Resource Center (AMRC) and the York Center for Asian Research (YCAR).

Funding Organizations
- Rockefeller Foundation
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- Heinrich Boell Foundation
- Interchurch Organisation for Cooperation and Development

Conference Structure
The conference is structured to elicit debate and discussion. In order to achieve optimal time use integrating paper presentations and discussion there are six formats during the three-day conference.

1. Keynote Address
   Nancy Lee Peluso
   Director, Berkeley Workshop on Environmental Politics
   University of California, Berkeley

2. Plenary Sessions
   Three plenary sessions are designed to bridge the thematic panel sessions and provide a local, regional and international perspective on a particular issue.

   Session One: Politics of the Commons
   Bhichet Maolanondh, Kobe University
   Peter Riggs, Rockefeller Brothers Fund
   K. Sivaramakrisnan, University of Washington (to be confirmed)

   Session Two: Ethnicity, Identity and Right to Development
   Zawawi Ibrahim, University of Malaya Sarawak
   Oscar Salemink, Vrije Univesiteit
   Pamela McElwee, Yale University
Session Three: Commons Thinking for Policy: Good Governance and Devolution
Antonio Conteras, De La Salle University
Jesse C. Ribot, World Resource Institute
Bob Fisher, University of Sydney
Srisuwan Kuankachorn, SPACE

3. Panel Presentations
Five themes are presented to shape the direction of the conference. Panels will be coordinated within each theme according to accepted papers. Participants are encouraged to submit individual papers that either fit into the stated themes and/or cut across the general conference theme.

Participants will be encouraged to participate in several panels throughout the 3-day conference in order to create an in-depth and comprehensive discussion of the issues. Each panel will be limited to 3-4 paper presentations leaving time for discussion and debate. Please email directly to theme coordinators with specific inquiry about the panel themes and paper topics (coordinator emails are listed with correspondence information).

Theme One: Situating the commons in post-colonial and (post)-socialist thinking/ articulation

Coordinators:
Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, Chiang Mai University
Pinkaew Laungaramsri, Chiang Mai University
Janet Sturgeon, Brown University

Objective: Scholars of post-socialist regimes in Europe have suggested that property under socialism, was more determining of identity than is true under capitalism. The conflation of property and identity has had identifiable effects on how both property relations and development prospects have played out in post-socialist states in Europe. This panel will focus on common property regimes in East and Southeast Asia, examining the relationship between development trends and the commons in both post-colonial and post-socialist contexts. In some cases (Thailand and China), these contest are largely separate, while in others (Vietnam), current development activities play out in an arena that is both post-colonial and post-socialist. The panel aims to situate the common in the context of political, economic, and cultural transformation of the post-colonial and (post)-socialist regimes have implemented development that both draws on and erases legacies of a colonial and socialist past.

Key questions:
· How have common property regime and development trends changed in the era of post-colonialism and (post)-socialism in Asia?
· How have the history and political economy of resource and livelihood in this region been deployed within the influx liberal and neo-liberal economy?
· What are the articulating grounds, connection and disjunction, tension and ambivalence within the changing socialist nations and postcolonial settings of Asia?
· In countries with differing political economic histories, how have local people manipulated, adapted to, resisted, or remade development options through their own practices of commonly-held property?

Theme Two: Trans-nationalizing the commons and the politics of civil society

Coordinators:
Santita Ganjanapan, Chiang Mai University
Philip Hirsch, University of Sydney
**Objective:** Globalisation and regionalization have helped to bring into focus, and in some cases to create, trans-national commons. There are three main aspects to trans-nationalization of the commons. First, there are the trans-national common properties such as shared river basins, or globalized industries, such as shrimp farming that depend on appropriation of local commons, or intellectual property rights in bio-materials, whose management regimes and implications transcend national boundaries. Second, there are trans-national discourses of the local as well as global commons, such as those coming under the increasingly mainstreamed rubric of community-based natural resource management, for example IASCP agendas. Third, trans-nationalization of civil society, in part in response to trans-nationalized resource development, competition and conflict, and in part in response to wider globalisation agendas and opportunities, presents new challenges.

**Key questions:**
- What are the issues of grassroots participation in response to trans-national impacts?
- What are these trans-national discourses and associated practices, and what quandaries do they present in relation to tensions between local context or specificity, on the one hand, and general principles or universality, on the other?
- What scale issues are associated with the politics of civil society’s engagement with the material and discursive dimensions of the trans-nationalized commons?

**Theme Three: Local voices in the globalizing market: cultural diversity and pluralism**

**Coordinators:**
- Anan Ganajanapan, Chiang Mai University
- Yos Santasombat, Chiang Mai University
- Somchai Preechasilapakul, Chiang Mai University

**Objective:** In the globalizing market, state policies increasingly manage natural resources, particularly the common as commodities while ignoring local rights and the negative consequences in the lives of local people. On the other hand, the global market also encourages more population movement, which reinforces the trans-border problems of people’s health as well as local rights. Local rights are tied to local identity, ethnicity, gender and social movements.

**Key questions:**
- Will local rights be lost in the global market, is there such thing as the global market and how do local voices react to such encroachment on their lives?
- What complexities are found in relation to such interactions?
- In what ways do cultural diversity and legal pluralism play a role in problem areas in Southeast, South and East Asia?

**Theme Four: Politics of Tenure Reform**

**Coordinators:**
- Jamaree Chiengthong, Chiang Mai University
- Peter Vandergeest, York University

**Objective:** Over the last decade international development agencies have supported or pushed institutional reforms in many developing countries, such as decentralization and accountability of governing institutions, participation of civil society, and the clarification of property rights, under an umbrella of ‘good governance’. Many NGOs have also been convinced that these kinds of institutional reforms are fundamental to achieving sustainable and democratic development. At the same time, many questions
have been raised about these reforms, for example, the way that they are often linked to loan conditionality, the top-down implementation, and their appropriateness in Asian political contexts.

**Key questions:**
- Identify examples of institutional reforms based on good governance package, how are they working, and what effects do they have on people’s access and management of forests, land, water, and other natural resources?
- Do these reforms address the more important causes of unsustainable development, resource degradation, and conflicts over resource rights? Do they challenge existing resource rights, for example, unequal land distribution?
- Particularly in tenure reform, what are the impacts of these reforms? Under what conditions might they have a positive impact and under what conditions might they produce impoverishment or displacement?
- Do property right reforms contradict other elements of the institutional reform package—i.e., are they centralizing or decentralizing? Participatory? Do they address the fundamental problems underlying resource degradation and marginalization?

**Theme Five: Crisis and access: critical times for the commons**

**Coordinators:**
- Chusak Wittayapak, Chiang Mai University
- Louis Lebel, Chiang Mai University

**Objective:** The importance of access to commons (upland and coastal forests, waterways, coastal fisheries) for the wellbeing of poor and marginalized people is often greatest at times of ecological, social or economic crisis. Opportunities to re-design or introduce novel institutional arrangements affecting access, rule making and decisions about the commons are infrequent, and often coincide with political crisis. Our understanding of social and ecological processes during periods of crises and re-organization is not well integrated, and the consequences for commons is not well understood.

**Key questions:**
- How do different kinds of crises, and the way they are socially constructed and defined, affect and constitute dependencies on commons, and consequently the sustainability of livelihoods?
- What are the political determinants of access?
- How have citizenship, land tenure, and stewardship rights and responsibilities been bundled and unbundled over-time, and what have been the consequences of this for the poor responding to crisis?
- How have power relation been played out and renegotiated in the axes of gender, ethnicity, caste, and class?

4. **Roundtable and Open Forum**
The second afternoon is dedicated to round table sessions and an open forum.

4.1 **Roundtable Sessions**

4.1.1 **The Mekong Commons: past, present and future**
Chair: Phillip Hirsch, Australian Mekong Resource Centre, University of Sydney

4.1.2 **The Social Making of Space and Territory through Processes of State Formation and Social Struggle**
Chair: Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, Chiang Mai University
Thomas Sikor, Humbolt University, Berlin
Nancy Lee Peluso, University of California, Berkeley
Janet Sturane, Brown University
Peter Vendergeest, York University
4.2 Open Forum
After the roundtable sessions an open forum lecture on a key policy initiative will be held. This session is open to the public, local media and NGOs will be invited. This session will inform the public about the conference, as well as provide an opportunity for non-academic interests to participate.

5. Synthesis
Theme coordinators will hold a final synthesis session moderated by Louis Lebel, Chiang Mai University.

6. Concluding Remarks
The conference will conclude with closing remarks by senior scholars:
   Rosalia Scornio, Rockefeller Foundation
   Charles F. Keyes, University of Washington, Seattle
   Yos Santasombat, Chiang Mai University

Paper and Panel Proposals
Committee members and panel coordinators will select papers in a competitive review of abstracts. Abstracts are accepted based on quality and appropriateness to the conference. Interested participants are encouraged to submit an abstract on their topic of expertise that will be suitable for discussion and debate with emphasis on South and Southeast Asia, even if it does not necessarily fit in the stated thematic panel.

Accepted paper presentations from South and Southeast Asia will receive funding for travel, accommodation and conference fees. Field trips and honorariums are not covered. Accepted papers and funding recipients will be announced after March 15, 2003. Abstracts and registration forms must be received by February 15, 2003 to be considered for funding.

Panel proposals will be slotted into one of the 20 panel theme sessions according to appropriate theme. The committee requests that panel proposals are limited to 2-3 papers (maximum 4). Panel proposals should include an abstract for each paper. Please limit the panel topic to conference theme and/or area studies (South and Southeast Asia). Funding for panel proposals will be considered in the same group as paper presentations and considered according to individual abstracts in each panel proposal.

Panel proposals and individual abstracts must be received by January 31, 2003 to be considered for funding.

Optional Field Trip
An optional field trip will be organized for the fourth day (July 14, 2003). Field trips will enable participants to interact with local people and NGOs focusing on land, water or forest issues. Those who want to participate must sign up during registration or by the end of the 2nd conference day. Field trips are not covered by the conference. A nominal fee will be charged for transportation and meals.

Important Dates
January 31, 2003 Deadline for panel proposals
February 15, 2003 Deadline for abstract submission
March 15, 2003 Announce paper selections and funding
April 15, 2003 Third Announcement
May 15, 2003 Deadline for paper submission
June 15, 2003 Distribution of abstracts to participants
July 11-13, 2003 Politics of the Commons conference
July 14, 2003 Optional field trip
Correspondence
RCSD Conference Secretariat
Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD)
Faculty of Social Sciences
Chiang Mai University
Chiang Mai, 50200 THAILAND
Tel: 66-53-943595 / Fax : 66-53-943596
rcsd-con@soc.cmu.ac.th
www.rcsd.soc.cmu.ac.th

Panel Coordinator Emails

Theme One: Situating the commons in post-colonial and (post)-socialist thinking/ articulation
Chayan Vaddhanaphuti ethnet@loxinfo.co.th
Pinkaew Laungaramsri pinkaew@soc.cmu.ac.th
Janet Sturgeon Janet_Sturgeon@brown.edu

Theme Two: Trans-nationalizing the commons and the politics of civil society
Santita Ganjanapan santita@chiangmai.ac.th
Philip Hirsch Hirsch@mail.usyd.edu.au

Theme Three: Local voices in the globalizing market: cultural diversity and pluralism
Anan Ganajanapan anan-g@chiangmai.ac.th
Yos Santasombat santasombat@yahoo.com
Somchai Preechasilapakul psomchai@soc.cmu.ac.th

Theme Four: Politics of Tenure Reform
Jamaree Chiengthong jamaree@soc.cmu.ac.th
Peter Vandergeest pvander@YorkU.ca

Theme Five: Crisis and access: critical times for the commons
Chusak Wittayapak chusak@soc.cmu.ac.th
Louis Lebel llebel@loxinfo.co.th