

## Attention Please!

This July, the INTG meeting is NOT on the second Tuesday  
BUT on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday, i.e. on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July.

There is ALSO a SECOND meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, i.e. on July 24<sup>th</sup>.  
See below.

### Informal Northern Thai Group Bulletin

9 July 2012

**1. MINUTES of the 348<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Tuesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2012: “Creating a Temple Museum”. A Talk by Supachai Sittilert, Curator, Hong Luang Saengkaew Museum, Wat Phra Kaew, Chiang Rai.**

**1.1. PRESENT: A total of 14.**

**1.2. THE 348<sup>th</sup> TALK by Supachai Sittilert (Edited by Rebecca Weldon).**

**2. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**2.1. 349<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Tuesday, July 17<sup>th</sup> 2012, 7:30 pm at the Alliance Française: “Record Production: combining Thai and western instrumentation”. A talk by Michael Zager, Visiting Professor, School of Music, Payap University.**

**2.2. 350<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Tuesday, July 24<sup>th</sup> 2012, 7:30 pm at the Alliance Française: “The Monks and the Hmong: the Case of Tham Krabok”. A talk by Ian Baird, Professor of Geography, University of Wisconsin at Madison.**

**3. MAILING PROBLEMS**

**4. FUTURE MEETINGS: August & October 2012.**

**5. INTG CONTACTS: Convenor & Secretary.**

**1. MINUTES of the 348<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Tuesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2012: “Creating a Temple Museum”. A Talk by Supachai Sittilert**

**1.1. PRESENT:** Hans and Sangdao Banziger, Alex Brodard, John Cadet, Tony Christiaens, Oliver Hargreave, Roongarun Hedegaard, Reinhard Hohler, Anthony Irwin, Rachanok Ketboonruang Luis Marcon, Michael Solomon, David Steane, Colin Stratford, A total of 14.

**1.2. THE 348<sup>th</sup> TALK: “Creating a Temple Museum”. A Talk by Supachai Sittilert, Curator, Hong Luang Saengkaew Museum, Wat Phra Kaew, Chiang Rai. (Courtesy of Supachai Sittilert; Edited by Rebecca Weldon)**

Wat Phra Kaew in Chiang Rai was originally called *Wat Pa Yiah* after a variety of bamboo common to the area: *Cephalostrachyum virgatum* Kurz fam. GRAMINNEAE. After *The Emerald Buddha* was discovered there in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was renamed Wat “Phra Kaew”. The temple was designated as a Royal Temple, 3<sup>rd</sup> class, on May 30, 1978. The present abbot is Phra Thammanuwatr who also serves as the “Chao Kana Pak”. He is responsible for the administration of the 6<sup>th</sup> religious region, which includes 5 provinces: Chiang Rai, Payao, Lampang, Phrae and Nan.

The temple is known for several important structures:

1. **The Phra Chedi** is the location of one of the most significant religious events in the region. In 1434 AD lightning struck the Phra Chedi and a Buddha image was revealed. It was discovered to be The Emerald Buddha which now resides at *Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram* (Wat Phra Kaew) inside the Grand Palace in Bangkok. The Phra Chedi was registered as a national historical landmark in 1935. The last restoration of the Phra Chedi took place under the supervision of the Fine Arts Department in 1995.
2. **The Phra Ubosoth**. This is a small and intimate structure, in the Chiang Saen style, reminding us of a mother chicken sitting on its eggs. The current building was built in 1890 and has been renovated several times. The most recent renovation was in 2007, under the auspices of the Fine Arts department. The presiding Buddha image is *Phrachao Laan Tong*, dating from the second period of Chiang Saen. It was created in the Palawa style and is considered the largest and most beautiful Buddha image of the Chiang Saen period in Thailand.
3. To commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of HRH the Princess Mother, mother to HM The King, the Jade Buddha was commissioned. Approximately the size of the original Emerald Buddha, it was created out of a donation of Canadian jade. The Jade Buddha presides in the **Ho Phra Yoke**, a building designed by Tawan Duchanee, Thai National Artist, a native of Chiang Rai. The murals inside tell the story of the creation of the Jade Buddha as well as the history of the Emerald Buddha. They were also painted by Chiang Rai artists.
4. The **Buddhist School**, is for novices and young monks. Established in 1971, it provides both standard and Buddhist religious education.
5. The Buddhist University occupies the former provincial offices which have been placed under the administration of the temple. It is the Chiang Rai branch of the **Maha Chulalongkornrajavidyalaya University** Payao campus. In celebration of 750 years of the founding of Chiang Rai the University has decided to upgrade it to a separate Chiang Rai campus.
6. The temple museum, **Hong Luang Saengkaew**, a structure of concrete and teak, was donated by Mae Amara Munikanon. Begun in 1995, it was opened by HRH Princess Sirindhorn in 2007.

### **Hong Luang Saengkaew Museum**

The concepts behind the creation of the temple museum were simple: to preserve artifacts already in the temple collection and to create appropriate exhibitions to share with the public. The museum includes antique cabinets, artifacts, Buddha images and media for the dissemination of knowledge. The building itself has a space of 310 m. sq. The presiding image in the building, Phra Buddha Sri Chiang Rai, was created by Acharn Sanoh Niladej. The collection is comprised of Buddha images, ritual and ceremonial artifacts, everyday artifacts used in Lanna culture and archaeological and architectural artifacts as well.

### **The Mandate**

The mandate to create the museum was based in sustainable concepts. The abbot also wished that it be professionally done. There was an agreement to use volunteers because all the functions of the temple are run in that way. Rai Mae Fah Luang museum staff provided museum expertise on an entirely volunteer basis. The budget for the development came out of the funds already existing at Wat Phra Kaew.

### **Planning**

The planning for the museum was based upon the concept of a *Living Museum*. It is where the community can experience Lanna Buddhist culture. The museum mission is informative: to share local knowledge of the religion and of Lanna culture. Because of the nature and importance of the site, target groups include all types of visitors, ages, professions, educational backgrounds and languages.

The environment, both inside the building and on the grounds, was considered to be very important in the planning for the facility. Trees and plants were chosen because of their meaning. This has particular interest for our visitors, many of whom live in urban environments and rarely have a chance to see or experience botanical specimens that are related to traditional belief. Explanatory texts are provided as well in the garden.

### **Implementation**

Implementation of the museum plan was as follows:

The first priority was to document the collection to be preserved in the museum and create the museum catalogue. This included information as designated by the standards of the National Museum including:

1. name in Khammuang, Thai and English
2. maker, use, history
3. measurements
4. period, style, description
5. photograph and black and white drawing
6. condition, conservation

The next step was preservation of the artifacts. Basic cleaning and conservation was done by technical staff at Rai Mae Fah Luang. The staff had been trained in preventive preservation by professionals from the Fine Arts Department and the Royal Palace.

Exhibition design was developed as follows:

1. Artifacts were organized according to subject for exhibition.
2. Appropriate exhibition locations and spaces were created.
3. Fragile objects that should not be handled were separated and placed in glass cabinets.
4. All labels are in Thai, English and Khammuang with brief descriptions. Additional information was developed. Each subject and artifact is backed up by a one page handout that the visitor can take with them.
5. A resource and documentation library area was created, where books, documents, handouts are available.
6. Volunteer opportunities were created for guiding and helping with other tasks at the museum.

### **Management**

A board of directors was established for the museum. The Abbot is the chairman. Both monks and lay people serve as members. The Visitor Service was created to operate the museum. It includes one monk who is a consultant and is available for any religious services that need to be provided. Often visitors wish additional religious instruction and want to make a donation directly to the monk at the museum. A guestbook is maintained and brochures (in both Thai and English) are available to all visitors. Questionnaires are also handed out in order to improve services.

There is always staff present on site during opening hours. In addition staff travels locally as part of outreach activities. Research opportunities are encouraged through the Invited Expertise program. Hong Luang Saengkaew Museum at Wat Phra Kaew has been also been designated as the location of the Chiang Rai Museum Association.

### **Opening**

The museum has been open 9am to 5pm daily since its official opening on February 13, 2007. There is no entrance fee. Currently, it receives approximately 200 visitors per day.

Since opening, the museum has received much support in the following forms:

1. Artifacts from personal collections including the official uniform of the last Chao Muang of Chiang Rai and a large collection of Burmese Buddha images.
2. Equipment in the form of flat-screened TV, DVD, CCTV monitors.
3. Financial contributions

The questionnaire indicates an 80% satisfaction rate.

### **Networking**

The museum is the center for the Chiang Rai Museum Association. There are now over 30 members who get together regularly every month to share experiences and seek solutions to challenges. The exchange has led to the development of basic standards for many museums in Chiang Rai.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Chiang Rai Technical College to develop a training and internship program for museum skills. And a Monk Chat program has been developed in cooperation with the Buddhist University to enhance communication capacity for monks interested in the education aspect of temple museums.

## **Problems**

Responding to the needs of varying types of visitors remains one of the major challenges facing the museum. Differences in age, education and the increasing number of foreign visitors require that the staff increase its capacities in this field. Outreach into the community is one way we are doing this.

Maintenance functions need to be better developed. Housekeeping, due to the large numbers of visitors and daily opening hours, is difficult using volunteer staff. It is currently done by younger monks but there is a regular turnover and so we are always training in this area. In addition, lighting located in very high areas sometimes takes a while to replace when needed. Security is also a concern in the sense that there is no separate security staff and CCTV is only useful after the fact. To date we have had no problems but it is a worry.

## **Creating Temple Museums**

Finally, I would like to say a few words about creating expertise for temple museums in particular. In my view, there are two ways to approach this. The first is through partnerships with other museums in the area. Sharing experience and expertise is a very cost-efficient way of going about this. It is also the way the temples work. They are part of the community and run and maintained by members of the community. The temple museum should be the same way. In particular, our development of completely volunteer staff has been quite successful and is a sustainable model of operation that keeps the community involved.

The second way is to increase capacity on the part of members of the monkhood who have an interest in this field. They may be interested in communication and education, or in the craft of preservation or in administration. Sharing access to all the functions is very important: documentation, research, exhibition design as well as visitor services. This is a course of capacity building that is currently being researched at the Buddhist University. Courses and formations in standard professional techniques for museum and collection management are being offered, not yet as a diploma, but, as a result of our experience at Wat Phra Kaew. Internships are available for those who are interested.

So, please pass the word and we will do our best to help with facilitating the creation and operation of better temple museums in the future.

**2.1. ANNOUNCEMENT: 349<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Tuesday, July 17<sup>th</sup> 2012, 7:30 pm at the Alliance Française: “Record Production: combining Thai and western instrumentation”. A talk by Michael Zager, Visiting Professor, School of Music, Payap University.**

Prof. Zager plans to talk about producing recorded music, with an emphasis on the problems simultaneously recording Thai and Western instruments. Ajarn “Joe” Bringkok Vora-urai of the Payap University School of Music will assist in the presentation, arranging musical demonstrations.

Prof. Zager holds the Dorothy F. Schmidt Eminent Scholar Chair in Performing Arts and is a professor of music at Florida Atlantic University. He is a Fulbright Specialist (awarded 3 grants by the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars) and serves on the Board of Governors of the Florida Chapter of the Recording Academy (creator of the Grammy Awards). He was Visiting Professor at Payap University in 2009 and will be back again this summer.

**2.2. ANNOUNCEMENT: 350<sup>th</sup> Meeting, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012: “The Monks and the Hmong: the Case of Tham Krabok”. A talk by Ian Baird, Professor of Geography, University of Wisconsin at Madison.**

The Tham Krabok temple in Saraburi Province, central Thailand is controlled by an unusual Buddhist order founded by a self-professed bhikkhuni and her nephew, an undercover Thai policeman-turned-monk. Although best known for treating drug addicts, and for supporting large numbers of Hmong people from

Laos in the 1980s and 1990s until the majority were accepted as political refugees in the USA in 2004-2005, most observers have little understanding about the special relationship between the Hmong and Tham Krabok. Here, I explain the history of the temple and how Hmong political refugees from Laos became linked with the temple.

Ian Baird is professor of Geography at University of Wisconsin at Madison. He researches the political ecology of large hydropower dam development in the Mekong River Basin, with a special emphasis on fisheries issues; large-scale economic land concessions/acquisitions, the experiences of ethnic minorities between 1975-1989 in northeastern Cambodia, political conflict related to Laos after 1975, Hmong social networks and small-scale rubber development in Laos, the histories of various peoples, ethnic groups and social and political movements in Laos and northeastern Cambodia (particularly the Brao, Hmong and the Lao Na Champassak family).

### 3. MAILING PROBLEMS

The following addresses do not work and have been phased out of the INTG mailing list. If you know a correct address for these addressees, please send it/them to <gabaudel@yahoo.com>. Thank you.

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### 4. FUTURE MEETINGS

**349th Meeting** – July 17, 2012: “**Record Production: combining Thai and western instrumentation**”. A talk by **Michael Zager**, Visiting Professor, School of Music, Payap University.

**350th Meeting** – July 24, 2012: “**The Monks and the Hmong: the Case of Tham Krabok**”. A talk by Ian Baird, Professor of Geography, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

**351st Meeting** – August 14, 2012: “Balloon Culture in Thailand”. A talk by Yut Wanichanond

[352nd Meeting – September ??, 2012 : To be announced]

**353rd Meeting** – October 9, 2012: “Restitution of Stolen Works of Art”. A talk by Manus Brinkman

**Talks in the oven** (dates and titles to be fixed): From the Temple to the University by Prof. Saeng Chan-ngam ; Chiang Rai Art Scene by Angkrit Ajchariyasophon ; Stories about teaching English in Thailand by Jeremy Walter ; Creating a Museum in Luang Prabang by Tara Gujadhur ; Introduction to the EFEO New Library in Chiang Mai.

### 5. INTG CONTACTS: Convenor & Secretary

**1) Convenor : Rebecca Weldon:** e-mail: <rebecca.weldon@gmail.com>. Mobile: 087 193 67 67; Home:

**053 227272.** Address: Gerard Habitat, Room 204 - 8/2 Soi 3 Nimmanhemin Rd. - T. Suthep - A. Muang CHIANG MAI 50200 - THAILAND.

**2) Secretary: Louis Gabaude:** e-mail: <[gabaudel@yahoo.com](mailto:gabaudel@yahoo.com)>. Mobile: **087 188 50 99**. Address: 28/64 Laguna Home 10 - T. Sansai Noi - Mu 8 - A. SANSAI - CHIANG MAI 50210 [Back in CM on July 24th].

**3) INTG Website:** <http://www.intgcm.thehostserver.com>

*Thank you for printing and posting the following posters in places you think fit for.*

**Informal Northern Thai Group (INTG)**

*27 years of Talks!*

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**Record  
Production:  
combining  
Thai & Western  
Instrumentation**

A Talk by **Michael Zager**

**Tuesday 17 July 2012 : 19:30**

AT THE **ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE – CHIANG MAI**

138, Charoen Prathet Rd, opposite Wat Chaimongkhon & EFEO

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**The Monks  
and the  
Hmong:  
the Case of  
Tham Krabok**

A Talk by **Ian Baird**

**Tuesday 24 July 2012 : 19:30**

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**138, Charoen Prathet Rd, opposite Wat Chaimongkhon & EFEO**

