

Informal Northern Thai Group Bulletin

5 September 2012

1. MINUTES of the 350th Meeting, July 24th, 2012:

1.1. PRESENT: A total of 25.

1.2. THE 350^h TALK SYNOPSIS: “The Monks and the Hmong: the Case of Tham Krabok”. A talk by Ian Baird.

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS: 352nd Meeting: September 11, 2012: “The Peace Corps’ 50th Anniversary in Thailand”. A Talk by Hugh Leong.

3. FUTURE MEETINGS: September 2012.

4. INTG CONTACTS: Convenor & Secretary.

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

1.1. PRESENT: Hans Bänziger, Sangdao Bänziger, Elke Bernhardt, Glenn Black, John Buchanan, David Chambers, Tony Christiaens, Louis Gabaude, Peter Gore-Symes, Oliver Hargeave, Reinhard Hohler, Anthony Irwin, Beryl McKeown, Jonathan McKeown, Juu Moua, Nicolette, Glyn R. Phillips II, Ron Renard, Tani Sebro, David Steane, Peter Vail, Victoria Vorreiter, Rebecca Weldon, Chia Youyee Vang. A total of 25 at least.

1.2. THE 350^h TALK SYNOPSIS: “The Monks and the Hmong: the Case of Tham Krabok”. A talk by Ian Baird. ibaird@wisc.edu

The Tham Krabok temple (Wat Tham Krabok) in Saraburi Province, central Thailand is the home of an unusual Theravada Buddhist order, one that was founded in 1958 by a female, Mian Parnchand, a self-professed bhikkhuni commonly known as ‘Luang Pho Yai’, and was led by her nephew, an undercover Thai policeman-turned-monk, Luang Por Chamroon Parnchand and his younger brother, Charoen Parnchand. The temple is best known for treating over 100,000 drug addicts over more than half a century, and for being the home of large numbers of Hmong people from Laos during the 1980s and 1990s, until over 15,000 were accepted as political refugees in the USA and elsewhere in 2004-2005. Although Wat Tham Krabok is widely remembered for supporting the Hmong, most observers have little understanding about the special relationship between the Hmong—particularly those led by Chao Fa leaders Pa Kao Her and Moua Nhia Long—and Wat Tham Krabok. In this presentation, I have endeavored to explain the development of the relationship between two unorthodox religious movements, including the history of Wat Tham Krabok and how Hmong political refugees from Laos came to become closely linked to the temple through anti-

communist militant resistance and violence while the monks there maintained particular and unique Buddhist practices, including not using any form of transportation other than walking.

For more details regarding this research, please refer to my book chapter, which has just been published in a new book:

Vladimir Tikhonov and Torkel Brekke (eds.) 2012. *Violent Buddhism – Buddhism and Militarism in Asia in the Twentieth Century*. Routledge, London.

Note of the editor: *For reasons of copyright, we cannot reproduce here the complete text of this very interesting and surprising talk/chapter. So, please try to get a copy of the book just referred to.*

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS

352nd Meeting: September 11, 2012: “The Peace Corps’ 50th Anniversary in Thailand”. A Talk by Hugh Leong.

What was Chiang Mai like back in the hippie ages of the 1960s in the eyes of a 22 year old American Peace Corps volunteer? Reminiscence of a golden age.

Short Bio:

Hugh Leong is a retired American, raised in New York City, and now living in Chiang Mai. Hugh first came to Chiang Mai as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1969 and was the first foreigner ever to teach at the Yuparaj Provincial School. He has traveled extensively since then, living and teaching in Iran, Saudi Arabia, back in Thailand, and later settling down to raise his family in Seattle, Washington. Hugh has been married to his Thai wife, Pikun, whom he met while they were both teachers at Yuparaj, for 40 years and has two grown sons.

Hugh has had careers as an English teacher, a psychotherapist, freelance writer, and an independent computer consultant. He taught at Chiang Mai University and was later the director of AUA Language School Chiang Mai. For a number of years Hugh was a contributor to the Bangkok Post features section, writing about Thailand and its culture, and recently retired after 5 years writing the retirement column for Chiang Mai City Life magazine.

The author of the Professional English for Thailand series published by Silkworm Press, a book translated into Thai called ‘Going to America, A Survival Guide for Thais Moving to Live in the United States’, and the eBook ‘Retired Life in Thailand’, he also maintains the website www.Retire2Thailand.com, the blog www.Retire2Thailand.wordpress.com and contributes the blog post ‘Thai Language Thai Culture’ to the popular Thai language blog www.WomenLearnThai.com (and some men too).

In his free time from his so called ‘retirement’ Hugh raises free range rabbits and ducks, and helps Pikun with her conservation project, in cooperation with the Chiang Mai Zoo, to save endangered mountain tortoises (19 babies born this year). He also plays golf, which is more a subject for him and his psychotherapist to discuss.

3. FUTURE MEETINGS

352nd Meeting: Sept. 11, 2012: “The Peace Corps’ 50th Anniversary in Thailand”. A Talk by Hugh Leong

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

35?th Meeting: January 15, 2013: A talk on the Hmong by Dr. Chia Youyee VANG, Dept of History, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Specific topic to be announced.

Talks in the oven (dates and precise titles to be announced): 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 ;

4. 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 Nimmanhemmin Rd. - T. Suthep - A. Muang CHIANG MAI 50200 – THAILAND
- 2) **Secretary: Louis Gabaude:** e-mail: <gabaudel@yahoo.com>. Mobile: **087 188 50 99**. Address: 28/64 Laguna Home 10 - T. Sansai Noi - Mu 8 - A. SANSAI - CHIANG MAI 50210.
- 3) **INTG Website:** <http://www.intgcm.thehostserver.com>

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Informal Northern Thai Group (INTG)

27 years of Talks!

**The
Peace Corps'
50th
Anniversary
in Thailand**

A Talk by Hugh Leong

Tuesday 11 September 2012 : 19:30

AT THE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE – CHIANG MAI

138, Charoen Prathet Rd, opposite Wat Chaimongkhon & EFEO

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**Restitution
of Stolen
Works of
Art**

A Talk by **Manus Brinkman**

Tuesday 9 October 2012 : 19:30

AT THE **ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE – CHIANG MAI**

138, Charoen Prathet Rd, opposite Wat Chaimongkhon & EFEO