



THE WHITE LOTUS NEWSLETTER

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1. THE NEWS

Since our last newsletter, change has been the sole constant in Thailand. With each new constitution drafted in the Kingdom, there is one measure of progress we can be sure of: the rising cost of the paper it is printed on.

In a context defined by economic and political uncertainty, the price of the books on offer has been rising (across the board) at the Bangkok Book Fair. Higher fuel costs are discouraging international shipping, bringing gradual but pervasive changes to publishing in Southeast Asia. The fair will be held twice in 2008; the second event is coming up in October, with a White Lotus stand that will be displaying many of our new books, announced below.

Despite these pressures, there was a jubilant air at the last ICAS. This series of conferences, devised and supported by the IIAS, has been convened every second year for a little more than a decade, and is proving to be a more and more successful venue for the presentation of English-language studies in (and about) Asia. With over 1,000 scholars delivering papers, White Lotus presented its range of publications to an appreciative audience at the August 2007 event in K.L., Malaysia. For those looking to attend the next event in August of 2009, the deadline for papers and panels to be submitted is already creeping up on us, this October 15th, 2008.

Amidst a censorship controversy, the 10th International Conference of Thai Studies was convened in Bangkok, in January, 2008, and a White Lotus stand was there, to represent our authors. A single panel grabbed the headlines by daring to offer a mild critique of the concept of "the sufficiency economy", with everyone cringing as Thai academia tested the limits of freedom of speech. However, after the end of the conference, the real struggle remains: to arrange the publication of the proceedings.

A conference for a very different kind of politics, the ISIS "Asia Pacific Roundtable" (APR) also convened in K.L., in June 2008. White Lotus was proud to be there, presenting several new works on contemporary politics, including the first in our series of "Studies in Insurgency and Terrorism", edited by Thomas A. Marks.

2. CURRENT PROJECTS & PROPOSALS

At White Lotus, we benefit from the initiative and research of scholars from around the world, and we're always pleased to call for more. By serendipity or by design, a number of different scholars are pursuing issues of historical slavery and contemporary human trafficking, producing a number of works on related issues at about the same time, ranging from collections of academic papers to the re-publication of primary source documents.

Anthropologist Pierre Le Roux, a veteran of many years of research in Southeast Asia, and humanitarian engagement with Cambodia in particular, has brought together an amazing array of contributors under the title *The Trade in Human Beings for Sex*. This is to be the first in a proposed series under Le Roux's supervision, bringing scientific inquiry to bear upon areas of social research more often avoided, or simply dismissed with stereotypes, in the history of Southeast Asia.

Perhaps because of our range of ethnological and anthropological studies, White Lotus has attracted several new contributions to debates on the role of "Economic Development" agencies in Asia. This area of social studies has proliferated in the decade following the landmark publication of *Development or Domestication?* (McCaskill & Kampe, eds.). At present, a new collection of critiques is being prepared under the editorship of Frédéric Bourdier, and will be presented with no question-marks in the title: *Development and Dominion: Indigenous Peoples of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos*.

Of course, we always invite a diversity of competing opinions, and the press is equally pleased to support the forthcoming work of Michael A.B. Boddington, offering an insider's view of the intersecting interests of international charities, local Communist officials, health professionals, amateur administrators, and finally, the patients -- as they all struggle to survive in 21st century Laos.

We would encourage all our readers to consider submitting their own focused, nonfiction studies, presenting new research or providing translation of historical materials.

3. NEW IN INK

We're pleased to announce 11 new books, currently going through the presses; all of them will be available within the next three months.

People, Livelihoods and Development in the Xekong River Basin of Laos, draws together the conclusions of over 15 years of research in southern Laos and the adjacent region of northeastern Cambodia. Bruce Shoemaker & Ian G. Baird have produced a compendious study of the ecology and economy of some of the world's least understood cultures, as free-market modernity redefines the landscape around them.

A further contribution to Southeast Asia's "development discourse", David B. Wangsgard (ed.) presents a collection of studies addressed to the transitions and transformations observed in fieldwork among ethnic minorities spanning the continent. In *Culture and Development in Southeast Asia*, common themes of cultural change driven by socio-economic development are traced among the Lahu, Lue, and Black Tai of Thailand; the Toraya of Sulawesi; the Kalinga of Luzon; the Giay, Hmong, Dao and Nung Phan Slinh of Vietnam.

One of the most admired but, admittedly, inaccessible aspects of Chinese culture has been the ritual and habit of drinking tea. Bret Hinsch has written *The Ultimate Guide to Chinese Tea*, to bring the sophisticated vocabulary and refined sensuality of connoisseurship within the grasp of the Western reader.

Challenging western preconceptions of an Asian mythological figure, in *Rangda, Bali's Queen of the Witches*, Art Historian Claire Fossey goes beyond the established iconographic stereotype of a Hindu "villain", to reveal a more complex cultural narrative.

With a detailed study of economic history and its political ramifications, William L. Swan completes the picture of Thailand's (often neglected) role in the development of the Japanese imperial dream. *Japan's Economic Relations with Thailand: The Rise to "Top Trader" 1875-1942*, depicts two nations as they are being drawn into the industrial age; ineluctably, they become unequal partners in the short-lived "sphere" of Japan's Pacific empire.

For a satirical view from within a very different "doomed empire", we now have the collected cartoons of Andre Joyeux, as inspired by the artist's daily life in colonial Saigon. His art and humor serve to deliver an incisive social critique of *The Colonial Good Life*, a world of swaggering plantation owners on a "civilizing mission" that soon proved to be intolerable to the people of Vietnam, perhaps due to some of the same hypocrisies Joyeux pokes fun at.

Not everyone saw French Indochina with such detachment: in *Laos in 1893*, we see the creaking empire from the rollicking, relentlessly polemical perspective of Charles Lemire (1839-1912). While *White Lotus* is offering this reprint primarily for the important historical information contained within, it is also an fascinating glance into the psychology of a "true believer" in the colonial enterprise.

White Lotus is also pleased to re-issue Henri Mouhot's *Travels in Siam, Cambodia, Laos and Annam*, in two volumes comprising both his famous travelogue (1858-60) and previously unavailable scientific observations. While Mouhot's name became known through his popular accounts of the exotic and the ancient, this comprehensive translation shows his dedication to documenting everything he encountered, from zoology to local folktales, a study pursued with passion, and concluding with the author's death in Laos.

Europeans didn't always write from the vantage of conquerors and colonists: *The Black Blocks of China* is a unique historical account provided by a band of British

refugees. The narrative follows a group of English tradesmen fleeing the boxer rebellion in 1900, from Shanghai to the outer limits of Yunnan, reaching the Tibeto-Burmese borderlands on foot. Rich observations, illustrations and maps, this is a glimpse of Yunnan's cultural diversity at the end of an era.

Could there have been another road to Yunnan? *_Mandalay to Momein_* is the account of the British who tried to forge a route from their colonial outposts in Burma and Assam into China. Starting in the 1860s, this is a major chapter in the annals of ill-conceived imperial projects, on a grandiose scale, that failed, repeatedly, until its final abandonment at the end of the second world war.

Now in its 12th printing, *_Working with the Thais_* remains the definitive guide to coping with employers and employees in the Kingdom. It is both an introduction and a reference book business in a sometimes dizzying cultural and legal context.

4. WHAT'S NEXT ?

White Lotus is preparing its next catalog for early 2009, however the 2007 catalogue remains "in print", and the prices stated in Thai Baht are still consistent with the current prices given on the website. Alas, the value of the U.S. dollar is somewhat beyond our control, so the dollar-prices of 2007 must now be regarded as "out of date".

As so many specialists have published with us in the past, we are starting a new initiative to encourage our (past) authors (and contributors) to review new works that White Lotus is putting into print. The Press will be pleased to provide a free copy for authors who will write a substantive critique (of any opinion, preferably well-researched) to be published by any scholarly periodical. If you are interested in receiving a free copy of any of our new or forthcoming books, please write to us, and consult with the journal concerned as to guidelines for submitting book reviews.

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