

Informal Northern Thai Group Bulletin

November 8, 2014

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1. MINUTES OF THE 382ND MEETING: TUESDAY, 21 OCTOBER, 2014: “TRADITIONAL MEDICINAL KNOWLEDGE IN NORTHERN LAOS” A TALK BY JEAN-MARC DUBOST

1.1. PRESENT : Davitt Abraha, Amporn Boontan, Hans Bänziger, Sängdao Bänziger, Alex Brodard, John Cadet, Cory Croymans, Bernard D. Davis, Caroline Ford, Louis Gabaude, Jean Gottlieb, Reinhard Hohler, Brenda Joyce, Otome Klein, Caroline Marsh, Maw Homprang Chaleekanha, Walter Meyer, Mimi Saeju, Patrick Morel, Christine Olivares, Jean-Pierre Pautreau, Roberte Pautreau, Pradit Takernfrangsarit, Colin Stratford, Gary Suwannarat, Suzanne, Edward van Tuyll, Rebecca Weldon, Christopher Woodman, John Ziegler, a total of 31 at least.

1.2. THE TALK

This study is the result of two campaigns of recording traditional medicinal knowledge with healers in two locations, Nam Kan National Park, Bokeo province, Laos, with three ethnic groups—Hmong, Lu and Lamet—and Nong Het district, Xieng Khouang province, with Hmong people. Medicinal plants were collected and their uses recorded.

In this talk I address the questions of traditional medicinal knowledge transfers and transmission, and their dynamic in the two areas. I have focused on the species used by two or more informants to address:

- the question of traditional medicinal knowledge transfers between the three ethnic groups studied in Nam Kan National Park
- through a comparison of medicinal knowledge in Hmong communities, the question of knowledge transmission: within Nam Kan National Park, within Nong Het area and between the two locations.

Results show that in Nam Kan National Park, despite their close vicinity and the numerous relations the three ethnic groups studied maintain, traditional medicinal knowledge transfers are very limited. Reasons can be linked to the different medicinal approach they have and ways of traditional medicinal knowledge transmission (Lue transmission occurring in Lue temples, Hmong through ritual transmission and family lineage transmission), and the absence of common plants vernacular names to communicate about plants, each group using his own names.

Regarding knowledge transmission among Hmong people, for plants species used by two or more informants, names and symptoms these plants are given for differ in a big proportion from one person to another: between the two areas (Nam Kan National Park or Nong Het) but also within the same area. This suggests more a vertical transmission of these knowledge (from ascendant to descendant) than horizontal diffusion or transmission, which is attested by informants reports about their learning time (most of it occurring while foraging in the surrounding forests with their parents or grand-parents) and in accordance with the way Hmong villages are traditionally populated, which doesn't keep groups together over the succession of generations.

However, beyond this multitude of particular knowledge lineages, the description of symptoms and health disorders shows a stronger cohesion. Thus, we can distinguish two levels of knowledge in Hmong traditional medicine:

- the pharmacopeia which appears to be mostly proper to each transmission lineage
- the nosology which reflects common representations shared by all the population.

Regarding the vitality of these knowledge, the situation is completely different in the two areas: in Nam Kan National Park area, following recent access to modern medicine, there is a very quick erosion of traditional medicinal knowledge use and thus depreciation of these knowledges which affect drastically their transmission: as plants are less and less used, they are less and less collected. In the end, transmission opportunities which occur mainly while collecting plants become scarcer and scarcer.

Conversely, on the second location, we witness the emergence of a new medicinal plant market initiated by Hmong people who settled down from Nong Het to Km 52 (Vientiane province). Km 52 has become the hub of a large plant network encouraged also by plant demand by members of the Hmong diaspora in France and the United States. Providing income opportunities, this market has increased plant collecting in Xieng Khouang province, the main supplying area, and has reasserted traditional medicine knowledge. Transmission here has been also broadened with the emergence of horizontal knowledge diffusion due to the necessity of supplying this market (as healers recruit now their relatives and neighbours to collect plants) and the development of networks linking collecting areas, Vientiane markets and Hmong diaspora overseas.

For more details regarding this research, please refer to:

1) Jean-Marc Dubost, *Medicinal plants used in Nam Kan National Park: an ethnobotanic survey in Hmong, Lue and Lamet communities* –Vientiane: Ed. Animo, Sept. 2013, 217 p. In this book, all species collected in Nam Kan National Park are given with their different local vernacular names and uses from each community. [Should be available soon at the EFEO library in Chiang Mai]

2) Dubost Jean-Marc - '*Transmission and vitality of traditional medicinal knowledge among several groups of Northern Laos*' in Evrard, Olivier; Guillaud, Dominique; Chayan Watthanaphuti (eds.). *Mobility and heritage in Northern Thailand and Laos : past and present : Proceedings of the Chiang Mai conference, 1-2 December 2011*. ISBN: 978-974-672-822-5, pp. 273-288. [EFEO Library in Chiang Mai, CALL: ASIE ANTHR. E. E093M. EFEOT]

2. NEXT TALK (383rd) : TUESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER, 2014, 7:30 PM
AT THE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE, CHIANG MAI :
“STUDYING ELEPHANT INTELLIGENCE AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION”
A TALK BY JOSHUA PLOTNIK

The Talk: Dr. Joshua Plotnik will talk about his work on the intelligence of elephants, including his studies on whether or not elephants recognize themselves in a mirror, how and when they cooperate, and how and when they use vision, sound and smell to navigate their environments. He will also discuss his work on conservation education in Thailand and the U.S., and his current interests in applying the study of elephant behavior to conservation practice.

The speaker: Dr. Plotnik is the Founder and CEO of Think Elephants International (USA). A lecturer in conservation biology at Mahidol University, he heads the research at the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation (Thailand), and is also a Researcher in the Comparative Cognition laboratory at the University of Cambridge (UK).

Dr. Plotnik is an evolutionary biologist interested in the evolution of intelligence in animals; he has published his work on elephant intelligence in some of science's top peer-reviewed journals, and has had his work covered by hundreds of media outlets since 2006. His previous studies have focused on mirror self-recognition and cooperation. Currently, he is interested in sensory perception, as he believes a better understanding of how elephants "see, hear and smell" their worlds will help to better inform protocols for their conservation. He has an MA and a PhD from Emory University, a BS from Cornell University, and was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Cambridge. He first began studying elephants in Thailand in 2007.

As CEO of Think Elephants International, Josh has overseen the design and implementation of pilot conservation education programs for eventual use in schools worldwide, and in collaboration with Mahidol University faculty, is currently running a program in several Thai schools that teaches young people about elephants and conservation .

3. NEXT TALK (384th) : TUESDAY, 2 DECEMBER, 2014, 7:30 PM
AT NR 8 SOI 3, NIMMANHEMIN ROAD, CHIANG MAI
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF INTG TALKS
WITH OUR FIRST SPEAKER JOHN SHAW AND HIS COLLECTION OF CERAMICS
WITH A TALK BY DR. ISABELLE C. DRUC ON
“UNDERSTANDING ANCIENT CERAMICS USING ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY”

The celebration of 30 years of the Informal Northern Thai Group will take place at the home of John Shaw. Esteemed archaeologist working in the region, John Shaw gave the first INTG talk in December, 1984 about "Illegal Burial Site Excavations in Tak". He has one of the most important private ceramic collections in Thailand. The INTG has been invited to a private showing by the collector himself.

John and Pat Shaw's home—Nr. 8—is located on Soi 3, Nimmanhaemin Road. NO PARKING!



Contact details may be found on the website: <http://www.shawcollection.com/>

The Talk: Understanding Ancient Ceramics using Ethnoarchaeology

Ethnoarchaeology helps interpret the remains of ancient cultures and better understand craft production, socio-cultural interactions and past societies. Through a series of ethnographic interviews with artisan potters and the scientific study of the ceramic materials and traditional productions in different parts of the world, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the different factors affecting craft production, the choices made by artisans in given situations, the availability of resources, and possible distribution routes. This lecture will highlight traditional ceramic production and how it helps the interpretation of archaeological data. It further underlines the importance to protect and preserve traditional knowledge. The lecture will be illustrated with video footage and slides.

The Speaker: Dr. Isabelle Druc is a ceramologist, specialized in Andean ceramics, ethnoarchaeology and ceramic petrography. She did her Ph.D. in Archaeology at the University of Montreal (Quebec, Canada), after finishing her initial studies in Switzerland. She conducted post-doctoral studies at Yale University in the United States, and has been a visiting scholar at the CNRS in France and at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. She has received two excellence awards from the University of Montreal in Canada and won the 1989 Plantamour-Prévost science prize in Switzerland for her master at the University of Geneva. She has been at the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 2000, holding positions of lecturer, honorary fellow, and associate researcher in the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER). She was co-Director and Media-Director of the Deep Approach to Turkish Teaching and Learning project, an educational project funded by the U.S.

Department of Education. She has been involved in many different archaeological and ethnographic projects, in South America, the US and Europe, has published more than twenty articles and six books and has produced some 200 film documentaries and video interviews related to culture, language, ceramics, traditional arts and handicrafts. She frequently gives lectures and seminars in Europe, the USA and Latin America. Dr. Druc is Associate Researcher and Media Director at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

4. List of FUTURE INTG MEETINGS

383rd Meeting : Tuesday, **11 November**, 2014, 7:30 pm : **“Studying Elephant Intelligence and Conservation Education”**. A Talk by **Joshua Plotnik**.

384th Meeting : Tuesday, **02 December**, 2014, 7:30 pm : **Celebrating 30 Years of Talks with our First Speaker John Shaw and his Ceramics**.

385th Meeting : Tuesday, **09 December**, 2014, 7:30 pm : **“Spreading Buddhism in England: Conditions and Challenges”**. A Talk by Ven. **Amaro Bhikkhu**.

386th Meeting : Tuesday, **13 January**, 2014, 7:30 pm : **“‘Holy Man’ (Ton Bun) Tradition of Lanna Buddhism”**. A Talk by Paul T. Cohen.

387th Meeting : Tuesday, **10 February 2015**, 7:30 pm : **“Statesman, Zoologist, Missionary, Spy: The Life of Harold Young in the Golden Triangle”**. A Talk by **David Lawitts**.

388th Meeting : Tuesday, **10 March**, 2015, 7:30 pm : **“Faulting in Northern Thailand and Earthquake Preparation”**. A Talk by **Ray Weldon**.

5. ANNOUNCEMENT FOR A BUDDHIST RETREAT IN MAE RIM

Dr. Jingjai Hanchanlash, President of the Alliance Française, and Writer Khunying Chamnongsri Hanchanlash (Alias Chamnongsri Rutnin) have kindly proposed the December 9 Talk by Amaro Bhikkhu on Buddhism in England.

They organize a Buddhist Meditation Retreat at their home in Mae Rim on November 28-30 under the guidance of Ajahn Viradhammo.

We are glad to transmit the information about this retreat in a separate and document "Meditation Retreat-Ajahn Viradhammo-Nov-28-30*". This document includes the following:

1. Detailed schedule of the retreat (p. 1-2) - 2. Map (p. 2) - 3. Registration Form (p. 3)

Pleeeeeease do not contact the INTG about this retreat. Should you be interested in training your mind, please send your questions or your Registration Form (p. 3 of the attached document) to Dr. Jingjai Hanchanlash before 15 November 2014

E-mail: <drjingjai@gmail.com> OR <jingjai@loxley.co.th>

Fax: 0-2240-3286 - Mobile: 081-657-9955

Postal address: Loxley Public Company Limited - 102 Na Ranong Road – Klongtoey - Bangkok 10110

6. INTG CONTACTS : Convenor - Secretary - Website

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

2) **Secretary : Louis Gabaude** : e-mail : < gabaudel@yahoo.com >. Mobile : **087 188 50 99**.

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

**Thank you for posting the following announcements
wherever you can!**

Informal Northern Thai Group (INTG)
29 years of Talks!

**Studying
Elephant
Intelligence
and Conservation
Education**

A Talk by **Joshua Plotnik**

Tuesday 11 November, 2014, 7:30 pm

At the **ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE**

131, Charoen Prathet Road, Chiang Mai, opposite the EFEO

Informal Northern Thai Group (INTG)
Celebrating 30 years of Talks!

Understanding
Ancient Ceramics
using
Ethnoarchaeology

A Talk by **Isabelle C. Druc**

Tuesday 2 December, 2014, 7:30 pm

At Nr. 8, Soi 3, Nimmanhemin Rd
Chiang Mai

Informal Northern Thai Group (INTG)
30 years of Talks!

**Spreading
Buddhism
in England:
Conditions
and Challenges**

A Talk by Ven. Amaro Bhikkhu

Tuesday 9 December, 2014, 7:30 pm

At the **ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE**

131, Charoen Prathet Road, Chiang Mai, opposite the EFEO