

ROYAL CONSULATE of LAOS

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HONG KONG.



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**BUDDHISM
new year**

IN LAOS

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BUDDHIST NEW YEAR IN LAOS by Chao Sinh SAYSANOM

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When the fifth lunar month rolls by there arrives again a time of traditional Buddhist New Year in Laos which we call entails PI MAY Pi (year) May (New) or in Pali SONG-KRAN, in lao pronunciation Toud SongKarn, but the people of Laos prefer to say PiMay for this year falls on the 13rd, 14 and 15th April. The Buddhist astrologers had chosen this day from the Brahmin HORAXAD or astrologer as prediction as the good day for cycle of the moon and the stars under a good favorable sign of the Zedical of Serpent Pi MASéng and it is also the first day of the spring season whereby flames trees "Dok Fang" burst out their floral beauty and the CHAMPA fragipan's flowers white along the wall street at every where and at any village and town.

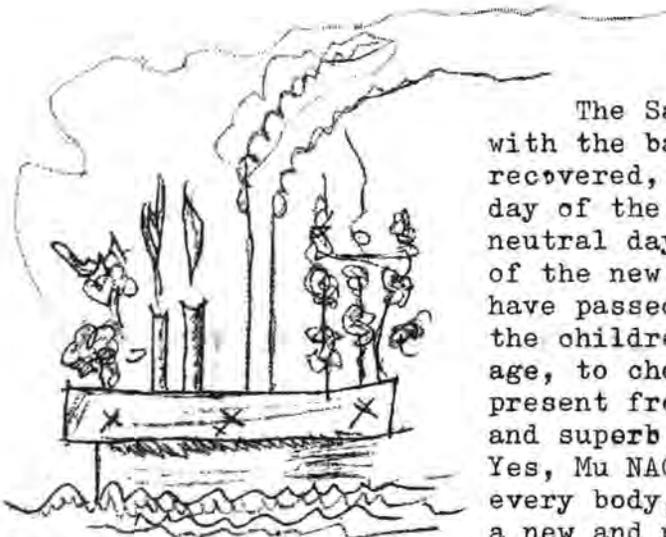
PiMay festival is a praise-worthy and a thanksgiving day. It begins as a public health day. Some families prepare 3 months earlier before the PiMay day to make new clothes by weaving silk, collect the flowers to make perfume and prepare the rice-wine, LAAW SATHO sweet-wine, LAAW HHEI Jare-wine or LAAW DED liqueur or whisky as volka.



The day before the SANG KHANE PAY (one day before the neutral day between the day of New Year day on 12nd April 1965.) on which the peoples of Laos collectively perform a property day by cleaning their green grass, houses and compounds and burning all refuse on the day before the eve of the PiMay consequently it is a costume and available to every Lao to joint as the national health day.

It is the day before the last day of the year, through out away with the old former passed year the every bad and old disease far from home. Tomorrow will be the last day of the old year, every thing must be clean properly, and beginning to renew some decoration.

The SANG-KHAN PAY the last day of the old year the last day to clean up the houses to burn the weeds in rice-field, finish its today, because it is day "D" or D's day of the date of the departure of the bad spirit. At the after-noon, all laotian in village and town go down to the stream or river nearby, with the "Kratong" spirit-box containing food and candle lighting, the box is made by banana leave or banan trunk with well decorated, some one as a truncated cone and other as a ship. In reality this spirit-box is inspired as an embacation small boat, where invited the bad deceases' spirits to take a festin feast banquet in this flotting-boat. While the decease' spirits testing the delicious foods, the owner of this spirit-box send this shipping to the current on the water, and when this shipping go away, the owner farewell this bad spirit to go far and to be born in the celeste empire and never return to this country, then the owner beginning to pray to the (God) spirit of water, to the Nag (NAGA) and to the lord Buddha to bless him and his family for the next coming year, happiness and longevity. At the evening of this day, in the pagoda VAT, the villagers feast and congratulate the neighborhood on the cleaning and decorating houses, some time the Health Department is profited this occasion to distribute the price and to encourage to the people to be healthful; and their ending this meeting by evening mass. Almost at midnight of this day there is a strong wind or a rain stormy blowing away dusty thing and wash clean-up a dusty spirit.



The Sang Khan Pay, or the old spirit has gone with the bad thing and the deceases; the fever is recovered, the dawn shining morning arrive is the day of the eve, yes the EVE or Mu NAO, it is the neutral day between the last year and the beginning of the new year. Mu NAO is the happy day to whom have passed in good health from the last year; to the children to have added one year more to his age, to cheerful to their parents, to have the new present from the family, to have a great feast and superb honeycomb, and to wear new clothes, Yes, Mu NAO is the cheerful's day, on the morning every body, olds and youngs, girls and boys wear a new and nice clothes, some one wear silk SARON

which the family made. The new and cleanness clothes meaning the beginning of the new spirit, new health, new life.; and go down to the village's market to buy some food for festival-party, some gifts, some toys for children (but this day you can not buy meat since the day of Sang Khane Pay until the end of the new year's day) and especially to buy animals living as bird, tortois and fishs to be delivered in the free world of prosperity. In the afternoon, there is a ceremony in the Vat (Pagoda) to prepare some arrangement of statuts of Buddha in the outdoor place for the public washing. Then for those who are not yet doing the ceremony of bathing as mentioned in the day on Sang-Khane Pay, they can pay the homage this afternoon, because the ryth of Buddhist in Laos is not so strict and very superstitious

This day is the day to be free the prisoner, to free the life of animals prisoners, as fihs, tortois and birds to flight freely into the free world of humanity and prosperity.



I delived you
As my Lord Buddha delived the humanity,
And may be one day I became prisoner
Which with my pray you may listen it
And come to delive me as
I doing for you in the circumstance.

Go, go on the liberty
To the free world of prosperity
I wish you long life, good appearance
Tranquility and energy
Ayu Vanno Sukkhang Phalang!



May be we don't meet again this year or this life because you are animal and I am man, we are not the same lives.

But the next life, I pray for Lord Buddha for you to become man like me And we can be both good commrade; even if I dead, may my next life and your next life be born in the same world, be the same life as animal, tree or human, but be born together in the same family in the only one mother and father as human been, as you know every people pray for good living faithfully.

Oh! my Lord Buddha, I prostrate you to protect it, and give it the best life to attain the NIRAVANA celestial empire.

The Mu NAO is neutral day, no one body can not do the work, this is strictly forbidden by costume; it is the Eve day. Some year has two days of Mu NAO, meanwhile that date is a coincident of the renewed of the natural thing, the rebirth of the leaf, the revival of the field bloodless and anemic of the nature which doze off from the heat by mounth in the South and the cold from the North (Laos is long between 15-g to 25-g.) wake up and put on the green under the...//...3

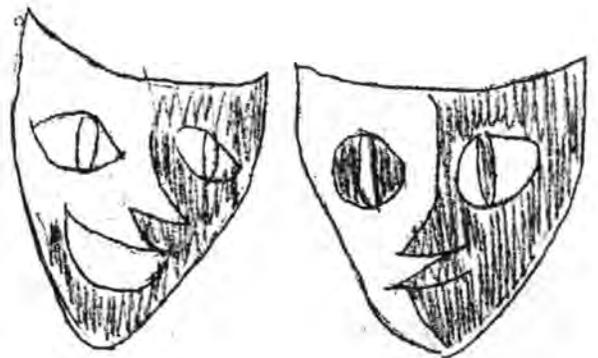


under the first shower storm.

It is the day to be unemployed and good day for teen age to entertain in the street to sing dance and throwing of water spree under pretext to purify.

This day is forbidden to work and forbidden to rest or to sleep for a siesta; there is one of my friend who would not joint us during the Buddhist New Year eve and we tell him"-if you sleep today you are nothy boy; your back will stick on the bed, but he still slepy in his bed. So we led keep him in his bed; but when he wake up, members of his family begining to smiling then smear and laughing funnyly. As my small

village in countryside there is not a water-pipe, and my friend should go down to the stream nearby the pagoda where the young make a barrier to throw-ing water totheir boy-friends, while my friend past nearby on the way to the stream, then they laughing and saying to Khamson my friend "-Look! my Thévada my angel came down to the earth his face is beautiful as Phra Indra. Laughing and laughing she continuing to say, oh I forget my mirror which I want to give it to my futher husband to showing his face, he look like a clown oh he has a avon, a lipstick red,white and black. Don't be red Khamson, why you have your ears red, you have a nice moustaches. Oh barbeout, you are prety like this Yeh ! my boyfriend, tonight I will ask my mother to go to see your family to request them to give the permission to let you to become my brother in-law. Oh! I love you too my dear; look! can I become your wife !?... they yorking like this... If you want to sleep in the Mu NAO, well if you don't beleave me so please visit Laos on the Buddhist New Year ! only in two or three hours by Jet you can be in Vientiane where you can enjoy yourself or in Luang-Prabang the Royal Capital. And the game in my small village only serves as a sort of a romantic rendez-vous where local boys meet prety girls resulting in many subsequent marriage !



At the real date of the New Year (15-4-65) the hulle people go to the VAT pagoda to baste arrosage or glaze-water to effigie Buddha, men and women bend to Lord Buddha; it is a high time for merit-making in rededication to the praise worthy to the good memory of the dead whereby the people after offering food to the Biku SONG (priest) in the pagoda in the morning, flock the CHÉDI (temple) and the THAT (stupa) where the ashes and charred loves of their parents ancestors are entombed. The water throwing is required for a boon of more healthy for the coming year, the prosperity, richness, wealth and happiness. The visit to the family and to the friends, since the SangKhane Pay, is doing in this day mostly to the hight ranking personalities and this ceremony we nomined BACI (pronounce Bace) the pardon from the elder to the younger or from the high ranking to his subordinator. This ceremony of BACI is practicaly only in Laos and unic in the world.



To ending...//...4



To ending the PI MAY, the boys and girls olds and youngs build the Chateau-de-sable THAT or stupa of sand, which their decored with the flag-papers design of zodiacals or totem of the year. This present year E.B 2507-8 is Pi Maséng or serpent (1965); some times they build this stupa of sand near the river-band, some times they bring sand to build in the VAT pagoda area, which this sand the Biku (priest) later can use to build an other real stupa THAT or temple usefully to the community.

They build this Chateau of sand is required for a boon more of rain (while they watering) for coming rice planting season (the next day is the raining season) in building their requested from the haven the gracefulness and the pardon, to live longess the beautiful good day fecund in happyness as numerous as the grain of sand to consist of the stupa.

In that day, at the pagoda the Biku (priest) read a lecture of the TRIPITAKA DHAMMA the source of virtue by the Lord Buddha, and recommended to the people to live with the DHAMMA (meaning the law or precept) the teaching of the Lord Budda; whereby those who sincerely follow them and are properly trained will eventually find the Perfect NIRAVANA or Peace in this world, recommended also to the children to obey their parents and to their ticher and to work well as to became a good citizen to serve later in futur the nation. In Vientiane City as other city the primary school organised the school-children's day.



But the best ceremonial and religious procession is in Luang-Prabang Royal Capital, and it during more than two weeks.

There are so many multiple manifest and the most spectaculary are the Morning-Maket in the central avenue, offering things especially animals living destinies to be free (which I have mentionned above)

The procession of the Royals Elephants is the request the pardon of the royals elephants to the Lord spirit of the city, to his rider, and to His Majesty the King.

The BACI in the Royal Palace, the cortege of the Majesty the King to sprinkle the statuf of a massif golden Buddha PHRA BANG (height about 1,30 m) in Vat May; PHRA BANG whence named the City of Luang Prabang, Luang is great Prabang is the name of the statuf of the Golden PHRA BANG.

The Royal procession to the Vat Sri VISOUN Luang or in simply Vat VISOUN, to Vat XiengThong (village where founded the City of LuangPrabang the first village of the fondation of the Kingdom of Lane Xang or Million Elephants). and to Vat SANGKHALOK.

This cortege...//...5





This cortege is following by the Prince and the Thao KUN honourable notable, elephants and horses with the tradition music spiritually conserved as from thousand year, and the exhibition of the POU GNEU and GNA GNEU the first man and the first woman of the LAO ancestral, wearing the clothes of flax with the very big red mask smiling their silver white teeth; both of them adorn the red hibiscus flower on their ears. The dance is following by a lion. Faithfully, they begging the dance to prostrating and presenting to the sovereign; following her husband, she the GNA GNEU repeat the tale telling from the land where they came from, the obstacle of the past and the present and fortune telling for the future; then they dance with the gesture of the imitation and language from the primitive stone age; and the lion mime its faith, its gladness, accompanied only by a sound of drum as a signal of the movement.

The processing to the Elephant grotto THAMTING in the north of LuangPrabang by boat, the visit to the grotto is one of curiosity from the past lives of the primitive temple; it prove a proud Buddhist faith in that century.

If you go ther for the Laotian Buddhist New Year don't be supprise to be wet and soak by a simple water, by a parfume or by mubby colorful water, and don't be angry because along all roads at day and night for three days you will receive it often from the small girls or boys to the old women, and especially in LuangPrabang you have no right to return the throwing water to the girls, even some times she tear your shirt. Beleave me there are so many Princes loss each year their real golden buttons of their clothes, and I seen with my proper eyes withness his aide-de-camp is captured by a strong group of pretty girl, and they ask him to pay some ransom for one Ball evening New Year party for the hole village, so cost him no so expensive, only one buffalo or five porcs for a good and happy banquet for the new year eve.



So please joint this venture, you are alway wellcome, the Lao people take this indeed most particularity in this occasion to every body without distintion of nationality or skill to participate with his rejoicing.

It is so pleasant to be wet in a warm day and to see some exquisite sculture's body hide-and-peek in the soak's clothes and to see some face daubed miscollany in the carnival.

So don't miss this occasion !
Good luck, wellcome and happy
Buddist New Year in Laos. ! ./-