

Recent Books from Cambodia – Sept 2022

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Anthropology

Cuisine Rurale d'Angkor : Esai de Sociologie Culinaire / Ang Choulean
Phnom Penh: Yosothor, 2020
xiv, 298p.
French & Khmer Languages
9789924939405
\$ 80.00 / HB
1242gm.

For nearly two decades, the author has studied the culinary mores and diet of villagers in Angkor region (in particular the Roluos area), documented it with field notes and photographs. His findings demonstrate the historic continuity of Cambodian cooking from ancient times, the definitely rural and plant-based character of the Cambodian diet, and how aptly the apparent simplicity of village food responds to nutritional and gustatory needs.

Far from attempting a collection of cooking recipes, or developing a "structuralist" approach of the Cambodian agrarian society, the essay deals with "culinary situations": ,when, where, by whom, how, and with which purpose cooked food was and is still made in the context of villages close to Angkor Wat.

The research encompasses fishing and hunting techniques, agricultural skills, timing and location of the meals, cooking methods, use of spices -- fairly limited, even if the Cambodian pepper is praised worldwide --, special occasions, as well as linguistic and historic considerations.

Of particular interest are the author's reflection on the (surprisingly, for many researchers) limited, or even non-existent influence of Indian cuisine on rural

Cambodia diet and tastes, while "tasting like Chinese food" informs festive meals, as a symbol of material wealth and prosperity.

At the core of the rural diet, we find the somla (stew), which the author presents in two main categories, somla mchou ("sour stew") and somla prohoc (the word prohoc defining here the "stimulating" taste given by herbs and leaves, not to be confused with prohok, the famous preparation of fermented fish). As for cooking techniques, the author defines for instance chha kdao, literally "hot sauteed", fried in a hot cooking liquid, and p-krek, a term mimicking the popping sound of ingredients just heated up in a pan without liquid or fat, "dry cooked", a technique used in particular for ants. The symbolic of ingredients is also thoroughly explored. For instance, the author notes that lemongrass (citronella), while widely used, is rarely kept in the final presentation of the dish, since villagers think ageing clumps of the aromatic herb may be inhabited by evil spirits.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=831995>

Biography/Memoirs

Dancers / Colin Grafton

Phnom Penh: IPML Services, 2021

140p.

Includes Index ; Notes (Khmer)

English & Khmer Languages

9789924963134

\$ 45.00 / PB

346gm.

In 1974, on the occasion of a rare classical dance performance in Phnom Penh during the Cambodian Civil War, I wandered into a theatre dressing room and took a few candid photos. The dancers did not notice me. 32 years later, by extraordinary chance, I met one of those dancers in Tokyo, Japan, where she had come to perform. This led to a chain of events whereby other dancers in the pictures were rediscovered one by one when I finally returned to Cambodia.

In 1980, while I was working in Thailand as a volunteer for World Food Programme, I witnessed and photographed the incipient stages of a classical dance revival in the refugee camp of Khao-I-Dang. Meanwhile, on the other

side of the sealed border, the surviving dancers of the classical ballet were also struggling to piece together the remnants of their art. Their stories of hardship, perseverance and survival, and their individual contributions to the renaissance of the dance, which is the spirit of Cambodia, form the core of this project.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=831996>

Cinema/Film Studies

Faded Reels : The Art of Four Cambodian Filmmakers : 1960-1975 / LinDa Saphan (Ed) Jessica Austin
Phnom Penh: Royal University of Phnom Penh, Department of Media and Communication, 2022

320p.

Includes Index

9789996377976

\$ 55.00 / PB

398gm.

Faded Reels: The Art of Four Cambodian Filmmakers, 1960-1975 brings to light the essential contributions to world cinema made by Cambodia's greatest prewar directors: Ly Bun Yim, Tea Lim Koun, Yvon Hem, and Uong Citta. With in-depth plot summaries, stunning screenshots, and discussions of 16 rare Cambodian films, this book gives readers access to a largely undocumented period of Southeast Asian film history. A delight for movie lovers and film scholars alike, Faded Reels includes detailed scene descriptions that feature the technical craftsmanship, innovation, complex storytelling, compelling characters, and beautiful cinematography of each director, while situating their biographies in the socio-cultural context of Cambodian history. Highlights include an exclusive interview with director Uong Citta, and chapters focusing on key films such as The Snake Man, The Twelve Sisters Story, Sovannahong, and Thavary Meas Bong. Extensively researched and artfully written, this book is a can't-miss addition to the history of global cinema.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=831997>
