



Kingdom of Laos

The Great Oath Ceremony – 18/Nov/1953

The Kingdom of Laos lent annual great oath ceremony in which civil servants and dignitaries pronounced their allegiance and fidelity to the King and to Laotian constitution. The ceremony took place in Wat Ong Tu, Vientiane, the administrative capital of the Kingdom.

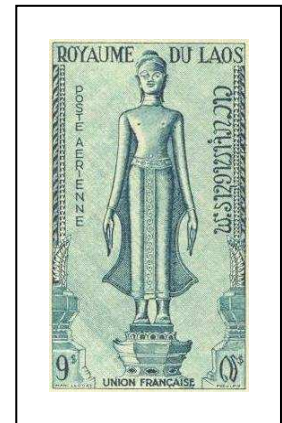
This set of stamps was issued to commemorate the annual great oath ceremony. It shows different Laotian Buddha statues, each with different position and gesture (mudrâ).



Mahaparinirvana (Laotian: Say nha) - Lying Buddha Statue in a position of final Nirvana - Buddha fully passing away the world and enter Nirvana state, meaning reaching full enlightenment, peaceful and happiness and will not rebirth.
16th century, Wat Xieng Thong, Luang Prabang.



Dhyânâ mudrâ - Buddha Statue in a gesture of meditating and concentration.
18th century, Wat Phra Keo, Vientiane.



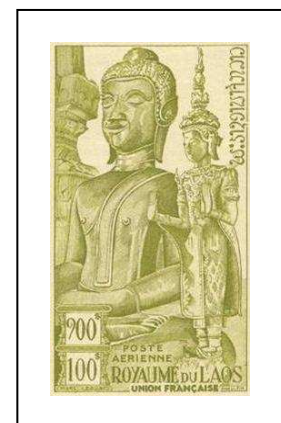
Standing Buddha Statue (Laotian: hiek fone) - "Buddha is calling to the rain".
17-18th century, Wat Phra Keo, Vientiane.



Bûmisparshamudrâ - Sitting Buddha Statue - Buddha touches the earth with his right palm and calls it to testify for his spiritual achievements. In Laos, this mudra is considered as the victory of Buddha on Mara (Maravixay).
Wat Phra Keo, Vientiane.



Abhayamudrâ - Standing Buddha Statue - This mudra represents fearlessness or calming floods, quarrel between relatives etc. This specific mudra is intended to calm the ocean.

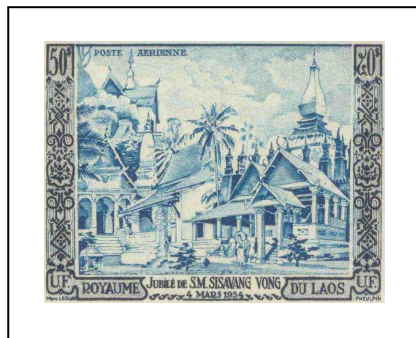
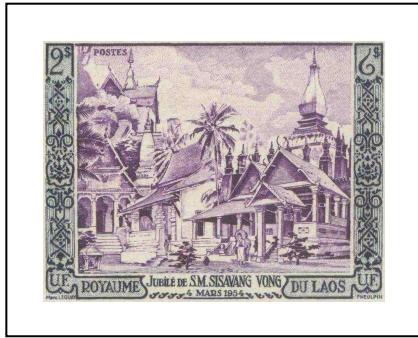


The left statue represents grandeur Buddha in Bûmisparshamudrâ - Buddha attesting the earth or victory of Buddha on Mara.
Wat Mahatât, Savankhâlôk, Thailand.
The right statue represents Abhayamudrâ - Buddha calming quarrel between relatives.
16th century, Wat Si Sakêt, Vientiane.



Kingdom of Laos

Jubilee of King Sisavang Vong Reign – 4/Mar/1954



*That Luang, Vientiane
That Chom Si, Luang Prabang
Temple in Pakse, Champasak*

King Sisavang Vong, the last king of Luang Prabang and the first king of Laos, was born on July 14, 1885 at Luang Prabang. He was son of Zakarine, king of Luang Prabang and queen Thongsy. He acquired his education in Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat, Saigon and l'École Coloniale, Paris.

King Sisavang Vong succeeded his father, after his death on March 26, 1904, as king of Luang Prabang, French protectorate within French Indochina. Under his kingdom, he had united provinces Houaphan (1931), Houakhong, Xien-Khouang and Vientiane (1942) Champasak and Sainyabuli (1946). He was a supporter of French rule in Laos and refused to cooperate with the Lao Issara, an anti French movement that struggle for Laos's independence. In 1945, he was disposed as king, while the Lao Issara declared the country independent.

In April 1946, the French took over Laos again and Sisavang Vong was reinstated as king all over entire Laos. When Laos achieved full independence from France, he became the head of state for the Kingdom of Laos.

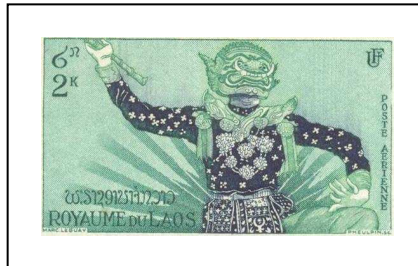
King Sisavang Vong was succeeded, after his death on October 29, 1959, by the regent, Prince Savang Vatthana, one of his fifty children. King Savang Vatthana ruled Laos until the abolishment of the Laotian Monarchy in 1975.

King Sisavang Vong became one of the longest-servings monarchs, serving for a period of 55 years. In 1954, he celebrated jubilee of his reign. For this occasion, Laos issued this set of stamps shows three different Laotian temples, one from each former Laotian Kingdoms: Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Champasak. The temples represent the unification of these three Laotian Kingdoms to Kingdom of Laos under King Sisavang Vong reign.



Kingdom of Laos

Ramayana Epos Ballet – 28/Oct/1955



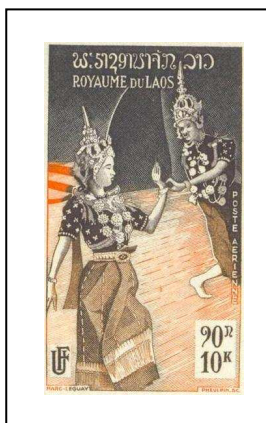
Ravana



Hanuman



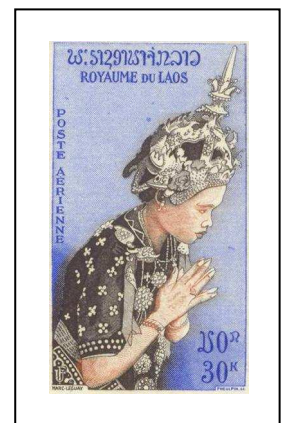
Ninih Lapat



Sita and Rama



Luci and Friend



Rama

One of the great Buddhist epos is the Ramayana. It tells the adventures of god Rama and his wife, Sita. Shurpanakha, sister of the dreadful demon Ravana, ruler of Lanka (Sri Lanka), fell in love with Rama but he firmly rejected her courting and offered her his brother Lakshman. The furious Shurpanakha pleaded Ravana to marry Sita. Ravana, cunningly and using his enormous power, kidnapped Sita and flew with her to Lanka. Hanuman, the monkey god and monkey's army commander, rescued Sita after a great war. In Buddhist tradition, Hanuman is a symbol of power, strength and loyalty and admired character throughout the Hindu world.

The Laotian version of the Ramayana Epos called Phra Lak Phra Lam. The stamps depict the Laotian royal ballet actors play the Ramayana epos.



Kingdom of Laos

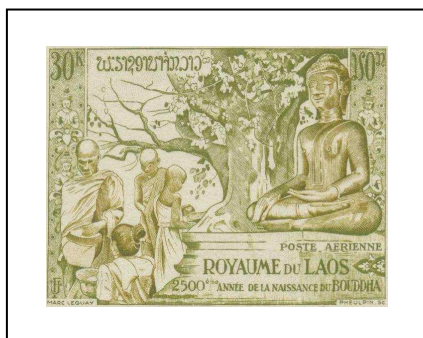
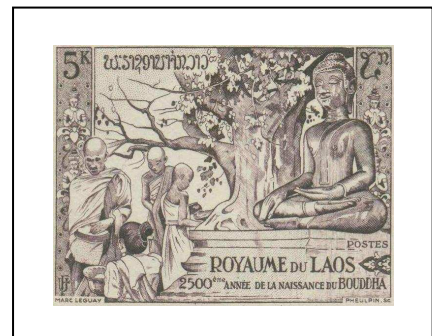
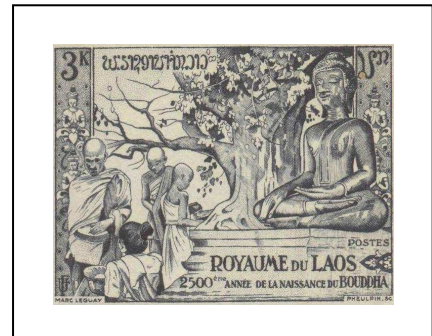
2500th Anniversary of Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha – 24/May/1956 2500th Anniversary of Creation of the Buddhism

Buddhism is a religion, or way of life that attempts to identify the causes of human suffering and offer various ways that are claimed to end or ease suffering. This is formulated through the Four Noble Truths which teach suffering and its cessation through the Eightfold Path*. It is a body of philosophies influenced by the teaching of Siddhartha Gautama., spiritual teacher from India and the founder of Buddhism.

Siddhartha Gautama is recognized by Buddhists as the Supreme Buddha (Samasambuddha) of our age. The precise nature of such a supreme Buddha – whether "merely" human or transcendental, immortal, god-transcending beings – is different constructed in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism tends to view him as a super-human personage of supreme teaching skill and wisdom (uncontactable after his physical death), whereas Mahayana Buddhism goes further and tends to see him as projection of an eternal, ultimate principal of Buddha hood, present in all phenomena, immortal and transcendent.

The Buddhism practiced in Laos is the Theravada. The main philosophy of the Theravada says that insight must come from the aspirant's experience, critical investigation and reasoning instead of by blind faith. The Laotian Buddhism is a unique version of the Theravada. It is the basis of Laotian culture and is often tied to animist and ancestral spirits beliefs.

Most historians date Buddha lifetime from 563 to 483 BCE. To commemorate the 2500th anniversary of the complete Nirvana of the Buddha (Mahaparinirvana) which considered as the point of the Buddhism creation, Laos released this set of stamps. The stamps depict former Laotian Buddha statue from 14th century in Wat Mahathat, Savankhialok, Thailand and monks receiving alms (offertory).



*The eightfold path is the way to the cessation of sufferings. It contains eight parts: right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration, right understanding and right thought.



Kingdom of Laos

1st Anniversary Admission of Laos to the UN – 14/Dec/1956

The United Nations (UN) is an international Organization, founded in 1945, whose aims are to facilitate cooperation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress and human rights issues. The UN divided into administrative bodies, primarily:

The General Assembly, the main deliberative assembly.

The Security Council that deals with peace and security.

The International Court of Justice.

The Economic and Social Council that promotes international economic, social and development cooperation.

The Secretariat that provides studies, information and facilities needed by the UN.

The Economic and Social Council that promotes international economic, social and development cooperation.

Additional bodies deal with the governance of all other UN system agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO and WHO.

Laos was admitted to the UN on December 14, 1955. To commemorate the first anniversary of the admission, Laos issued these stamps depict Garuda, a Mythical bird from Buddhist mythology, holding the UN emblem.

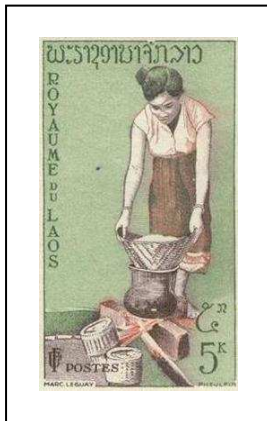


Definitive: Rice Cultivation – 22/Jul/1957

Rice is a staple and the main crop in Laos as in other South-Eastern countries, even more than cereal grains. Rice cultivation is well suited to countries with low labor cost and high rainfall, such as Laos, where most of the total agricultural areas are rice fields. Rice is also a source of other products like beer and other alcoholic beverages. Rice is so important in Laos, so the meaning of the Laotian verb "Kin-Khao" (to eat) is "to absorb rice".



Harvesting



Cooking



Polishing



Winnowing



Kingdom of Laos

Traditional Laotian Music Instruments – 25/Mar /1957

Music in Laos is an important part of the tradition and culture. The most popular music instrument in Laos is the *Khene*, made from a special kind of bamboo. It contains sets of bamboo and reed pipes of various lengths, which are strapped together, and then blow into by the player. It can be played solo as in traditional Lao music (*Mor Lam*) or in combination with other musical instruments to accompany modern songs. The *Khene* is a very ancient instrument, developed more than millennia ago in northern Laos by the *Lawa* people, the historical predecessors of Lao people.

In Laos, each village has its orchestra, dancers and *Khene* players that participate in occasions such as national, community and family events and religious processions. The orchestra includes, in addition to *Khene*, all or part of the following instruments: *So* violin, *Khoy* flute, *Row Nat* xylophone, *Kong Thab* drum and *Khong Wong* bells.

The classical form of Laotian music is closely related to that of the Siamese. Ethnomusicologists believe that Laos is a country where the ancient art music of the *Khmer* people has been best preserved, as well as diverse form of folk music related to the oldest type of Indian music, music that has largely disappeared in India itself.

Music is so important in Laos that the national proverb is: "A person living under a stilted house, eats sticky rice, listens to any music related to *Mor Lam*, and plays the *Khene* is likely to be Lao."



Khoy
Flute



Khene
Pipes



Row Nat
Xylophone



Khong Wong
Bells



So
Violin



Kong Thab
Drum

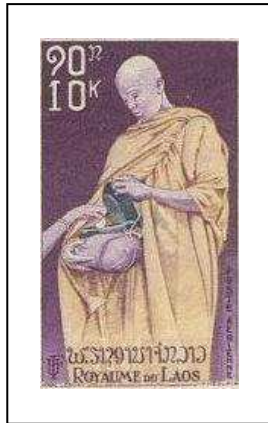


Kingdom of Laos

Buddhism Elements – 5/Nov/1957

The main religion in Laos is the Theravada Buddhism. This set of stamps depicts four elements of the Buddhism: The offertory (Dâna), Meditation (Bhâvanâ), Serenity (Passaddhi) and Renunciation (Nekkhamma).

The Offertory (Dâna) – In Buddhism, almsgiving is the respect given by a lay Buddhist to a Buddhist monk or nun. It is a symbolic connection to the spiritual and to show humbleness and respect in the presence of normal society. In Theravada Buddhism monks and nuns go on a daily alms round (pindacara) to collect food. This is often perceived as giving the laypeople the opportunity to make merit. Such giving is one of the elements of the path of practice as formulated by the Buddha for laypeople and the beginning of one's journey to Nirvana.



Meditation (Bhâvanâ) – Buddhist meditation encompasses a variety of meditation techniques that develop mindfulness, concentration, tranquility and insight. Core meditation techniques are preserved in ancient Buddhist texts and have proliferated and diversified through the millennia of teacher student transmissions.

Serenity (Passaddhi) – In Buddhism, Passaddhi refers to tranquility of the body, speech, thoughts and consciousness on the path to enlightenment. As part of cultivated mental factor, passaddhi is preceded by rapture and precedes concentration.

The stamp depicts smiling Buddha Statue from the 16th century located in Wat Phya Vat, Vientiane, Laos.



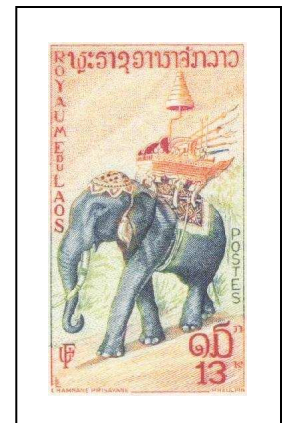
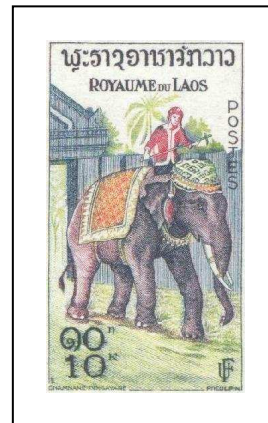
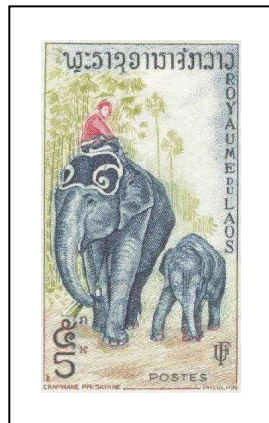
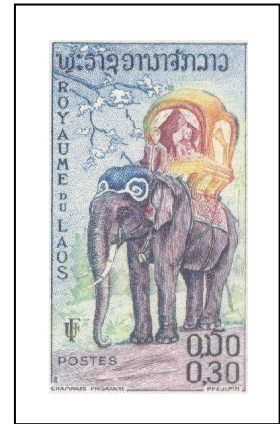
Renunciation (Nekkhamma) – In Buddhism, Nekkhamma refers to renunciation of worldly pleasures or the virtue of selflessness, which is opposed to attachment, selfishness and possessiveness. Renunciation is one of three "Right Thoughts" (samma-sankappa) which serves the purpose of eliminating evil thoughts and developing pure thoughts.

The stamp depicts Nang Thorani, mother of earth. According to a legend, Buddha sat down under a Bodhi tree and vowed not to get up until attaining enlightenment, but he was tempted by the Mara's (devil) army. Nang Thorani appeared, squeezed water from her hair braid and drowned Mara's army. Buddha overcame his demons, after which he attained enlightenment. The water symbolizes the pure power eliminating the evil.



Kingdom of Laos

Asian Elephant – 17/Mar/1958



The Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is one of the three living species of elephant, and the only living species of the genus *Elephas*. The species found primarily in large parts of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and South-East Asia countries including Laos. It is thought that 200-500 wild Asiatic elephants roam open-canopy forest areas throughout Laos, mainly in Sainyabuli province and in Nakai plateau in central eastern Laos. Around thousand domesticated elephants, used for logging and agriculture, found around the country mainly in Sainyabuli, Udomxai, Champasak and Attapeu. In total number of work elephants, Laos ranks forth in Asia after Myanmar, Thailand and India. Laos populated in the past by herds of elephants living wild in the forest. Hence, the older name of Laos was "Lane Xang" meaning "Land of million elephants". The Asian elephant has a prominent role in the Laotian culture and tradition. The Lao kingdom emblem was the three headed elephant (god Erawan) that represents the unification of the three former Laotian kingdoms: Vientiane, Luang-Prabang and Champasak, Laotian kings, since king Fa Ngum, used to keep a rare albino elephants because their sacred power and as representatives of war god. The elephant featuring prominently in Laotian mythological legends and also is an important character in Buddhism. Elephants take significant part in many Laotian traditional ceremonies and processions.

The first prize for best French philatelic art in 1958 (Grand prix de l'Art Philatélique Français) was given to the engraver of this set, Jean Pheulpin, for excellent gravure work of one of the stamps from this set.