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## Back in the Good Old U.S.A

August 31, 2011 // 0

**Thailand Elephant** (Article and Picture from the BA Ledger – Double click on the link!)



Thailand is truly a land of contrasts. Shanty houses and small gardens pepper the land adjacent to huge skyscrapers and luxurious malls. Tribal village communities who share resources and make a living by fishing and

farming off the land are within miles of massive computer centers, jewelry distribution centers, and fashion markets. Rainforests , mountain ridges, and beautiful beaches can all be visited within the same day. Truly, Thailand is a land of contrasts.

No doubt, the future of Thailand as an emerging world power depends upon progress such as hydroelectric plants, copper and gold mines, logging companies, and even nuclear energy plants. But the emergence of this progress is stripping the Thai people, the Siam, of their old ways of life and slowly eliminating a beautiful culture where tribal villages worked together, farming and fishing the land, sharing in the fruits of their labor. Fish in the rivers, animals in the forests, and natural resources that once were abundant and provided life to the tribal people are becoming more scare. The old ways of life, the old culture, is dying as the youth are moving from the tribal villages to find new opportunities, employment, and a new way of life.

This newly found progress has resulted in even more contrast and disparity. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer (if that is possible). Instead of compensating the tribal people for their loss of land, loss of natural resources, and loss of way of life, the government has allowed enormous amounts of profit to go to foreign companies and select government officials. Individuals claiming to subscribe to the Buddhist faith have become corrupt with wealth. Truly, Thailand is a land of contrasts.



The average per capita income in Thailand is \$8,000. But this d

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not mean that most Thai make \$8,000. Most of the wealth is held by less than ten percent of the people. The per capita income of most Thai considerably less than what they live off of rice and fish. But, the land is being replaced by progress, where the tribal people are being displaced for their loss of land or way of life. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. Truly, Thailand is facing a civil war.



However, the future may be different. Thai have always faced a civil war, the Ramakien, the Thai version of the Ramayana. It is an allegory of good and evil where in the end, good prevails over evil. The poor people, the tribal villages, see their plight as the good fight, the fight of the people against a corrupt government, against foreign carpetbaggers. They are uniting, calling themselves “Red Shirts, voicing their opinions, and even becoming what some would term to be “rebels with a cause,” fighting for democratic rule by and through the people in a land ruled by a constitutional monarchy.

Some say a civil war is looming in the future, not of race or color, but of economic disparity where the poor demand not to become poorer, but rather to share in the newfound wealth created by Thailand’s progress. Some say the civil war will be a result of the people demanding accountability, where corruption is replaced by Buddhist principles of morality, meditation, and wisdom.

In contrast, this may not be true. To survive, the village youth are moving to the cities, locating work, and sending money back to the elders in the tribal villages. The old way of life, of survival, is being replaced by progress. The youth are riding motorcycles, talking on cell phones, shopping in mega shopping centers and are becoming part of the progress that destroyed the fishing, hunting, and farming that represented the old way of life, the tribal village culture.

Instead of a civil war, Thailand is most likely to face, and is probably facing at this moment a political war. But this political war will be a Ramakien, a war perceived by the people where good ultimately triumphs over evil. This political war will be viewed as a war of sacrifices, where in one bloody battle at democracy square ninety-three people laid down their lives for a cause in 2011. This political war will be for “rule by the people,” and “accountability” for wrongdoing where the “rule of law applies to all,” not just to the poor. This political war will be where the people have a say, and a vested stake, in progress, and the future of Thailand.

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Truly, Thailand is a land of contrasts, a land of change.

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August 5, 2011 // 0



I have been at Kata Beach for the past eight (8) day. The Kata Beach Resort looked familiar when I checked in. This is not a surprise as it was on national TV during the Tsunami that hit after the Japan earthquake in 1994. In fact, I am staying at the same hotel that I saw on national TV. This, I found out after doing a google search. Some pics of the tsunami are located at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kata\\_Noi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kata_Noi). My hotel is the 11:04 a.m. shot! Note: The pic on the left is a beach bar from my visit. The beach bar is really on the beach. You have to wade in the water to get a drink!



But, there has been no Tsunami for the past ten days. In fact, there has been no rain (except in the North where I visited



about three weeks ago). Tonight, I had some noodles, vegetables, chicken, and unknown food parts from a food vender for 40 baud (about \$1.10 U.S.) It was a typical Thai dish – in fact, my face is still burning from the seasoning. The photo on the left is the pool and beach at the Kata Beach Resort (my hotel). The shot on the right is the beach from the hotel.

Well, time to check my online class.

Sangha!

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Categories

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August 3, 2011 // 0

Much to my surprise, my stay could only last thirty (30) days. After that, I would be fined 500 baud (about \$18 U.S. dollars) per day for violating conditions of my stay. So, it was off to Cambodia for five (5) days. Bugt, Cambodia was very inexpensive. Two Angkor beers and chicken stew (I think) with rice was only three U.S. dollars. That's right, Cambodia accepts and loves U.S. dollars.

While in Cambodia, I visited Angkor Wat, one of the world's