

Becoming the attraction – Laos September 2005

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Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya - Barcelona - Espana After 4 hours of non stop trekking through virgin green landscapes, slapping myself to kill the annoying mosquitoes, making way through itchy leaves or leafs ?and literally dripping myself in sweat, we arrived a village where we would stay for the night. With the two of us were a Lao guide and an Irish guy, named Chris. As we enter the bamboo hut village the children started running randomly and screaming as the grown up stood up to greet us.

We place our backpacks in the palm tree hut designated for us and walk to a small stream of water running nearby. In the water course some children play while some women wash their clothes by the stream bank. They all smile at us. With the water level by our ankles, we use a cup to help pour water in our shampooed heads. Two tiny village girls look at us with curiosity, so I reach them and handle them a bit of my fruit flavoured shampoo. Firstly they just smell that viscous liquid and smile happily at each other and only after I show with gestures how to apply in their long black hair, they start massaging their heads turning it into foam shapes without rinsing it. They run screaming for the village to show their white foamed heads and only a couple of minutes later they return to rinse it.

We return to our hut where one of the villagers slices vegetables into boiling water for our dinner. One hour later, around 5.30pm, our dinner is served, a big bowl of sticky rice and another bowl of cooked vegetables with Lao spices in which we dip our hand shaped balls of rice. It's delicious, after the long day that started in Luang Prabang, 100km away, this meal came like an answer to our day thoughts.

After dinner, with still some natural light available we play Tà-krâw with the village kids, a kind of foot volleyball with a rattan ball. It gets completely dark. With the dim light of some candles we drink Lao whisky at a table in front of our hut, while most of the village kids in their rotten Chinese and western clothes surround us just to look at us with their Asian stretched eyes wide open, paying close attention to our every move. There's no verbal communication. They laugh and imitate our gestures and sounds with genuine smiles. They're there because we are the attraction of the evening.