



VIETNAM:



« Day Eight - The Colonel

Day Ten – Temples, Pagodas and all that jazz, Hanoi »

Day Nine - Water Puppets and Weasel Shit Coffee, Hanoi

June 19th, 2007 by ben

Faeces, was the word of the day... After saying goodbye to Astrid, Mat and Hugh, who were heading to Halong Bay, we had a lazy day of coffee shops and resting then made our way, Morgan, Naouel and me, to a water puppetry performance at Hanoi's Municipal Water Puppet Theatre. Entering the theatre, the paper fans we, and our fellow audience members, were given, while all very nice looking, when put to use, smelt distinctly like buffalo faeces. The worst thing was that I somehow felt this strange compulsion, despite the theatres relatively cool interior, to repeatedly use the thing.

That said the puppet show was excellent. Water puppetry, it is said, evolved out of conventional Vietnamese puppetry when despite intense floods in the red river delta, in which Hanoi is situated, determined puppeteers continued performances by adapting to the water world in which they found themselves.



The result is quite remarkable: A large pool of water fronts an old world Vietnamese building, with two tiers of sweeping red eaves and a curtain facade. Behind the façade a team of puppeteers manipulate the complex machinery that, beneath the murky green water, has the puppets moving about 3 dimensional space – up, down and around the pool - and carrying out a variety of entertaining activities. Dragons dive about and, by a means that I was unable to ascertain, breath fire and water in synchronised dances. Gangly fisherman attempt to catch cantankerous fish that blessed with speech, from what I could tell (they were speaking in Vietnamese), taunt and ridicule their ineptitude. All manner of traditional Vietnamese myths and tales are played out. To the side of the stage a Vietnamese orchestra and singers perform traditional Vietnamese musical accompaniment. It's light-hearted fun, and at only 1 hour, the language issue was not too much of a drain on my attention span.

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Later that evening our plan to experience Hanoi's beating nightlife was seriously set back when we discovered our meeting place, Funky Monkey, had moved to another unknown location. We were then advised that it club, New Century, had been closed, possibly due to drug activities. We chose instead to try out a truly Vietnamese original, Chon, a beverage like no other. Chon is coffee derived from coffee beans that are first fed to a weasel then somehow extracted from it's faeces before being processed by traditional methods to make coffee...



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