

Indochine style emerged in the late 1800s to the mid 1950s, when France colonized Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, forming French Indochina. The designs that emerged during this period combined traditional Asian perspectives with touches of French influence. Motifs derived from the flora and fauna of the region appeared in textiles, arts and crafts, while architectural details respected the principle of 'form follows function'. Indigenous materials were widely used, honoring the organic rather than the machine-made. The result was an exotic presence in the decorative arts, home furnishings, architecture, fashion and the visual arts. Today, after a century of global acceptance, Indochine style is recognized as one of the most successful fusions of East and West. In this book, over 250 stunning colour photographs by Jay Graham, together with Barbara Walker's historically informed narrative, present a luminous vision of this beguiling style.



BARBARA WALKER

Barbara lived in Vietnam from 2004 to 2005 and traveled extensively in the region to study the influence of the French colonial period on the culture, arts and architecture of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. After returning to Florida, USA, she spent the next three years researching and writing *Indochine Style*. Barbara retired from her practice as an architectural interior designer in 1988 to live part-time in Bali. She is also the author of *Bali Style* (1995) and *Gathering Places: Balinese Architecture – A Spiritual & Spatial Orientation* (2005).



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TEXT BY **BARBARA WALKER** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **JAY GRAHAM**



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FRONT COVER Lotus-shaped lampshade at the Vine Wine Boutique Bar and Café in HaNoi.
PAGE 1 Natural rattan furniture, silk lanterns and patterned floors at Maxim's nam an, SaiGon.
PAGE 2 Stylish 1920s grille-work at Le Madraux café and furniture shop in the Old Quarter of HaNoi.
THIS PAGE Period Art Deco furnishings in the home of LIM Du Minh near SaiGon.
FOLLOWING PAGE Indochine-style salon and dining room in the home of the family of Mai Lam.
PAGE 8-9 Women in the Red River delta planting rice wearing the traditional hat, the *non*.
PAGE 10 Vintage furnishings and needlework pillow covers at Nguyen Freres, HaNoi.







For Review of



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ABOVE Outdoor dining area at the Brother's Café has an unobstructed view of the Thu Bon River; once filled with tall-masted schooners sailing into Faifo from international ports. Now the river traffic is limited to local fishermen as they head out to work on the South China Sea.

OPPOSITE Rooms of the dining-bar at the Brother's Café open to the front sidewalk and onto paths leading back to the river. The original small rooms of the villa have been joined by way of arched openings, making an airy space of inviting proportions.

Cultural Fusion in Indochina

Commanders, rogues, and opportunists of every ilk were drawn to Indochina, undaunted by treacherous, uncharted travel throughout the Indonesian Archipelago, up along the coast of Indochina through the blue waters of the South China Sea. For more than 200 years, beginning in the 16th century, ships from all over the world sailed into the harbour of Faifo establishing a central port city for merchants from India, China, Portugal, Holland, England, France, and Japan.

The village of Faifo, now called HoiAn, is situated almost in the middle of the lengthy South China Sea coastline of VietNam. Long and narrow, VietNam is commonly said to resemble a shoulder yoke with baskets on either end...to the north is the basket of the





ABOVE An antique timbered hall house was dismantled from its original site in northern VietNam and reassembled at the Moon River Resort.

TOP RIGHT Restored old gate at Moon River is used to devise a focal point to this walled garden path.

BOTTOM RIGHT Statuary in the gardens of Moon River set a light-hearted feeling.

OPPOSITE A new structure at Moon River borrows elements of traditional Vietnamese/ Chinese architecture... the roof tiles are laid in the fish-scale pattern, wooden doors have latticed openings, and the circle window displays the stylized characters of longevity.

On the banks of the Duong River, in the Red River delta, lies an innovative retreat, the Moon River Complex. Not far from HaNoi, Moon River features an innovative mix of traditional and modern Asian architecture. This sanctuary offers a place to rejuvenate, enjoy fine dining while watching the ever changing scenes of river commerce, and the experience of staying in a century-old Vietnamese timber house. Mortise and tenon post and beam constructions allowed the old houses to be disassembled and moved to be reassembled in the same plan. Antique timber houses were moved from a northern province in VietNam to the Moon River site to be used as guest rooms and an antique community building for large gatherings.





OPPOSITE The villa renovation included opening walls between the columns. The open plan allowed an interplay of spaces when viewing the relationship of rooms. The difficult design task was to preserve the same proportions and perspectives of the original Salon into the new dining addition. This photograph looks toward the dining room and onward to the lakeside gardens.

LEFT Venetian-glass chandelier from Murano was found in old SaiGon when de Leo and her friend, Luc Lejeune were browsing for... "everything that smelled of old Indochine and I spotted the chandelier first, amidst Galle vases, Lalique glass, and Art Deco furniture". The chandelier is clearly a mouth blown Venetian glass from Murano with very delicate wrought iron work.

BOTTOM LEFT A lamp from the Han-Viet period. The jar has the recognizable 'green ash drop' technique, a special feature of that period. Exquisite hand-embroidered lampshade is from Asia Song.

RIGHT The collection of Laotian-style Buddhist sculpture is outstanding at Haw Pha Kaew in Vientiane, the site of a former royal temple that was built in 1565 to house the Emerald Buddha. After a skirmish with Siam in 1779, the Emerald Buddha was stolen and has since been installed in Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok. During the Siamese-Lao war of 1828, the Laotian Haw Pha Kaew was razed and then rebuilt in 1936.

OPPOSITE Wat Si Saket was built in 1818 in an early Bangkok style, probably the oldest *sim* (sanctuary) standing in Vientiane. The *sim* is unusually situated... facing south, not east and is not parallel to the river. The row of columns form a verandah that surrounds the single-roomed sanctuary. The interior has as many as 2,000 niches with silver and ceramic Buddhas and the ceiling is decorated with relief mouldings that have highly carved pendants. The base of the pendants are in the shape of a lotus flower... a new element at the time in Lao religious art.

Phnom Penh—Cambodia

Cambodia's ancient history shines as a brilliant gem reflecting an artistic civilization in stark contrast to more recent times of cruel invasions, wars, and dictatorships that exiled or killed most of the population. Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, was first known as Krong Chaktomuk, the 'City of Four Faces'. This name refers to the confluence of the Mekong, Bassac, and Tonle Sap rivers to form the site of the capital. Krong Chaktomu is an abbreviation of its lengthy ceremonial name given by King Ponhea Yat: Krong Chaktomuk Mongkol Sakal Kampuchea Thipadei Sereythor Inthabot Borei Roth Reach Seima Maha Nokor. King Ponhea Yat of the Khmer Empire, moved the capital from Angkor Thom to the site of Phnom Penh in 1434. This site fell to various invaders until 1866 when the capitol became the permanent seat of government under the reign of King Norodom I.

Soon to be called the Pearl of Asia, urbanized Phnom Penh was administrated by the French who engineered an expanded canal system to control the wetlands, built a railway and constructed roads as well as a port. Despite the brutal wars of the 20th century and destruction by the Khmer Rouge, the city retains some of its traditional Khmer architecture along with considerable colonial charm.

Recent political changes encourage cultural traditions and these values have promoted a new economy in tourism. Restoration of hotels and villas from the early 1900's and the construction of new hotels, restaurants, and residential buildings are revitalizing Phnom Penh and the nearby cultural sites.

Vientiane: The Walled City of Sandalwood

Quiet and leisurely Vientiane remains the capital of Laos, first designated with this status under the French protectorate in the late 19th century. The name Vientiane is a reminder of the French in its Romanized French version of ViengChang. The French colonial period is also remembered in a few faded villas and administrative buildings and the early morning smell of fresh French-style baguettes. There are many temples that are mainly Laos in character, however other historical influences are recognized as Siamese, Chinese, and Khmer.



BOTTOM RIGHT These late 19th-century Ming Dynasty chairs in the salon have cushions with hand-embroidered designs of traditional motifs. The base of the lamp is a lacquered figurine of a Vietnamese servant, while the trunk was probably used by a rich or royal family from Hue. The large jar with dragon and cloud motifs is from Bat Trang.

OPPOSITE The formal salon at Nha Lien Hoa has a diverse collection of Southeast Asian objects that come together beautifully to complete this elegant room. A Chinese chair used in VietNam during the late 19th century sits beside an Art Deco sofa and chair from the colonial period. On the sideboard are lacquered statues carved from antique wood; antique ceramic vases from the Dong Nai province in south VietNam; and a tall Chinese celadon vase marked with 100 Chinese characters for 'Happiness'. Italian artist Valentina of La Casa in HaNoi created the ceramic and bronze sconce on the wall, while the large painting titled *Yin and Yang* is a lacquer and oil work by Bui Huu Hung.



taste or effort'. The idea equates to loneliness; you can't live in it; you can only occupy it". Trinh's fine sense of proportion and instinct for the textural interplay of materials, coupled with the valuable reclaimed objects, have resulted in a refined and gracious home with both comfort and historic value.

Stairs from the front entry lead to the open-air verandah that links the main house with the wing made up of the guest quarters upstairs and the formal salon downstairs.

The formal salon embodies the eclecticism of Indochine Style. Providing a handsome textured background for antique furniture and ceramics is the wall constructed from Han Dynasty bricks. The ageless appearance of these Han Dynasty bricks belies the fact that they are at least 2,000 years old. They are usually found in the Dong Trieu, Uong Bi, and Quang Ninh provinces (similar bricks are exhibited at the HaNoi and Ho Chi Minh City history museums). There is a wonderful variation in color, size, and texture, and some still have their glazing intact. The floor is a combination of handmade Vietnamese mosaic terracotta tiles and ironwood framing with bronze squares placed at crossings. The fusion continues with the furnishings and decor.





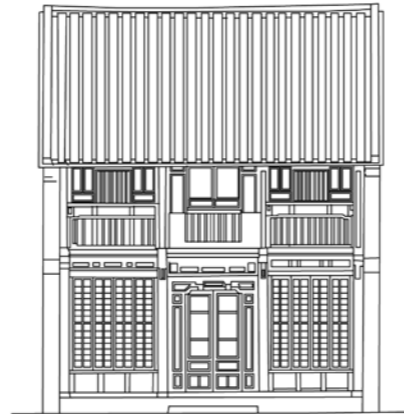
OPPOSITE The walls of the guest quarters bathroom are made of old bricks used to build kilns in Bat Trang. The sink is installed on antique stands.

LEFT A powder room in an unusual garden setting with loose river pebbles and a path made from slices of wood. The bamboo vanity is an old kitchen storage cabinet with a counter top made from Vietnamese slate with a natural cleft-finish.

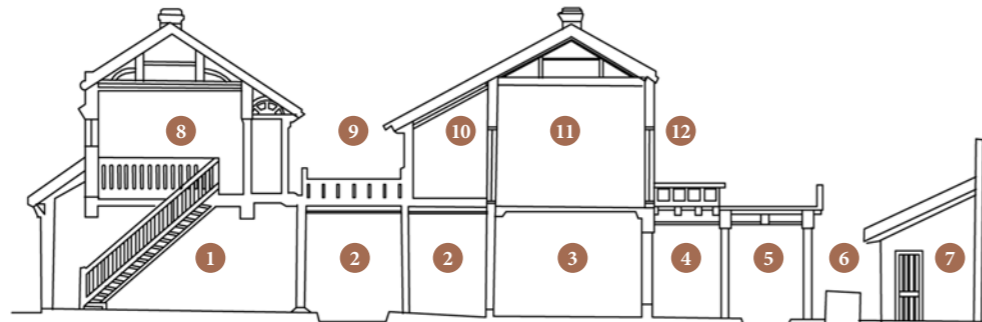
ABOVE The customised red lacquered armoire in the guest bedroom was inspired by an antique Chinese cabinet and designed by their friend, Debbie Gauci. The vases, with an under glaze of blue and brown design and a crackled finish, are from Bat Trang.

Tube Houses—An Urban Vernacular

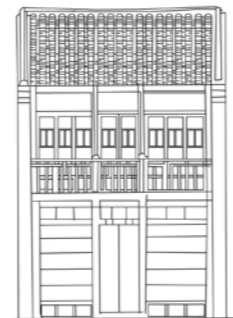
Tube houses are a traditional style of urban dwellings named after the railroad-like shape (one-room about 3-5 meters wide with several consecutive rooms totaling 20-60 meters deep). To gain access from front to back of the tube house, it is necessary to pass through each of the rooms. Open-roofed courtyards separate rooms, allowing the penetration of air and light. The family business occupies the first floor space that opens directly onto the street; family living quarters are to the back or on the second or upper floors above the business. The second story room opening onto the street usually has a balcony to oversee the activity streetside. The Old Quarter in HaNoi has many examples of the classic old tube houses. See photographs on page 56 to 59 of the Thuy An Tailor Shop in HaNoi.



- 1 Business or shop area opening directly onto street
- 2 Rooms for business/storage/offices
- 3 4 Family quarters/sleeping room for men and boys
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Kitchen open courtyard, well for household water
- 7 Bathroom/toilet
- 8 Family Temple—altar for ancestors. Also the sitting room for men
- 9 Open courtyard
- 10 Work room for women's activities
- 11 Sleeping room for women and girls
- 12 Verandah

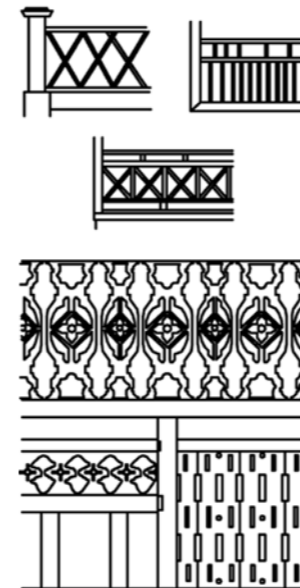


Tube houses in HoiAn dating from late 18th–19th Century are much the same as those in HaNoi. An interesting difference is that wood panels provide privacy and security when the shop is closed. Wide, horizontal boards slide into grooves in the casements of the shop windows. On page 58 is a street-scape view of HoiAn shop houses.

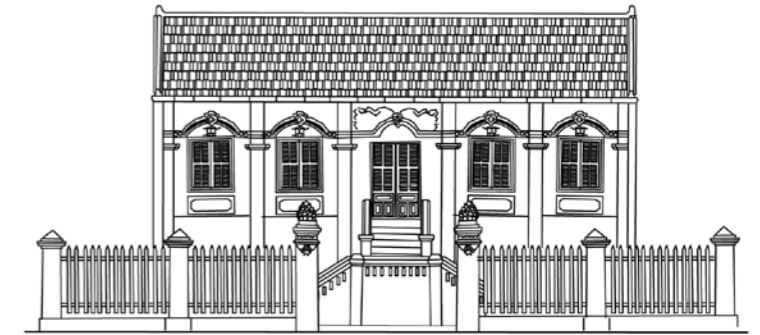


Cottage Style—Colonial Indochine

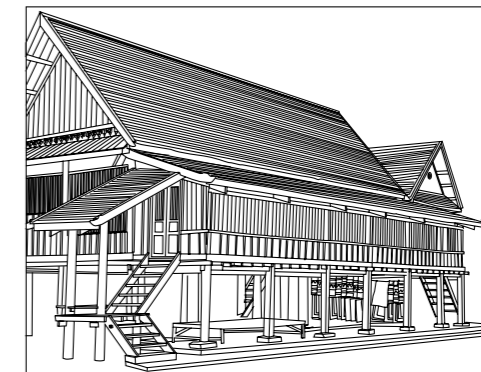
Cottage style dwellings constructed during the French Colonial period brought a new style of architecture to Indochina. Bricks or blocks were used rather than the customary wood or bamboo and a fusion of French, Lao, Cambodian, Chinese and Vietnamese elements appeared.



Bannister and railing details are often constructed of mortar in a Colonial style, however wooden railing details are simplified and often have a geometric feeling with an Asian sensibility.



A cottage probably built for a French expatriate or a wealthy native mingles the Colonial taste with local influence.



Mekong River Vernacular

Traveling along the Mekong from VietNam to Cambodian to Laos there are many styles of vernacular architecture, both wood and brick structures. In answer to seasonal floods during the monsoons, most structures are elevated. Typical Lao and Cambodian wooden houses along the river are built on stilts that rest on brick foundations—a proven structural solution for marshy lands. The upper floor houses the family while the ground floor space between the stilts is used for working, socializing and sheltering animals. The open design also keeps the house cool, allowing breezes to flow through, helping to clear the sultriness of high humidity.