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Solar Serve News

Dear friends,

This is our first Solar Serve newsletter. Welcome to our solar family. First of all we would like to tell you in brief what is happening in our solar cooker project, but we also want you to give an understanding of the region we are working in.

Our solar work

After three years our contract with the Danang University ended, but we were very happy when dr.Hung our supervisor the University wanted to extend it for more than five years. The last three years we provided 500 families with solar cookers. Almost 79% of the cookers are still used. Most of our work has been done in four districts in Quang Nam province and will be extended to other regions in 2004. This autumn (winter) we are planning to build 400 new solar cookers, 15 (new) parabolic solar cookers and several solar still models for water distillation. A new challenge and a different approach will be the start of a new solar cooking program with one of the minority groups. We also need more Vietnamese staff.



Dr. Hung

Here a picture of our present Solar Serve team during an outing at the end of this Summer:



Performing a skit



From left to right:

Giap is a sports student, but works for SLS most of the year.

Bich is the project manager and is responsible for the project.

Lien is responsible for the parabolic solar cookers

Mai is our mobile maintenance man and works together with Hoang

Hans is the project adviser and works together with Bich

Hoang is handicapped and responsible for building the solar cookers.

History of the region

Throughout this summer visiting groups and friends have been telling us that Danang is like a 'gateway' to Vietnam. We know that each city is important, and we would like to give you some reasons why the city of Danang is 'also' unique. So, we made a little study and used some material from the Duy Tan University in Danang and others.

Major ports

First of all you must understand that Danang has always been linked with the ancient town Hoi An. In the centuries of 16th and 17th when Hoi An was a great trade port. Danang played the role of a major port. There were two ways for ships to go to Hoi An: Cua Dai (Hoi An) and Cua Han (Danang). More than 100-ton ships found it hard to enter Cua Dai therefore they came through Cua Han. Freight was transported to Hoi An on Co Co river (which is filled now). In late 18th century Hoi An declined, Danang took its place and became a central port for this area with crowded population. Hoi An was considered a trade fair from 16th century to 18th century, at early 19th century Danang became a real maritime port where western ships were engaged in commerce with Vietnamese merchants.



Danang harbor in 18th century

Wars

In the wars between Dai Viet and Champa kingdom (14th - 15th centuries), the war between the two feudalist group Dang Trong (Nguyen Lord) and Dang Ngoai (Trinh Lord) (16th - 18th centuries), Danang with the role of a major port and an important military base was considered a bridge head and a spring board for all attacks. In the scheme to invade South East Asia' western countries as Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, France paid much attention to Danang because of its strategic position in military. Danang was also considered a place to defense Hue citadel. The French colonist began their war in Vietnam by attacking to Danang on September 1, 1858. The French failed in their plan of "quick attack quick win" when attacking Danang. The Americans first landed on Vietnam through Danang beach on February 9, 1965.

Business and tourism

During the American War, Danang had one of the busiest airports in the world. Danang was often referred as the 'Saigon of the North'. It had an booming economy, fine restaurants, busy traffic and glittering shops. Business declined sharply when the war ended and it became a pretty laid-back city. During the last years it regain some of its former glory and still distinguishes itself by having one of Vietnam's three international airports. Also Danang's infrastructure changed fast, which made it a major gateway for traveling to many tourist spots in the region (Hue, Hai Van Pass, Long Co Beach, Bach Ma National Park, Hoi An, Cham Island, Ba Na Hill Station, Marble Mountains, Cham Museum and My Son).

Religions

Several religions were established through the gateway of Danang. It was the center of the Indian-influenced state called Champa in the second century. The combined philosophies and religious ideologies of Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as Islam, influenced the Cham culture. The kings of Champa adopted Indian-type names and were worshiped as god-kings. The kingdom of Champa flourished till the 15th century. By the end of the 14th or early 15th century, Champa has been absorbed by the Vietnamese. For three centuries the Pho Da pagoda has been teaching Mahayana Buddhism to monks of the province. This pagoda was the central Vietnam Institute of Buddhist studies. At present, this is a place for the basic school of Buddhist studies of Quang Nam province. Catholic activities were not recorded but there are some written records that in the 16th century missionaries from Portugal, Spain and French came to Vietnam. Their impact was neither deep nor widespread. The turning point was marked by the arrival in 1624 of French missionary, Alexandre de Rhodes in Hoi An. Protestantism was introduced in the 20th century, when in 1911 the first missionaries came to Danang. After that it spread north to Hai Phong and Hanoi and then by 1918 to Saigon and to other cities in the South.

Danang has always been very strategic and a unique 'gateway' to Vietnam.



Well, this was our first Solar Serve newsletter. We hope you liked it. Please stay in contact with us.

Greetings,
Solar Serve Team

Called To Serve

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