

# September 2011

EDITION 9  
VOLUME 1

# ASIAN FOOD GODS



TAKE CARE OF  
YOUR PLANET!

YOU CAN MAKE THE  
DIFFERENCE

## TEAK WOOD FROM BURMA

From one of the isolated countries in Asia, Burma, much Teak wood is harvested and exported. Mainly illegally and controlled by the

military government. During my trip in this country I kept my eyes and ears open for this precious wood. I spoke to locals and an environmentalist. I cannot mention their names for their safety. Neither the

exact names of the places I have been. Despite this, most harvesting and transport is being done in front of the eyes of the tourist. It seems that the big G is not too ashamed of showing this.

# TEAK WOOD



## WHAT IS TEAK WOOD

Teak (*Tectona grandis*) is a large tree native to Asia and one of the three species in the genus *Tectona*. Growing up to 40 m. It is a dominant tree species. The trees can easily be recognised by big ovate-elliptic leaves which are hairy on the lower surfaces. It grows in tropical regions with 1,450 mm of rainfall/year.

The information in my news letter is based on interviews. Little can be found on the internet. Most locations I have seen were areas where government controlled clear cutting massive areas. Since Burma is a closed regime I had to take care with finding out more in remote areas. The areas I visited were just on the tourist trail, accessible by train and boat. In Yangon the main port functions as shipping place where many trucks loaded with teak logs pass by. Why and how it works is elaborated to explain, but in this edition you will find a simplified answer.

## An easy source

After the jade trade, teak wood is a good second place for income for the military regime. The pristine forests are easy accessible by the extensive Irrawady River, which doubles as getting there and transporting the large trunks out of the forest. Surprisingly it is easy to see the logging and effects on the environment. Clear patches in the forested hills and seeing the trunks loaded on boats are not unusual during a boat trip. As a result of logging much sediment comes into the river which gives it a muddy colour (erosion). There is also transport over land, but tourists are not welcome here.

## Trade

Teak wood is not listed by the Convention of Endangered Species (CITES). This means that the trade is unregulated without permits. Despite cultivation of this wood species much comes from unsustainable use of forests. As the trade is regulated by the corrupt government, they create their own certificates for exporting large amounts of wood. Most of the wood is harvested without certification or sustainable use of the forest. Burma contributes to almost one third of the world production of teak. The biggest importers are Korea, Japan, China, and the EU. All money flows straight into the pockets of the regime and the Burmese do not benefit from it. In remote areas of Burma, where many tribes live, people are now forced to leave these places. Leading to violence between the army and the tribal liberation armies. As the value of the wood is increasing; more will be cleared. The impact on the locals is not wellknown, since it is closed for tourists and scientists.

## Have you thought about...

- not buying furniture made of teak wood?
- signing a [petition](#) to ask politicians to import only certified tropical hardwood?
- using Douglas pine trees which is an alternative for tropical hard wood?

