As we are well aware that nearly no country in the world has its population constituted by one race or a single ethnic group. In fact, all nations are constituted by many different ethnic groups which are endowed with national characteristics of different dialects, custom, tradition, belief and culture. Through each period of history, through the communication, generosity, unity and helping each other among the ethnic groups there has been some change, but of course, it still encompasses diversified traces inheriting from the span of century like their dialect, customs, traditions, beliefs and other. Ethnic group is a matter of complexity for our world today. However, it is significant and meaningful for the strength and firm monolith of a nation.

As far as the Lao P.D.R is concerned, despite being a small nation, with its total territory of 236,800 square meters and its population of over 5 million people, it is composed of any ethnic groups having numerous particularities which are not the same with those of other countries in the world.

I. The particularities of ethnic group in the Lao P.D.R.

1. The Lao P.D.R. is a country which is constituted by many ethnic groups which live their livelihood in between each other from the north to the south, no one ethnic group has ever exploited or conquered another ever since; they have lived together in peace, no one ethnic group has lived its livelihood separately in a large territory. Each ethnic group has a common character of being a part of a unified nation and had its own particularities.

2. All ethnic groups of the Lao P.D.R have contributed with their strength and forces to protect and develop the nation, have a firm traditional of unity and concord, especially since the country has been under the leadership of the Lao peoples’ revolutionary party, the process of relationship and concord among the ethnic group within the nation had been firm and rapid.

3. All ethnic groups of the Lao P.D.R have a common socio-economic base, but the level of the development has been stepped up with an unequal rhythm, in particular.

4. The ethnic groups of the Lao P.D.R have a common culture, the Lao culture is a harmonized and ultimate combination of all ethnic groups, the Lao spoken and written languages (national language) is a common language, however, each ethnic group still preserves its own dialect, custom and culture of its own.

5. The origin of some ethnic groups of the Lao P.D.R has been identical with that of some ethnic groups living in the neighboring countries

II. The objectives of the research, grouping and classification of the Ethnic groups in the Lao P.D.R

1. To classify the names of the ethnic groups of the Lao P.D.R in compliance with the ethnographic principles and to suit also their actual preference as well as to limit and step toward eradicating the names which have the sense of humiliation and look down on the ethnic people.
2. To increase the sense of unity and equality among ethnic people, build awareness and encouragement for the ethnic people to be proud of their own while living as a part of the Lao national community. Enhance the national spirit and unanimity, diminish the traces of suspect among the ethnic people to combat the division and sabotage activity of any hostile as well as together protect and develop the country.

3. To preserve and promote fine custom, tradition and culture which is unique for each ethnic group. In the contrary, to limit, solve and remove all obstacles which impede the development, unity and mutual assistance among the ethnic groups in compliance with the policy guideline of the Party and Government.

4. To provide with important information about ethnic affairs to the Party and Government as well as to all parties to consider and include in the policy guideline, development planning and the implementation of various plans for each ethnic group in a accordance with the particularities and actual fact of all ethnic locality.

III. Expected outcomes of the research, grouping and classification of the names of the ethnic groups in the Lao P.D.R

1. It is expected to be able to preliminarily define and acknowledge that how many. Ethnic groups actually live in the Lao P.D.R. How many braches is each ethnic groups constituted of. The calling of their name will comply with the basic principles of the ethnography and suit the preference they like to be called. And at the same time the humiliation, look down on will be limited, solved.

2. The role of each ethnic group will be upheld, causing the ethnic people to be proud of their own being within the Lao national community. The implementation of equal right own their among the ethnic groups will be ensured, the monolithic unity and concord among the ethnic groups within the Lao national community will be firmly enhanced and the sense of mastery as well as the valiant traditional including the particularities in each ethnographic aspect will be developed. At the same time, the trace of suspect and conflicts among the ethnic groups will be solved and the division and sabotage activities of the hostile forces will be defeated.

3. the acknowledgement of the fine custom, tradition, art and culture of each ethnic group will be promoted and preserve the solution to them.

4. It will be beneficial and useful information for the Party and Government as well as all parties in considering the policy guideline and policy plan for each aspect to each ethnic group to suit the ideology, custom, traditions and culture of each ethnic group which.

IV. Reference of criteria for the research, grouping and classification of the ethnic groups in the Lao P.D.R

1. As far as the status of ethnographic in Laos fro the past to date: The ethnographic research being done in the countries of Europe, American and Latin America has attracted people’s interests for longtime, while in the Asia and Pacific region, in particular, in the developing countries as well as the Least developed countries the interest has been gained recently.
For the Lao P.D.R, ethnographic research has gained more interest since the period of having the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party as the Leader. Due to the far sightedness of the Party, the ethnographic affair has become of importance and strategic for the strength of the nation. Therefore, the Party has paid constant and close attention to the ethnographic affairs, which can be seen, after the establishment of the Liberal Lao Front (Neolao Issara) on the 13 August 1950, staffs of all ethnic groups were mobilized to take part in the leadership of the Liberal Lao Front and the Opposition Government (Lutthabarn Lao Tottarn). By 1970 which was the period of preparation for the second party congress, therefore, to ensure that the essence suited the actual fact which was the turning point in the Lao revolution. The central level Lao front for national construction discussed and nominated a committee to carry out the research on the Lao society and assigned to that committee to study and define the name of the ethnic group within the Lao national community with the purpose to enhance the sense of monolithic unity, serve the political course in the movement of struggling for national liberation and independence. To fulfill the said purpose, the committee for Lao Society Research carried out its study and classification of the ethnographic name based on the settlement, language and political meaning which grouped Laos on three main groups (Sohnsard) of 68 ethnic groups as follows:

**Sohnsard Lao Loom** (Lowland Lao main group):
Means the people living and settling in the plains and by the river banks, comprised of 12 ethnic groups such as: Lao, phouan, leu, T’ai dum, T’ai deng, T’ai khao, T’ai meuy, T’ai neua, T’ai Nyee, Yung and seak.

**Sohnsard Lao Theung** (middle Lao main group):
Means people living and settling on mountain slopes with the altitude of over 700 meters high above sea level, composed of 36 ethnic groups such as: KHAMU, SAMAED, BID, PHONG, PUAK, YRU, PHOUNOY, KASENG, DOY, PHAI, MAKONG, KATANG, PAKOH, LAWAIN, LAWAE, NYAHERN, TRUI, SOO, SAPUAN, SOK, TREW, TALIANG, TAOY, ALUCK, KATOO, YAE, SUAY, CHENG, DARKKUNG, LAWEE, LAWUCK, OY, TONGLEUANG, KADO, THIN and SARMTAO ethnic groups.

2. **Reference and criteria to principles for the research, grouping and classification of the name of the ethnic groups**

2.1. Related vocabularies.
- **Kooks or Takoon** (Clan, family line): is a primary form of community which was constituted by individuals having the same blood line.
- **Laoh or Sahakoksid** (Tribe): is a unification of many individual or clans having the same blood line due to the need for livelihood and production, some people call as Sahaphun koksid or many koksid.
- **Sohnphao (Ethnic)** is a group of people which have a common dialect or language, origin and historical background, culture and is believed to succeed from the same ancestors ancestors (some nearly have its territory).
- **Sohnsard Lao song**: (Highland Lao main group): means people living and setting on high mountain of over 1000 meters of altitude, composed of 20 ethnic groups such as: Hmong Khao (white hmong), Hmong Lai (striped hmong), Hmong Dum (black hmong), Yao, Laentaen, Kormootern, Korcheemarm, kongsard, Hayee, Lahoo, Mooiserdum (black mooser), Mooerkhao (white mooser) and Kui. After the national liberation, a machinery of a Central level Sohnsard (main ethnic group) committee was acknowledged and adopted into the machinery of the Government, it had a role of being a headquarter to the Party Central Committee and Government in the research of ethnic groups and elaboration of ethnic policies.

In a workshop hold from 15-16/6/1998 on studying the resolution of the political Bureau of the Central Party on ethnic affairs, President Kaysone Phomvihane quoted: “Any ethnic group shares a common uniqueness of the Lao National Community and has its particularities on other aspect as well. Thought the revolutionary process, all ethnic group volunteer to become a part of the nation which was called then in a political sense as “SORSNARD LAO LUOM (low land main ethnic group); SORSNARD LAO THEUNG (middle main ethnic group) and SORSNARD LAO SOONG (high land main ethnic group). The central level SORSNARD committee shall coordinate with all sectors and with the staff of all ethnic groups to together study and discus on how to call the ethnic group correctly and how to make an inventory of (name list) of the ethnic groups to make them become our state general provisions.

In other to implement the policy line and policy plan of our party, in particular, the instruction of president KAISONE PHOMVIHAN, the central level SORSNARD committee change their name into central level committee on ethnic groups, which played the role in being the head quarter for the central party executive committee and the council of ministers in pursuing the research and study on ethnography.

This committee dispatched its ethnographic staff to carry out studies, of which the focus was on gathering information on their dialects, language, historical background, socio-culture and particularities in other to regroup and classified them on the inventory and then submit to the higher management for consideration and adoption officially.

Through the actual working to the staff on the grassroots and through the research, analysis based on the ethnographic principles, the technical staff classified initially as 47 ethnic groups but that was not adopted. However, the inventory of the 47 ethnic groups used as the basis for the second population census in 1995.

- **Seuasard** (Race): is a group of people having similar physical particularities such as: complexion, hair nose, eye, lips, skin color and others.
- **Sunsard** (Nationality): is groups of people being members of the same nation and it is meant to become a legitimate member of that country, their physical particularities and culture may be different.
- **Sard** (Nation); **Sohnsard** (Main ethnic group): is a group of community where people have their common particularities in regard to dialect, language, historical background, territory, economic life as well as psychological structure which can be seen in their culture.
2.2 References and criteria or principles for the research.

For the research to group and define the names of ethnic groups living in Laos, in order to attain the preliminarily defined objectives, technical staffs have references to be based on as follows.

1. Based on 4 criteria or principles of a definition of a nation comprising:
   - Common dialect or language;
   - Common territory;
   - Common background of economic livelihood;
   - Common psychological and ideological structure which can be seen in the culture.

2. Based on the actual particularities of the ethnic groups in Laos.

3. Based on the policy guideline in solving ethnic affairs of him Party in general. And in particular the instructions of the President Kaisone Phomvihane given in the workshop hold from 15-16/6/1891 to carry out research on the resolution of the political bureau members of the Central Party on ethnic affairs.

4. Based on the resolution of the Central Party Executive committee on ethnic affairs in the new era, dated on 20 May 1992.

5. Based on documents related to ethnics in both Lao and Foreign languages.

2.3. Information analysis according to ethnographic principles:

For the technical staff who are in the middle scientific information and local information as well as technology and villagers knowledge. Apart of the material- lizing firmly the ethnographic principles, they have to firmly materialize the Party’s policy guideline and policies plan of the Party on ethnic affairs for each period to be the basis for the research.

Based for the aforesaid references, it can be analyzed that the calling of Sonhsar Laoloom, Laotheung and Laosoong (lowland, middle land and highland main ethnic groups) during that time had the resettlement and political meaning with the aim to enhance the sense of national unity and concord; And at the same time to put all efforts to the revolution for national liberation only. To the present time, the calling of three main ethnic groups is not suitable. The President Kaisone Phomvihane, who firmly materialized the ethnography as well as had a profound and detailed research on ethnic affairs, He, therefore, instructed the workshop which was held in 1981 that we should not call Sohnsard Laoloom, Laotheung and Laosoong any more or should not classify into such three main ethnic groups, we should “ call them according to the name of their ethnic group that they had been named since the ancient tiem”.

In order to witness and affirm the saying of the former President Kaisone Phomvihane, 4 criteria or principles have been used to analyze briefly the ethnic groups existing in the Lao P.D.R as follows:

1. Analysis on their linguistic criterion:

Presently, all ethnic groups in the Lao P.D.R use Lao language alike and the Lao language has been defined as national language (official language). At the same time the ethnic groups preserves their own dialects or languages such as: Keumu, Hmong, Leu, Nyuan, TaOy, Katahng languages and others. But in such languages there are many similarities and differences, the linguistic similarity of some ethnic groups can be said as because they are from different family line (takoon or clan).

Based on the system of such family line and language, the ethnic groups in the Lao P.D.R are classified into 4 language groups such as: Lao Tahi, Mon-Khmer (including
Vietmuong language), Chinese-Tibetan (including Hor language) and Hmong Ewmian language groups;

2- Analysis on Territory:
In regard to this criterion, based on the particularities of Laos, all ethnic groups live their livelihood in the same territory, but they live their livelihood in between each other from north to south. In the history of Laos, it has never separated into 3 nations or 3 different states, there has never been any ethnic group living in its own separate administrative zone. That means from the ancient time to date, the country has been always a unified Lao nation, which is different from other countries such as:

3- Analysis on Economic criterion:
In this criterion, all ethnic groups existing in Laos have live their livelihood by similar economic base such as: agricultural based self subsistence economy (growing crops, raising animals and handicraft). In general, there has not been a base and economic production which is unique or typical to any ethnic group. The Lao ethnic group can not take a typical economic style or uniqueness of any ethnic group to become a common criterion.

4- Analysis on psychological or ideological aspect and culture:
In this regard, it reflects that all ethnic groups in Laos have a unified Lao culture, that all ethnic group considers itself as a part of the Lao national community, anybody says he/she is a Laotian, lives in the Lao Language. At the same time, each ethnic group has its psychology, ideology, custom, tradition and culture which is unique or typical of its own ethnic group which can be seen in their like, familiarity as well as in their mode of material and spiritual living.

All the psychology, ideology, custom, tradition and culture of the ethnic group are basically not in conflict with the common psychology, ideology and culture of the Lao national community. But each has been an important element which has added and made the common national culture a diversified abundance and colorful one. In addition, the respect of the culture values of each ethnic group and the equality between all ethnic groups living in the Lao national community has been the basic policy of the Lao Party and Government. Despite unequal level of development in the aspect of economy between and ethnic group and another, between the plains and mountainous areas, between the urban and rural areas, these have not been any impediment or obstacle to the building of the base of the unified national culture.

From the analysis of the above mentioned 4 criteria, it can be assumed that the country of Laos is composed of only a single Lao nation. That means the calling of three nations or three main ethnic groups was not suitable for the actual situation of the country. There is a need to adjust and slowly turn to use the word of Lao nation. This is a reason also for the existence of a nation is not by a will of our people, not by the aspiration of the administrative authorities, but it is because of the impact of economic and social rule.

According to the ethnographic principles, an ethnic group is composed of 4 criteria like a nation as afore mentioned, but at lower level and not as firm as a nation, in particular the level of economy and territory.

For the Lao P.D.R, if we consider only the criterion to group, classify and determine the name of an ethnic group, it will not be accurate, suitable or comply with the actual particularities of the ethnic groups, Therefore, the ethnographic technical staff have selected some criteria a
nation and based on the particularities as well as the actual fact of the ethnic groups living in Laos to define the criteria and use as a reference for the research. If we want to know whether it is the same ethnic group or not, it shall be based on 3 criteria to research such as:

1- Linguistic criterion;
2- Historical background criterion in association with its original name;
3- Customary, traditional and culture criterion ethnographic staff materialize firmly the attitude of our Party, in particular, the attitude and instructions of the President Kaison Phomvihane which say: “the research and affirmation any matter about an ethnic group is to be base on the awareness and volunteer of that ethnic group”

2.4 Procedures of carrying out a research on grouping and determination of the names of the ethnic groups in Laos

- collect all documents related to the ethnic groups in Laos including the inventory of the ethnic names done by former researchers in both local and foreigners (including in lao and foreign languages) to analyze and compare whether correct or wrong in order to adjust and carry out more research, those important documents are to be seen in the annexes of references.

- conduct actual field survey in the locally in collaboration with the local administrative authorities, to gather the historical background, movement, their evolution including the name of each ethnic group as called in the locality, their old name, new names, the name the ethnic people call themselves, their dialect and their cardinal numbers, custom, traditional, the tangible and intangible count of each ethnic group. At the same time discuss and ask the comments of the ethnic people about the grouping and determination of their name in accordance with their actual situation and based on the scientific criteria.

- bring back all the information gathered to carry out further study, research and an analysis based on 3 criteria as set forth for each ethnic group.

- organized the workshop to discuss and exchange on the names of each ethnic group in each province at nation wide and at central level, and get agreement as well as affirmation by the workshop participants and local administrative concerned.

2.5 the application of the said 3 criteria to carry out a research, grouping and classification of the ethnic names.

In order to know whether an individual is of the same ethnic group or not, the technical staff applied 3 criteria to study and carry out a research and analysis to classify and determine the names of the ethnic groups in Laos as follow:

2.5.1 Linguistics criterion

In this regard, it can be seen that each ethnic group still preserve their original dialect and language, in each dialect of and ethnic group there is similarity and difference, for the stance, the Lao language differs from the language of the HMONG ethnic people, the language of KEUMU ethnic people is different from that AKHA ethnic group (KOR ethnic group); the language of TA OY people’s different from that of LEU ethnic group and others. The difference in their language means that they’re not in the same language group. At the same time, there are many similarities in the spoken languages of the ethnic people, they can discuss and understand each other with out using an interpreter such as: the language of training ethnic group is similar to the YAE ethnic group; CHEHNG language is similar to OY language; the language of AKHA ethnic group is similar to is similar to that of LAHOO ethnic
group; the lao language is similar to LEU language so on. The similarity in the language means they are in the same language group. Due to there similarity and difference, the languages of the ethnic group in LAOS are classified in to 4 language group such as: LAO TAI, MON KHMERE (including VIETMULONG language), CHINESE TIBETAN (including HOR language) and MHONG-EMIAN language group; the only one language criterion can not determine whether and individual is of the same or different ethnic group, because an ethnic person can speak many languages.

2.5.2 Historical back ground in association with the calling of their name criterion
This criterion affirms that the ethnic groups of the same language of the same language group have similar historical back ground and origin; due to their migration in each period, each groups had different influence and environment, which cause some changes in the society of the ethnic groups; some ethnic group is sustained. Some developed into different branches and had their new name. There fore, an ethnic group may have different names, this includes the name they call themselves, the name they are called by other ethnic groups, the name called according to their habitat such as: name of the village, district, name called according to their spoken language, according to their mode of livelihood, their style of dressing and costumes, according to their chief of tribes and clans and according to the nature such as: the name of forest, stream and river, name of the tree and others. In addition it is leant that the name of an ethnic group has good and bad meaning, calling the name with the sense of humiliation or looking down on that particular ethnic group.

There fore, through Te research, analysis and comparison of the names of the ethnic groups it is know that what actually is the name of that particular ethnic group, is it the name they call by themselves or is called by other ethnic groups. And at the same time one should preserve their name which has good meaning and the name the ethnic people has called themselves since ancient time in compliance with their historical background and origin. On the contrary, one shall eliminate humiliation and being looked down on to such as: MEO, SOH, KHAH SONH HAHNG (two tailed KHAH), KHATOO BONG (KHAH of drilled ears), KHAH KHAEV TUD (KHAH of cut teeth) and others. In addition, there are many names, when compared with only the criteria of linguistics and custom, tradition and culture, one still can not group as an ethnic group, that means it be only a SAEK, SAENG, or a branch of and ethnic group, despite having different name, but their language, historical background and origin is similar.

2.5.3 Custom, traditional and culture criterion:

In this regard, the ethnic group in LAOS, apart from having a common culture of the unified nation, each ethnic group still has its typical custom, tradition and culture which are ethnic o their own ethnic which can be seen in their like, familiarity, belief, material and spiritual being. The analysis shows that the ethnic groups of the same language group have similar tradition and culture. On the contrary, the ethnic groups of different language groups have different traditional and culture. There internal and external factors in each ethnic group such as: primitive, feudal, and the factor of the present and new regime. Therefore it is mean that the ethnic are in harmony, borrow each others’ tradition and culture. This is because they have lived in between each other, have had relations, a sense of unity and mutual assistance, in particular, among the neighboring ethnic groups.

2.6 The out come of the research and study
Through a research and analysis, based mainly on the international criteria as being adopted extensively; and at the same time, based on the actual particularities of the ethnic groups in LAOS to group, classify, it can be said that we have fulfilled a part of instructions given by the president
KHAISONE PHOMVIHANE who did not prefer to say SARM SORN SARD or SARM SORN PHAO NYAI (three main ethnic groups) namely: LAO LOOM, LAO THEUNG AND LAO SOONG (low land, middle land and high land ethnic groups); we should say” of the same nation, which is constituted by many ethnic groups. That means any member in the national community is an ethnic group alike, the difference is their size of population, large or small population only”.

Therefore the actual outcome of the research and analysis, having aforesaid references, it is seen that the LAO P D R is lived by 49 ethnic groups, being classified into 4 different language groups such as: LAO TAI, MON KHMER, CHINESE–TIBETAN and MHONG-EWMIAN language groups.

The ethnic diversity is of great importance for the development. The grouping and classification of the ethnic group this time, has scientific meaning, serve the political purpose positively, which is the basis for the solution of economic and social inequality among the ethnic groups.

By adhering to the policy line and attitude of the party to solves ethnic matters, the current grouping and classification of the ethnic groups will contribute to help to know about ethnic structure in scientific principles and when looking at the requirement of the present ethnic affairs or in the future, it is seen that the grouping and classification of the ethnic groups is of initial out come or success, which has basically opened the path for further ethnographic research; the grouping and classification of an ethnic group is not the last time and inflexible eternally; this is because the ethnic group are developed in each period of their history. It is believed that in the year ahead, efforts will be put on further study, research, data collection and information analysis in regard to the aspects of political, economy, social culture and others which relate to the living conditions of different ethnic group to learn about the particularity of psychology, ideology, custom, culture and their fine traditions. Increase the sense of firm and strong unity as well as equality and concord among the ethnic groups, to gradually eradicate the gap of development between the plains and mountainous areas, between the urban and rural areas, as stipulated in the article No.8 of the Constitution of the Lao P.D.R: “the state Government has implemented the policy to enhance the sense of unity and equality among the ethnic groups. all ethnic groups have their right to preserve and develop the custom, tradition and fine culture of their own and of their nation. All acts and activities causing the division of the ethnic groups are prohibited.

The state government implements all measures to increasingly develop and uplift the socio-economic level of all ethnic groups”.

The technical staff and the Department of Ethnic Affairs consider that the successful outcome of the ethnic research has been graceful to the important contribution of various parties such as: Cultural Research Institute, Linguistic Research Institute of the Ministry of Information and culture, Department of Ethnic Affairs of National Assembly, The National Statistics Center, the Lao front National Construction at district and provincial levels, elderly and prominent figure, tribal and clan chiefs of various ethnic groups at nation wide. In addition there has been the contribution of some individuals such as: Mr.Maisouk Saysompheng, Mr. Visith Santivong, Mr.Khamsene Vongnorkeo, Mr. Somsy Desakhamphou, Mr. Khabai Nyounarath, Mr.Pheng Lasoukanh, Mr.Khamso Kaisong, Mr.Souksavang Simana, Mr.Khamleuane Keosouvand and other persons.

On behalf of the lao front for national construction, the department of ethnic affairs would like to highly express its thanks and gratitude to the political Bureau of the central party committee, the government and the lao front of national construction for having provided their supervision and guidance through out the process of ethnic research in the LAO P D R. many thanks are addressed to the Canadian funds for development for its financial support. Thanks are also addressed to the organizations concerned and the persons who have given their cooperation and value able assistance by providing information, ideas, and comments to the research and to the publication of this book entitled “the ethnic group in the LAO P D R”.

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The technical staff and the department of ethnic affairs of the lao front for national construction consider that the book “the ethnic group in the LAO P D R” as is the first one and it is the initial success with paves the basic path for further research of the ethnic group in the future. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the information and essence of this book is not a fully complete one yet, it may have a number of short coming due to limited experience and professional skill of our technical staff and the limited availability of funds and time spent for the research.

Therefore, it is frankly ask for the comments and criticism from the readers of this book to help adjust and solving the matter of completion later. The technical staff of the department of ethnic affairs welcome appreciate and thank in advance for those comments.

THE LAO-TAI LANGUAGE FAMILY

(8 ETHNIC GROUPS)

XAEH

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The XAEH live in the two middle provinces of BOLIKHAMSAY and KHAMMOUANE. They live in KHAMKERTH district of BOLIKHAMSAY province. In KHAMMUOANE province they live in THAKEK HINBOUNE, NAKAI and NGOMALATH district. In the seventeenth century some sach migrated to VIETNAM and CHINA. Today the population of XAEH in LAOS is 2,745 people, according to the 1995 censes.

Name and language:

Their official name is XAEH. The language is in the AUSTRO-THAI linguistic family and in the TAI-KADAI group. There is some mix of LAO language in their language.

Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths

Many of XAEH that live in the lowlands have adopted Buddhism; however, those in the remote high lands still practice animism where they worship a myriad of nature-related spirits. There is a guardian spirit of the house and the village. There also the spirit of river, mountains and sky. The XAEH have shamans, called MOIYAU who cure the ill and organize the religious activities.

The XAEH live in matrilineal nuclear families. A young man woman is free to choose their future partners; however sometimes parents will arrange a marriage. After marriage the bride will move into the parents-in-law’s house hold. The XAEH often intermarr with the lao and other TAI speaking group in the area.

When some one died then ceremony is held. The body is placed in a coffin and then the coffin taken to the cemetery where it is cremated. One to two buffaloes are sacrificed. When carrying the coffin to the cemetery, the druthers and daughter-in-laws must line down in the path so the coffin may pass over them as it is carried. People who die in accidents or children who die are buried, not cremated.
Village and house:

Many of the Xaeh villages are remote, and can only be reached by foot. Their houses are on stilts, about two meters high. The walls and floor are built with wooden planks, and the roofs are covered with thatch. The house is separated into several compartments for sleeping, eating and cooking. A kitchen is located in the back of the living room.

Costume:

The Xaeh used to wear traditional costumes, but this is not common any more, the traditional costume for women consisted of an ankle length sarong colored dark blue, which is embroidered along the lower a hem. With this the woman would wear a dark blue, which is embroidered along the lower hem. With this the woman would wear a dark blue long-sleeved vest that was fastened with silver buttons. A broad red sash is worn over the right shoulder and an embroidered belt around the waist. The men would wear dark blue rousers that are long and wide. With these trousers a vest similar to the women’s vest would be worn. Both sexes wear silver jewelry with their traditional costumes. The women are known for their large silver pendants.

Agriculture and livelihood:

The Xaeh in Laos live simple agricultural lives. Those living in the plains grow glutinous rice in flooded paddies, while those living in the highlands grow dry-land rice using slash-and-burn methods. They also grow other crops such as corn, potatoes, and vegetables. They raise buffalo, cattle, poultry for food and trade. They also raise dogs for meat. In the forests they hunt game and gather wild vegetables and herbs. Simple handicrafts include the weaving of baskets and mats with bamboo. Many Xaeh have very low incomes, so the Lao government has been trying to assist the by introducing new farming methods and crops.

Nhouan

Historical background:

The Nhouan people originally came from the Lanna kingdom of northern Thailand, moving into Laos between 150 to 300 years ago. Today the Yuan people in Laos live in the provinces of Saiyabury, Luangprabang, Bokeo, Udomsai and Phongsali. Additionally, there is a large population still in northern Thailand. The total population of Nhouan in Laos is 26,239, of which 13,312 are women.

Name and Language:

The most common name for these people is “Nhuan”, and this is their official name in Laos. Other names include Lanna Thai, Tai Nhouan, and Lao Phung Dam. There are two distinct groups in Laos: the Kalorm and the Ngew.

The Language is similar to Lao, but has fewer Pali and Khmer loan words than Lao or Thai. There is a traditional script that is similar to the Lue script, but this is not known among the younger generation of Nhouan. Only a few older people still know this script.
Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:

Predominately Buddhists, the Nhouan adopted Buddhism around the tenth century. However, they are adopted ancient animistic beliefs into their Buddhism, still worshipping such spirits as the spirits of ancestors, nature, and the village.

They believe that spirits can insure a more prosperous and healthy life as long as these spirits are kept happy. Once a year offerings are made to these various spirits in an outdoor altar under a large tree that is usually in the center of the village. The more personal ancestral spirits are worshipped at an altar inside the house.

It is important to inform ancestral spirits of all new event in the family such as births and deaths. The usual Buddhist festivals are also important, and the temple is an important place of worship. Nhouan live in nuclear family units. The men are monogamous. Family lineage through the father’s line in important.

For marriage, after a young couple has agreed to marry, then the man must pay her family a dowry, this consists of silver, a buffalo, a pig, some chickens and some rice whiskey. Today, there is no strict rule in which household the new couple must reside in. They will chose depending on circumstances. The Nhouan will also intermarry with other neighboring ethnic groups.

A midwife will assist in birth, which will take place near the hearth inside the house. If there is a difficult delivery, a shaman will try to assists by performing magic. The umbilical cord of he baby is hung in a tree outside the house, or it may be buried. The mother must avoid certain foods for sometime, such as spicy foods, or bad smelling food.

When there is a death, then a ceremony where monks will chant and perform prayers is held. Then the body is cremated.

However, if he deceased died in an accident, then the body will be buried.

Village and house:

The Nhouan village are usually located in lower plans and close to rivers if possible, which allows easier farming.

Their houses are generally typical Lao-style, sitting on sturdy cement posts. The walls are woven bamboo, or sometimes planks and the roof will be thatch or wooden shingles. Wooden stairs will lead to a door or small covered porch.

The interior has a large living room and smaller rooms for sleeping. There is a small kitchen in an attached outbuilding.

Costume:

Traditional clothing for women consists of a traditional skirt (phaa sin) with horizontal stripes of many different colors. With this a tight beige or black blouse will be worn that accompanies an elaborately patterned silk cloth worn over the shoulder. A white, silk turban finished the costume. They will wear earrings, necklaces, and rings made of silver. The men’s traditional costume consists of wide trousers that only go down to the knee. A long-sleeved vest is also worn, plus a silk scarf that is worn similarly to the women’s scarf, they cover their heads with a silk turban.
**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Nhouan grow rice in wet paddies. They also grow corn, cassava, vegetables, fruits, tobacco, and cotton. They breed buffalo, poultry, and pigs. Nhouan women also raise silk worms and make silk. This has led to the Nhouan being financially better off than many other minorities in Laos.

The men also hunt small game with crossbows, traps, flintlock muskets and slings. They fish with spears and nets and forage for edible products in the forest.

**Tai**

**Historical background:**

The Tai have a long history similar to the other ethnic Lao group. The ancestors of these groups came from Bolikhamsay and Khammuan provinces. This is a large group of people that consists of numerous subgroups, such as the Tai Dam, Tai Khao, Tai Deng and Tai Meur. Today, there are about a dozen different Tai groups in Bolikhamsay province.

**Name and language:**

With many different Tai groups, they are often named after traditional clothing that they wore, such as Red Tai or White Tai. The black Tai or Tai Dam are divided into the Tai Dam, Tai Keu, Tai Dean and Tai Meer.

The Tai languages are in the Austro-Thai family. This broken down into the Tai-Kadai group and then into Southwestern and Northern groups. Certain groups have old scripts for writing, but many of these have been forgotten.

**Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

Most of the Tai groups practice Buddhism, however not all of them. The Tai Dam do not follow Buddhism, but instead practice animism.

All of the Tai groups incorporate animism into their beliefs, worshipping spirits that represent the district, the village, the household, forests, water, the heavens, ancestors, and many other things. To most Tai animists, the household spirits is the most important spirits, as this spirit also represents the ancestors who have passed on. There are spirits who are both malevolent a helpful. Most villages will have older members who act as shamans and sorcerers who can communicate with the spirits or act as traditional healers.
Families are the most important social unit. Families will live together and the oldest male will be the head of the household. Some groups will practice polygamy, but that is less common today.

Tai groups such as the Tai Dam are organized in political and familial groups called *sings*. This can be attributed to Vietnamese and Chinese influence.

Marriages were arranged in the past, but today young people are free to many whom with to. Dowries usually consist of an amount of silver and animals plus perhaps some money. The husband may move into the household of his new wife and later they are free to move into their own household.

Funerals differ, depending if the villager is animist or Buddhist influenced. If animist, the body will more likely be buried, while the body will be cremated if Buddhist.

**Village and house:**

There are differences among the groups in housing, but most houses are similar, sitting on stilts and in a rectangular shape. They are usually made from woven bamboo, with the floor wood planks and the roof from thatch. There may be an open or covered verandah. The inside will be divided into living and sleeping quarters, with a small hearth for cooking.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Ti minorities are generally farmers, growing both glutinous rice and regular rice. They are also skilled at growing vegetables such as sweet potato, cassava, Chinese cabbage, onion, garlic, chili, etc. For both labor and sacrifices they breed cows, buffalos, pigs, dogs and others. They also make handicrafts such as bamboo baskets and mats. Some groups, such as the Tai Dam are well known for their weaving skills, with the women making elegant tablecloths, phaa sins, and other items for sale.

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**THAY NEUA**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS**

The THAY NEUA have lived in LAOS for many centuries. They moved from southern part of China and entered into LAOS.

First they have lived on SOYE, ADTH and XIENKHO district in HUAPHA province. Then they moved to settle in the MA river region of PHONGSALI province. Today, they also lived in VIETNAM and China.
The population of THAY NEUA IN LAO P D R numbers 2.354 people, of which 1.205 are female according to district and provincial records.

**NAME AND LANGUAGE:**

There official name in “THAY NEUA” “THAY” means people and “NEUA” means north. There language is and AUSTRO- THAY language that is in the TAI-KADAI group.

**SOCIETY, BELIEFS, CEREMONIES AND MYTHS:**

The THAY NEUA who lived in LUANGNAMTHA province are Buddhist. How ever, the THAY NEUA who lived in PHONSALI province still practice animism, believing the spirit in the sky, the house hold, river, pond, ancestors, and so forth. The spirit of the house hold is believed to be the spirit of the first person who died in the house after moving in. every village will have the spirit house that is located in a near by forest. Also, each village will have a shaman whole role is to deal with the spirits and other religious issues. Once a year in JUNE, each house hold will sacrifice the chicken and offer rice whisky to the spirits.

The most important for the THAY NEUA is the new year celebration that is in the lunar date in January or February of each year.

The THAY NEUA have different languages. Each lineage will have different prohibitions and taboos. For example marriage is for bidden within the same lineage. Each lineage has a chief who plays the significant role in managing public affairs and all members must respect him.

In regards to marriage, when a young man has chosen a young woman to be his bride, then he will offer a dowry to her parents consisting of chickens, pigs, rice and some opium. A wedding ceremony will be held, with a large feast prepared by the bride’s family. This will consist of many kinds of dishes and alcohol. The festivities will go one for about three days. The groom will stay at the bride’s house for one week, and then he will return to his old house hold. Later he and the bride will be lead on horses to live on his household.

Mothers will give birth in the bed room. After birth, she will avoid food that is hot, sour, or salty for at least thirty days. Later there will be a naming ceremony for the infant.

A fortuneteller or the shaman may be involved, to see if evil spirits are involved. If they are though to be involved, then a chicken will be sacrificed.

If someone dies, then they body is place in a coffin that will sit in the house for twelve days and nights. Later the coffin will be burned, and the bones are gathered and buried in the ground, where a small tomb will be built. If the deceased is a child or someone who was killed in an accident, then the body is buried.

**Village and house:**

The Tai Neua like to settle along rivers and steams which will assist them in irrigating their crops. Before they build their houses, they will place rise seeds in a hold and wait for them to germinate.
By examining these seeds liters, they can tell if the spirit are favorable for allowing them to build in that location. Some Thai Neua will also bright a monk to pray at the spot for future good luck.

The Thai Neua will adopt different housing styles depending on where they live. Those who live in Muang Sing have adopted the Lue style of house: building houses on stilts. Others have adopted the more Lao style of houses, with houses of wood and iron roofs. There are contain taboos for the houses. For example it is forbidden for guest or visitors to enter the bedroom of the parents.

**Costume:**

The woman rarely wear traditional clothing anymore. The traditional costume for women consisted of a black sarong with a broad red band. A top of the same color with silver clasps was worn. This top would leave the back bare. Two long red shawls were worn over this. To complete the costume a turban was worn over the hair. Silver earrings, necklaces, bracelets, were also common.

The men’s traditional clothing consisted of baggy blue trousers and a loose red shirt.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Thai Neua grow rice using both wet cultivation and slash-and-burn corn, cassava, cabbage, beans, potatoes and many other typical vegetables are also cultivated. They also grow tobacco and like to make rice whiskey.

For livestock they keep buffalo, poultry, horse and dog. They are also known to raise turkeys, which are not common in Lao. Hunting with primitive weapons such as crossbows and slingshots is also common. Fishing in the nearby rivers and steams is an additional source of food.

The women are busy weavers of cotton and silk. The make phaa sins (the traditional Lao women’s skirt), and earn extra income by selling them. The men are skilled at weaving mats, fish traps and baskets from bamboo. These items and also sold.

**Phou Thay:**

**Historical background**

The Phou Thay’s history and origin are similar to other ethnic groups of the Lao-Thai language group. They migrated from south China in the late 17th and early 18th century, following the Mekong, Salavan and Red rivers. The group that migrated into the Red River area later broke up into two groups: the Tahi Dum and the Thai Mour. These two groups later settled in many place such as Saybangfai, Hinboun, Saynamnoy river area and the Huaxanghai Mountain area.

Presently, the PHOUTHAY lived in the central provinces, mostly in NONGBOK, MAHAXAY, HINBOUN and BUALAPHA districts of KHAMMUANE province, plus they live in PHIN, SEPONE, and VILABLOULY DISTRICTS of SAVANAKHET province. Their population is around twenty thousand people in LAOS. There is a large population in Thailand.
**NAME AND LANGUAGE:**

“PHOUTHAY” has always been the most common name of this group. PHOUTHAY comes from these words: “THAY PHOU”, which has an obscure meaning of “those who migrated along the mountains”.

Their language is an AUSTRO-THAY language and is in the TAI-KADAI group. They do not have a written alphabet.

**SOCIETY, BELIEFS, CEREMONIES AND MYTHS:**

The PHOUTHAY adopted Buddhism during their migration through LAOS. Before this time they were followers of their own style of animism. However, they combined Buddhism with some of their ancient animistic practices and beliefs. They believe in some spirits, the most important being the spirit of the area (PHI MEUANG) and the spirit of village (PHI BARN). They also believe in other spirits such as spirit of the river and the forest. They believe ancestral spirits can protect those in the household from harm.

Every PHOU THAY village will have shamans, who are always female. These are called MOI YAU or PHI FA. They are believed to have magical powers allowing them to cure illnesses. After a harvest, the PHOUTHAY will sacrifice chickens, whiskey, fruit and other items to the “spirit of rice”.

PHOUTHAY families are basically nuclear, but with perhaps three generations living under one house. Men are monogamous and do not practice polygamy like other groups.

PHOUTHAY marriage is a complex affair, as when a girl marries, she must be cut off from her ancestral spirits and this takes many ceremonies and sacrifices to perform correctly. When a young man is interested in a girl he will give her a gift of money or cloth. Later a dowry must be paid to her family, which today is about half a kilogram of silver, plus one buffalo, a pig, some rice whisky, and one million kip in cash.

After marriage, the husband will move into the wife household. He will be expected to work hard; carrying water, pounding rice, finding and picking firewood, searching for food, and so on. Later the couple may inherit this house or may move into their own.

When a woman is pregnant, there are contain taboos she must follow. Some of these include not eating banana flowers, horse, fatty meat, or the meat of a pregnant buffalo. Also, she may not nap during the day, nor her husband may not cut the neck of a domestic animal for slaughter. These beliefs are to prevent the baby from being born deformed or seriously ill.

The baby will be born in the house. After birth, the mother will eat rice with ginger root for three days, then later progress to chicken and other meats. This is to insure the mother’s strength.

Phu Thai cremate their dead, either at the village temple or outside the village. If the family has money, then a ceremony is held for two nights at the house of the deceased. Those who are younger than fifteen or died in accidents are buried. If an outsider dies in a village, then the deceased’s family must sacrifice one buffalo to the village spirit.
**Village and house:**

Before building a new village or house, the villagers will bury some rice seed in the spot they wish to build. If it germinates successfully, then they will proceed to build in that spot.

The Phu Thai live in small villages with houses on stilts, the walls of woven bamboo and the roofs made of thatch. A leader leads to a small porch.

The house is divided into two rooms. One room is a living room with a small hearth for cooking. The other room is a small sleeping room. They will keep their animals under the house during the night.

**Costume:**

According to the Phu Thai in Laos, they no longer wear their costumes to the Phu Thai in Thailand. Today a Phu Thai woman will wear a traditional sarong (Phaa sin) that is black or dark blue with a long-sleeved vest. If there is a special occasion, then they will wear a more colorful phaa sin with a wide sash that is red or white. Today they wear a little jewelry, but used to wear a lot of silver jewelry several generations ago.

For special occasions the males will wear wide blue trousers and short-sleeved blue vest with red hems and fringes. For daily wear, they will wear commercial clothing brought from La traders. They will also be tattooed, but this is becoming less common.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Phu Thai’s main crop is glutinous rice, which is grown in wet paddies. They also grow vegetables, fruits, tobacco and some cotton, animals they raise are buffalo, cows, poultry, dogs, and small horses. They also hunt small game and fish in the rivers. The women will weave phaa sins and other items. The men will make items from bamboo for trade. These include mats, baskets, fish traps, and other household items.

**Yang Historical background:**

Most Yang live in the southern Yunan province of China, however, a small population lives in an around Phonsali province of Laos. They migrated into this area from Vietnam about 150 to 200 years ago.

The population of Yang in Laos numbers 4,630, which 2,284 are women, according to the second population census of 1995.

**Name and language:**

They are known as “Yang”, which is their official name. They are also known as Giay or Nhang.

The language is a Tai-Kadai language of the Austro-Thai linguistic family. They do not have their own written script, but some Yang have adopted the script of the Lue people.
Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:

Yang villages will differ somewhat in their religious practices. Some villages are Buddhist due to Lue influence, while other villages are more animistic, following their beliefs in local spirits such as their spirit of the village, the spirit of the house, and the spirits of ancestors and natural attributes such as the forest. Villages also have shamans and sorcerers to help in communicating with spirits or in healing the ill.

The Yang also believe in the 32 KWANS as the Lao people also believe in. the 32 spirits in the body oversee a bodily organ must be appeased with sacrifices and rituals to keep one’s health.

Yang society consists of nuclear family units. They are monogamous. Dowries consist of two pigs, some silver, and some money and rice whiskey, after marriage the man will move into the wife’s household for a period of up to three years. They yang will intermarry with the Lue and the Tai Dam.

During pregnancy the mother does not work much and will give birth in the bedroom with a midwife or with the mother-in-law assisting. On the thirty-first day after birth there will be a ceremony to name the baby.

Yang who die at the age of 70 or over will be cremated. Younger people will be buried. The bodies of he older dead are mourned at home a ceremony that lasts from one to seven days. If a child or teenager dies, then the body is buried the same day.

Village and house:

The Yang live in lower villages, at attitudes between 400 and 800 meters. They like to live near streams and rivers in order to have good irrigation for their rice farming. The villages are small, about 20 to 50 houses. In some villages the Yang build their houses on the ground, and other villages they build their houses on stilts.

A house will have a large living area plus a small kitchen. Family members will sleep in the corner of the living room. Under the house will be a rice-husker and a loom for weaving. Firewood will also be kept under the house. Yang do not like to keep animals under their house.

Costume:

Yang costumes will vary with the location of their village. However, most Yang women will wear a long sleeved vest with Lue-styled Phaa sins, the vest is often dark or light blue. They will often wear a turban. The men will wear baggy trousers of dark blue and a vest that fastens on the side.

Agriculture and livelihood:

The yang grow glutinous rice in flooded fields. They also know how to grow dry-land rice using slash-and-burn methods. Rice is the most important crop, but they also grow corn, cassava, pineapples and many kinds of vegetables. Cotton is also commonly grown, plus some coffee.
The Yang like to raise buffalos, horses, pigs, and poultry. Those near the river will fish with traps and nets. Edible foodstuffs are found in the forest to supplement their diet. Small game such as squirrels and birds will be hunted with simple weapons. They also have the practice of catching young bears by killing the mothers. These will be sold to the Chinese.

The women are skillful and busy weavers, weaving cotton products for sale and personal use. The men make baskets and mats from bamboo.

**LAO**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

The Lao people have settled in Lao for hundreds of years, even maybe as far back as six hundred years, which are the oldest written archeological evidence. The original territory of the Lao is thought to be north of the Mekong river, to the plane of NANG SIKHIENG river that is located in the southern China.

Now, the Lao live in every province of today’s Lao P D R. They also live in Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. The northeastern Thais are culturally and linguistically almost the same people. They are the largest group in LAOS, numbering 2,403,819 people. Females number 1,218,748 persons or 52.5 percent.

**NAME AND LANGUAGE:**

Lao is the official name and the most common name. Historians are not sure where the name “Lao” come from. There are several myths concerning the Lao culture emerging from a gourd, and perhaps this word came from this. There are sub-groups of the Lao. These include, KALEUANG, BO, NGOY and NGO.

The language is an AUSTRO-THAI language and is in the TAI-KADAI language tree. They have their own written script. It is also the official language of government and used by every ethnic group in LAOS.

**SOCIETY, BELIEFS, CEREMONIES AND MYTHS:**

The Lao have a rich cultural tradition. They have followed THERAVADA Buddhism for centuries. In this Buddhism are practices of local animism. They believe in spirits, known as PHI that reside in all things, such as villages, houses, forests, rivers, the sky, crops and their own ancestors.

Every village will have temple and it is usual for every family to have at least one son enter the monk-hood for a period of about two years.

The Lao have 12 customs (hit sip song) that means they will make merit in each month of the year. They have many other merit days (vanboun) also, according to the traditional custom of each month. The significant festivals are the Lao New Year, which includes a boat racing festival, and BOUNKATHIN, which is the offering of ropes to the monks, plus the time for males to enter the priesthood (BOUNKONG).

The Lao people believe in KWANS, which are bodily spirits. There are 32 KWANS in each person and each thought to be a guardian of a certain organ in the body. They are thought to occasionally
wonder from the body, and of this is seen as a problem, then a ceremony is performs to bring the KWANS back.

Today Lao families are generally nuclear, with perhaps several generations under the same roof, men are monogamous, and both husband and wife will decide family issues. The husband is the head of the family, but the women may be more industrious economically and control the finances. They will inter married with all others groups in LAOS. When they marry other Laos, it normal for the husband to move into the wife’s family. In heritance is usually matrilineal, often to the youngest daughter, as she will normally take care of parents in their old age.

The deceased are cremated in the temple compound. Buddhist monks will chant incantations. Drinks and food will be offered to family and friends for several days in a festive party. This may be a costly affair for the family, and some families can ill afford the cost.

**VILLAGE AND HUOSE:**

The Lao live in established villages, generally in the lowland. The most prominent structure in the small villages is usually the temple. Their traditional homes are large and comfortable, and usually sit on wooden or concrete poles or stilts. They are generally made of wood, cement or bamboo with thatched or tin roofs. Usually there is a large living room with two or three sleeping areas that are walled off. The front of house is straight to the north and the other end to the south. a ladder is at the front of the house and also at the back balcony. The ladder always has an odd number of rungs.

The space under the house is used for agricultural equipment and animals, in the past the rice husker was kept under the house. When visitors visit, they always take off their hat and shoes when entering the house.

**COSTUME:**

Lao women wear traditional sarongs, known as PHAASIN, which are usually made of silk, they made be very intricately woven, with many colors and designs. With this they wear a short-sleeved multi-colored blouse that will have shoulder sash which runs diagonally from the right hip to the left shoulder. A silver belt will finish the costume. They will also wear their hair up in a ban.

The men will wear long trousers and shirts. At home they will wear a light cotton cloth wrapped around the waist called a PANONG.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Lao have many occupations, but most are farmers. They are skilled farmers of both glutinous and ordinary rice; you will find LAO people, who are very fond of eating sticky rice with fermented fish paste.

Besides rice, Lao farmers grow vegetables, tobacco, cotton, fruit, cassava and many other crops. They also practice fish farming and the rising of silk worms in mulberry trees.

Animal raised includes buffalo, cattle, pigs poultry and dogs. Some are involved in the logging business in which elephants are still used. They will fish in the rivers and lakes using traps and nets.
Lue

Historical background:

The Lue originally came from Kwangtung province of China. They migrated through Vietnam into Ynnan province and into northern Laos around the thirteenth century.

The majority of Lue lives in Phongsali, Luangamtha, Bokeo, Udomsai, Saiyabury and Laungprabang provinces. Today, there are still Lue living also in China, Burma, Vietnam and Thailand.

The population of Lue in Laos mummers 119,199. A little more than half are women.

Name and Language:

The official name and the most common name. Historians are not sure where the name. “ Lao comes from. There are several myths concerning the Lao culture emerging from a gourd, and perhaps this word came from this. There are sub-groups of the Lao. These include Pouan, Kaleaung, Bo, Ngoy and Ngo.

The languages is an Austro-Thai language and is in the Tai-Kadai languages group on this languages tree. They have their own written script. It is also the official languages of government and used by every ethnic group in Laos.

Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:

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Every village will have a temple and it is usual for very family to have at least one son enter the monk-hook for a period of about two years.

The Lao have 12 customs ( Hih sipsong ) that means they will make merit in each month of the year. They have many other merit days ( van boon ) also, according to the traditional custom of each month. The significant festivals are the Lao New year, which include a boat racing festival, and Bounkathin, which is the offering of robes to minks, plus the time for males to enter the priest-hood ( Bounkong ).

The Lao people believe in kwans, which are bodily spirit. There are 32 kwans in each person, and each is thought to be a guardian of a certain organ in the body. They are thought to occasionally wonder from the body, and if this seen as a problem. Then a ceremony is performed to bright the kwans back.

Today Lao families are generally nuclear, with perhaps several generations under the same roof. Men are monogamous, and both husband and wife will decide family issues. The husband is the head of the family, but the women may be more industries economically and control the finances. They will intermarry with all other groups in Lao. When they marry other Laos, it is normal for husband to move into the wife’s family. Inheritance is usually matrilineal, often to the youngest daughter, as she will normally take care of parents in their old age.

The deceased are cremated in the temple compound. Buddhist monks will chant incantations. Drinks and food will be offered to family and friends for several days in a festive party. This may be costly affair for the family, and some families can ill afford the cost.
Village and house:

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The space under the house is used for agricultural equipment and animals. In the past the rice husker was kept under the house. When visitors visit, they always take off their hat and shoes when entering the house.

Costume:

Lao women wear traditional sarongs, known as phaa sin, which are usually made of silk, they made be very intricately woven, with many colors and designs. With this they wear a short-sleeved multi-colored blouse that will have shoulder sash which runs diagonally from the right hip to the left shoulder. A silver belt will finish the costume. They will also wear their hair up in a bun.

The men will wear long trousers and shirts. At home they will wear a light canton cloth wrapped around the waist called a panong.

Agriculture and livelihood:

The Lao have many occupations, but most are farmers. They are skilled farmers of both glutinous and ordinary rice. There is a saying that when you find sticky rice, you will find Lao people, who are very fond of eating sticky rice with fermented fish paste.

Beside rice, Lao farmers grow vegetables, tobacco, cotton, fruit, cassava, and many other crops. They also practice dish farming and the raising of silkworms in mulberry trees.

Animal raised included buffalo, cattle, pigs, and poultry, and digs. Some are involved in the logging business in which elephants are still used. They will fish in the rivers and lakes using traps and nets.

LUE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The LUE originally came from KWANGTUNG province of china. They migrated through Vietnam into YUNAN province and into northern Laos around the thirteenth century.

THE MAJORITU of LUE lives in PHONGSALI, LUANGNAMTHA, BAKEO, UDOMSAY, SAYABURY, and LUANGPRABANG provinces, today, there are still LUE living also in china, BURMA, VIETNAM, AND THAILAND.

The population of LUE in Laos numbers 119,199. a little more than half are women.
Name and language:

The official name is LUE. This is the name they prefer to be called, alternative names include DAI, PAI-YI, and LAO LUE.

The language is an AUTRO-ASAITIC language, and is in the MON-KHMERE group. There is a written script, but very few young LUE today know this script.

SOCIETY, BELIEFS, CEREMONIES AND MYTHS:

The LUE adopted THERAVADA Buddhism in the fourteenth century, however they still mix in their own brand of animism where they believe in the spirits of nature and the household. They believe life is controlled by many, spirits, most of them malevolent. The spirit of the township (PHIMEUANG) is the most feared and most powerful. The villagers pay respect to this spirit by building a spirit house near the village and offering sacrifices such as pigs and chickens.

The LUE have clans that take the names of animals, such as the tiger clan or the bird clan must assist all members of the same line when they need help or have troubles in their lives. It is also forbidden to kill or eat the animal or plant that represents one’s clan.

New Years is a very important time of celebration for the LUE. They will make offering to the spirits, such as sacrificing buffaloes and pigs. This may go on for three to seven days, and during this time no outsider may enter the village. They also spend this time to make merit for those who have passed away.

The LUE traditionally practice monogamy. Traditionally, polygamy was practiced among the wealthier members of society, but that tradition is fading. Young people are free to choose their future mate. Once married, they live in nuclear family units. They usually marry within their own ethnic group, but will occasionally intermarry with the LAO, TAI NUA, and YUAN, plus the other TAI groups.

Mothers give birth in the house. The umbilical cord will be buried in the ground. Mothers must refrain from eating certain foods for sometime after giving

When someone dies, the body is placed in a coffin and a ceremony is held. The coffin is later taken to the cemetery and burned on a pyre. Traditional, there were certain funerals protocols that had to be followed depending on who died. The kind of ceremony was dictated by if the person was rich or poor, adult or minor, or a victim of violent death. Of a young child dies, they are not cremated, but buried in a grave.

Village and houses:

The LUE have settled in the lowlands, at altitudes between 150 and 400 meter. They like to be near water for their farming their villages are neatly arranged and tidy, and rang from 40 to 250 house per village.
The houses are built on wooden poles. The walls are made of woven bamboo and have thatched roofs. There is a covered verandah in the front that has a ladder leading to the ground. There a large living room with a kitchen in the corner, and a small area is partitioned off for sleeping. there is an altar in the house where offerings are given to ancestors and spirits.

Every LUE village also has a temple. The walls inside are often decorated with murals depicting LUE life in the past.

Costume:

Lue women will wear a sarong of dark blue or black that is women with numerous colorful designs. With this they wear long-sleeved jackets and loose blouses. They also wrap a colorful cloth around their head, covering their hair. The women wear silver jewelry, which will be etched with patterns of birds, butterflies and flower.

Men’s traditional dress consisted of a short jacket, trouser, and a turban. The jacket similar to the women’s and the trouser are bell-bottomed and are embroidered with bands of red, white, and yellow along the hems.

Agriculture and live hood:

The Lue produce mostly glutinous rice at their main crop. They also grow corn, tobacco, cotton, fruits, and wide range of vegetable. They raise buffaloes, pigs, poultry, and some cattle.

They are very skilled in crafts. Men are skilled silversmiths and can also make very nice baskets of woven bamboo. The women are known for their weaving and sewing, making sarong, handbags, pillow covers, and many other items. Some women are involved in traditional paper making using mulberry bark.

The Mone – Khmer Language Family :( 32 Ethnic Groups)

Khmou

Historical background:

The Khmou are one of the oldest inhabitants of northern Laos. They arrived in the area by the early first millennium A.D. it is still a mystery from where these people came from, but some anthropologists believe they migrated from northern Burma. Others believe that perhaps the Khmou migrated from Vietnam or the Yunnan area.

After majority Lao, the Khmou are the next largest ethnic group in Lao. According to the 1995 censue, the population of the Khmou in Laos is 500,975, of which 253,517 are female. This is 11 percent of the country’s total population. The Khmou are also be found in neighboring countries such as China, Vietnam and Thailand.
Name and Language:

Different groups of Khmou refer to themselves with slightly different accents on the first syllable as “Kha” or “Kum.” But all groups pronounce the second syllable clearly and exactly the same as distinct “Mu.” The official Lao government name is “Khmou.”

The word “Khmou” name is “a person.” The Khmou have many different groups which go by the names Khmou Rork, Khmou U, Khmou Lue, Khmou Kwaen, Khmou Nyuan, Khmou Cheuang, Khmou Khrong, Khmou Mae, and Khmou Kasuck.

Khmou language is classified into the Mon-Khmer language group, the branch is the Khmuic branch. There are distinct regional dialects among the language. Khmou also like to learn the languages of other ethnic groups. In 1980s, linguists carried out some studies and used Latin alphabets to write in Khmou dialect. This alphabet still exists and is being used.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

Khmou, like other ethnic groups in Lao believe in spirits. They believe in the house spirit (hrooy gang), the spirit of water (hom), the spirit of the forest (hrooy prri), and other. Among the most feared are the hrooy poop and the hrooy suu because of their ability to take possession of people. Turning them into dangerous individuals. Therefore, each village must have at least one spiritual master to defeat these spirits.

There are abundant festive traditions within the year. For example, after the completion of upland and pabby rice harvesting, there will be buffalo herding festival. There is also a rice planting festival and a New Year’s festival.

The KHMOU also practice ancestor worship. They have clans that are built on the patrimonial line. These lines are named after different animals or plants such as the tiger line, bird line, firm tree line, and many others. Each clan line will have some restrictions and taboos such as do not touch, kill or eat the creatures that represent the clan. They believe if a person dies commit taboo, bad things may happen such as their skin may fall off; their teeth fall out, or suffer insanity. Also, all members of the same clan must always assist and offer aid to each other, no matter how far away they are from each other.

Court ship is fairly free among the KHMOU, and they chose whom they like as mates. When all is agreed, they arrange a marriage. How ever, of a woman becomes pregnant before the wedding ceremony the father of the baby is scolded for not respecting the village customs as well as offending prominent figures and elderly people.

Elderly people are give names to newborn babies according to the day, month or year they are born.

The KHMOU have a short ceremony for the died, Sometimes if a person dies in the morning, There will be a funeral in the afternoon of the same day. When a person dies, a pig will immediately be killed by using the rice pestle to hit the head of the pig at the foot of the house’s stairs. This is offered as a sacrifice. A bamboo that will cover the body, the body is carried by bamboo sticks to the gravesite. People who carry the body do not wear clothes, only loincloths. A close male member of the family carries a sword.

Some Khmou groups have a poems for recitation that direct the deceased in the afterlife. To confuse any bad spirits that may follow the funeral party back to the village, the people return to the village by walking in large circles.
Art and culture is also abundant. Each branch has many kinds of chanting and sinning. There are a number of musical instruments made of bamboo. In addition, they have folk tales, proverbs and dances of their own such as the sword dance (Phom darp), and the bamboo-slapping dance (Phorn thung bung).

**Village and house:**

Their village are found near streams in lower mountains areas. The villages vary in population from 10 to 90 houses. Traditionally, the village has a communal house where the young boys will live.

The Khmou like to built their houses on low wooden stilts. The walls are made of woven bamboo with no windows. There are two rooms; the inner room will be for their parents, which has a fireplace for cooking rice; the outer room with a separate fireplace will be for receiving the guests. Visitors to the house will be allowed to stay in the outer room only. During daytime, a taboo states that it is not allowed to carry raw meat to the house without wrapping it first. After celebrating festivals, Khmou people then restore and maintain their houses or build new houses. After completing the maintenance or building a new house, they celebrated again with rice wine that is made in clay jars.

**Costume:**

The Khmou have limited weaving skills, so most of the buy their cloth from the Lue or Phuan people, or other Tai groups who weave. The festive dresses of the women are dark vests that are long sleeved with a dark sarong that has some motifs and colors embroidered in it. Usually they wear ordinary Lao sarongs and blouses, preferring g bright colors. They like silver and copper bracelets. The older women cover their hair with a headscarf.

Traditionally the men wore a loincloth and a long-sleeved jacket which are embroidered. However, today they generally wear cheap factory made clothing.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Khamou generally have practiced slash and burn agriculture for growing dry-land rice. They also grow crops such as cassava, maize, peanuts, and other vegetables. They also grow tobacco. They have some buffalo, goats and pigs and chickens are also popular. They also like to fish and hunt, catching small rodents that they sell or eat. In addition, the Khmou collect non-wood forest products or for sale and exchange at market places or for exchange with their neighboring groups.

They are also skilled metalworkers and also at weaving with bamboo and rattan, making baskets, fish traps and other tools and utensils which can be sold or traded.
Katang:
Historical background

The Katang are a sizeable ethnic groups of Laos, numbering close to 100,000 people. Before the Buddhist era, during the region of King Chanh Aluay, the Katang were believed to have, migrated from today’s northern Myanmar region and settled in the Lao territory in the north. Later a group of Katang then located in the north and later on migrated to the regions of Salavan province. Also, some moved to the Champassak province area, where they still remain today.

Also a popular story says that during these times of migration, some Katang traveling thought the Chapassak area found a Buddha image in a cave as they were searching for new territory to settle in. the Katang travelers took the Buddha image with them, but some ethnic Lao begged them to leave the Buddha statue. When the Katang were crossing the Mekong River at Moung Kao, the Buddha image was accidentally dropped into the river. A number of people made attempts diving to find the image, but several people died. The then ruler of Chapassak principality ordered the Katang people to dive for the village since they were they originators of this problem. Quickly some Katang divers found the Buddha image, where it was placed in Horphrake Pagoda, in the Muong Phonethong district of Champassak province. After this incident the ruler of Champassak principality gave the Katang the duty of looking after this Buddha image, which they did dutifully.

During the later Siamese invasions the Siamese invaders took this Buddha image to Siam, taking the Katang keepers with them as slaves. During this forced trek into Siam, six to seven families did not want to go to Siam, so they fled and hid deeps in the forest and mountaintops. Later they moved to settle in the pains of Salaven, Savannakhet, Champassak and Sekong provinces, where they currently are today.

The population of the Katang today is 95,440, of which 48,573 are female, this is 2.1% of the country’s total population census done in 1995.
**Name and language:**

These people refer to themselves as “Katang”, which is also the official name that the Lao government recognizes. Apparently the word “Katang” comes from the word “Katang” which means “bee’s wax”.

Their language is classified in the Mon-Khmer language group, on the Katuic language branch. They do not have an alphabet for writing.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The Katang believe in a myriad of animistic, local spirits. Spirits of the household, the village, the forest, ancestors and the rice harvest are just some of the few important ones that are worshipped. One of the most important spirits is the spirit of rice. If this spirit is offended then a white buffalo must be sacrificed. Also, if there are natural disasters or disease strikes the village animal sacrifices are also made. These sacrifices are made in spirit houses that are some ways from the village, there are also “spirit gates” at the entrance to the villages, which keep away the evil spirits.

The Katang previously lived in extended-family household with several generations under the same roof, but today the family structure is more nuclear. They follow a clan system based on the male lineage of the family. If the father dies, the son shall become the family patriarch.

Katang choose their mates two ways: either though an marriage arranged by the parent, or letting young people find their own partners. The katang celebrate their wedding ceremony twice. The first celebration is called the dong noy (small wedding) and the second time is called the dong nyai (big wedding). The wedding dowry consists of a package such as three buffalo, some money, three to five pigs, some chickens, vessels of wine and other similar items. A celebration of eating pork and drinking wine follows for a day and a night. Five to ten years later the “big wedding” ceremony is celebrated and the festivities are repeated. Then next morning, a buffalo is killed as sacrifice to the spirits, which is later cooked and eaten later during further partying.

Apparently, the Katang who lived in Toomlarn district had the tradition of after their initial wedding will not sleep together for seven years, seven months and seven nights during this long period, the husband has the right to court and sleep with other women. If the husband and wife break this taboo and there is a pregnancy, they must pay a penalty to the village of three black buffaloes and three white buffaloes; this taboo period has been reduced to one year, one month and one night. However, if there is an early pregnancy, the buffalo fine is still the same.

Today the Katang are basically monogamous, however polygamy used to be more common. If a women’ husband died, she would become the wife of his brother, or even his father.

Katang women used to give birth in the forest, with the mother having mother and sister assist. Three days after birth, she would be allowed to return to the house. During this period the husband or other male relatives are forbidden to see her. But nowadays, this tradition has changed, with most women giving birth in the house.

If there is a sickness, a shaman will try to cure the ill person by using magic spells of chants and traditional medicines from the forest. If there is death, the deceased is covered with a white cloth and placed in a coffin. Before carrying the coffin to be buried, the soul of the dead must be worshipped. Then a small feast is held, and then the coffin is buried outside the village. However, if person died in an accident, he or she will be buried where the accident occurred.
Katang festivals include the New Year festival, which is called Cha Nga. In addition, they also have ritual feast that occurs on many occasion when the spirits need to be placated. This called la peup. Usually, a buffalo is sacrificed during this time. This feast is also held during funerals.

The Katang have artistic traditions such as ritual chanting (lum), and traditional vocal songs. They also have traditional musical instruments such as the flute, khaen, drum and phanor. They also have folk tales, fairy tales and other that emphasized their culture and livelihood.

Katang like to eat glutinous rice, soup, grilled meat and vegetables. They use spices in their cooking such as lemon grass, ginger, and wild onions. Most of their food is found in nature by foraging, hunting and fishing. They rarely kill domestic animals for everyday eating. Most of the domestic slaughter is for rituals and sacrifices. The Katang like dirking rice wine and smoking strong tobacco using clay or wooden pipes. Both sexes of all ages partake in the tobacco smoking.

**Village and house:**

Traditionally, the Katang village consisted of longhouses surrounding a communal house. However, this is less common today, and now one is more likely to see small houses on stilts constructed of wood and bamboo. These houses are arranged irregularly, and there is usually not a communal house today. The houses are simple affairs with one room for eating and sleeping with a small fireplace hearth in the corner.

**Costume:**

In the past, Katang men wore only loincloths. They had long hair, which they rolled up. They also pierced their ears with large holes for earrings of silver and tin. They also tattooed their legs, which demonstrated their power and courage; this was also believed to give them magical powers. Now they wear typical commercial clothing bought in the markets and they don’t wear much jewelry much anymore.

The women wear traditional Lao skirts (phaa sinh) with blouses. They roll up their hair and also pierce their ears for jewelry. Children under age six are mainly nude.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Katang are engaged mainly in slash and burn cultivation and flood paddy filed rice farming. In addition, they also grown root crops and vegetables for their household consumption. Katang people also raise different types of animals such as cattle, buffaloes, pigs and poultry for ritual ceremonies. They also gather forest products such as mushroom and honey. Hunting small game such as birds and rodents with crossbows and ancient muskets is common. Fishing is also important in supplementing their diet.

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Katang
/   \\  
Phakeo
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Katu

Historical background:

The Katu people have lived in Laos for many centuries, but their exact origins are relatively unknown. The historical background and origin of this ethnic group is similar to those of other members of the Mon-Khmer language group. Many researchers believe that the Katu migrated from Southeast India and southern part of China. In these regions, there are still people who speak Mon-Khmer languages such as the Moondah and Kohn people.

Presently, the majority of Katu live in the Southern provinces of Laos such as Kaleum, Darcheug and Thattaeng districts of Sekong province; Laonggamm district of Salavan province and Paksong and Bachiengchernalsook of Champassak province. In addition, Katu ethnic people also live in Vietnam in Quang Nam, Danang and Theua Thian Hue provinces.

The total population of Katu people living in Laos is 17,024 people, of which 8,653 are females. The katu share 0.4% of the country’s total population, according to the second population census in 1995.

Name and language:

The Katu refer to themselves also as the “Katu”, and other ethnic groups also call them Katu as well, and this is the name they generally prefer. The Katu group is also composed of many smaller branches such as the Trew, Darking, Utrna, Asarn and Pheuang groups.

The Katu language is classified as a member of the Mon-Khmer language group and is member of the Katuic language branch. They do not have a written languages or alphabet.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

Katu have customs and beliefs that are similar to other members of the Mon-Khmer group. They believe in the spiritual mind and soul as well as spirits that they call in their language the “Yung and Brao”. There are many spirits, some which are good and considered helpful, and some that are evil and feared. One of the most important is the spirit of rice.

Like other ethnic groups in Lao, the Katu live in a society tightly controlled by custom and traditions that have been handed down for generations. They believe sacred things surround them that contain good and evil. These things protect and take care of them but may cause harm as well. If the people pray and worship properly, they will be protected from misfortune. Also if they worship and respect the evil spirits, the Katu believe misfortune can be turned into fortune.

Therefore, every year the Katu will have large feasts and ritual ceremonies to beg for happiness and a peaceful life as well as for good production in farming and hunting. The major feast celebrates the rice spirits called in Katu language the Ah Yah. In addition, feasts are held before planting and harvesting rice. In addition, they have other feasts and ritual ceremonies. They traditionally offered chicken, pigs or buffaloes to the spirits as a sacrifice plus and large meals for guests during feasting and rituals.

In regards to succession the Katu community follows a matrilineal. A clan is of great importance, even more than an individual family. Only a son can lead the clan and receive inheritance. Every person is each clan must respect and implement spiritual traditions of the clan and every clan member has the
responsibility to help other in various activities, particularly in their customs, traditional rites and religious beliefs.

Traditionally, the Katu have restrictions on cross-marriage between clans. If a man in “A clan” marries a woman in “B clan”, a man in “B clan” cannot marry a woman in “A clan”. The marriage takes place when the groom pays a dowry of one to twenty buffaloes to the bride’s parents. This figure depends on the economics status of the couple.

Birth traditionally takes place in a separate place prepared by the husband. This place can be an area under the house. Also, a small hut may be built near the village. It is important that pregnant mothers do not give birth in the house. During birth, there is usually an experienced woman or female relative to assist in the birthing process. After three days have passed after giving birth, the mother can return to the house with her infant.

In regards to death and funerals there are traditions that are followed depending on the age and cause of death (illness or accident). In addition, the social status and economic status of the deceased’s family plays a role in the funeral rites. Generally, Katu bury their dead. However, if a person died an unnatural death such as by a tiger or violence, the village was abandoned and all animals were put to death. After a period of around six months of living in the forest, a new village could be built in a completely new area.

**Village and house:**

The Katu rationally prefer to place their simple houses of bamboo and wood in a circle, having a Slakwan (Public house) located in the center of the village. The Salakwan is for receiving guests and ritual ceremonies and feasts. One also must be cautious and observe whether there is a fresh tree branch by the village gate before entering a Katu village. If there is a branch it is forbidden for a villager to leave the village and for an outsider to enter the village. Also, if a fresh tree branch is hanging on the wall of a house, it means entering their house is prohibited. It is also prohibited to sit and lean on a column of the house. A visitor must use the special door as an entry and exit, not the regular family door. The tradition of receiving a guest is to provide a tobacco pipe for the guest to smoke, which is called a korkder.

**Costume:**

Traditionally men used to wear the traditional loincloth and left their upper body naked, but now most Katu wear modern clothing bought in local markets.

The Katu women have preserved their traditional dress better than the men have. These traditional costume can often be seen during various feasts and ritual ceremonies. These consist of long dresses that cover the breasts red and yellow stripes cross across the black background.

Traditionally, the Katu filed their teeth, but that is not practiced much now. They were also skilled at tattooing their bodies, but this custom is slowly dying out also.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The majority of Katu live in remote mountain areas, far from public mountains areas from public infrastructure. They practice mainly slash and burn cultivation of rice, and grow vegetables and roof crops for their household consumption. Katu men are skilled hunters also. Generally, their livelihood is very tied-in with nature, with their tools and technology production primitive. Animal husbandry is an
activity that Katu have practiced for centuries. The animals are raised mainly for ritual ceremonies and can also be used for wedding dowries. Buffaloes are of special importance for this, and pigs and chickens are next. Katu women are skillful in weaving cotton to make clothes, and the men are skillful in handicraft such as carving.

**Kriang:**

**Historical background:**

The Kriang ethnic group’s historical background and origin is similar to others in the Mon-Khmer language group. They have lived in the territory of Laos for many centuries.

Presently, most of the Kriang people have settled in the southern provinces of Laos, in particular, in Kaleum, Thataeng and Lamarm districts of Sekong province. In addition, they live also in Salavan district of Champassak province. The Kriang officially consist of two groups: the Kohr and the Chatong.

The total population of Kriang in Laos is 12,186 people, of which 6,175 are female, sharing 0.3% of the country’s total population, according to the Second population census done in 1995.

**Name and language:**

Other ethnic groups refer to them as the “Ngae”, but they do not like this name. They prefer to themselves as “Kriang”.

The Kriang language is placed on the Katuic branch of the Mon-Khmer language group. They do not have written language.

**Belief, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The Kriang have unique customs, traditional, and beliefs. Thought the relationship and communication with other neighboring ethnic groups, they have borrowed and combined other cultures. The Kriang believe in animism. They believe that spirits are everywhere, both good and bad. These spirit are associated with objects and things, such as trees, rivers, wind and rain, for example. When someone falls sick, when there is a disaster, or damage to their agriculture or economic production they believes this is the act of a spirit.

The Kriang people will feast many times in a year. One such feast is to commemorate the spiritual soul of dead parents. This is usually organized in April. The Kriang also celebrate the New year festival (Boon Nga).

When there is a ritual feast or traditional festival, they kill a buffalo to tradition festival; they kill a buffalo to offer as sacrifice and for feeding the villagers. In addition, there are feast in association with their yearly agricultural production such as before harvesting rice. These feasts may last up to three days.

The social structure of the Kriang is composed of many family clans, and each clan has its own name with various taboos and restrictions. Inheritance follows a paternal line. After marriage, the wife will live with the parents of her husband. She will become a member of her husband’s family and will work with that family. The households are extended with one to six families living together. The most elderly man will generally serve as the head of this extended family group.

Apart from the official organization of government, the elderly and prominent figures of each family clan will help in village administration as they are well respected by the village community.
VILLAGE AND HOUSE
KRIANG settle mainly in the remote areas in villages of 25 to 50 houses. Traditionally the houses were placed in a circle or rectangle around the SALAKWAN or village public house that is located at the center.
During the construction of the SALAKWAN, the villagers are prohibited from working in their fields and farms. The SALAKWAN is also a place for feasting and rites.

COSTUME:
Traditional costumes have mostly vanished; with the KRIANG mostly wearing commercially produced Lao clothing. The traditional woman’s dress consisted of a red sarong and short-sleeved shirt with a sort of cape. The cape was dark blue with red stripes around the neck. Women weaved these themselves, but today most KRIANG women no longer have weaving skills.

AGRICULTURE AND LIVELIHOOD:
KRIANG people are occupied mainly in shifting cultivation of dry land rice. However, some with access to reliable water will grow wet-paddy rice. They also grow vegetables for consumption and trade such as taro, pumpkin, egg plants, wax ground, cucumbers, maize and others. They raise chickens and pigs in nearly every household, killing them on the occasions of rotes and feasts, killing for daily consumption only occasionally. The KRIANG raise also buffalo and cattle, but this is not as common on the KRIANG as other groups hunting and fishing are also important for food sources.
Presently, some of them have begun to grow coffee, tobacco and other cash crops in addition, KRIANG people have a tradition off bamboo weaving of baskets and roof coverings.

Kree/Kri:
Historical background:
The Kree people are an unusual group in Laos, as they have predominately been a nomadic people. However, today they have begun to settle in more permanent villages in Bolikhamsay and Khammuan provinces.
For centuries the Kree people wandered the mountainous area of Bolikhamsay and Khammuan provinces, living in caves and simple shelters. Today the Kree are divided in two groups in Laos. The first group lives in Bualapha, Nyommalad and Nakai districts of Khammuan province and in Khamkeut district of Bolikhamsay province. The second group lives in Phiang district of Saiyabury province.
For centuries the Kree people wandered the mountainous areas of Bolikhasay and Khammuan provinces, living in caves and simple shelters. Today the Kree are divided in two groups in Laos. The first group lives in Bualapha, Nyommalad and Nakai districts of Khammuan province and in Khamkeut district of Bolikhamsay province. The second group lives in Phiang district of Saiyabury province. In addition, Kree people live also in Vietnam and Thailand.
The total population of Kree in Laos numbers 730 people, but it is not known if this is a accurate figure or not.

Name and language:
Kree ethnic people have many different names such as: Kree, Labree, Yubree, Salahng, Arehm and others. Locao in Laos refer to them as the Kha Tong Luang, or “Yellow Leaves” because of their tradition of making simple structures from banana leaves. Once these leaves turned yellow, they then
abandon these shelters and move on to another place. They prefer the name Kree, which means “wild person” in their language. Their language is considered a Vietic language of the Mon-Khmer language group. There are different dialects among the Kree groups. There is no written alphabet.

**Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

Since the Kree have lived very remote lives without much contact with the outside world, their beliefs are very traditional and animistic. They believe in a large number of spirits pertaining to nature and that these spirits control their destiny.

It is believed the Kree wandered the forests in small groups of two to three related nuclear families. These families are patricarchally organized. The leader of the group may be the leader who is the oldest or the best hunter.

The weddings are simple affairs with a small feast of meat and fish. The Kree mothers who still live in the forest give birth alone in the forest and her husband assists. Those in villages are assists by midwives.

When someone dies they bury the dead person at that place, then their houses are burned and they move on to a new location.

They find most of their food in nature such as taro, wild roots, and vegetables. They are also skilled hunters using bows and arrow to shoot boar, deer, snakes and birds. Those who now live in the villages supplement their diet with rice.

Their houses are characterized as primitive and simple, built of only things found in nature such as banana leaves and bamboo. They may also stay in caves and tree holes.

**Costume:**

Previously they used to wear clothing that was woven from tree bark skin and leaves. However this is less common today as they receive typical Lao clothing through trade and from government assistance. They do not know how to weave cloth.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Their livelihood have been nomadic, living a traditional life of gathering, hunting, fishing and constant moving. Now those who are living in permanent villages are growing rice and vegetables for daily food. They have also learned to raise some animals such as buffalo and poultry. They are also very skilled at gathering wild honey that they trade for essentials.

**Khmer**

**Historical background:**

The Khmer people have lived in Laos since ancient times. These people have a culture and language that is similar to the fifth century Wasawadee kingdom of the lower basin of Chaophraya River. Their historical background and origin is also similar to other members of the Mon-Khmer language group.
Presently, Khmer people live in Molapamok district of Champassak province. In addition, they live also in Vietnam and Cambodia.

The total population of Khmer living in Lao is small, numbering 3,908 people, of which 2,051 are female, according to the second population census done in 1995.

**Name and language:**

They are only known by the name “Khmer”, which is also the name other groups refer to them as. This is also their official name in Laos.

Their language is an Austro-Asiatic language, and is a Mon-Khmer language. They also have their own alphabet, which is similar to the Lao alphabet.

**Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

The Khmer follow both Buddhism and animism at the same time. There are pagodas in some Khmer villages, where the villagers will gather for worship.

There are a number of feasts and celebrations such as the New Year, Buddha’s birthday, lunar feasts, and so on.

The Khmer have preserved their customs and traditions quite well. As the time, they have borrowed heavily from neighboring group’s traditions and religious practices, such as wedding ceremonies, entering the priesthood, basi ceremonies, funerals, and others. Young Khmer have complete freedom in choosing their mate. When they feel they have found the right person for marriage, they will ask elder people from both families to make necessary arrangements. Later a formal ceremony will be performed where the man will ask the woman’s hand in marriage and a dowry will also be paid. Later a wedding ceremony similar to a Lao wedding will take place.

Inheritance usually favors the daughters as they have the responsibility to take care of their parents and grandparents until death. After marriage, the husband will stay at his wife’s house, therefore the majority of inheritance is given to those who look after the parents and other siblings will receive less.

Khmer women give birth in the corner of their bedroom under the assistance of an experienced older woman and her husband. The length of resting and staying indoors for the mother will depend on the individual. If she given birth before, she will stay indoors for 15 days if it is her first birth, she will stay indoors for about thirty days. Divorce is allowed, and if a man wants to divorce he will make a sacrifice to the village spirits, such as a pig and rice wine. A woman pays a similar penalty, especially if she committed an offense, such as adultery.

Khmer funeral traditions are identical to the Lao ethnic group’s funeral rites. The body is cremated. However, if the death was caused by an accident, then the body will be buried. An alms-giving ceremony will be performed three years later.

The art and culture of Khmer ethnic people is rich and abundant, in particular with carving, drawing and the paintings in pagodas. They have songs, poetry, rhymes, dances, folk tales, and musical instruments.

**Village and house:**

Khmer prefer to build simple houses on stilts; however, lately they have been building houses that are more similar to the Lao people’s houses.
**Costume**

Presently Khmer so not like to wear their traditional costumes, or most likely do not even own traditional clothing.

**Agriculture and livelihood**

The Khmer in Laos grow rice, root crops, vegetables, and fruits for household consumption and sale. They raise cattle, buffaloes, pigs, chickens and ducks for both consumption an sacrifice. The men are skillful in handicraft and carving, and women are talented in weaving and earning cash income through sales of various commodities.

**Ngouan**

**Historical and background:**

The Ngouan people live in Bualapha, Hinhboon, Xaibuathon an Tahkhek districts of Khamuan province. They migrated into Laos from Vietnam around the end of the nineteenth century. Originally these ethnic people lived in dense forests, high valleys, and other remote places, later, during French colonial rule, they were forced down into the lower lands.

In the 1995 census, the total population of Ngouan living in Laos amounted to 1,344 people, of which 688 were female. Ngouan also live in Vietnam, most of them in Quang Bing province.

**Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

The Ngouan people are animists, respecting and worshipping a range of spirits. These range from spirits of the region and village, to spirits of the natural realm, such as the spirits of the forests and the streams. There are also spirits of the rice crop and the harvest. Importantly, they worship the spirits of the ancestors such as dead parents and other relatives, and believe that these spirits of the soul continue to live in the household. They will make offerings and sacrifices to these spirits in order to have good fortune and happiness. Because of their Vietnam influence, the Nguan people celebrate the Lunar New Year. This is a time for great festivity with much drinking, eating and enjoyment of friends and family.

The society is matrilineal, and the eldest son or father will be head of the family. The youngest daughter will generally take care of the parents in their old age.

Marriages may be arranged sometimes, or young people may choose their own mate. The wedding take place at the bride’s house. The groom pays a dowry after an agreement is reached between both families, so the dowry may vary in size. The usual dowry is a buffalo or a couple of pigs that will not be slaughtered at the wedding, but given to young couple as in investment for their future.

Mothers give birth in their house with assistance from an experienced older woman. A taboo is enforced for the husband and wife that stated they may not stay together of three months and ten days. If they break this taboo, they must pay a penalty of a pig to the village spirit.

Funerals depend on the wealth of the family. If a family has money, then the funeral may be quite elaborate, with a lot of feasting and an elaborate coffin. Poorer families have less feasting and simpler coffins. Other families may assist them in these costs if they are quite poor.

On the funeral day, sons, daughters and nieces must go and lie down in the path of the carried coffin so that the coffin will pass over them. If there is a forked junction, crossroads, or a bridge on the
way to the cemetery, all children and grand children of the deceased must pray to all people I the funeral procession as they pass.

One year after the funeral, the household of the deceased will kill a buffalo or a pig and offer this to the villages in a celebration. Again, this will depend on the wealth of the family.

Village and house:

When the Nguan want to start a new village, elderly people will lead the search for an area that is suitable in terms of water and open area for farming. Before building they will have a ceremony of coin throwing and praying in order to please the spirits of the area.

The Nguan people build their house on the ground. Their small houses have grass thatched roofs, and woven bamboo walls. The floor will be of hard earth. There is a family room for living, and some walled off areas for sleeping. There is an altar in every household for family spirits. The cooking area is outside the house.

Costume

The Nguan people rarely wear any traditional clothing, and what they do have is similar to the Hmong traditional clothing. They like clothing that is white and yellow with black borders. Women will wear a turban that covers their hair. Both sexes have mate necklaces and bracelets of silver, but these are also less common today. Today most Nguan wear commercial clothing that is bought in the local markets.

Agriculture and livelihood

The Nguan practice wet-paddy cultivation of glutinous rice, plus growing vegetables and some fruit. They like to raise chicken and pigs for ritual ceremonies. Buffalos are raise or farm labor.

The Nguan will weave silk, and also raise silk worms. The men make household good such as baskets from bamboo and utensils from wood.

CHENG

HISTORICAL BACK GROUND:

The CHENG are one of the smallest groups in LAOS. They only live on ATTAPEU and SEKONG province. Presently, most of them live on SAISATTHA and SANARMSAI districts of ATTAPEU province. Their total population amounts to 6.511 people, of which 3.342 are females, according the second population census done of 199. Not a lot is known about this group, especially their early history.

NAME AND LANGUAGE:

The person who coined the name “CHENG” was king STTHATHILATH of the LARNXANG kingdom in B. C. 2091-2114 because this ethnic people and the unique art pf carving, and supposedly, he name “CHENG” means “those who carve”. King SETTHATHILATH assigned them to build and take care of the temples and other religious places.
LANGUAGE AND NAME:

The CHENG language is classified as a MON-KHMER language, on the BAHNARIC language branch. The CHENG language is similar to CHIENG, BRAO, YRU, OY and NYAHERN languages. When these people meet and talk, they can understand each other easily.

BELIEFS, COCEITY, CEREMONIES AND MYTHS:

In some villages, the ACHENG believe in both Buddhism and animism. However, a few villages only have animist beliefs. Each year, from January to December, they worship different spirits such as BRAKANAO, the wooden Buddha image. A soup of one chicken or duck and a jar of wine are offered to the spirits. The purpose of ritual feasting is to pay tribute to the spirits that have done good deeds such as permitting a bountiful rice harvest. It is also and opportunity for villagers from different villages to get together.

The most important spirit is the village spirit. Worship of the village spirit is considered essential to daily life. A large feast or held during the middle of the year on this occasion previously, one or two buffaloes were killed. Today, pigs are more commonly killed. During the procession of the rite, young couples, married people and children put their arms on each other’s shoulder in a round shape. Each person yells and dances in a regular rhythm. Every one has great fun during this time. During this time for about one week, no one is allowed to go out of the village. If an outsider does happen to enter the village, He or she must offer one or two buffaloes that will be killed for animist sacrifice to the spirits. When this period of ritual and feasting is over, the villagers go back to work as normal. Before starting with their rainy season, the villagers will organize a separate animist sacrifice to the village PAH (Buddha image) in order to request assistance and mercy from the spirit, and asking the spirits to prevent damage to their crops.

In regards to marriage, either marriage is arranged by parents from a very young age, or young people find their own mate. If everyone is satisfied with the arrangement, a small dowry of money or animals is paid to the bride’s family. After the wedding, the groom will stay at the bride’s house. If divorced is demanded, such as because adultery was committed, the guilty party must pay a penalty of one buffalo or at least four pigs that are to be killed for an animist sacrifice to that village spirit. If the husband committed adultery, all of his valuables or assets will belong to his wife except for the clothes he is wearing.

In regards to inheritance, most inheritance passes to the eldest daughter. She has the right to suitable divide a part of heritage to her brothers and sisters.

CHENG pregnant woman will give birth in a corner of the house near the fireplace. A midwife will assist the birth. There are certain taboos the mother must follow. She will be forbidden from eating catfish, chicken, duck, vegetables, mushroom and other things for some time.

If someone dies, the funeral tradition is simple. The body be covered by a mat, and some feasting and mourning will take place in the house of the deceased. For those who believe in Buddhism, monks will be invited to the house to pray. Some families organize and alms-giving ceremony and some do not.

In addition, CHENG also have some other unusual taboos. One taboo is that it is strictly forbidden to cut one’s hair from the time rice is sown until it is harvested. This is to prevent insects and pests causing damage to their crops. During this period, it is also forbidden to put crabs or shells on hot charcoal.
VIILAGE AND HOUSE:

Before, the CHENG village consisted of some longhouses situated around a communal house. However, they now prefer smaller houses for the typical nuclear family unit. Today the CHENG villages consist of houses on stilts placed in an irregular pattern. The houses sit on wooden stilts, with a wooden floor frame. The walls are made of bamboos and the roof is thatch, and there is a hearth in one corner for cooking.

COSTUME:

Today CHENG woman do not know how to weave, so they buy their clothing from local markets, wearing typical Lao PHAA SINHS and blouses. They tie their hair in a knot on the back of the head. They wear little jewelry. The men wear short pants and generally no shirt.

AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMICS:

The CHENG grow wet-paddy rice, and grow maize and various fruits and grow vegetables. They also raise buffalo, pigs, chickens and ducks for consumption and sale, and for their handicrafts. They make a few simple things such as baskets for their own use.

SAMTAO HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

According to information provided by elderly SAMTAO people, it was learned that the SAMTAO ethnic group has original roots in the southern area of CHINA and northern BURMA. They migrated because of social pressures and settled in LUANGNAMTHA and BOKEO provinces. The total population of SAMTAO in LAOS is 2,213 people, of which 1,153 are female according to the second population census done in 1995.

NAME AND LANGUAGE:

These people refer to themselves as “SAMTAO”, which is also their official name and the name others refer to them by. The SAMTAO also have a sub-group called the DOI. There’re about hundred DOI in LAOS.

Their language is MON-KHMER language tree. They do not have a written language. They also can speak Lao, LUE, YUAN, BID, KEUMMU, and other languages as well.

The SAMTAO practice a mix of Buddhism. They believe in spirits such as the spirits of ancestors, the household, the village and district, plus spirits of nature such as the rivers and the forest. Every year they make sacrifices to the rice spirit, offering chickens, rice and rice wine.

Traditionally the SAMTAO live on extended family units where several generations will live under one roof. The father is the head of the family and they are monogamous. The first child of the family has the task of liking after the parents; thus receives more inheritance than other children.
society of SAMTAO is composed of many clans, known as SINGSAO. They are named after animals, such as the TIGER clan or the cow clan, it is forbidden to eat the meat of the animal that your clan is named after.

They celebrate the LAO New Year, the BOONPHA Ved festival, BOON KHAOPAHNSA festival, and other popular Lao festivals.

The SAMTAO also have traditional shamans and fortunetellers. Of someone is ill, fortuneteller is asked to see if angry spirits are involved in the illness. If so, then sacrifices may be arranged in order to try to please the spirits to cure the illness.

When a couple wants to marry, the groom must pay a dowry of silver, some pigs and some chickens, plus some betel nut. The couple may live with either family after marriage before starting their own household.

The deceased are cremated at the temple or if the family can not afford a proper funeral, the body is buried outside the village. Children who die are always buried.

VILLAGE AND HOUSE:

The SAMTAO have small houses on stilts, the house is built of wood and woven bamboo. The roof is usually grass thatch. There is a single room with a hearth in one corner. The family sleeps on one side of the room under mosquito nets.

COSTUME

The SAMTAO do not have traditional costumes anymore, only wearing common commercial Lao clothing for women used to consist of a dark colored sarong with colored stripes. This was worn with a ling-sleeved vest of dark color. The women also traditionally wore silver jewelry, but this is less common now.

AGRICULTURE AND LIVELIHOOD:

The SAMTAO practice slash-and-burn cultivation of rice, plus also grow rice in flooded paddies. Additionally, they grow other crops such as vegetables. They raise some animal, such as buffalo, pigs, and poultry. The men have simple blacksmithing skills.
SADANG

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

There are a small number of SADANG people in Laos, there have been no accurate information on the origin of this ethnic group. But the present-day SADANG who live in Laos migrated from the central provinces of VIETNAM over 100 years ago. They first settled along the border of Laos and VIETNAM in the region of DARK OONG. Presently, The SADANG lives in BAN HUAI SOM, PHOO YAHNG, and DARDOOD villages in the Lao-VIETNAM border area of ATTAPEU province and SAVANAKHET province. There is still a large population in VIETNAM, numbering nearly 100,000. The 1995 census states that there were 786 SADANG in LAOS, of which 393 were females.

NAME AND LANGUAGE:

Their official name is “SADANG” and this what they are usually called by other groups. There are three different SADANG groups: the SADANGDUAN, KAYONG, and the SADANG.

Their language is a MON-KHMER language that is considered to be a BAHNARIC language of this language group. They have no written language. There are slight dialect differences between the three groups of SADANG.

Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:

The SADANG people believe in a large array of spirits and gods. Besides the usual animistic spirits that almost all the Lao ethnic groups believe in, they also believe in supernatural beings called KANDA. These are the gods that created the universe. In addition, they also worship the spirits of their ancestors and spirits of the forest, Rivers, sun, moon, and earth for example. GOOD spirits are called YANG, and bad spirits are called KAI.

The SADANG have shamans who assist when someone is ill. They can identify which spirit is causing the illness. They can then recommend the correct sacrifice to appease the spirit.

The SADANG wait until they are over fifteen before they marry. They are free to choose who they want as their mate. Often they will have sexual relation before marriage; this is accepted as a way to help decide whom to marry. If they find they are compatible with each other, then the young man will ask elder relatives to help arrange the marriage. There are no dowries in SADANG culture. How ever, divorce is allowed, and if the couple is divorced they must pay a penalty to the village.

After marriage, the husband and wife will sleep in the village communal house until she is pregnant. Once she is pregnant they will move into their own house.

Mothers give birth in the house, however if the mother in unmarried she must give birth alone in the forest and pay a penalty as a sacrifice to the village spirit.

The deceased are placed in a coffin and there is a mourning ceremony that goes on for two days. After this the coffin is buried in the cemetery outside the village. The village shaman will call on the spirit of the dead not to return the house. Traditionally, if someone died in an accident or and equally unfortunate early death, the village would be burned and the villagers would relocate to a new site.

Village and house:

The SADANG are well known for the giant communal house that stands in the middle of the village. These are called RONG. They have very tall and have steep sloping roofs. They sit on pillars
and are often high enough for an elephant to pass under. The main door of the RONG faces the sacred pole of the village where the main sacrifices take place. However, there currently is only one RONG in LAOS, and that stands in ban WANG DAT of ATTAPUE province.

Traditionally the SADANG lived in rectangular long houses with bamboo walls and thatched roofs. They stood on stilts about one meter high. Today most SADANG long houses today are only about five to eight meters long and much smaller than the older long houses. Five to seven families may live in one house.

**Costume:**

In earlier time SADANG men only wore loincloths and turbans. Today they wear short pants; t-shirts and turbans are no longer worn. Today the women wear typical cotton sarongs and blouses. They like to wear glass pearl necklaces and many other beads. They will wear their hair up or let it fall freely. Some wear a cloth over their hair.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The SADANG groups practice mainly slash-and-burn cultivation of glutinous rice. When possible, they have also grown wet-paddy rice also. Other crops they cultivate are maize, yams, sweet potatoes and many kinds of vegetables. Fruit, tobacco and some fruit are grown also. The raise the usual domestic animals: buffaloes, pigs, cattle, and poultry. Hunting, fishing and gathering wild plants for food is also common.

They are not known for their handicrafts. SADANG men forge simple tools from iron, and women will weave baskets from bamboo.

**XUAY**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

Thought to be an earlier arrival in Laos, the XUAY people are believed to have some relationship with the MALY peninsula aborigines, because of the Negroid facial features of some of them. Centuries ago, they migrated to settle in some districts of SAVANANKHET province; but due to population pressure, many of them moved from SAVANANKHET province to SALAVAN, CHAMPASAK and SEKING provinces. Today, there is also a very large population of XUAY in Thailand.

Presently the XUAY NOW LIVE in KHAMMUOANE, SAVANNAKHET, SALAVAN, CHAMPASACK and SEKONG provinces. The population of XUAY is 45.498, of which 23,285 are females according to 1995 census.

**Name and language:**

These ethnic groups refer to themselves as the “XUAY”. In Thailand they are referred to as the “KUI’

XUAY is classified as a MON-KHMER language that is on the KATUIC language branch. They can often speak KATANG, TREE, MAKONG, TA OY and LAO languages as well.
Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

In former times, the XUAY were animistic believers of spirits. While they still hold some of these spiritual beliefs in Laos, now, they are predominantly Buddhist. However, one could say that they practice a sort of “animistic Buddhism” which is an adaptation of their previous animistic beliefs. Today many XUAY villages have pagodas identical to Lao villages.

Previously the XUAY people had their own unique art, culture, songs, folk tales and stories. However, it is commonly believed that they have lost much of their older culture due to integration into mainstream Lao society.

The family is the important social unit in XUAY society, and today it is typically the nuclear-style family. However, these families seem to have a strong matrilineal authority, which is different from most other Lao ethnic minorities, where most tend toward paternal authority. Inheritance usually favors the youngest daughter, with smaller amounts going to the other children.

When two young people want to get married, two friends will act as intermediaries between the families. For a dowry, the man must pay 25 roosters or equivalent in silver. For the wedding, the men feast at the groom’s house, and the women at the bride’s house. After marriage the groom lives at the bride’s house for about one year, and then they move out to build their own house.

After a mother gives birth, she avoids certain food and does not perform household tasks for sometimes. The father welcomes the newborn into the world by having a drinking party and playing drums.

Due to Buddhist influence, most XUAY cremate their dead by wrapping it in a sheet and burning it in a pyre. Some non-Buddhist XUAY will still bury their dead near the village.

Village and houses:

A XUAY village is located between 200 and 700 meters high, in planes and valleys. Villages are from 40 to 100 houses. Traditionally they built longhouses that held several generations of families, but this is not seen today. Today they built small houses placed on stilts. The walls and floors are made of wooden planks or bamboo, with a gees thatched roof or a galvanized iron sheet roof. The house is generally one room that is used for cooking, eating, and sleeping.

Costume:

The XUAY used to weave, but this is not seen today. Today the women like to wear colorful sarongs with short-sleeved blouses they buy in the markets. Elderly women go topless, and they also wear very heavy earrings, which would stretch their earlobes almost to their shoulders. Other common jewelry is silver bracelets worn around the wrists and ankles.

Men simply dress in regular trousers found in the markets, or may still wear the traditional loincloth (KATIAV). Traditionally they wore their hair long, tattooed their legs, and sharpened their teeth, but this is not common among the younger generations.

Agriculture and livelihood:

The XUAY were traditional followers of slash-and-burn agriculture, but today they more commonly practice wet-paddy cultivation of rice. They also grow many vegetables and fruits such as
sugarcane, cotton and coffee. The XUAY also raise different types of animals such as cattle, buffaloes, pigs and poultry.

The men are also skilled blacksmiths and barter and sell the household utensils and farm tools they make. They also are known as skilled elephant handlers, capturing and domesticating wild elephants. These are used for logging, where the elephant drags cut logs out of the forest. However, this is less common today.

Xingmoun

Historical background:

The XING MOUN ethnic group presently live XINGKHOR of HUAPHAN province. A part from Laos, they live also in SERNLAL and LAI CHAO provinces of VIETNAM.

Their total population is 5,834 of which 2,900 are females, consisting of 0, 1% of the country’s total population. According to the second population census dine in 1995.

Name and language:

XINGMOUN ethnic people have many different names such as: PUAK (termite), PUAKDONG (forest termite), PUAK DAO (star termite), PUAK ngaed and Laomai (new lao). All those names were given to them by other ethnic groups, which they do not like. The name they prefer to be called, and which is their official name is “XINGMOUN” the name XINGMOUN means “people living in mountainous areas”.

The language of the XINGMOUN is classified in the KHUIC branch of the MON-KHMER language group. They do not have a written alphabet.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

Since they live close to other ethnic groups, such as the KEUMMU and particularly TAI ethnic groups such as the TAIDAM (black TAI), and TAI DANG (red TAI), their customs and cultures are similar to these other peoples. They believe in animism such as the spirits of their dead parents, the forest spirit, the village spirit and others. In order to show respect and sacrifice, each household has a sacred altar (HORPHII) for the spirit built near by.

XINGMOUN people inheritance is matrilineal. Children must take the family name of the father. The men in the family pay the most important role; in particular, the elderly men are the most prominent figures in society.

XINGMOUN family is composed of many family clans. Each clan has its own taboos and restrictions that vary slightly among each clan. The clans are named after animals or plants, so a particularly strong taboo strictly prohibits killing and eating of animals that represent one’s clan. Marriage within ones own clan or within a different clan is possible. Women who marry into a different clan have to fully respect the clan of her husband.

After the wedding the husband will stay at the wife’s house until the birth of their children. After this time he and his family will stay at his parent’s house or live in their own house.
Pregnant women give birth in their house with the assistance of an experienced midwife. When the baby reaches the age of one month the parent will invite the shaman of the village to name the baby.

When someone dies, the villagers will fire their muskets to express condolences and notify the villagers. They bury the dead and build a small hut on the tomb. Family members will bring meals for five days and after this time they will organize an alms-giving ceremony which invites the soul of the dead to live in the sacred grove near the house.

Some important feasts of XINGMOUN ethnic in a year are the CHANOR feast, the BOON KINCHIANG (New Year festival) and BOON KHAOMAI (the harvesting of rice). In addition, they have many different rites as well, such as the house warming feast, and the village and district ceremony. Each ceremony provides an opportunity to commemorate the soul of the dead ancestors, especially those who died prematurely. XINGMOUN people prefer to drink rice wine when feasting, and the women like to chew betel.

**Village and household:**

The XINGMOUN live in permanent villages of about ten to seventy houses, located in the hills a bit higher than the TAI villages. Their traditional houses were built on piles, and the roof structure looked like the back of a tortoise. Today the houses are much less interesting, mostly simple structures of bamboo and wood. There is one large room with compartments for single men to stay and for worship activities. There are usually two earthen fireplaces, one for cooking and another for heating during the cold season.

**Costume:**

Today they buy finished clothes in the market places and from neighboring ethnic groups, particularly the TAI ethnic groups, XINGMOUN women wear their hair the same way as the TAI DAM women, tied up on top of head, sometimes decorated with a silver coin. The men today wear modern Lao clothing, usually shorts or pants with cheap shirts or t-shirts. During religious or social celebrations, the XING MOUN will wear the TAI DAM dress, which is a dark blue tunic that covers the knees.

**Agriculture and economy:**

Traditionally the XINGMOUN practiced slash and burn cultivation of dry land rice. Now they generally cultivate wet-paddy rice. Vegetables and fruits are also grown. Buffalo, pigs, and dicks are raised. Hunting and fishing is also important, hunting with crossbows and catching fish with bamboo traps. In addition, raising animals and growing maize, cassava, potatoes and vegetable for household consumption is common.

XINGMOUN men can carve boats from tree trunks, which they use on the NAMNA River for fishing and moving goods. Men and women also weave baskets, mats and fishing traps from bamboo.
Nhaheun

**Historical background:**

The NHAHEUN were a SEMI-NOMADIC people who didn’t settle into permanent villages until the twentieth century.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the NHAHEUN roamed the PHOO KHAMPHOOK mountain area and then expanded through to the surrounding of PHOOLUANG chain (ANNAMIC CHAIN). They then settled on the western side of NAMNOY RIVER. Presently they settle in PAKSONG DISTRICT of CHAMPASAK province and SANAMXAI district of ATTAPEU province.

The total population of NHAHEUN is 5,152, of which 2,607 are female, sharing 0.1% of the country’s total population according to the 1995 census.

**Name and language:**

The NHAHEUN have many different names such as GYA HON, NY HON, NHAHENH, HERN NYOR and TEUNGKAE.

Their language is placed on the BAHNARIC branch of the MON-KHMER language group. They have no alphabet. They have been bi-lingual for a long time, with all of NHAHEUN able to speak the Lao national language.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The NHAHEUN believe in a large number of spirits that surround them, such as the spirits of the trees, forest, river, soil, and others. These spirits cause both good and bad things to happen, such as bountiful harvests or someone falling ill. Shamans, called the MUAN, play an important role in dealing with spirits. They will make offerings of rice and chickens to spirits that are causing problem in hope of placating them.

The NHAHEUN live in nuclear family until and there is no clan system. There seems to be some division between the poorer and wealthier families. Very little is known about their social systems compare to other groups.

Traditionally when someone died in the village, they had to move the village to a new location. This is not practice any more. Additionally, if the dead person lived alone, his or her house would be burnt down and the village moved to live else where.

**Village and house:**

A NYAHERN village is quite small, with ten to fifteen houses; these villages are located on the BOLOVEN PLATEAU, between 700 and 1000 meters.

There are a few well-constructed houses by those villagers with more income, but most houses are simple structure on wooden poles with thatched roofs. Generally, the house is divided into two rooms: a living room for cooking and eating and a room for sleeping.
Costume:

Today, the NYAHERN dress in commercial Lao clothing, which they have worn for a long time. Generally, they wear a cheap sarong, blouses, pants and other typical clothing found in the markets.

Older women remember when they used to weave, but they have lost this tradition. Women will wear their hair in a bun, knotted in the back of the head.

Previously NYAHERN men pierced their ears for earrings, but unlike other groups, did not sharpen their teeth in have tattoos on their body. Men and women wore bracelets and other jewelry. Women wore long traditional skirts down to their feet, wore bracelets, foot laces, and earrings may of copper, but they did not cut their teeth or tattoo their body.

Agriculture and livelihood:

NYAHERN people practice slash-and-burn cultivation of non-glutinous rice. They also grow root crops, fruits trees, and vegetables, plus raise animals such as buffalo, pigs and poultry for food and various feasts and rites. The women do not weave or dye silk, but they are skillful in handicraft and knitting. Because of the difficulties in making enough with their same farming, some of the NYAHERN either hire themselves out as laborers in construction or work for wealthier, neighboring farmers.

Ta Oy:

Historical background:

The Ta Oy ethnic group has lived in Laos from many centuries. It is believed the Ta Oy migrated to Laos around the fifthe century. There is no clear information where they came from, but today there are Ta Oy also living in Vietnam.

Presently, the majority of Ta Oy lives in Salavan, Savannkhet, Champassak, Sekong and Attopeu provinces. The total population of Ta Oy in Laos is 30,876 people, of which 15,358 are females, consisting of 0.7% of the country’s total population, according to the statistics of the second population census in 1995. the Ta Oy are comprised of two sub-branches: the Tong and the Inh (Yinr).

Name and Language:

The most common name is “Ta Oy”, which is also the name other groups refer to them as, plus this is also their official name.

The meaning of their name is not completely clear. Some people think they are named after the Ta Oy plateau, which is where they live. Others say this name is from the Ta Oy language, as Ta Oy means “uncle Oy”, who might have been a leader of the Ta Oy at some early time. Therefore, the meaning of the word Ta Oy is questionable.

The Ta Oy language is Mon-Khmer and is on the Katuic branch of the language group. They do not have an alphabet.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

The Ta Oy are traditionally animistic. They believe in a wide range of spirits, similar or neighboring ethnic groups. The strongest spirits for them are the spirits of the sky and the spirit of the
rice paddy. They also practice animistic sacrifice as a way to prevent future accidents and to placate the spirit. An example of this may be small offerings of rice or alcohol, or large sacrifices of a buffalo or pig. The have shamans who make these sacrifices and are believed to have special relations with the spirits. These shamans also make scarifies when a person is ill.

Ta Oy families are pratilineal, tracing their lineage through the male line of the family. Children take the family name of their father. The extended family unit is very strong in Ta Oy society, and there are four generations living in the same village who are strongly united.

Traditional festivals and ritual ceremonies of the Ta Oy pay respect to the traditional New Years festival and celebration.

In marriage, young people are free to choose their future mate. After the wedding the wife shall stay at the husband’s house, and she adopts the husband’s lineage.

In the past Ta Oy women gave birth in the forest and they could not be assisted by anyone, having to deliver the baby to give birth in their house.

When someone dies, the family buries the body in a coffin that is covered by a small miniature house of wood that has carvings and designs on it.

The Ta Oy people have poetry, dancing and music that are unique to their ethnic group. They like the play the gong, drum, flute and clarinet. They often have musical parties for parties to celebrate a housewarming. In addition, they have folk tables, poems, and proverbs that reflect their livelihood and culture or obstacles that their ancestors were faced with.

**Village and House:**

The Ta Oy people live in hills and valleys between 300 and 1000 meters high. They often live in the same area as the Ca Tu people. Traditionally, they build their houses in a circular pattern with a communal house in the center. This was to protect the village from attackers, but this is less important today. Now they place their house in a more random pattern, depending on the tography.

In previous times, they lived in longhouses with several generations under the same roof. Now they tend to build smaller houses with fewer family members. However, there is still a village communal house for meeting and performing rituals.

**Costume:**

The Ta Oy have no weaving skills, so they wear typical clothing found in the local Lao markets, the women wear sarong and blouses, and the men trousers. Traditionally their filed their teeth and tattooed their bodies, but this not common today. The traditional costumes they used to wear contained embroidered patterns similar to those of Kriang and Kahtoo ethnic groups. Presently, it is not common to use these costumes anymore.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Ta Oy people living in the higher lands still practice slash-and-burn agriculture. Those in the lower lands grow wet-paddy rice. Beside rice they grow cassava, sweet potatoes, corn and other vegetable. They also forage for food, and hunt and fish, which are also important sources of protein.
A few families are now growing coffee and fruit as cash crops. They raise some domestic animals such as chickens and pigs.

**Triang:**

**Historical background:**

The Triang previously settle in area of Vietnam, mostly around the Hue region. Due to exploitation by the French colonialists. The Triang migrated to Laos where they settled in Tung pong-Tung talung regions, the Sekamarn river area, and the Darkxuang and Darkjone regions of Sarcheung district. Later, when the French arrived in Laos, the Traing fled deeper into the mountains to avoid exploitation.

Now the Triang live in Darkcheung, Thataeng and Lamarn districts of Sekong province. In addition, soe Traing still live in Vietnam.

The total population of the Traing in Laos amounts to 23,091. 11,800 are females, according to the second population census of 1995.

**Name and Language:**

During the invasion by Siam and French colonialist to Indochina, the Triang had many names such as Tah Liung, Ta Liang, Triang and Kasehng. All of these had different meanings, the name they now prefer to be called plus their official name is “Traing” which means “Listen”.

The Triang language is similar to the Haruck, yae and Lawee Languages. It is a Mon-Khmer language and is on the Bahnaric language branch. They can usually speak the languages of their neighbors also, including the Lao national language.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The Triang have an animistic belief in spirits such as spirits of their ancestors, the forest, sky (Phi fah), and the heavens (Phi thaen). In addition there are the pig spirits, cat spirits, dog spirits and any other. For ritual worship of these spirits large and small animals are sacrificed. They have certain taboos; such as when they search for new land for cultivation no outsider may enter their house for three days after they have found the new land. In July through Augusts, they do not allow outsiders to enter their house fearing their future hunting trips will not be successful. When they are about to harvest their rice and other crops, they will first have a sacrifice to the certain spirits that are responsible for these crops.

The Triang have large feasts in March to April of every year. If any household harvests more than 80 large baskets of rice, the village will kill 20 to 30 buffaloes, which are stabbed by iron
spearheads. This is to give thanks to the spirits for their prosperity. This is called the Dordollr feast. This feast, which lasts 3-4 days, in a time for people to have fun. They drink alcohol, eat buffalo meant and watch traditional shows and dance and listen to music.

The social structure of the Triang is comprised of many chong or clans. Each clan has their own unique taboos and restrictions. Traditionally, sons take the name of their father and daughters take the name of their mother.

Previously, men got married at the age of 30 and women at 20. Today, boys, at around the age of 18 and girls starting at the age 15 will marry. They may choose their male, or their parents may arrange a marriage for them.

When a young man finds a suitable mate, he asks for his parents’ agreement, or if his parents have a chosen girl, they then ask the son if he agrees. If agreement can be reached, a date is set for engagement. On the engagement day, the groom’s side sends two or three relatives to talk to the bride’s parents and when they arrive they offer a gift of various crops seeds. The bride’s parent will parent rice wine to drink, and then they will answer their visitors if they agree to the wedding.

During the wedding, the bride’s family will skill kills a chicken to observe its intestine by looking to see if the intestine is think or thick. If the chicken’s intestine is think, they will other chicken until they find one that has a thick satisfactory intestine. Then that chicken is cooked for the wedding couple to eat. The other family member and guest will eat pork, duck and other dishes.

Next, the wedding procession walks to groom’s house. The bride will take a mat knitted with teuy grass and rattan, a leg of pork meat, and clothes to present as gifts to the groom’s parents.

As the bride sits in the groom’s house, she will kill a rooster with her hands in order to chase away all bad omens and evil spirits that could harm the marriage. Then a village fortuneteller and his parents perform ritual (hid kayaba) to notify the spirits of the marriage, and to insure a successful union. At the final stage of the wedding ceremony, the parents of the groom pay a dowry of five buffaloes to the bride’s parents. Then the people congratulate the new couple and everyone eats, drinks and has fun. Traditionally the Triang practiced polygamy, but today they are generally monogamous.

When a woman is pregnant she is not allowed to eat deer meat, snake or other similar items, or to go near a dead body or to a funeral. The husband will build a small birthing hut near the main house. On the day of birth, the husband and wife sleep in a small hut, and the husband will guard against evil spirits entering the hut. After one month in the hut, the wife shall present the baby to her parents for approval. At first they give ugly, temporary name to the baby first. The real name is given to the baby later during a feast of buffalo meat.

When someone ill, the Triang will use a spiritual master who can speak with the spirits and can offer sacrifice to the spirits that are responsible for the sickness.

When someone dies, they dress the body in cotton cloth and place the body in a coffin. A mourning feast is held, where a pig and one some chickens are killed and offered to the dead. The coffin is taken to the village cemetery and buried. People will come later to consol the deceased relatives. The family members will eat relatives. The family members will eat and call to the soul, asking it to eat and drink with the children and grandchildren.

The traditional art and culture of the Traing is similar to that of other Mon-Khmer ethnic groups. There are songs, music, folktales, stories and the playing of traditional music.

**Village and house:**

The Triang village has a minimum of about 15 to20 households to a maximum of 100 households. The distance between villages is about a two to three day walk. Traditionally, they would
lice in one place to a new location. Normally, Triang people build their houses in a circular pattern with a communal house in the center of the village, with all houses facing the communal house. Some villages do not have a communal house, but there is a public space for sacrificing buffaloes.

Each Triang village has a fence made of bamboo and two entry gates called Patoovieng. This is to protect against thieves and wild animals, in particular tigers that eat their domestic animals at night.

Normally, houses of Triang people are built on stilts with a large, spacious room. The walls may be open or enclosed with woven bamboo. The roof is thatched grass or corrugated tin. There is often a separate kitchen area and a second entrance to the house.

**Costume:**

For daily wear Triang women wear Lao-style sarongs and short-sleeve blouses. Not all Triang have retained their weaving skills, but for those that have, they will weave some traditional cloth that contains thick red lines interwoven with thinner yellow, blue, and white stripes. They may make garments such as coats or shirts from these materials that are worn on special occasions. The women will wear their hair long and usually role it up in a bun.

The men used to wear loincloths, but this is not common today, with most men wearing typical trousers and shirts that are bought in the local Lao markets. Teeth sharpening and tattooing are also not common anymore.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Triang people are still occupied in slash and burn cultivation of dry-land rice. Triang living in the lowlands will practice wet-paddy cultivation. They will also grow maize, potatoes, tobacco and other vegetables and cash crops.

The Triang are also skilled in raising buffalo and other animals such as pigs and cattle. Hunting and gathering in the forests are also an important food source, and they are also skilled in collecting wild honey that they sell.

The Triang make handicraft products such as baskets and mats from rattan and bamboo. They can also forge iron and will make machetes, knives, spears, and swords. They carry most things on their back in specially made “back baskets” that they weave themselves from bamboo.

**Tri Historical background:**

The Tri migrated from the regions of Burma and Thailand many centuries ago. They were powerful economically, militarily, and culturally until the Revolutionary Party of Laos took over as the central power.

Presently, the Tri live in the central provinces of Khmmuan and Savannakhet. Apart from living in Laos, the Tri also live in Vietnam in such provinces as Quang Binh.

The total population of the Tri people is about 22,000, of which 11,000 are females according to the second population census done in 1995.
**Name and language:**

They refer to themselves as “Tri”. This is the name they prefer and is their official name. They have also been known as the So Tri or Cali.

Their language is as a member of the Mon-khmer language group, and is placed in the Katuic branch by linguists, and is similar to that of the Mekong, Katung, Xuay, Pah Koh, Kado, and Kanai people. Tri can often speak some of these languages and usually can speak the Lao language.

**Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

The Tri people have a variety of customs and traditions. Those living in the plain areas believe in Buddhism and some animistic spirits, which those living in remote areas still believe in many spirits such as the spirits of their dead ancestors, parents, brothers, sister and children. Also, spirits the heavens, nursing, rice, fish and dogs are some of the other spirits that are worshipped. There are many spirits among the household, and it varies between families in how many spirits are worshipped. In addition, there is a common spirit of the village and district called a Mahaesak.

The Tri also have rituals related to daily production. For example, when the Tri build a house using wooden planks they will worship the spirits and offer a sacrifice such as pig or buffalo. Before slashing and burning land or harvesting and carrying rice to the storehouse, they kill a pig to offer as a sacrifice to the agricultural spirits. Tri people also worship and give thanks to spirits when they earn some money or find some gold. Also, the birth of a baby leads to a feasting ceremony, but lately some of the festivities have been reduced.

The Tri have social strata with village intellectuals, prominent figures, plus tribal and clan heads (chaokokand chaolao) that are influential in the village. In addition to feasts and rituals related to agricultural production during the year, there is also the New Year feast, called the Cha Nga festival in the Tri language. There is also the Lapeup feast to convey worship to the dead.

In Tri society men can have many wives which lead to large extended families. Particularly, men have most of the power in an aging to family. Marriage for the Tri can take place at about 13 years of age. Yong people have freedom in choosing their mates and when they falling love, they ask a close friend to tell their parents. If the young man’s parents agree with his choice, a coordinator (longta) or a son in law is went to talk with the girl’s parents. If both sides agree, a day is chosen for the bride to proceed to the groom’s house to worship their household spirit. If all wedding matters are agreed upon, the wedding day is chosen. The groom prepares a dowry of cattle, buffalo, pigs, and chickens. Also included in the dowry are swords, gongs, drums, dishes and bowls. The bride’s relatives prepare alcohol steamed rice in banana leaves and candies for he wedding feast.

On the wedding day, the ride and groom go to the loongta’s house (marriage coordinator) to organize a wedding ceremony. The loongta performs a customary rite by gesturing around the couple’s head and gives advice to the groom to become laborious, respectful, honest, as well as love his bride dearly. If the wife has faults, the husband must educated her, but if this education does not succeed, then the husband can return his wife to the loongta.

After the wedding, the wife stays at the husband’s house. The Tri have a husband dies, she then becomes the wife of her husband dies, she then becomes the wife of her husband’s brother or father. If she is not willing to do so, the loongta must return the complete dowry to the husband’s family.

Despite this practice, divorce sometimes does occur in Tri society. If the husband wants to divorce his wife, he must return her to the loongta. If the wife commits an offence and the husband
wants a divorce from her, the wife has to return the full dowry to the husband. If the husband has another woman and wants to take this woman has his second wife, the husband must pay to the loongta one buffalo plus money, then he this allowed to have as many wives as he can afford.

If a member of the household becomes ill, animist sacrifices to the spirits, chants of spells and charms, plus offers of traditional herbs are offered in attempt to heal the sick. The sacrifice depends on the type of spirit that needs worshipping. If a person dies, family members will cry from the time of death until the day of funeral. Previously, the funeral consisted of burying the dead. However, Buddhist influence has lead to the burning of the dead in a coffin. If the deceased was a wealthy member of the village, the body is laid in a coffin that is placed under the house. Then the LAPEUP feast occurs before the coffin is buried. If the deceased was a wealthy member of the village, the body is laid in a coffin that is placed under the house. Then the Lapeup feast will take place later. Buffalo, pigs, goat, dog, chickens, rice, alcohol, rice steamed in banana leaves, candies and fruit will be consumed at a LAPEUP feast. Now a days, the body is generally first burned. Soil is put into the coffin and one day of feasting occurs at the edge of the village. On the second day, the coffin is carried onto the village lead by a procession of drums and gongs beating for three days and three nights. During this time a buffalo, cattle, and pigs are sacrificed and the coffin, which contains only soil, is buried in the cemetery during the afternoon of the third day.

Birthing tradition of the TRI ethnic people dictate that when a woman is pregnant she is not allowed to sleep much and she has to labor a lot in the fields. This is done in the belief that she can physically give birth more easily. during pregnancy, the husband is forbidden from killing living animals such as fish, chickens, pigs, and other large animals out of fear that the newborn may be born deformed in addition, during pregnancy the woman is prohibited from eating foods such as bananas, pork, beef, and buffalo meat in fear she may give birth to a monkey, this is also meant to prevent a physically difficult birth.

Traditionally, birth took place in the forest on the ground. More typical today the husband builds a small hut outside the village for his wife to give birth. She will be allowed to enter the regular house three days after giving birth. Before she enters, an animist sacrificed to the household; therefore, men were allowed to have many wives for this purpose. The mother cut the umbilical cord herself using a sharp piece of bamboo.

The newborn is bathed in warm water, starts feeding from the third day, and is only breast-fed. If there are difficulties in nursing, the child in put in a rice-polishing basket (KDONG), and vegetables are placed on a chopping board where the spirits are invited to come and eat. The mother eats only rice and salt for the first three days after giving birth, after this time she can eat food cooled from wild animal such as deer, fish, and birds.

On regard to teaching children, girls must obey her parents and elderly people. She learns skills such as weaving and pottery. Boys are taught to plough fields, upland rice farming, and wood-skills for to making a house and other related things.

The TRI have a variety of traditional and skilled arts that they have practiced from earl time. Some of these for example are the rhyming SANERD CHANTS, proverbs, and the story telling of abundant folk tales. They also have a variety of traditional miscall instruments such as the GONG, drum, flute and stringed instruments. The TRI have elderly people called the LARM who lead customary rituals.
**VILLAGE AND HOUSE:**

Housing of the TRI people is characterized by building a small house on piles to suit the family size. Inside their house, there is a fireplace, the parents’ bedroom, a bedroom for the gusts and a bedroom for single some. Single grown daughters will sleep at the house of a widow. This custom is similar to the MAKONG people.

**Costume:**

As far as dress and ornaments are concerned, about a century ago the TRI men kept their hair long and tied up like women’s hair. Also similar to other MON-KHMER people in the southern provinces, they pierced a large hole in their ears to wear earrings made of silver and tin. They wore hat called a KACHORM, and wore bracelets and necklaces of silver and tin. Both men and women cut their teeth to sharp points, but this is not common today. Today this culture is dress and ornamentation is not practiced much anymore. The TRI now rend to dress in typical Lao commercial clothing.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The main occupation of the TRI is slash-and- burn cultivation of rice. Hunting, fishing, and foraging in the forest are also important. They also raise animals such as cattle, buffaloes, pigs, goats, and poultry. In addition, various crops are grown such as maize, taro and various root crops. They do well in handicraft, plus weaving and pottery. The men and have simple blacksmith skills to produce production tools and household consumer goods.

**TOUM HISTORICAL BACGROUND:**

The TOUM people live in NYORDNUM sub-district of KHAMKEUT, PAKKADING, BORIKHAN AND VIENGTHONG district of BORIKHAMSAI province. The TOUM migrated from CHINA, moving down the MEKONG RIVER and moving onto LAOS in the 1300s.

By 1891, during the French reign over INDOCHINA, more TOUM people migrated from NEHAN province of VIETNAM. They settled in the CHAMSOM region joining other who already settled in that area. The TOUM still live in VIETNAM today.

**Name and language:**

The TOUM have many different names such as TOUM, PHONG, TAI CHUMLEUHA and others. The official name and the name they prefer is “TOUM”. In VIETNAM these ethnic people are called “THOH”. There language is a MON-KHMER language is on the VIETIC language branch. Their spoken language differs greatly from region to region. Some TOUM near the VIETNAM-LAOS border still speak their original language, while those who migrated westward speak or a mixture of regional language combined with their own.

**Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**
Most TOUM people practiced animism, while some also practice Buddhism. They will offer sacrifices to various spirits of village and nature, especially before the growing season and before the harvest. The highest and most worshipped spirit is the spirit of the village that is called PHU TOH. Every village will have a spirit house outside the village for offerings to this spirit.

The TOUM also celebrate the VIETNAMESE New Year “TET” during the same time as the VIETNAMESE do.

Young people are free to choose their own mates. When they are ready to marry, a negotiator will act as an intermediary between the two sets of parents. He will offer gifts from the boy to the girl’s parents. If both sides finally come to an agreement, then a wedding date will be set. Wedding ceremonies vary depending on financial circumstances. There are four steps to a marriage. But most couples don’t practice all four steps. The husband will pay a dowry of silver and buffaloes. If the husband cannot pay the dowry, then he will stay with the bride’s family first.

TOUM women give birth in the bedroom, today they will often give birth in a government clinic or hospital.

The deceased are placed in the house and covered with white blankets. Later the body will be carried out of the house through a special door for this purpose. Of there are two son-in-laws in the household, they will carry the body.

The TOUM bury the dead. They place the body in a bamboo coffin. After burying, they make a fence around the tomb, and the family will bring food to the cemetery the next day an offering to the deceased’s spirits. During the week, the family of the dead is not allowed to cook, bathe, or leave their house. After a week, some chickens are sacrificed and the funeral is over.

The TOUM have folk tales and proverbs that reflect their culture. Additionally, they have rhymes and chants that are humorous and teasing. However, the young TOU generations seem to be losing their traditional culture and are not preserving it.

Village and house:

The houses of the TOUM sit on stilts about two meters above the ground. There is a staircase that leads to an extended balcony. There are two doors to the house, but one is only used in emergencies. A fireplace for cooking is inside. The house has no windows. There is a large family room, and small living rooms are walled off.

Costume:

Today the TOUM do not wear any traditional clothing, instead wearing traditional Lao clothing. The women used to wear a long-sleeved blouse with ten old silver coins sewn on the front. They also used to dye their teeth with dark natural dies, but this is no longer common.

Agriculture and livelihood:

The TOUM grow glutinous rice in both wet-fields and slash-and-burn fields. They also grow maize, taro, cassava, and vegetables. They will have cattle, goats, horses and poultry for consumption and sale, and they also hunt and fish. The men have simple blacksmithing skills and also make products from bamboo.

Thaen

Historical background:
There has been no accurate information or evidence pertaining to the historical background and origin of the Thaen. According to elder Theau people, they migrated from present day Burma to Laos in the early nineteenth century. The reason for migrating was due to war and a need for somewhere with more comfort and security.

Presently, Thaen people settle in two villages: Ban Sa and Ban Ngiev in the Phoosanyarm region of Viengkham district in Luangprabang province.

The total population of Thaen ethnic group living in Laos amounts to the small number of 305 people, of which 148 are females (according to information provided by the village chiefs on 06/11/2001).

**Name and language:**

“THAEN” is the only name that these people are referred by. It is also their official name.

The THAEN language is classified as a MON-KHMER language. A part from their own dialect, THAEN ethnic people can speak Lao and KEUMMU language well.

**Society, Beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

The THAEN believes in Buddhism and additionally they follow animism, believing in a number of spirits. These spirits can be spirits of house and village, nature, and ancestors.

The THAEN have important ritual ceremonies such as a feast that celebrates the spirit of a MS. ANGLANG who apparently was the woman who lead the original group of THAEN from BURMA to LAOS. In addition, there is a tradition of feasts and rituals for animist rites.

The THAEN ethnic group is composed of many clans. They name these clans after trees and animals. It is important not to eat the animal or plant that represents your clan name. This is to show respect and protect the good fortune of the clan.

The family pattern of THAEN people is characterized by the nuclear type family, which follows a patrilineal line of succession. THAEN may only marry those who are of a different clan, never in their own clan. After the wedding, the bride will live with her husband’s parents. At this time she will adopt the customs and taboos of her husband’s clan.

Women give birth at home. There are certain food taboos she must follow after delivering the baby.

The THAEN generally buried there dead in an area outside the village.

**House and village:**

The THAEN prefer to build their houses on stilts or posts. The inside of the house has a room for receiving visitors, relaxing, and sleeping. The other room is used for cooking places. The arrangement or division of bedrooms and the size of their house depends on the number of their household members. They also have an altar in the house for offerings to spirits. This is usually in the bedroom, and at times
it’ may be forbidden for outsiders to enter the house. There are also times when and outsider cannot enter the village. This is usually during the time of ritual worship to a major spirit.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

THAEN people grow dry-land rice through slash-and-burn cultivation. At the same time they grow vegetables such as: pumpkin, wax gourd, cucumber, maize, root crops and others for their domestic animals and to supplement their diet when there is a rice shortage.

The THAEN raise chickens and pigs, which will be used for sacrifice and consumption. In their free time they will go to local markets to sell their produce, including vegetables, chickens and pigs. As they live far away from the main roads, it can be said their livelihood is one of basic self-subsistence.

**Bid / bit**

**Historical background**

The BID people have lived in LAOS since the fifth century, migrating about the same time as the KEUMU and LAMAED ethnic groups. Originally they came from VIETNAM. Presently, the majority of BID people live in PHONGSALI, OUDOMSAI and LUANGNAMTHA province. According to the second population census done in 1995, the total population of BID people amounted to 1,509 people. Of which 747 are female.

**Name and language:**

Neighboring ethnic groups often refer to the BID as the “KHABID”, but they do not like this name, preferring the name “BID”

There language is a MON-KHMER language. There language is similar to the BID people do not have their own written alphabet. They often speak the languages of their neighbors, such as the LEU, LAMEAED and other groups.

**Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

The BID practice animism, believing in spirits of the village, house, nature, and their ancestors, each house has an altar in it for offerings to the spirits of house and village. The village will have a religious leader or shaman, called a MOMON the MOMON is always a male. There are several religious feasts and celebrations throughout the year. They will make offering to the spirits after a good harvest, offering a pig and chicken to the spirit. When there is sickness or disease they will organize a ceremony to call the spirits and make offerings, hoping to placate those spirits who are angered and the source of the problem.

BID families are patriarchal. The men are monogamous and the families are nuclear. There is a tradition of families clans (SING) in which they are named after certain animals, such as the TIGER clan and the SNAKE clans. There are taboos against killing or rating the animal that represents one’s clan.

Weddings are expensive, usually costing the groom a large of silver, pigs and nice whiskey. After the marriage the husband moves into the wife’s household.
Mothers give birth inside the house. After she gives birth she is forbidden to eat raw meat or salt food toe some time. After the baby is named, a string is tied around the baby’s wrist so that its soul will stay with its parents and not leave for the spirit world.

When someone dies in a family, the funeral ceremony is simple and the deceased will be buried in a burial ground in a nearby forest.

**Village and house:**

BID people prefer to build their houses on piles about two meters above the ground. The walls and flooring are built and woven out of split bamboo. There is a small porch that is reached by a bamboo ladder. There will be two bedrooms that are separated from the living quarters that contain a small hearth for cooking. There is also and altar in the house for offerings to spirits.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The BID practice mainly slash-and-burn agriculture and also grow rice using flood-paddies. They grow both glutinous and regular rice, but prefer to eat glutinous rice. They raise animals such as buffaloes, cattle, pigs, goats, and poultry, and also grow many kinds of vegetables. The BID will also hunt small animals and dish in nearby the rivers. They will supplement their income by gathering products in the forest. These include herbs, wood, thatch grass and bamboo. The BID does not weave or make traditional clothing.

**Brao Historical background:**

The Brao ethnic group has lived in Laos for centuries. There is no clear evidence about their background or origin. According to the elderly Brao people living in Attopeu province, the Brao migrated from the north through the plain of Jars in Xiengkhouang province and settled along Sekong, Sekamarn, and Sesoo rivers, in the intersection between the border of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Presently, the Brao live in Xaisettha, Samakkhixai, Sanarmxai and Phoovong district of Attopeu province, and in Khong, Pathoomphorn, Paksong, and Bachiangchalernsook district of Champassak province. In addition, Brao live also in Korntoom province of Vietnam and Lattanakhilee of Cambodia.

According to the 1995 census, the total population of the Brao living in Laos was 17, 544 persons, of which 8,842 were females. The Brao make up 0.4% of the country’s total population.

**Name and Language:**

The name preferred is “Brao” which means a sound of a bird singing. This is the name they call themselves also. Other ethnic people in Laos call them “Lavae” or Luivae”. Lavae is the name of French army chief in charge of commanding armed forces in the region where the Brao ethnic people lived.

Classifieds into the Mon-Khmer language group, Brao is also on the Branch of Bahnaric language. Each region where Brao people live has difference dialects, but generally, they can understand
each other. Apart from their own languages of Chieng, Oy, Yru, Nyahern Sadahn and Lao people. The Brao do not have an alphabet.

**Beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

The Brao believe in animism, conscious of things sacred and containing spirits that creates and controls the sky, land, rain, water, wind, life and death. They believe in a Creator, called the paxay. During the year there are numerous traditional feast such as the Pahvieng, Phadieng, Phamun and Phaphai, which take place during difference times of the year. These feast are held to honor and respect the spirits.

Young Brao couples have freedom in choosing their mate. The groom is responsible for asking the bride to marry. The wedding ceremony is held at the house of the bride, and after the wedding, the husband must live in the wife’s house for three years before he can return to live in his parent’s house. Then he is free to move back accompanied by his wife and children. If no one falls seriously ill, the family may stay there indefinitely. However, if there is a serious illness in the household spirits are not happy, the husband and his family will return to the wife’s family.

If the older brother dikes, the younger brother can take his sister-in-law as his own wife. However, if his younger brother dies, the older brother cannot take his sister in law to become his wife. In general, the BRAO follow the practice of a paternal bloodline.

BRAO people entertain themselves with interesting songs and rhythmic stories, different types of dances, musical instruments, and folk tales such as the YAKEUDEUY, YAKOONG, and YADAOMARM stories and others.

The BRAO bury their dead in a coffin that is made from a hollow log. A funeral party is held where the relatives and friends show their respect. They dance and sing around the coffin. After a few days the body is buried and a small house is built atop the grave.

**Village and house:**

Previously a BRAO village was in a round shape with a SALAKWAN (communal house) located in the center of a village. They made a fence surrounding the village and planted banana trees at the village gate to protect against thunderstorms. Different types of gingers were also grown near the gate to protect against people who would cause harm to the village. A village usually consists of 20 to 60 houses, with more than a hundred families.

A BRAO house is made of timber with two stories. The first story is used for preparing and cooking meals, drinking alcohol and general relaxation. The second one is used for sleeping, and storing household belongings. If a family has a daughter, the house must be extended with a room, which is higher then the second story. This becomes the third story for the daughter.

**Costume:**

In regards to their culture of dressing ornaments and make up, BRAO men traditionally wore a KATIAV, or loincloth. They tied up their hair, pierced a large hole in their ear two wear are earrings of ivory or wood, and tattooed their chest, back and cheeks. They also have a tradition of cutting their teeth. Women wore the KADO SINH (traditional) skirt, with a black shirt. They rolled up and tied their
hair with red and white strings, or used a wooden or ivory comb. They also tattooed their bodies like Brao men and wore large earrings.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Previously, Brao people mainly practiced slash and burn cultivation of dry-land rice, combined with hunting, gathering and fishing. They also grew maize, taro, and other root crops. Additionally, they are skillful at wooden carving and other handicraft skills, especially in basketry. Prudently, the Brao in many regions have moved from slash and burn cultivation to paddy farming of rice, vegetable gardening and raising various types of domestic animals. However, in some remote Brao villages, the villagers still live on subsistence agriculture and simple barter.

**PaKoh / Pach**

**Historical background:**

The groups migrated fro Vietnam to the Aleuay district of Theuathianhue province and Heunghua district of Quang Tri province. They have also settled in Atook, Adeng and Kootai regions of Samuay district, and in Tahuak, Pngarn, and Tlor region of TaOy district of Salavan procince. Presently, the majority of the PaKoh live in Samuay and Ta Oy districts of Salavan. They also still live in Vietnam as well.

The PaKoh in Laos have a total population of 13,224, of which 6,693 were females, making up 0.3% of the country’s total population according to the population census done in 1995.

**Name and Language:**

Calling themselves the “PaKho”, they are also referred by other ethic group by this name, which they prefer. It is believed that “Pah” means the “other side” and “Koh” means a “mountain”. Thus, the word PaKoh means “The other side” of the word PaKoh means ”The other side of a mountain”. It is also agreed that the PaKoh people consist fo two groups: the Kado and the Kanai groups.

Pah Kho is placed on the Katuic branch o the Mon-Khmer language. This ethnic group does not have a written language.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The PaKoh has a diverse culture ht is similar to other members of the Mon-Khmer language group. Even without a written language, generations have passed embodies all matters of daily life. Like all ethnic groups in Laos, they believe in sprits of their dead parents he spirits of the household, and the spirits of the village and the forest.

The PaKoh community is lead by a group of elderly people that make up the tribal and clan heads. Presently, the PaKoh are ruled by a combination of official administration and traditional leaders of whom remain quite influential. At the same time, heir society is made up of many different clans, each one with their own specific name plus different restrictions and taboos.
Relations are paternal, which means after a wedding the wife must stay at her husband’s house. In general, the family is a combination of the Nuclear family and extended family. In the household, men have most of the power and rights. This is particularly true among the eldest men who are generally the most prominent people in the family.

Previously, the PaKoh traditionally sharpened their teeth, pierced their ears the ability to tolerate pain, display courage and add charms that protect the body or harm. Men and women preferred to have long hair, which was rolled up with a ribbon or people. However, some of these traditions have changed, or are no longer practiced.

The PaKoh celebrate the New Year in a festival that is called “Chanh Nga”. This occurs in November or December. A feast that worships and celebrates the spirits the dead is held annually in February or March. This is called “Lapeup”. This feast is usually organized in February-march o each year. In addition, there are customs and traditions related to agricultural production, cultivation and others activities during the year. The purpose of the festivals and feast is to ensure and abundant harvest, avoid illness, and overcome various misfortunes.

In regards to art and dress, the PaKho have their own unique chants, proverbs, stories and other forms of entertainment. However, they do not often dressing traditional clothing anymore, preferring to buy regular clothing gin the city market. One can see some women in remote areas still dressing traditionally.

Mothers give birth outside the house and three days later she and the baby can return to the house. Naming the child is dependent on the parents, however it very important the children do not have a same name as a parent. Funeral customs includes a feast of a few days after placing the body in a coffin unless the dead is a child or death occurred in by and accident. When there is corpse in the village, villagers do not work tin the fields during this tie, as it is believed tat crops will rot and the harvest will be dad.

**Village and house**

Generally, he PaKoh build their villages and houses in remote mountainous areas over 900 meters high. The houses are built on stilts, and there re two different styles. The first is a long house in which many families and generations live together. This style is found in the Kado branch of the PaKoh. The other style of hosing is a square house on stilts, in which one nuclear family lives. This is seen in the Kanai branch of the PaKoh.

**Economic and agriculture:**

The economic base of PahKho ethnic group is a self-subsistence type. They practice slash-and burn-cultivation rice farming .they also grow corn, sweet potatoes, vegetables and spices. They also grow some fruit.

They usually do not have buffalo, but will breed some pigs and chickens. Most of the meat that they eat is hunted in the forest. The PaKoh also forage in the forests of wild vegetables and herbs. They will occasionally work as laborers on construction to earn extra cash
Pray

Historically and background:

According to village elders, the Pray people originally came from the Chiang Mai area of Thailand, and due to difficulties there, they migrated to Laos about one hundred years ago. Today there are scattered settlements, with approximately 20 villages in Saiyabury province. The population is 23,193, based on the second population census of 1995.

The Pray also still live in the northeastern provinces of Thailand where there are about forty thousand people.

Name and language:

Their official name is “Pray”. They also refer to themselves as the “Lawa”, but this is more among themselves. With outsiders and officials, they are generally referred to as the Pray.

The Pray language is on the Khmuic branch of the Mon-Khmer language family. There are two sub-groups: the Pahai and the Mal. There are minor linguistic differences between the two groups.

The Pray are animists. They believe in many spirits, and the most respected is the bhuka. Once a year, during New Years, a three-day celebration is held. There are other celebrations and feasts such as the water feast, the Dorkdeng feast (household feast), and others. Sacrifices and worship are done in a separate spirit house that is in the forest some way from the village. Traditionally, the villages are also protected from spirits of the outside world by spirit gates at the entrances of the village. There is a shaman, called a khawcam that is elected by the village men. He is a medium between the spirits and living world.

The Pray are a fairly classless society and traditionally the village is a self-contained political and social unit that is led by a headman and council of elders. The family unit is nuclear but can of the extended style also.

Girls marry young, at about age fourteen, first she lives at her future husband’s house for sometime, where she helps with daily duties. If the family is satisfied, then a wedding will be held. The wedding is held and there is much drinking and eating. The girl’s family pays the wedding expenses.

Women give birth in their own bedroom. An older female will help in the birth. The husband usually cuts the placenta and buries it. Afterwards, the baby and mother remain for some days near the fireplace of the house, and later a small party is held to give thanks.

For the funeral ceremony, the shaman will dip a finger of he dead in a bowl of water. This will tell the shaman what was the cause of death. The Pray gave a funeral feast for on day and then they bury...
the coffin, and the tomb will be covered with tree ranches and then fenced off with wooden posts. When returning form the cemetery, a family member will kill a chicken, and present a token amount of money to those who participated in the funeral.

**Village and house:**

Villages are located in remote and steep valleys upland. They may range in size from eight to houses to a hundred.

The Pray prefer to live in houses built on stilts. The walls and floor are made of bamboo and the house is thatched with grass or palm fronds. A bamboo ladder leads up to a cover porch. Traditionally every house should face toward the west with the door also on the west side of the house. The inside of the house is divided into three or four smaller rooms. The first two rooms next to the stairs are for receiving visitors. Another room as a fireplace and it for cooking and eating. Most houses have a separate granary, which is built on stilts and locate near the house.

**Costume:**

The regard to clothes, since the Party cannot weave, their clothes are bought in local markets and are typical Lao style commercial clothing such as sarongs and blouses. The men traditionally wore a shorts or long trousers of dark color.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Prai are one of the poorer groups in Laos, and cultivate land with slash-and-burn cultivation, in which they grow glutinous rice. They also grow crops for daily consumption such as Chinese lettuce, beans, potatoes and others. Animals are raised mainly for ritual ceremonies. The animals they prefer to raise are pigs, chickens, and some buffalo.

The Pray are also involved in making fermented tea-leaves that they chew themselves and also sell in the lowland markets. They also supplement their daily income and diet by hunting and fishing and gathering. Small game such as wild pigs and squirrels are hunted using simple weapons such as crossbows.

In addition, pray people are skilled in the collection of non-wood forest products, plus weaving baskets and traps using bamboo.

**Phong
Historical background:**

There are no accurate historical records documenting the background and origin of the PHONG ethnic group. However, the PHONG believe they migrated from the border of MYANMA and CHINA. Apparently, they settled first in the NONG KHANG region of XANG district, but this region was found not suitable and they moved n to XIENGKUANG and HUAPHANH province.

Presently, PHONG live in the population of the Phoosaleuy mountain region of Xamneun district and Huanmeuang district of Huaphan province. They also live in Borkorbornyia, and Kham district of Xiengkhunag province.

The total population of the Phong people in Laos is 21,396, of which 10,846 are females. This is 0.5 percent of the second population census done in 1995.
**Name and Language:**

Their official name is “Phong” there are several sub-groups such as the Phong Piad, Phong Larn, Phong Chapuang and Phong Fan. Each Sub-group has slight differences in dialect and customs. They may have borrowed cultural influences from neighboring groups, which they have combined with their own group.

The Phong language is classified as a Mon-Khmer language, and is on the Vietic language branch. Apart from their own language, they can usually speak the Lao language well.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

Like all animistic believers in Laos the Phong follow a group of spirits they believe in such as the spirits of the household, village, mountain and forest. Each village has its own spirit house that is place near the village. However, many villages now also practice Buddhism, which they combine with their own animistic practices.

Twice a year the entire village will join in a sacrifice to the spirits of one pig, four chickens, some rice whiskey, and some fruit. This is to insure a successful harvest of their crops.

Basically, their social structure is characterized by having a nominated council of authorities. There is also a tribal chef ( chao kok ) who has power in deciding internal village affairs. There is also a clan chief ( chao lao ) for each family clan, as Phong society is composed of many different family clans. Each clan has different family clans. Each clan has different restrictions and taboos varying from one region to another. In particular, restrictions and taboos forbid the killing or eating of certain animals that represent the names of clans. The family system is nuclear, and inheritance passes down the male side of the family. All children have the right to inheritance, but the ones who stay with the parents and take care of they will generally receive more. After a wedding the wife will stay at the husband’s parents’ house until the husband’s brother marries. Then the older brother can move out and the couple can start their own household.

Pregnant women traditionally give birth in the house by the fireplace or in the bedroom. The husband, parents and a mid-wife will help. In case of a difficult birth, a shaman may be called to help.

When someone dies, there will be a feast at the household. Previously, the dead were buried, but if the deceased was a Buddhist, then the body will be cremated and the bones collected to be later buried or covered by a small Stupa.

**Village and house:**

The PHONG build their houses on low hills. The houses are in low stilts. It is a taboo to build a house on the fifth, ninth, or fifteenth day of the month. The size of their house, number of bedroom and living room size depends on the number of household members. Each house has a small spirit house for the spirits, and there are certain household restrictions to follow, such as it is forbidden to do the washing on the balcony.
Costume and dress:

The PHONG have lost the tradition of their old costumes, so now they usually wear simple Lao peasant clothes that are commercially made and bought in the markets. Women wear SARONGS and blouses. PHONG men used to wear lion-clothes, but today wear regular trousers and shirts.

Agriculture and livelihood:

The PHONG, like most other ethnic groups in Lao, practice slash-and-burn cultivation of rice. They also grow wet-paddy rice for domestic consumption, and grow other crops and vegetables including root crops for when there is rice shortage. They prefer to raise poultry and pigs that are used for ritual ceremonies and religions feastings, some families also raise cattle and buffalo. In addition, men hunt and fish and gather edible food in the forest. Women will weave baskets and sleeping mats group is also skilled in blacksmithing producing simple knives and machetes.

Makong
Historical Background:

Centuries ago, the Makong migrated to Laos thought Hongsawadee principality of Myanmar and Lopbury principality of Siam and settle in Nong district of Savanakhet province during the reign of King Chanh Alua. Later, due to population and social pressures, some Makong moved from Nong districts to settle sparsely in various districts of Savanakhet and in some districts of Khammuan provinces.

Presently, the Makong live in Khammuan and Savannakhet provinces. Additionally, the Makong also live in Vietnam, where they are referres to as the “Bru-Vernvian”.

According to the 1995 census, the population of Makong stands at 92,321 of which 47,219 are female. This is 2.1 percent of the country’s total population.
Name and language:

These people refer to themselves as the “Brumakong”, however, their official name is the “Makoong”, which means “Bring the drum”. The Makong also have several sub-groups such as the Makong, Trui, Phua, Maroy and Trong.

The Makong language is a member of the Mon-khmer language group, and is place on the Katuic language branch. The Makong can also commonly speak the languages of the Katang, Tree, Ta Oy, Xuay, Kado, Kanai, Pakoh, and of course the Lao national language.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

Many of the Makong are still animists, believing in the spirits of ancestors, dead parents and family members, plus the spirits of nature. There are also spirits for rice planning and harvesting, spirits that control sickness and disease. The common village spirit that everyone in the village must respect and fear is the Mahesuck. However, some village have now converted to more mainstream Buddhism, but still may incorporate some of their animistic beliefs. Often animals are sacrificed to various spirits when such activities such as house construction or the family, or rice harvesting.

The Makong have elderly persons who serve as masters or shaman (larm) that lead these rites of sacrifice or paying restrict to spirits. MAKONG society contains intellectuals, heads of clans and tribes, plus prominent figures who have important influence in the village.

At around the age of 13, MAKONG boys and girls start the courting process. When they find a suitable mate, they use the mediator to coordinate the agreement between the two families, if all is agreed on; a wedding day will be set. Before the wedding, the future bride and groom cannot enter each other’s house. For a dowry, the groom will prepare cattle, buffalo, pigs, chicken, a gong, dishes, and money. During the wedding, customary words are said to both bride and groom, reminding them to be respectful, honest and good to each other.

In case the husband would like to divorce his wife, the wife must pay back the cost of the wedding, including the dowry. If the husband wants to take a second wife, the husband shall pay for the future wedding. The husband can have several wives as long as he can pau the costs. Of the husband dies, the wife shall become the wife of the husband’s older or younger brother.

When a woman becomes pregnant, she is made to work often and is not allowed to sleep much. This is because the MAKONG believe if the mother is active it will make for an easy delivery during labor. During pregnancy, the husband is forbidden to kill animals, including catfish, chicken, pigs, cattle or buffaloes, in the fear that the newborn will be deformed or abnormal. During pregnancy, the mother is also cautious about her diet. She cannot eat bananas, pork, cattle or other meat in fear that the newborn will resemble one of these animals or plants.

Previously women gave birth in the forest. Today, it is more common for the husband to build a small “birthing hut” near the main house. She will stay in the house for three days after giving birth. After spiritual worship to certain spirits, the woman and the newborn can enter the house.

After birth, the woman eats only rice and salt for three days, then can return to a more normal diet. Other wives and women family members will assist the mother and the newborn in the beginning.

Children are taught certain rules at a young age. If the child is a girl, she is taught to obey her parents and the elderly. She will also learn on how to weave, fetch water, mill rice, build fires and cook. Of the child is a boy he will learn to cultivate slash and burn crops, to plough paddy fields, hunt and fish,
plus cut timber for building a house. Starting at about age eight, the children assist in many of these choirs.

When someone falls sick, a shaman tries to cure the sick by using magic spells, charms, as well as herbal medicines. When someone dies, the body is either burned or buried. If the dead person comes from a family of some wealth, he or she will be put in a coffin and ten a feast will be held for family and friends. Of the person is poor, there may be no feast. This feast and ceremony of worship may go for all three days. Buffalo and pigs will be sacrificed also.

**Village and house:**

In a village, house is arranged in a round shape. There is a sacred place (SALA KWAN) at the center of the village. The MAKONG will hold a ritual ceremony when selecting site for village settlement or on the occasion of building a new house.

The houses are small and built on stilts. There is a fireplace, a bedroom for family, and an area for guests. The walls and floor are built with bamboo or wooden planks. The roof is grass thatch.

**Costume:**

MAKONG women have no traditional dress; they simply wear the basic Lao peasant dress of a SARONG and a blouse. They like to wear bracelets and necklaces of silver and tin. The MAKONG men used to wear a traditional loincloth. Today they wear typical trousers and shirts. Both sexes used to tattoo themselves, pierce their ears. And sharpen their teeth, but this is less common today.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The MAKONG grow glutinous rice by both slash and burn and wet-paddy farming. They also grow corn, sweet potatoes, and various common fruits and vegetables. They also raise domestic animals such as buffaloes, cattle, pigs, dogs, goats and poultry. Hunting small game and fishing is also something they do with skill. In addition, they practice handicrafts such as weaving, dying silk, pottery, and blacksmithing to manufacture household consumer goods and for trade. They are also skilled at making many things from woven bamboo such as fish traps, baskets and sleeping mats.
MOY
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

MOY people living in Laos migrated from the northern area of VIETNAM in the early nineteenth century. They settled in BAN DORN village, of XAMNEUA district in HUAPHAN province where they still lived today. MOY people also live in the northern provinces of VIETNAM such as HUABINH and THEAN HUA provinces.

The total population of MOY living in LAOS is small; 627 people, of which 294 are female. These are numbers that were provided by the village chief of BAN DORN in November 2001

Name and language:

They refer to themselves as”MOY” which is the name other groups and the government refers to them by. In VIETNAM the MOY are referred as the “MEUANG”

The language of the MOY is classified as a MON-KHMER language, and is in the VIETIC branch. They is not have a written language. A part from their own language, the MOY can often speak the languages of the TAI ethnic people (TAIDENG, THAI KHAO) and Lao languages as well.

Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:

The Moy have similarities to their neighboring Tai ethnic groups’ culture, but they still have traditions that are unique like their neighbors, the Moy believe in animism, such as the spirit of ancestors, dead parents, the household and village, and the spirit of natural things such as the sky and water.

Moy people have many feasts an celebrations during the year such as the New Year festival, and the festivals related to agriculture such as the Rain Asking Feast (boon khor nam phohn) and the New Rice Calling Feast (boon khuan khao mai). Sacrifices will be made during these feasts to placate spirits of nature and ancestors.

In regards to social structure, Moy society has family lines or clans, and the families are patriarchal. Moy must marry from a different clan, not their own, and the wife will live with her husband’s family.

There are three wedding ceremonies, but it may be several years before all three are completed. The wife will have the responsibility of taking care of her husband’s parents.

Mothers give birth in the house near their sleeping place or by the fireplace. A midwife will assist in the birth. If there are problems in the birth, a shaman may try to communicate to the spirits to assist the birth.

When someone dies they body is placed in a coffin, they bury the coffin in ash and charcoal. Some animals such as chickens or pigs are killed as a sacrificial offering to the soul of the deceased in hopes it will return to the house and protect the living members of the family.

Village and house:

Traditional Moy houses are rectangular and sit o stilts. The walls are of woven bamboo and the roof is thatch. The floor may e wood planks or split bamboo. A front porch is used for doing daily work and receiving guests.
The inside of the hose has several small rooms for sleeping with a larger living room. There is a corner hearth for cooking and heating. The often have a separate out-building as a granary for storing rice.

**Costumes:**

The traditional clothing of the Moy will combine Vietnamese, Chinese and Tai influences. The women like to dress in a dark blue sarong that is secured with a green or red silk scarf below the breasts. With this they wear a short-sleeved vest with a kerchief over the hair. The men will wear long trousers and a shirt with a jacket.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Moy grow mainly rice using both wet-paddy and slash-and-burn methods. They also grow a large variety of vegetables and also tea as a cash crop. The animals they like to raise are chickens, buffaloes, pigs, and ducks. The en will hunt in the forest for small game, but fishing is a more important activity for extra food.

The women are skilled at weaving and dying silk, which supplements their income a small amount. However, most production both agricultural and economically is for self-sufficiency and not for commercial sale.

**YROU HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

The YROU are the most numerous ethnic group on the BOLAVEN plateau, hence their other name, the “loven”. They have lived there for many centuries, and have had long contact with the Lao people, and also the French, who had established large coffee plantations on the plateau.

Now they live in PAKSONG, BACHIENGCHALERNSOOK and PATOOMPHORN districts of CHAMPASACK province; in LAONGAM district of SALAVAN province; in THATENG district of SEKONG province and in SANARMXAI district of ATTAPEU province.

The total population of the YRUO ethnic group in the Lao P.D.R is 40,519 persons, of which 20,497 are females, representing 0,9% of the total population of the country.

**Name and language:**

These people refer to themselves as the “YRUO” which can have three meanings: (a) monolithic unity (b) a river and (c) the forest. Their official name is “YRUO”.

They are two groups to the YRUO. The first is the “YRUO KONG” which means “YRUO” who settle at the plateau, and “YRUO DARK” which means “YRUO who settle in the southern surroundings of the SEKONG River”.

The Yrou language is in the Mon-khmer language group, and is on the branch of the Branch languages.

There are difference dialects, but each group can understand each other. The Yrou language is similar to that of the Nya Hern, Oy, Aheng and Brao ethnic groups.

There is an alphabet that was developed in the mid-twentieth century and which used the Lao alphabet.
Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

The Yrou believe in many animistic spirits, such as those of the house, village and nature. They believe these spirits play a role in taking care of the people and protecting them from sickness. Also, they believe in the spirits of large trees, forests and mountains, and the dead killed in accidents. Presently there has been a combination of animist beliefs and Buddhism. Some villages have Buddhist pagodas. However, when someone falls sick, the Yru still call on a spiritual, master or shaman to perform customary rites and to invite spirits to assist in curing the illness.

The village unit is very important in Yrou society. Each village has a headman who decides important issues and represents the village when dealing with outside authority. The oldest male leads the family unit.

Young people have freedom in choosing their mate. When someone finds a satisfactory pair, they inform the parents and a wedding date is arranged. Unlike most other ethnic groups, the groom does not have to pay a dowry. However, they live with the bride’s family for sometime before moving out to live their own house.

Divorce is by mutual agreement of the couple, and the children can live with either parent. When the wife is pregnant, the family has to prepare rice wine, pigs and chickens, plus firewood for a party that will be held if the birth in the house. After giving birth, the mother has to sleep by the fireplace, and drinks and bathes in hot water. Friends and family them come to cerebrate and may stay up to ten days. The mother must to certain food taboos and not eat wax gourd, maize, cucumber, redtail fish, or tortoise and deer for sometime.

If the member dies, the villagers will come to help prepare a coffin. Previously, if a rich person dies, he or she would lie in state for nine days and nine nights. A poorer person maybe only lies in state for three days. Then family and friends carry the coffin for burial in the village cemetery. After buying a coffin, they would build a miniature house to cover the tomb. In this house they place household consumer goods, clothes, tools and other things to assist the dead in the afterlife.

Village and house:
The Yrou live in small villages, nevermore than forty houses. These villages are quite permanent, surrounded by cultivated field. They live in house on stilts, either constructed of bamboo or wood, depending on the family’s financial income. Inside there is a bedroom for the parents, a bedroom for the children and a spare room for receiving the visiting guests.

Costume:
Because of their early contacts with the Lao people, the YRUO dress like Lao people with traditional skirts and blouses for the women, and the pants, shorts and shirts for the men. The men used to wear the KATIAV, or traditional loincloth.

It is not clear if YRUO women used to weave. Now all cloth and clothing is bought in the Lao markets and is of commercial make.

Agriculture and livelihood:
The BOLAVEN plateau is known for its excellent growing conditions. Many YRUO are involved in growing ARABICA coffee and EUROPEAN potatoes, which is an important cash crop. They also grow many types of vegetables I their gardens and also raise various kinds of animals such as
cattle buffaloes, pigs, and poultry. However, for the YRUO, these animals are not as an important income-generator as the cash crops.

**YEA / YE’ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

The historical background of the YAE is similar to that of the TRIANG people. They are believed to have come from VIETNAM and originally settled in DARKCHEYNG district. Due to the limited availability of land for production, they migrated to settle in the VANGTAD region of SARNXAI district in ATTAPEU province. There they practiced mainly slash-and-burn cultivation. A number of them migrated to settle around KWANGNAM and DANANG in VIETNAM.

Presently, the YAE people live in DARKCHEUNG district of SEKONG province and in SAMXAI district of ATTAPEU province. Their population is 8,013 according to the 1995 census.

**NAME AND LANGUAGE:**

THEY HAVE ALSO BEEN KNOWN BY THE NAMES “GIE” and “DIE”, but YAE is their official name and the name they prefer.

Their language is classified as a MON-KHMER language and is in the BAHANARIC branch. A part from their own languages of TRIANG, HARUCK, KAHTOO, Lao and VIETNAMESE languages. The YAE do not have a written language.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The YAE people believe in animism. Many taboos, spirits, and omens must be observed and obeyed. There are spirits of forests, trees, river spirits and others. They believe all living things have a soul and spiritual mind. Many rituals and practices are related to the agricultural cycles. There is a deity. Called the YA NGUH, which is responsible for human conception YAE believe she lives in a village on the moon. Illnesses are also caused by evil spirits and a village shaman will sacrifice a pig in hope of placating the evil spirit.

In general, the ritual feastings are similar to this is the TRIANG ethnic group. In particular, the ceremony of commemorating and respecting the soul and spiritual mind of their ancestors and dead parents is very important. This ceremony is held in MARCH, it is forbidden to work during the festival. A buffalo is stabbed and killed as a sacrifice to the spirit, and then the villagers eat this buffalo in a large feast held in the communal house. Additionally, rituals are held when someone is seriously sick or there is poor agricultural production.

The social structure of Yae ethnic people is characterized by an extended type of family in which lineages is traced through the male line of the family lines, with different taboos and restrictions. Marriage is strictly forbidden between members of the same lineage. The youngest child has the responsibility to took after the parents.

Traditionally, boys of over ten years of age slept at the Salakwan ( public house ). At the age of thirteen to fifteen, a ceremony was held for teeth cutting and then the boys may marry. However, this custom has disappeared today.
The bride’s side is responsible mainly for the wedding ceremony. The girly respects the words of her parents in cooking her mate before getting married. Grooms must is skillful in handicraft and must have knowledge about customs and traditional values. Brides should be skillful in weaving and other household skills.

Traditionally, when a woman is about to give birth, the husband must build a small hut by a stream in the forest so that the wife can give birth alone. Soon before birth, the husband prepares food in the hut for the wife, escorts her there, and returns to the village. Five to six days after giving birth, the husband will bring her some food, and will continue to do so far about one to two months. Then the mother and child will return to the village. However often give birth at home now.

When someone dies, the Yae place some uncooked rice in the mouth of the body, dress the body, and then place it in the main room of the house. Feasting and drinking follow along with music. The next day the body is place in a coffin carved from a tree trunk and place in a grave in the cemetery some distance from the village. Some personal belongings of the deceased are left with the coffin. After this, the mourners go to the nearest stream and bath, to prevent spirits from following them back to the village.

**Village and house:**

In the past, the Yae lived in long house on wooden stills. A single long house may have constituted a village. Yea people built houses around the communal houses that had a roof like the shape of a turtle shell. In front of each house, there is a wooden post to attach buffaloes that are to killed for their traditional rites.

Now Yae villages in Laos no longer have these long houses. The villages today look typically like Lao village Lao village, with ordinary wood houses and no communal house.

**Costume:**

Traditionally, Yae men preferred to wear loin clothes and leave their upper body naked. Now they wear a traditional Lao phaa sihn (skirt) and a blouse. When the weather is cool, they will wear additional clothing bought in the Lao markets. If a woman is married, she will plait her hair and wind it in a knot on top of her hair. Young girls let their hair fall free.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Yae people practices mainly slash and burn cultivation of dry-land glutinous rice. Additionally, they also grow root crops and legumes. They also gather vegetables in the wild including fruits, bamboo shoots, mushrooms and others for daily cooking. Yae people have a tradition of raising animals such as buffaloes, pigs, and goats for animist sacrifice, and some daily consumption.

Yea women are skilled in weaving dying skill, and weaving baskets and mats from bamboo. Yae men are skillful in handicraft such as pottery, and simple blacksmithing, and make simple tools for farming, fishing and hunting.
**Lamed/Lamet:**

**Historical background:**

The Lamed have lived in Laos for a long time, but how long remains unclear. They are considered one of the earlier groups to have settled in Laos. There is no clear information about their migration to Laos or where they migrated from. Based on linguistic and cultural traits, it is agreed that this group has lived in Laos for a long time.

Presently, the Lamed live in Luangnamtha, Udomsai and Bokeo provinces. According to the second population census done in 1995, the Lamed population totals 16,764 people, of which 8,872 are female sharing 0.4% of the country's total population.

**Name and Language:**

The Lamed refer to themselves as “Lamed”. Other ethnic groups also call them by this name, which is preferable. The meaning of the word “LAMED” REMAINS UNCLEAR.

The LAMED language is classified as a MON-KHER language group and is a PALAUNGIC language. Apart from their own language, LAMAED people can often speak neighboring languages well which help with economic and cultural exchange. They have no alphabet for writing their language.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

LAMED people respect and believe in animistic spirits such as spirits of ancestor, spirits of their dead parents, spirits of village and districts and others. In addition, they believe in spirits and the soul (KWAN), in which each person has two souls within the body. Unlike some other minority group in Laos, the LAMED only take one wife or husband. The LAMED did not have a true head man, but the village priest, or shaman, has the role as the village leader.

The family unit is organized in the patriarchal sense, and after a woman marries, she lives with her husband’s parents to help take care of them. However, before she lives in her in-law’s house, the newly married couple must stay at group has an extended family system with more than one family system with more than one family living in the same household?

There are some restrictions and taboos related to pregnancy and birth. For example, it is forbidden for a pregnant woman to touch the body of a dead person. In addition, an expecting mother should not be allowed to work hard physically, and also not to kill any animals. The place for birth is in the bedroom of the house and after birth; the mother sleeps by the fireplace and does not work for one month.

When someone dies, there body is placed in a coffin. After a funeral ceremony in which family and friends pay respect, the coffin is buried in the ground.

As far as fine art and culture is concerned, Lamed people have songs, rhymes for traditional, chanting, music, proverbs and folk tables. The patterns of their dress and make up are similar to that of Leu, Yung and Lao ethnic groups. Major traditional feasting and ritual worship of the Lamed is related to cultivation, in particular, before planning and harvesting rice.
**Village and house:**

The village is located in valleys and hilltops. There is no defined plan to the village, and the houses are placed somewhat randomly. Their houses are built on stilts in a style similar to that of Leu and Nyan people.

When building a house, the Lamed hold a ceremony once the house is built. This consists of feasting and ritual worship in the new house for three days. During this time, it is forbidden for the family member to go out of the house and any outside to enter the house. There is a sacred altar in the corner of the parent’s bedroom. Therefore, visitors and even other family members are not allowed to enter the parents’ bed room. This restriction has been followed for a very long time.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Lamed people practice mainly slash and burn cultivation of rice, and grow root crops and vegetables for daily consumption. Tradition, after harvesting an area, the Lamed would farm new land, allowing the previous farmland to regenerate for around ten years, however, because of land pressures; this is not practiced much anymore.

They have a tradition of raising animals for food such as cattle, buffaloes, pigs, chickens and ducks for food. Hunting for wild animals such as birds, rats, deer and wild boar is common. Lamed people are also skillful in handicraft and blacksmithing. They produce back-baskets, containers and fish traps.

**LAVI / LAVY****

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

The LAVI people live in three villages in LAMAM district in SEKONG province. In the 1980s migrated from the forests of the BOLAVEN plateau to these three villages.

The background of this small group of people is very unclear, as many anthologists cannot agree to where these people originated. Their small number may mean that they split from a larger ethnic group, but this is also not clear. Their language is also unique and differs from all of other neighboring ethnic groups.

The total population of Lavi amounted to 538 people in the 1995 census 252 were females.

**Name and Language:**

Their name apparently comes from a stream where they originally settled. They call themselves this name and know of no other name for themselves.

The Lavi language is an unknown language that has been placed in the Mon-Khmer group of Languages.

No other neighboring groups can understand their language, which is unusual. There is no alphabet.
Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:

The Lavi are animists who worship the usual spirits as other Mon-Khmer groups’ do in Laos. The most important spirits known as plat, are the spirits of the forest water, and their ancestors.

They have shamans known as djamon who can heal the sick and communicate with spirits. Ceremonies performed for ancestors worship including sacrificing several buffalo at once followed by pigs and chickens. This sacrifice is accompanied by drums and dancing. There are also agricultural rituals.

Today the Lavi live in small nuclear family units and are monogamous in terms of marriage. The wedding dowry consists of one buffalo; unless the girl marries someone from a neighboring group then the dowry may be high as six buffalo. The bride will live with her husband’s family after marriage.

Pregnant mothers work as usual and when it is near time to give birth, her husband will build a small hut in the forest where she will give birth. Women form the village will assist her during labor and birth. When the infant is one year old they will sacrifice a buffalo and have a celebration.

When someone is ill, the shaman will prescribe traditional medicines and communicate with the spirits who may be performed in an attempt to please the spirit.

When there is death, the body is covered with cloth and placed in a coffin. There is period of mourning for two days before bury belongings of the deceased along with the body. Later they will offer sacrifices to the spirit to the deceased.

Village and house:

The Lavi’s traditional village was located deep inside the forest of the Boleven plateau. The village was circular in layout and there was a large communal house. In front of the communal house was an area for performing sacrifices. This area contained posts carved out of tree trucks in which animals were tie to for stabbing.

Their houses were originally longhouses, some of which were twenty longhouse, some of which were twenty meters long. They were built on many posts and had bamboo walls and thatched roofs. There is a large porch that has a in ladder leading from it. There is a hearth in the corner of the house for cooking and eating. There is no partitioning of the house into separate rooms.

Costume:

The Lavi will still wear their traditional clothing. For men this is mainly a simple loincloth and no shirt. The women traditionally wore a single piece of cloth that went form the breasts to the knees. They tie their hair in a knot behind their head.

Agriculture and livelihood:

Formerly the Lavi practiced slash-and-burn agriculture. Where they are located now they have adopted wet rice faming. They also grow corn, vegetables, spices and fruit. They raise some livestock, such as pigs and chickens, but not as much as other groups. The Lavi also fish often.

The Lavi are excellent basket-makers. They make many kinds of baskets of carrying and storing goods. Their woodcarving is also very good, as their traditional longhouses have finely carved symbols on the gables.
Oy

Historical background:

The Oy people have lived in Attapeu province for a long time, but there are no written records to confirm exactly how long. Oy oral history says that the Oy used to live on the right bank of the Seknog River, but population pressures from other groups caused them to move to the slopes of the Boloven plateau, where most people now live. Most Oy now live in Sanamsai district, west of the provincial city of Attapeu. There is also the The people, which are considered a subgroup of the Oy. The 1995 census put their population at 14,947 people.

Name and Language:

The language is of the Bahnaric branch of the Mon-Khmer language group. There are some regional dialects among the Oy there s no written alphabet for their language.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

Like other ethnic groups, the Oy believe in various spirits, such as spirits of the household and spirits of the village, which guard the village. There are also spirits of the forest and of the rivers, which can bring either fortune or disaster. The spirit of rice is very important for a good harvest and this is worshiped and celebrated by honoring the gravest season in December by much eating ad drinking.

The Oy will marry usually on two different occasions. The first is when the parent will choose a mate for their child. The second occasion is when a young couple meets freely and decides to get married. The Oy people generally follow the policy of one wife to one husband, unlike some of the other neighboring tribes that practice polygamy. However, if a man does take more than one wife, he must pay the first wife the penalty buffaloes. If there is already a second wife, then the husband must pay her three buffaloes when taking a third wife. Divorce is allowed. Children can take the name of either the mother or the father’s family.

Oy women give birth in a corner near the fireplace of the house. For three months the mother will sleep by the fireplace, drink hot water and bathe in hot water. In case the mother dies within 90 days after giving birth, the hose shall be destroyed and a new house built elsewhere. It is important that no wood or other material from their old house is used in the construction of the new house.

Oy funeral ceremonies vary depending on the region. In some regions after a body has been buried for several years, they dig up the bones in a ceremony called Pah Chokkaduk, a feast and alms giving are held for seven days. In other regions, Oy do not bury the dead, they simply make a small platform of stones, place the body on top of this, and then cover it with ore stones. After four months, a ceremony is held and the bones are removed and put in a clay jar and then buried in the village cemetery. In addition, in some regions, a feast I held after the bones of the dead are dug durin the April of each year.

Village and house:

Villages generally consist of 50 to near by 200 houses, lying in lowland near rivers and streams Oy villages do not have a communal house so the houses are located randomly in the village.
Oy people prefer houses on stilts, with wooden plank floor and woven bamboo or wooden walls, and a thatched roof. Typically, the length and width are different, with the length of the house facing the west, and bedroom face toward the south. The maximum size of a house is five rooms, the minimum being 2 rooms. There is also small spirit room for spirits to live in. Under the house, they will store firewood and agricultural tools.

Each Oy house is surrounded by a fence, which has two gates, before entering a house, one must observe whether there is a fresh tree branch by the gate, if there is no tree branch, one must then check to see if there is a fresh tree branch by the village gate, if a fresh tree branch is fond there, anyone who is to a member of their village is forbidden to enter the village.

**Costume:**

Oy women do not weave, but they have a very distinct traditional costume. They wear a short-sleeved cotton vest with a V-shaped collar. This vest has a vertical black stripe in the center with red stripes on the side. With this is a cotton sarong, which has horizontal strips, one stripe black and other thinner stripes of red, yellow, and blue. In addition, there is a very distinctive headdress. This has a flat, wide upper base with a cone below which is place on the head. Many cotton threads with red, black, and white colors hang down from around the upper base, covering the women’s forehead and hair.

Oy men wear a similar costume; however, their hat consists of a high conical hat that has a tuft of red thread on the top, looking much like a party hat.

Today it is difficult to find these costumes, as Oy people now wear typical commercially produced clothing such as sarong, long pants, and t-shirts.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Oy do not practice slash and burn agriculture, as they have always had an abundance of water for wet-paddy rice farming. They will also raise fish in their rice paddies. Maize, vegetables and fruits are also cultivated. They Oy will raise ducks, chickens, pigs and buffaloes. They also raised dogs, which they eat. Cattle are not common in their villages.

The Oy are skilled in handicraft, such as making baskets, mats, and simple utensils from wood, bamboo, and rattan. They also have skill in pottery and some villages are known for their skill in forging simple tools from iron.

**Oedou/Oedu: Historical background:**

There has been no clear accurate information, document or evidence about the origins of the Oedou people. Apparently they migrated from Vietnam because of disease in their original homeland. They settled in Chameun region of Nonghead district in Xiengkhaoang province of the Laos in early nineteenth century. After the national liberation of Laos, Oedou people later settle in Ban Kharp and Ban Thaen PHOO villages of KHOON district in XIENGKHOUANG province where they live today.

Additionally, the OEDOU people live also in TEUNG YEUANG district of NGE A province in VIETNAM as well.

The total population of OEKOU living in the Lao P D R amounts to 255 people, of which 107 are females (a figure provided by the chief of BAN KHARP village, in November, 2001)
**Name and language:**

They refer to themselves as “OEDOU” other ethnic people call them “TAY HAT” which is a name they do not like. The OEDOU language is a MON-KHMER language and is on the KHUMIC branch is their language group. They do not have an alphabet. However, today the OEDOU tend to speak more Lao and KEUMMU that their own language, so OEDOU is slowly dieing out. Therefore, the new generation cannot speak their own dialect and now only elderly people can speak OEDOU fluently.

**Society, beliefs, ceremonies and myths:**

The OEDOU have loved and cohabitated with other ethnic groups in their area, so they have adapted and borrowed customs and traditions from these groups, especially the Lao and the KEUMU people. However, they still retain their own beliefs and customs also.

They are an animistic people, and believe mainly in spirits of household, nature, and ancestors. They believe that when a person dies. The soul and spiritual mind will stay in the house hold and provide animals, and crops. Therefore, every year they organize a feast and celebration in February to respect and celebrate the souls and spirits of the ancestors. They have their NEM YEAR celebration in November of each year.

They follow patrilineal succession in the families. After marriage, the husband will take his wife to live with his parents. They will take care of the parents and the husband will lead the family. However, it is usual for the husband to stay at the wife’s family first for sometime. This is usually right after the wedding.

The OEDOU have a clan system, but this is not as strong as some other groups. The families now are if a nuclear type and they are monogamous. Originally, the OEDOU did not have family names, but now this is more common.

Mothers give birth in the house, near the bed or by a corner of the fireplace. At birthing time the women family members will assist.

When someone in a household dies the funeral ceremony will have one or two elderly members to lead the activities in regards to the economic status of the family. The body is buried in the ground.

The OEDOU have lost a lot of their original art and culture, especially in regards to songs, music, costumes, and other things culturally related. However they do wear costume like the RED TAO, which for women is a long SARONG from the breasts to the ankles. The upper part is dark blue while the lower part has horizontal stripes of various colors. They cover the hair with a cloth of dark blue.

**House and village:**

OEDOU prefer their houses in stilts. The interior of the house is a single room. There is a hearth for cooking and the family sleeps in bamboo mats. An alter is in the house for offerings to their ancestors.
Agriculture and livelihood:

The main occupation of OEDUO people living in Lao P D R is not very different from that of other groups. They are engaged mainly in agriculture, growing wet rice, and dry-land rice. They also grow secondary crops such as maize, cassava, sweet potato, taro, beans, chili, Chinese cabbage, garlic and others. They sell some produce in village markets for extra income. They raise animals such as cattle, pigs, dogs, ducks and chickens for traditional and costmary rites. In particular, chickens are the most important for all ritual activities.

HARAK
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The HARAK are an ethnic group who migrated and settled many centuries also in the LAMARM region of seeking province and ATTAPEU province.

After the national democratic revolution, some HARAK people gave up slash-and-burn cultivating of dry-land rice and started growing coffee in LAOFGARM district of SALAVAN province, and BACHIENG and PAKSONG districts of CHAMPASAK province.

HARAK people now live in SEKONG, ATTAPEU, CHAMPASACK and SALAVAN provinces. Their population is 16,394, according to the second population census done in 1995.

NAME AND LANGUAGE:

The original name is HARAK and this is their preferred name. During the national democratic revolution it was decided that they would be known as “HARAK” which replaced the name “HAHLUCK” which means “a look for stealing”.

The HARAK language falls into the ON-KHMER language group. HARAK people can often speak the language of TRIANG, LAWEE, KAHTOO, TRU, LAO and CHIENG, leading to economic and cultural exchanges. HARAK do not have an alphabet for writing.

HARAK people believe in spirits such as the spirit of the household, and the village spirit that guards the village against misfortune. A small altar is kept near the fireplace of the household spirit to reside. In addition, the feast CHONGKAPIAV calls for each family to sacrifice a buffalo once a ear. Traditionally this feast was a village affair that was held once a year, common because of the cost of the feast.

In the area of art and culture, HARAK people have various types of traditional musical instruments such as: bamboo clarinet. Flute and drum. They also have rhymes that are chanted, fold tales that refer to spirits of the heaven and earth, and stories based on animals and the history of their people. Learning herbal medicines and words for magic spells and charms is also part of their culture.

Young people have freedom in choosing their mate for a future relationship. Of a couple feels that they are ready to marry, the young man will ask these parents for permission before getting married.

The wedding dowry of the HARAK people traditionally has been three buffaloes and five large clay vessel of rice wine. The bride moves to stay in her husband’s after the wedding ceremony.

Harak women gave birth alone in a hut nearly a stream in the forest. The husband brings food once very five days until the baby is one two months old. At this time, the mother will return home with the child.
If someone becomes ill, traditional medicine made from local plants are taken. If this does not work, then magic spells combined with herbal roots following the advice of a village spiritual shaman are tried. When someone dies, he or she is covered with a blanket, and then placed in a coffin, which is kept open in the house. A feast that lasts two to three days is held. After this, the body is buried in the village cemetery.

**Village and house:**

A Hark village typically is located on lower slopes or forest clearings near streams. Traditionally the houses were placed in a circular pattern, with a communal house in the center. A Village may consist of about ten to sixty houses. In the past, Haruck people preferred to build houses on piles, with the arrangements of the rooms done to suit the likes of the family members. One interesting household taboo was that prior to 1975 it was strictly forbidden to sleep under mosquito nets in fear of offering the spirits.

**Costume:**

Before 1975, Harak men preferred to wear the traditional katiav or loincloth. Like other ethnic groups, they pierced their ears to wear earrings made of silver or tin. Hair was kept long hair rolled up in styles similar to women. Harak also sharpened their teeth. However, unlike other ethnic groups, they do not tattoo their body. Women wear the traditional Lao phaa sin (traditional skirt), and also pierced their ears, rolled their hair up and sharpened their teeth.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Harak people practice slash-and-burn cultivation of dry-land rice and grow root crops and annual crops such as corn. They also grow legumes as secondary crops. Presently, many Harak people grow coffee and practice lowland paddy farming of rice. Traditionally, the Harak raise animals such as cattle, buffalo, pigs and poultry for food, but they are not as keen animals breeders as other ethnic groups. They also sell these animals and use them to pay for dowries when their sons marry.

Harak men also are skilled hunters of wild animals and also fish in the rivers and streams. They are also skillful in handicrafts, simple blacksmithing, and working with wood. Women are skillful in stitching, weaving, and making sleeping mats for domestic use can for sale. They also have a tradition of catching freshwater shrimp and fish in streams and along the Sekong River. They celebrate this tradition by performing a dance that mimics the fishing activities.

**The Chine-Tibet language family:**

( 7 ethnic groups )

**Singsily:**

**Historical background:**

The Singsily are an ethnic group who has lived in Laos for many centuries Based on documents and the stories of the elder people, the Singsily came form Burma and settled in the Viengphoukha are of Laos during the sixteenth century.
Today Singsily population in Laos is about 35,635. Females number 17,988 according to the second population census of 1995.

**Name and language:**

Common names are Phunoi, Pounoi Pounoi Thaiphongsali, Singsily, and Bisou. There are many stories about why there are so many different names. The agreed name given during the August 2000 meeting is the “Singsili Ethnic Group”.

There are many sub-groups of Singsili, namely Pouyoid, Tapaad, Bantung, Chahor, Laosangfai, Laopan, Pongku and Phongseth. Languages and traditions of each sub-Tibetan language group on the Tibet-Burman language branch. The Singsily have no alphabet.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

Most Singsily practice a blend of animism and ancestral worship. They believe in spirits of the sky, wind, water, streams forest and other nature-related placed. These spirits are associated with all things good and bad in nature, such as a good or bad harvests, floods, rainfall, etc. The most important spirits are the spirits of the land (dat tong) and the spirits of water (dat ahakhang). These and other spirits must be worshiped and offered sacrifices as to make sure they do not cause harm to the village.

Some villages have converted to Buddhism. However, they have a mix of animism and Buddhism.

Today the Singsily live in nuclear family units. Most men practice monogamy but polygamy is allowed. The family lines are paternal. Usually, the eldest child will have priority over inheritance.

The majority of Singsily give birth at home. Men must leave the house when a woman gives birth. For funerals, the body is washed and placed in a coffin. Coins instruments such as drums, gongs, the panpipe, and others.

**Village and house:**

Singsily villages are usually located near streams in mountain forests, between 600 and 1000 meters high. A village will contain about 20 to 100 houses that are randomly place with no organization.

Usually, the Singsily prefer to build houses on stilts. Clay or wood is used for wall construction to offer protection from the cold weather. There are two rooms, a large room with an earthen fireplace of worship next to the bedroom for offerings to the spirits. There are two doors in a house. One, in front, is for daily activities. Another, in the back, is used only occasionally for special religious activities such as calling spirits, or bringing out a baby for burying. However, this tradition of two doors is disappearing.

**Costume and dress:**

The Singsily have a special traditional dress for both females and males. All dresses are usually black decorated by colorful patterns that are skillfully and nicely woven by Singsily women. Those cloths are often worn in New Year religious celebrations.
The women wear a dark blue long-sleeved vest with a V-shaped collar. With this is a dark-blue skirt reaching below the knees. To finish the costume is a turban and white leggings.

The men wear wide Chinese-style trousers, blue vests and turbans. Today they do not wear as much jewelry as easier times.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Singsily grow both dry and wet rice. The most common is glutinous rice, which they grow upland by slash-and-burn methods. Other crops include corn, cucumber, sugar, cane, cabbage, lettuce and some tobacco. Animals they like to breed are chickens, pigs and buffalos. These animals are used as food and labor for transportation and for sacrifices in different religious activities.

The Singsily are known as a very diligent people, especially the women who are very skillful in sewing. Aside from making clothes for themselves they also sell their wares. The men can make simple tools such as knives, axes, machetes and crossbows. They also weave many things from bamboo such as basket, fish traps, and storage baskets.

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**Sila**

**Historical background:**

The Sila once lived near the Great wall of China. Due to a long period of warring, the Sila then migrated down through Sana Kungming and Yunnan before finally setting in the northern area of Laos.
According to a Sila legend there were two groups of Sida: one rich and one poor. The rich traveled by horse helping them move much faster and further from the poor ones who traveled by foot. Finally, the group of rich Sila settled in Laungnamtha province of Laos. This left behind the poor group who family settled in the head of the Ou river area of Phongsali province of Laos.

It is believed the Sila have been living in Laos for more than 200 years. Aside from Laos there are some in Nuichao province of Vietnam and the southern part of China.

Sila total population in Laos is about 1,772 people, and 882 are women. There are 436 Sila in luangnamtha province and 223 are women. This is based on the second population census of 1995.

**Name and language:**

There are many different names given to this group. For those who are living in the Ou River area, they are called the Beumsu Veryer, or Yertheua. For those living in Laungnamtha, initially they were called the Seng, which later changed to Sila. Today the preferable and official name is “Sila”.

Their language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language group. Sila language is quite similar to Akha, Hayii, and Lolo languages. The Sila also speak Chinese, Hor, Lui and Nhoung Languages. Chinese is often used to speak to other ethnic groups of the region.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The Sila, like other ethnic groups in Laos, practice animism and worship the spirits of their ancestors. They also respect and believe in guardian spirits of parents, the heavens, nature, and spirits of the households. The Sila also have a shaman that is called a mu phe. His role is to administer religious activities such as scarifies to agricultural spirits and funerals.

The Sila will worship the spirits of their ancestors twice a year; during the Chinese New year and the rice-planting season. They will offer meat, rice, whiskey, and other offerings.

The head of a village is the eldest man who is thought best able to solve and arbitrate all possible occurring in the village community.

In terms of courting, if a young man and a woman are interested in each other, they will begin the courting process. When the couple believes their love is deep, the man will talk to her parents. He and his brother-in-law will then visit the girl’s parents. They will visit two to three times, offering rice wine as a gift to the girl’s parents. If all goes well, then a wedding date will be set. This could be anywhere from one month to two years later. After this, the girl’s parents would announce that the wedding ceremony would be held in one month at the earliest or two years at the latest. Thing such as rice, rice wine a pig and buffalo, and other similar things are gathered for the future wedding party.

Once all things have been arranged and prepared, a ceremony will be held with family and friends in attendance. Chicken would be offered to guests. For the couple, the shaman will give an egg mixed with sticky rice to the groom and bride, one half given to the groom by his right hand and another half to the bride by his left hand. Then the couple will cross hands, and they are declared married. Then, guest would be invited to enjoy food and drink.

If conditions are favorable then later a larger, more formal wedding will be held later. A large feast will be held, with up to 30 different dishes and drinks offered. The groom will give the parent’s of the bride six to twelve old French silver coins.
When a wife is pregnant, her husband will help her prepare for the future birth. He will help prepare clothes for the newborn, and gather food. When the time of birth is near, she will inform her other or her mother in law for assistance. Birth takes place near the couple’s bed. After giving birth the mother and newborn has to stay near the fireplace for thirty days. They will rest and bath with hot water. Certain prohibitions for the mother are that she cannot eat meat from animals that are the color white, such as a white chicken or a white buffalo. After thirty days have passed, she may resume normal eating habits.

The newborn baby will be given a name after three days of his or her birth. Chickens and one small pig will be prepared for food to offer elderly guest who come to witness the baby’s naming. For boy the word “Cha” will be put in front if his given name, for instance “Chases” or “Chasi”. For a girl the word “Ko” will be use instead, for example “Kosii”. “Kohiev” and so on.

When someone dies, the body of the deceased will be kept a home for a time of worship for a few days. Then the body will be placed in a hardwood coffin and buried in a graveyard. After the funeral, the shaman will call back the spirits of the people who attended the funeral, plus the spirit of the deceased.

**Village and house:**

The Sila village is generally located in rugged area at high altitudes up to 1500 meters. The villages will contain from ten fifty houses. Their houses are small and rectangular. If the ground is flat, they will build the house directly on the group. It the refrain is steep, the they will also use stilts to support the forward of the house. There is a single door in the front or the back of the house.

There is a large room in the interior for eating and entertaining. Small sleeping areas are separated from this area by woven bamboo walls. The families sleep on small platforms made of wood. The house walls are either wood or woven bamboo. A small hearth is in the center of the main room. The floor is made of pounded earth. There is also a small altar in very house for offering worship to the family ancestors.

**Costume:**

The women’s dress consists of a long-sleeved cotton vest that has many small tin-hanging diagonally down the front. Five to ten rows of old silver coins that dates back to the colonial days hang around the waste. The vest is also decorated with embroidered bands of green, black, and red on the sleeves and body of the vest. However, this special vest is only worn on special occasions. Daily wear consists of simpler cotton vests and dark sarong that may have similar embroidery on it. The women will also wear a white cotton turban that with colored embroidery. They will wrap it complete around their head, covering their hair.

Sila men wear dark blue long-sleeved vest with long wide-legged black trousers.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Sila cultivate ordinary rice as the major crop with sticky rice as a secondary crop. In additional, they raise cows, buffalos, pigs, dogs, and poultry for food and labor. In addition, horses are raised for transportation. The Sila have tradition raised poppy flower for opium production, but this is being
discouraged today. Sila men are known as good ironsmiths, handicraft-makers, carpenters, and kitchen utensil makers. Sila women are known as fine weavers.

**Lahu**

**Historical background:**

The LAHU originally lived in southwest China. In the early nineteenth century this ethnic group settled in KUANGTUNG province of BURMA, then moved southwards at the end of the century. During this time some of them migrated into THAILAND, VIETNAM and the northern part of LAOS.

Today, the LAHU live in the northern provinces of LUANGNAMTHA and BOKEO. Other LAHU still live in the southern areas of CHINA, BURMA, VIETNAM and northern THAILAND.

Total population of LAHU in Laos is 14,970, whereas 7,566 are women, representing 0.3% of the total national population according to the second population census of 1995.

**Name and language:**

They refer to themselves as “LAHU”, which is the name they prefer other ethnic groups often refer to them as “MUSEUR”, whose origin and meaning is unclear. The word “LAHU” is from “LAHOU” which means “to breed tigers” in the LAHU language.

There are many sub-group of LAHU, namely LAHUNA ( white Museur ) and Lahusy ( Black Museur ) and Lahuseley ( Red Museur or Kui ).

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The Lahu in Laos predominantly believe in animism. They have spirits that are associated with natural phenomena such as lighting, rainbows, wind, and others. These spirits are thought of as generally friendly. There are also spirits that are good and bad, and these are the spirits of the house. The village, livestock and the forests. These spirits must be placated by worship and offerings. When people die of an unusual death, such as by murder or a tiger attack, the Lahu also believe in a supreme creator called the guisha.

There are many celebrations thought a year; however, the most interesting and colorful one is the New Year celebration that is usually held between the end of January and early February. Additionally, they also have tradition ceremonies related to agricultural production, such as a ceremonies of rice planting, cutting down trees, and slash-and-burning. There are also ceremonies protecting rice from insects and asking for a bountiful harvest, plus a ceremony giving thanks to the spirits for the harvest.

There are symbolic folk songs and songs of the Lahu that are of three kinds. This first are “whishing songs” to be sung by only elderly people. The second kind of songs are for young people to sing when working in rice fields or celebrating with each other. Housewives when hosting parties sing the last kind of songs. The panpipe ( kan ) is the only traditional played during the New Year’s celebration.

In general a Lahu family unit consists of parents, non-married children and sometimes a married daughter with her husband and kinds. After marrying, the first daughter will bring her family to live in her parent’s house. This is to assist in taking care of her parent. she has to stay until a younger sister gets married and replaces her in this duty. A married man will usually move out to live with his wife.
This is means the Lahu do not inherit along parental lines. The family and relative system is less complicated than other ethnic groups. In general, they just refer to all relatives as brothers or sisters. They will only look at actual relations of family members when one is getting married, to avoid marriage within the same family.

Unlike any other ethnic groups in Laos, there is no particular prohibition in what a pregnant mother may eat. However, after giving birth there are dietary taboos that she must follow, such as not eating buffalo, white chicken, or strong smelling food. Her mother and husband will help take care of her and the child after she has given birth. The elder villagers in an name-giving ceremony will give a newborn baby’s name. Once a couple has a child they will no longer be called by their first named, but by the name of their first child, by the means of “father of or mother of”.

The Lahu believe the soul of the deceased will stay in their own house as a spirit of the house. The Lahu wrap the deceased in a white cloth and the ceremony varies on the seniority of the deceased. Bodies are buried in a cemetery outside the village.

**Village and house:**

The Lahu prefer to build villages in mountainous valleys above 1,000 meters. However, today the Lahu can be found at lower areas. Villages are small, about twenty to thirty houses.

Traditionally, the Lahu house is on stilts. House styles vary, depending on the wealth of each family. Usually a house consists of a bedroom, a living room and a kitchen. There is no restriction of time or season when building a house, one can build when convenient. However it is prohibited to have the rooms situated in a straight line. This is believed to bring unhappiness and illness to the family. Usually the celebration for opening a new house festive in the belief that the more festive, the more prosperous the family will become. A large feast will be given to entertain guest and those who helped in building the house. How large the celebration is depends on the family’s wealth.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The Lahu have traditionally practiced slash-and-burn agriculture, growing crops such as dry-land-rice, maize and opium poppies. They also grow a variety of vegetables and fruits. For religious reasons and for food, chickens, ducks and pigs are raised. Cows and buffalos are not common.

The Lahu men are famous for hunting and spend much of the time in the forests. Hunting is an important food source and also an income earner. They use crossbows, traps, and now even machine guns. They are skilled hunting large animals such as tigers and bears. However, many of these animals are nearly extinct in Laos due to hunting pressure.
Lolo:

Historical Background:

The Lolo came from China’s Yunan province to Laos about two hundred years ago. In China they are a large minority group. Today, the small numbers that live in Laos are settled around Phongsali two in Phongsali province.

The Lolo population in Laos is about 1,407 people, and 711 are women. This is 0.1% of Laos’ total population (based on the second census of 195).

Name and Language:

They refer to themselves as “Lao”. Others refer to them by this name also. The official name for them is “Lolo”.

They speak a Sino-Tibetan language that is a Tibeto-Bruman language. The Lolo in China are reported to have their own script based on Chinese characters with this alphabet. Most of them speak Chinese and many use Chinese as their first language.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

The Lolo practice animism, and are very concerned about evil spirits. They believe their people originated from gourds, which is a belief that many ethnic groups in Southeast Asia have. They have the KET do spirit which is the Creator of the universe and the master of all. They also have the spirits of the sky, the water, and sickness, to name a few. They offer worship to their dead ancestors. Very household will have an altar for offerings to the spirits of the ancestors.

The LOLO have male shamans called PEMU. They also have male and female sorcerers. The shamans and the sorcerers are skilled in fortune telling, divination, spell casting, traditional medicine, and performing religious activities.

The torch festival is the major festival for the LOLO, which is held on the twenty-fourth day of the six lunar months. The festival occurs after the harvest, and the villagers offer sacrifices to the spirits.

With marriage, the LOLO traditionally married at the young age of around 14, but today they tend to get married at an older age. Of a young man and a young woman want to marry, he will inform his parents. Of the parents are satisfied with their son’s choice, and then they will meet her parents to finalize the agreements. Offering such as meat, tobacco, and wine are exchanged between the parents. If everything sees well, then a wedding dowry is finally offered. This normally is at least 60 kg of pork meat and minimum of 50 liters of rice wine or whiskey. Money and lengths of textile are also offered.

After marriage the wife will move into toe household of her husband. After her first pregnancy, the young couple will move out to state their own household.

A LOLO mother will give birth in the house. An older woman will assist in the birth. After the birth, the mother must drink hot water for one month. A one-month anniversary celebration will be held for the newborn baby. The woman who helped give birth will be also invited. On that day the baby will be given a name by his or her grandfather.

A person who is ill will be treated by traditional medicine. If this fails, then a sorcerer will be asked to find the reasons of sickness, which is believed to come from supernatural powers. Then more methods of healing will be tried after the sorcerer gives his advice.

When someone dies, dances, songs, and time of morning are organized by the deceased’s family. During the presence of the corpse at home, members of the deceased’s family must cover their
heads. A son-in-law is required to carry one end of the coffin during the journey to the cemetery, and the coffin is cremated in a funeral pyre. The mourners will leave the area before the pyre has finished burning. The bones are later collected, placed in a bowl, and then buried during a later date. During this time some chickens are sacrificed. Every year in April, family members will come to clean and tidy the burial site, light candles, and present some food to the spirits of the deceased.

The LOLO have songs and traditional musical instruments like the panpipe, bottle gourd, and gong. They also have proverbs and folktales stories.

**Village and house:**

The LOLO have an interesting custom for finding a place to build a new village. They will stay overnight at a prospective area and decide if the place is good or bad by analyzing their dreams the next morning. Seeing flying animals, money, gold, deer, or tigers in their dreams is considered a bad sign so they should continue to look for another place for their village.

Of the place is satisfaction, the villagers will dig a small hole and put three rice seeds head to head into the hole and cover with soil. Later, they check to see if the rice has germinated. If they have and the seeds are still located in the same direction, then it is okay to build at that spot.

LOLO like to build clay houses 15 meters in length and 6 meters in width. A house consists of two main rooms parallel to each other. One main room is used for guests while the other one is divided into many small rooms for grandparents and unmarried children, and will as a kitchen and a family altar.

**Costume:**

LOLO when wear a dark blue or light blue vest with long sleeves. The hems of the vest are decorated with black lace and narrow stripes of red embroidery. They complement this with a plain, dark colored sarong. They cover their hair with a carefully folded black turban. Around the waist they wear a blue waistcloth with red and yellow decorations. Today the women on Laos wear very little jewelry, unlike the LOLO in CHINA. The men will wear more typical commercial clothing, or perhaps a pair of long traditional trousers.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

The LOLO grow rice, corn, and vegetables. They grow both wet and dry rice. Traditionally, they have raised opium. In addition, the LOLO breed animals like buffalos, cows, and horses for labor. They also raise pigs and poultry for food and traders, transporting goods in their small horses. They traditionally trade opium and cotton.

The LOLO men do not hunt like other groups, but will fish when they are located near villages. They also manufacture some products from bamboo, such as baskets and fish traps.

**Hor**

**Historical background:**

The HOR are an ethnic group that originally migrated from China during the nineteenth century. Today they have settled mostly in PHONGSALI province. They also live in southern part of China.

Total population of the HOR is about 8,900 people.
Name and language:

The most common name for this group is “HOR”, which they call themselves and other groups refer to them by. However, the true meaning of “HOR” remains unknown.

The HOR language is a SINO-TIBETAN language, on the SINITIC branch. There is no alphabet for writing.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

The HOR in Lao are followers of Mahayana Buddhism plus some are followers of Islam. The Hor style of Buddhism combines ancestral worship, Taoism, and Confucianism.

Taoism to the Hor teaches meditation and the use of magic to gain wealth and health. Confucianism teaches ancestor worship and religious rituals.

For the Hor, there are many events and celebrations during the years or “Boon Kin Chaing”. This is same as the Chinese New Year and follows the lunar calendar. The festival of the Hungry Ghosts in a time to pay respects to the spirits of the dead. Muslin Hor also practice Ramadan.

The Hor family unit is patriarchal and is of the unclear unit. The father is the most powerful person in the family, and will often have more than one wife. Only sons can inherit family wealth and usually the first son will inherit the most wealth the first son will inherit the most wealth. In the past, Hor families were of the extended type, meaning many families and generations lived together in a house. Today it is more common for each family to have their own house.

The Hor offer intermarr with other ethnic groups in Laos. Mostly, marriage mates are decided by the parents and usually both boys and girls marry at young ages. Wives move into the husband’s after marriage. She will help take care of her husband’s family.

Both Muslim and Buddhist Hor will their dead. However, if the deceases had died from a violent death, then the body will be cremate instead.

The Hor like to sing love songs as well as the songs about everyday life, which expresses feelings about the motherland, human diligence, and the fights against nature and man. Musical instruments are the flute, guitar, traditional violin, and others.

Village and house:

HOR prefer to build their villages in lowlands and valleys. Villages will vary from 30 to 70 houses. The village is not usually fenced in, but there may be simple fences around individual houses. Houses are built on the top of the ground, not on stilts like most other ethnic groups. The houses are rectangular in shape. Building materials and the size of the house will depend on the wealth of the family.

The interior of the house has a large living room which takes up about two thirds of the house. This will have a hearth in it. Hunting instruments like curved swords, and lances, are commonly used as house decorators and usually are located above the entrance door.

Costume:

The HOR dress like typical Chinese, women wear black trousers, vests, jackets, and a cap. Men like to wear black-grey trousers and keep their hair ling. Some HOR women have adopted the local dress of neighboring ethnic groups.
Agriculture and livelihood:

The HOR have traditionally been traders, but also practice agriculture. Usually, HOR grow ordinary rice and vegetables. They are skilled in integrating cultivation that suits each growing season. Animal breeding is also practiced. Cows and buffalos are raised for labor, and pigs and poultry are bred for offerings I different celebration and for food. These animals are sold or exchanged for other goods necessary for daily life, such as salt, seasoning, sugar, fuel and cloth. The HOR are also not hunters, preferring to buy their meat from other ethnic groups who are more skilled at hunting.

Akha

Historical background:

The AKHA originally settled in the KUAICHAO and YUNAN, which are today provinces of china. After moving down to the southern part of YUANA, they later moved to VA and XIENGTUNG district of VIETNAM. Only later did they settle in the mountainous areas in northern LAOS during the last 200 years. Escape from war and the need for land for cultivation were the main reasons of these migrations. The AKHA have found MYANM, THAILAND, LAOS and VIETNAM as the most peaceful and agricultural-suited places to live in. the natural richness and mild weather through the rear are other factors that attracted them to settle in those areas. Currently, most of the AKHA are living in the northern part of LAOS, mainly in PHONGSALI, LUANGNAMTHA, UDOMDAI, and BOKEO provinces. KHA are also living in THAILAND, MYANMA, CHINA, and VIETNAM. The total population of the AKHA in LAOS is 66,108 people, where 33,000 are women. This is 1.4 percent of LAOS’ population census 1995.

Name and language:

The AKHA call themselves “AKHA” while other ethnic groups call them “KOR or IKOR”. However, the preference name and also the official name is “AKHA ethnic group” There are many sub-group of AKHA , namely CHICHOR, POULY, PANA, FE, OOMA, NUKUI, LUMA, EUPA, CHIPIA, MOCHI, UAEU, KHER, MUTHERN, MAMOUANG, POUKUANG, PILOU, PISOR, PUSANG and KONGSAAD.

The AKHA language is in the china-Tibetan group of languages and is placed in the branch of the Tibetan-Myanmar languages. AKHA has no written alphabet.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

Although there is no written history about the AKHA, they have a rich oral history of their traditions and culture. It is a summary of thoughts and true life experiences which are inherited from their ancestors. Their is called the “AKHASANG”, or the “AKHA WAY”

The AKHA heavily believe in spirits and it is not easy for them to give up this tradition, as their belief in spirits is strongly ingrained in their culture. They believe spirits are both” good” and “bad”. House and village spirits are believed to be “good” as they represent spirits of their ancestors who
look after their family members. Trees, forests and rivers spirits are considered ad spirits. The bad ghosts may cause them sickness and illness.

Based on these beliefs, the AKHA will pray, both to the good and bed sprits to look after them or save them from evil happenings. Also, AKHA also express their respects by YUKHAM or KALUM”. YUKHAM is when a woman who has just given birth must stay by alit fire. KALUM is the temporary prohibition from eating or doing some things that are usually considered a routine activity. It is important to not break these traditional rules or insult the house and village spirits. Women must stop working during their YUKHAM even of the activity s considered very important for their daily living.

In the past, the AKHA strictly obeyed their traditional rules and prohibitions. Some of these that were followed at certain times are:

- Do not touch any items or articles in the village gate area.
- Do not take off shirts and shoes. Do not bring raw meat into the village.
- Do not sing and dance. Conversation. Between boys and girls was also not allowed
- Pregnant woman that were not married were not allowed to give birth in the village.
- Do not allow pigs to give birth in the village, and if only one or two baby pigs were born, they must not be allowed to breed in the future. They must be killed or offered as food to others.
- Twin or abnormal babies would be killed.
- Widow or divorced women were not allowed to die in the village. If they did die in a village, the deceased’s family had to move and resettle in another place. There are other rules and taboos that had to be obeyed and were enforced daily in the past. However today some of these have fallen out of favor and are no longer practiced.

AKHA follow a paternal family line. After marriage a man must ring his wife to live in a small house built net to the main house of his parents. The son or daughter-in-law will be allowed to move in the main house when only the husband’s father or mother passes away. However, the new couple can have a normal daily routine, such as eating together with the husband’s parents. If the son desires to build a new house these must be in the area next to his parents’ house.

It is considered a great happiness if a wife becomes pregnant, therefore during the pregnancy the husband and wife should not break any rules for the sake of the mother and child’s health. When giving birth, only the husband’s mother assists in the birth. after the birth, two chickens are sacrificed to the spirits.

Akha believe that death is a transformation from the human world to another spiritual world of their ancestors. Therefore, before burying the body, there are many performances that are carried out so the deceased spirit will not be harmful for them and will also support their children’s future. The body is washed and pieces of silver are put in the mouth. Death rites and chants will last for two days. The body is placed in an elaborate coffin and buried. The next day the family visits the gravesite, but will never visit again. The following year a ceremony is held where the family asks the soul of the deceased to return to the household and watch over the family.

The Akha family system is an expanded system. In Akha society, men usually are the most important figure in house and village. In a village there will be a leader versed in belief there will be leader versed in belief and tradition, who acts a headman. The main activities of this headman are looking after the important and respected things in the village, such as the village gate, swing, water source, cemetry, and spirit place. This leader will also be the first person to be informed if unpleasant things happen so together with solve the problem as soon as possible. Also, there is a leader of the youth in the village. His main duty is to recommend activities for young people including the welcoming of outside guest.
For Akha, there are many performance and major celebrations in a year, such as the celebration of the swing in August to September, New Year celebration in January to February, and celebrations related to agricultural production. The Akha will pray to guardian spirits of the water source before rice plantation, asking them to scare away insects and grasshoppers.

**Village and House:**

The Akha choose a site for a new village by using an egg as a test. The main shaman drops an egg in small, freshly dug hole, and if it breaks, this means that the spirits of the land have accepted the villagers to construct a village. The shaman will build his house on the spot where the egg was dropped.

The Villages sit in altitudes from 600 to 1000 meters, and are usually on a hillside in some cleared forestland. An average village has between forty and fifty houses.

The Akha have two styles of house. One style is to build on stilts, so the house is about one meter above the ground. The other style is to build the house on the group. Floors are bamboo mats, wood planks, or hard earth, depending on the style of the house. Walls are made of woven bamboo and the roof is heavy thatch. Akha houses have no windows, but are well protected from wind, rain, and cold weather. Houses always have two doors, one at the front and one in the back. A wall that divides the house into areas for men, and area for women separates the houses.

Akha villages are recognizable by the large wooden swings that are used during festivals and celebrations. There are also two important gates called the law ka spirits that protect the village inhabitants these gates.

**Costume:**

Akha women have perhaps the most colorful and interesting costume of the entire minority group in Laos. There are many different styles of dress, but a common style is as follows. Elaborate headdresses are worn that are made of a series of bamboo rings covered with straw. This is covered with silver balls and silver coins, with colored threads at the sides. Colorful short skirts are worn with tight-fitting jackets. The skirt are often dark blue or black, and the legs are covered with legging that go from the knee to the dress, as it can vary among the different Akha groups.

The men tend to wear more modern clothing; however some still wear the traditional blue loose-fitting trousers and blue jackets. A white vest is often worn under the jacket. The Akha make all of their traditional clothing. The women spin cotton or hemp to make cloth. Then they threads and yarns.

**Agriculture and livelihood:**

Akha traditionally practiced a primitive form of slash-and-burn agriculture that would leave the soil exhausted after three or four growing seasons. Their three main crops are dry-land-rice, maize, and cotton. They would also grow vegetables, peanuts, pieces, and sometimes tea. However, one crop the Akha have grown for a long time is opium poppies, which have led to problems, including addition to opium.

The Akha are also skilled foragers at finding many wild fruits and vegetables. They are skilled hunters, using traps, crossbows and old muskets to hunt large and small game. They also breed cows, buffalos, pigs, and chickens. However, it is unpopular to eat those animals as daily food, unless there are special traditional celebrations or occasions there are guests.
Hanyi:

Historical background:

Historically, the Hanyi originated from China, moving down later into Lao Chao Province of Vietnam. Later, a small group of Hanyi moved into Phongsali province of Laos. The Hanyi population in Laos numbers 1,122 people, of whom 528 are women.

Name and language:

The Hanyi are referred to by different names such as Ou Ni, Za Ou Ni, but their favorable and official name is Hanyi.

Their language is similar to the Si La, Ahka and Lolo language. The Hanyi language is a Sino-Tibetan language, on the Tibeto-Burman language branch.

Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:

The Hanyi are animists, believing in spirits of nature and of household. These spirits include the spirits of heaven and earth, cats, thunder, and water, to name a few, they also practice ancestral worship. A shaman is the religious leader, his role is to make offerings to the spirits and to organize and lead religious rituals. Ceremonies include agricultural ceremonies, such as making offerings to spirits before rice harvesting. Chickens and ducks are sacrificed as offerings to the spirits of the rice fields. Other ceremonies are performed when new land is chosen for a new village or house, and also to contact the spirits of the deceased. The most important festival is the New Year festival that takes place the same time as the Chinese New Year. This goes on for about five to seven days ad includes a lot of drinking, eating, and merriment.

The society has different lineages of families, named after the name of an ancestor. It is considered important of one to be able to recite one’s genealogy back to the progenitor of their ethnic group.

In regards to marriage, when a man who is usually eighteen or older is interested in a woman, he will spend time courting her. If the young woman accepts his offerings, then the young man will choose someone in the family to act as an intermediary. Discussions will take place between the parents of the two young people. They will check the birthdates of the young people in a Chinese astrology book to see if they match favorably, and if they match, then a date shall be set for the wedding. The young man pays, some money, alcohol, and other goods. A wedding ceremony takes place where there is a large amount of celebrating, feasting, and drinking. The newly married husband will move into the household of his wife. After some time, they will spend time in his household.

When a woman is pregnant she must stop working hard. Three days after birth, a ceremony is held where a village elder will perform a ceremony of sacrificing a chicken and mixing rice and a raw egg to decide the name of the baby.

When someone is ill, then healing is attempted by traditional medicine and spells by the shaman. If there is a death, the body is placed in the house for three days for a mourning period. After the three days, the body is placed in a coffin made from a hollow tree trunk, and the coffin is carried to the forest where the egg lands and breaks is where the grave will be dug.
Village and house:

Hanyi villages are sited at altitudes between 1000 and 1500 meters high. The villages are small, usually no more than forty houses.

The Hayi generally build their rectangular houses on the ground. They are about five to six meters long and four to six meters wide. The walls are made of woven bamboo and the roof is thatch. The floor is pounded earth.

The interior is divided into several rooms, with a large living room and smaller areas for sleeping. There is a room that contains the ancestral altar where food offerings, joss sticks and small cups of wine are offered to the spirits. A small kitchen is in the back of the house. There is generally only one door.

Costume:

The women wear a long-sleeved cotton dress, a pair of trousers, and a long skirt that goes over the trousers. The vest has red, white and yellow embroidery along the hems. The long sleeves also have colorful ands o them. Rows of freshwater pearls are sewn on the front of the vest. Some women wear silver bracelets and necklaces. Today, the women wear a mixture of commercial and ethnic clothing, such as Lao sarongs and cheap Chinese blouses.

Men’s traditional clothing was similar to the Hmong; dark blue trousers with a long sleeved vest. However, most men now wear typical commercial clothing tat is bought in the markets.

Agriculture and livelihood:

The Hanyi grow rice with slash-and-burn agriculture. Today, they also practice wet-rice cultivation and grow corn and vegetables. Poppy for opium production and trading is also important. They will also keep animals such as buffalo, pigs, chickens and dogs. Hunting in the forest for all sorts of game is important. The women will gather edible plants ad herbs in the village. Men and women also weave baskets and other goods fro bamboo and the women are known to be skillful weavers and embroiderers.

The Hmong – Iuwmien Language Family
( 2 Ethnic Group)

Hmong

Historical background:

The Hmong are an ethnic group that has lived in the territory of Laos since the middle of the nineteenth century. This ethnic group migrated from the Tibetan region, passing through China and settling in the lower part of Maenam Leuang (Huang Ho or Yellow River). Due to war, they migrated and moved further down China, entering Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.

Presently, the Hmong live in numerous areas of the northern provinces of Laos all the way down to Bolikhamsay province. Additionally, the Hmong still live in China, Vietnam and Thailand. The
Hmong is Laos have a total population of 315,365 persons, of which 157,410 are females, sharing 6.9% of the country’s total population according to the second population census done in 1995.

**Name and language:**

Hmong refer to themselves “Hmong”. For those Hmong living in Laos, referring to them as “Hmong” is satisfactory, as this is their ancient name also. In their language, “Hmong” means “person”. The Hmong in Laos are composed of many branches such as the Hmong Khao (White Hmong), Hmong Lai (Striped Hmong) and Hmong Dum (Black Hmong).

The Hmong language is of the Miao-Yao group of the Austro-Thai language family. The language branch is the Miao. They have two alphabets, one using Latin characters. The Hmong language varies slightly from one location to another, but all Hmong can understand one another.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

The Hmong practice a mix of animism, naturalism and spirituality. Hmong believe in animistic spirits (phi) such as the spirits of their dead parents, the spirits of the household, spirits of the village and the region. There are also spirits of the sky, the forest, rivers, and many others. The largest group of spirits is called the dab, and this includes the above-mentioned spirits. Occasionally, these spirits will cause problems and have to be exorcised by village shaman. The spirit of the household is worshipped by placing offerings such as food on a small shelf in the house. If a visitor approaches the house, he or she must always ask permission first before entering. If the visitor enters without permission, then the household spirits may be offended, causing ill will in the household. The Hmong also believe that the ancestral spirits of the male line of the family live inside the pillars of the house. This is also another reason why care must be taken when entering another house. Hmong also believe strongly in witches, and that these witches can cast evil spells, such as turning one into a werewolf. Shamans who deal with these problems are generally male, but there are some female shamans.

Hmong follow the clan (takoon) system of lineage, which is traced and followed through the male line. This system of clan lineage prohibits marriage between members of the same line. They can only marry members of another clan. After marriage, the wife will stay at her husband’s house. She must follow her new family’s beliefs and lineage, but of course she still has relations with her own family. Hmong girls generally marry at the young age of fourteen to fifteen, and boys at around age eighteen to nineteen.

Major traditional festival of the Hmong people are the Boon Kin Chiang or Nor Peh Chao (New Year Festival) which is celebrated after the crop harvest, mainly on the fifteenth day of the first month of every year. This is a time of great celebration and feasting. This is also an important time for courting between young people.

Pregnant mothers give birth near the fireplace of the house, with the assistance of an experienced woman to help and take care of her. After birth, the placenta of the newborn is buried under the floor of the house. A daughter, whether having a husband or not, is not allowed to give birth in her parent house.

Hmong women will prepare for death by weaving the funeral clothes that they will be buried in. The dead are buried during sunsets in nice locations on mountainsides. The Hmong believe that a person has three souls that separate during death. Once soul goes to heaven, the other remains in the grave and the final soul in reincarnated. The Hmong spend time on farewells to the dead, for they believe that if they don’t evil spirits may mislead them on their way to heaven.
**Village and house:**

Most Hmong villages are between 1000 and 1500 meters high and many villages can only be reached by foot or horseback. Most villages never have more than fifty houses. Some villages are made up of a single clan.

The Hmong house is rectangular and I built on the ground, not on stilts like many other groups. It is made of wood, bamboo, and has a thatched roof. There is fireplace in the corner for cooking and heating, and one end of the house in partitioned off or sleeping quarters for the entire family.

**Costume:**

Costumes vary among the different Hmong groups, but they are varied and ornate. Among women, these can be black, loose trousers or pleated skirts with batik patterns and motifs of green, yellow and embroidery. Long sleeve jackets with narrow collars and curved edges are also worn. Some Hmong also wear a black kerchief that is decorated with silver coins. Both men and women wear a great deal of jewelry of solid silver. These are rings, bracelets, and earrings.

**Agriculture and economy:**

The Hmong practice mainly slash-and-burn cultivation of rice and maize. Traditionally, they would use the land for three years, and then abandon it for twelve ears t let the land regain fertility, but this is not always possible now due to population pressure. In addition, they grow vegetables and different types of root crops for the household daily consumption. They are very skilled at animal husbandry raising many types of animals such as cattle, buffaloes, horse, goat, pigs, dogs and chickens. Their favorite animals are the small pot-bellied pigs.

Handicrafts are very important in Hmong society. Hmong men are skillful in carpentry and blacksmithing, making a variety of tools and utensils from both wood and iron. Silversmith skills are also common to produce the myriad of jewelry that the Hmnoq love to wear. Women are skillful at knitting and embroidery of different styles and patterns. They are well known for the elaborate and ornate embroidery and batik patterns.

**Iumien**

**Historical backgrnd:**

The Iumien originally migrated down from China, first migrating to Kwnagtoog, Kuichw, Kwangsi and Yunnan in the southwest of China during the Xin Hun feudal reign. Some Iumien also migrated to the northern area of Vietnam between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. After this time they slowly spread into Laos, Burma and Thailand. Their migration to Laos occurred during several deferent periods and different routed such as through the northwestern provinces of Vietnam to Huaphan, Xiengkhoang and Luangprabang province. There was also a route passing through the Southern provinces of China to the north of Laos through Phongsali, Udomsai, Luangnamtha and Bokeo provinces.

Presently, Iumien ethnic people live in the northern provinces of Laos down to Vientiane province. Also, they still live in neighboring countries such as Vietnam, China and Thailand.
The total population of the Iumien living in Laos totaled 22,665, of which 11,374 were females according to the second population census done in 1995.

**Language and name:**

Te Iumien are also known as the Yao, which the Iumien are actually a sub-group of. In Laos there are two sub-groups of Yao: the Iumie and the smaller Laten. They are very similar in culture and language. The Iumien refer to themselves as the “Iumien”.

The language of this ethnic group is classified into the Miao-yao language group of the Austro-Thai linguistic family. The Iumien and the Lanten both have a written language using Chinese characters. They write down family records and lineage, as well as stories, rituals and medicinal treatments. This has helped them preserve some of their ancient knowledge. They often use handmade paper made from bamboo.

**Beliefs, society, ceremonies and myths:**

Since the Iumien use the Chinese written language to write, they have been able to preserve their customs and culture very well.

Both Iumien and Lanten people have a complex combination of a sacred spiritual doctrine and a Tao doctrine of their ancestors that comes from Chinese influence. It is a mix of doctrine magic, Confucianism and history. There is also a belief of the more animistic spirits that are part of daily life. They believe in seven principal spirits that represent humans, animals, fields, forests, the sky, water and the earth and village. In addition, they have a religious ceremony of entering into the Taoist “way” for all young men at around the age of seventeen.

Iumien society is strongly patriarchal. The husband and father have the final say. The families are in a clan system. The household number varies from 2 to 10 persons or more. Iumien people always follow the clan line of their father. A daughter, despite being married, does not become part of her husband’s clan line of their husband. This means they live in a extended type of family pattern or large family. Traditionally, Mien men had six on seven wives, but today monogamy is more common.

When Iumie women are pregnant, the woman and her family are very careful to prevent miscarriage or deformity. For example, water must be poured on the fireplace, or the doors must not have a knife stuck in them. The women give birth at home. For one month after giving birth, the mother cannot enter another house.

Funeral services are complex and expensive for the IUMIEN. They mourn for three days and place silver coins in the mouth of the deceased. The body is washed and placed in front of an ancestral alter. Relatives and friends hold prayers. The body is buried, unless he or she was killed in an accident, then the body is burned in a funeral pyre.

The IUMIEN have their own unique ethnic songs, music, and poetry. The body of this is quite large, thanks to their ability to save these songs, stories and poems on paper.

**Village and house:**

IUMIEN villages are situated between 500 and 1500 meters. The location of the village is chosen by the fertility of the soil. Villages are small, usually no more than fifty houses. There is no defined arrangement of the houses; nor is there a central community house or public area like other ethnic groups have in their villages.
The IUMIEN houses are one story and sit on the ground. There are three doors, one in the left and another on the right. One door is used for men and guests, and opens to the living room. The door for women opens to the kitchen, while the third door is called the PATOONUAI (the gate) and is used only for ritual ceremonies opposite the sacred family altar. The IUMIEN consider their house to be sacred buildings, therefore, before building, they decide in an auspicious day so as to not insult spirits and to insure family happiness.

**Costume:**

IUMIEN people wear trousers, a large TURBA in the head, and a long robe that has a sash. The entire costume is black or dark blue. There is a thick fringe of red yarn in the neck and down the front of their robe. They also wear a lot of silver jewelry, which displays wealth.

IUMIEN wear dark blue trousers and a short loose jacket with a few silver buttons. However, their costume is much less elaborate than the IUMIEN woman’s costume.

**Agriculture and economy:**

Traditionally slash and burn cultivation of dry land rice, plus the cultivation of wet rice was the mainstay of IUMIEN agriculture. Today they grow maize, cassava, sweet potato, beans, cotton, tobacco, and spices. They are skilled at breeding animals such as cattle, buffaloes, horse, goat, pigs, dogs, chickens and ducks. They also breed small horses that are used for transport. Even though they raise a large number of animals, they do not eat meat that often.

IUMIEN women do not weave much anymore, but they are skilled at making garments from cloth they have bought from other groups or in the market. They are very skilled in dying, embroidery, and producing ornate shoulder bags. The men are skilled in blacksmithing and silversmith, producing jewelry, tools and pipe for their family and for sale.

**Evidence of ethno logiest**

1. President Kaysone Phomvihane to enhance the solidarity of al ethics, state of prime minister and printed 1981 book.
2. Biography of Lao people by: Mr. Ounh Phimvongsa (Vientiane 2501) book
3. Lao History Maha Sila Vilavong book
4. History Phongsaly Province by: Mr.Khammanh. Printed in July 30,2513,book
5. Documentary of Ethnics group committee center.
7. Lao P.D.R, Lao people by Mr.Phonechanh and Mr. Siviley Publisher’s office Lao protiotic center 1971 book.
9. The subject in Vietnam, Publisher’s office Culture National, Printed: 1996.
11. Mr.Khoune- Au Bounelaphon, Deputy President of Lao National front for Construction Savannaket province.
12. Mr. Pausalaoseung, president of Lao National front for Construction, Nhod-Ou District, Phongsaly Province.
13. Mr. Sombay venevongkham, Deputy president of Lao National front for construction, Bolikhamxay Province.
14. Mr. Khanmbouan keophoutsy, Deputy president of Lao National front Construction, Khammouane province.
15. Mr. Sisavath Sihalath, Head of ethnic section, Lao National front of Constriction, Khammouane province.
16. Mr. Vanchao, the former Deputy President of Lao National Front of Construction, Khammouan province.
17. Evidence by elders of Ethnic groups, deans of family and Chief of Village in all country to humor interviews to the Ethnologist.
18. Mr. Nhodkhamluexa sinnavasirisengthong, Committee of Lao National Front for Construction, Head of Ethics section, Luangnamtha province.
19. Mr. Doesy Head of Ethnic section, Houaphanh Province.