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March 23, 1967

TO: All IVSers
FROM: Carol Compton, IVS/Ban Lao
SUBJECT: Some Lao Customs and Habits

These are some customs and habits of the Lao as told to me by four Lao people (two young girls, a young man, and a middle-aged woman) representing Borikhane, Vientiane, Xieng Khouang, and Sam Neua Provinces. The following are my translations of their descriptions. The provinces in parentheses indicate where the text applies. Otherwise, the text applies generally.

GREETING

In greeting, we place the hands, palms together, in front of the face and bow the head forward slightly. When we ask, "How are you?", we hold our hands in this greeting, or when we see an important official or a very old person, we use this form of respectful greeting. As we walk past an important official, we must bow our heads and walk very slowly by.

If we are in the country and see a monk walking along the road, we must hunker down and hold our hands and bow our heads in this greeting. The monk should have walked past us before we get up from this position or raise our heads. If we are in the city, we may simply bow our heads and place our hands in the common attitude of greeting before we walk past him.

VISITING, SITTING, AND EATING

When we enter the home of a friend, we must remove our shoes at the foot of the stairs or the entrance to the house. When a woman sits down in the house (on the floor), she should fold her legs neatly to one side of her with her toes pointing behind her, and her skirt folded carefully over her legs. When a man sits down he will normally sit Indian fashion (or he may sit similarly to the previously described woman's position).

When we are guests in a Lao home and eating Lao food as we sit on the floor, we should not put our hands against the floor to support us. The women must sit with their legs folded to one side (as previously described), and the men must sit Indian fashion. We should be invited to sit down at the eating mat before we eat. We should let the head of the house eat two or three mouthfuls before we begin eating. We should take just enough sticky rice for one mouthful from our right hand (in which we may be holding a larger amount) and roll it into a small ball between the fingers of our left hand. If you watch the head of the household, you will be able to tell which dishes should be eaten by dipping up the soup with individual spoons, and which dishes should be eaten simply by dipping the end of your small ball of sticky rice (but not your fingertips) into the bowl of food. When you have finished eating, you may back away from the eating area a little and lean against a wall and wait for the rest of the diners to finish, but you should not get up and leave the room until they are done.

TRADITIONAL DRESS (Vientiane, Borikhane, Xieng Khouang)

The Lao women traditionally wear a homemade silk Lao skirt with a silk Lao skirt border and a long-sleeved blouse. They wear their hair in an up-swept knot at the back of the head. For dress occasions the women also will wear a silk piece of material over one shoulder which is held in at the waist by a gold or silver belt.

Traditionally the Lao men wear a large cloth (pha hang) with no seam, which is folded in such a way as to have the extra material come up under the crouch and tuck in at the back of the waist. They wear large, collarless white shirts with long, wide sleeves.

TRADITIONAL DRESS (Sam Neua)

The Lao skirts of the women of the north are somewhat different in that they weave the upper part of the skirt in wide black and white stripes going horizontally only. Though they raise both silk worms and cotton, they make their skirts of cotton and use the silk for the skirt border only. They wear their hair slightly differently than the lowland Lao, for the knot of the hair is placed further towards the front of the head. They usually wear silver bracelets on both arms. In olden times the women also wore ankle bracelets of silver, one or more on each ankle, according to how much money or wealth they had. Now the women may also wear rings of silver on the middle, fourth and baby fingers of one or both hands, according to wealth or preference. They may also hold the knot in their hair more firmly with the use of a silver bar about the thickness of the thumb. One end of the bar is pointed to make it go through the hair more easily and the other end is thicker so it won't slip out.

The cloth used for making the men's shirts and pants is usually home woven. Two materials, a red and white striped cotton or a pure black cotton which they dye themselves, are commonly used for the men's clothing. Both the shirt and pants will be made of the same material (either all black outfits or all striped outfits). They will not usually wear a striped shirt with black pants. The clothes are almost always hand sewn, as they have few sewing machines. The pants are cut very large at the waist, rear, and trouser bottoms, and are held up by simply folding them over at the waist in much the same manner as the Lao woman's skirt is folded when she isn't wearing a belt. The bottoms of the pants are about 30" in circumference. There are no darts. (In other words, the effect is baggy.) The men usually wear one or two silver rings, on either the middle or fourth fingers only. Nowadays the men and women wear no shoes of any kind. In the old days, the people would make their own shoes out of the dried skin of buffalo or cows, with the cross peices of the thongs made of a locally raised fibre plant.

CLOTHING TABOOS

The Lao people feel that it is extremely rude for a woman's skirt, slacks, or panties to be hung out to dry in a high place (ie. such as to be even with an adult's neck, head or higher than the head). This is because these articles of wearing apparel touch the lower parts of a woman's body, which

is not considered clean. To walk under these articles is disrespectful to the Buddhist medal which a man may be wearing around his neck, or insulting to the spirit which inhabits a man's body. When we take up the clothing from drying, we should not carry blouses and skirts in together. This will bring you very bad luck and make your life difficult. When drying clothes, the pole or wire for hanging out the women's clothing must be low and there should be a separate, higher pole for the men's clothing. It doesn't make any difference if the man's pants are hung up above the head since there is no taboo on men's clothing. A Lao man will not walk under the clothes pole which is used for hanging women's clothing, rather he will go a long way out of his way to avoid walking under it. He also will not pick up or handle a woman's skirt.

GESTURES

We should never point to anything or kick anything with our feet, most particularly not when we are talking to someone, but also when we are alone. Pointing with the feet is considered the height of rudeness. Westerners often point to something with their feet when their hands are full, or close a door by kicking it. To watch such behaviour is upsetting to the Lao, for the feet are the lowest part of the body.

To touch the head of a small, small child is nothing, but to touch the head of an adult is considered the greatest insult. This is most particularly true of men. Even when he is an adult, a man cannot touch his brother's head. A mother may touch her adult daughter's head, but no one outside of the family, particularly a boyfriend, may touch the girl's head. Two men who are very good friend's may touch each other's heads in joking around, but men who know each other only slightly consider this a great insult and great enough provocation to start a fist fight. Also, a woman should not enter the sleeping room of a man and sit on the area of the mat or the bed where the man puts his head when he is sleeping.

This concern about the head may vary slightly among the Lao. Some Lao feel that hitting him on the head is insulting to the Buddhist religious medal which he wears around his neck, while others who are of a more animistic nature feel that touching the head is insulting to the spirit or soul which inhabits his body.

Touching, hitting, or putting your arms around the shoulder of a Lao is also not wise. Though very few of them are sensitive about this, the few who are, are quite insulted if you do touch their shoulders.

SPECIAL DAYS

On the fifteenth day of the lunar month (wan kham) you should not do any work or anything that produces a loud noise because it is contrary to the religion and such loud noise will offend the spirit or ghost of the local village. (There is usually a house for the village spirit at one corner of the village.) On this day of the month you should not go hunting for animals or go fishing either, as this is against the Buddhist law. Some of the people also say that on this day Buddha may be wandering about in the form of one of the animals which you might try to shoot.

COURTING (Xieng Khouang)

Ten years ago in Xieng Khouang, a boy would visit a girl that he liked at her home and sit near the doorway to the house and talk to her as she sat across from him on the other side of the room. At a wedding feast in that area, there would be a place for the young girls to eat and a separate place for the young men. Previously, there was no lam vong in Xieng Khouang. At a party a boy and a girl would sit some distance apart. The boy, as he was sitting, would move his hands and arms in the movements of a lam vong (called lam phouan here) and sing to the girl. When he was finished, the girl would dance with her arms and answer him in song. Many other people (old and young) would be sitting around or near the couple and listening to their flirt in song.

COURTING (Sam Neua)

In the evenings the girls like to sit and spin cotton into thread. While the girls sit in a sala-like structure on the ground, the young men who are courting them feed a big fire for light. A large group of girls will gather at this place and spin as they chat with the boys.

COURTING (Vientiane)

Courting in Vientiane is much more modern. Usually the boys and girls will go out in large groups, in couples, to the movies, to eat or to a party. At the movies they will sit in couples, and they may even hold hands. Even though they are in the same school, the couple will write letters to each other. Often the boy may go to visit the girl at her home, though, of course, other members of the family are present. Some families don't mind if the girl goes out riding in a car or on a motorcycle with a boy the family knows.

CHOOSING THE WEDDING DATE

If a young couple like each other and think that they might like to get married, the parents or other elders of the boy must go and talk with the parents or guardians of the girl. If the girl's parents agree, then a certain amount of money must be presented to the girl's mother, and a certain amount of gold (to be worn) must be presented to the girl.

In the old days the second month, the fourth month, and the twelfth month were considered good months for marrying. The second day and the twelfth day of the lunar phase are not good luck for marriages. All the uneven months and the sixth and the eighth months are also not considered good for marriage, the eighth because it is the month that the monks enter their three months of Buddhist Lent, and the sixth because it is the month in which Buddha was born, died and has his enlightenment. Consequently, when a couple is choosing the wedding date, they will usually take these things into consideration.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY (Xieng Khouang)

Usually the wedding ceremony is held at the home of the girl. Friends and relatives of the man will escort him from his home to the girl's home for the ceremony. The groom will have a best man who will walk with him and hold an umbrella above the groom's head. When the groom arrives at the girl's house, if the bride has a younger sister, the sister will close the door of the house until the groom hands over another sum of money. (This money is used as a gift for the younger sister to use as she pleases.) Once she has received this gift of money, the younger sister washes the feet of the groom and opens the door of the house to him. Just before the groom enters the house, an elder asks him, "Do you come with good intentions or do you come to complain?" The groom answers, "I come to bring riches to this house." Then the groom may enter the house.

At an old-fashioned Lao wedding no monks are present. Instead, the parents of the couple involved attend and the elders of the villages involved perform the ceremony. The elder in charge will tie one end of a string around the wrist of the young man first, and then he will take the other end of the somewhat long string and tie it around one of the wrists of the girl. During the ceremony the elder will ask the man, "Will you stay with this woman even when she is old or until she dies...and never leave her?" The groom answers, "I won't leave her, whatever she is, I'll stay with her until she dies." The elder asks the girl the same question, and she answers, "If he eats dirt, I'll eat it with him. If he eats grass, I'll eat it with him. Whatever he brings me to eat, I'll eat it...and I'll live with him until he dies."

At the end of the ceremony the elder will break the long string in the middle. Then others attending the ceremony will tie strings around the wrists of the couple separately and, at the same time, wish them good luck, many children, a long life, etc. When the ceremony is completed the man remains at his bride's home. They must stay there at least seven days. The man's parents then must ask for him to return home before the couple should leave the girl's parents' home. Sometimes at the end of the seven days the couple may leave to build a house of their own.

MARRIAGE (Xieng Khouang)

A Lao woman must show respect to her husband in a number of ways. She must let him go to bed at night before she does (in other words, he climbs into bed before she does). When it is time to go to sleep, the woman's head should be below the man's head, at about his shoulder level. On the fifteenth day of the lunar month (wan kham) before the woman goes to bed, the husband sits on the bed or sleeping place and the woman kneels down, folds her hands in the attitude of greeting and respect (in her folded hands are flowers and a candle), and asks her husband's forgiveness for whatever she has done wrong during the last 14 days. Then she lets her hair down and wipes her husband's feet with her hair. This takes place twice a month. (If the girl is not married, she should go through this ceremony, including wiping the feet with her hair, for her parents.)

In the morning, the wife must get up before her husband. She should boil some water and prepare it for him to wash his face with when he gets up.

Then she should prepare the food so that it is ready for him when he awakens. When it is time to eat, the woman should let her husband (or her parents) eat two or three mouthfuls before she begins to eat.

SOME TABOOS DURING PREGNANCY (Borikhane)

The following things are generally forbidden to a pregnant Lao woman:

1. She should not lift heavy things.
2. She should not sleep during the day.
3. She should not walk a long distance.
4. She should not eat food directly from a cooking pot or a mortar.
5. She should not sit in front of a door or on a stairway (this is supposed to prevent her child from coming out easily at birth).
6. She should not eat sweet foods.
7. She should not eat the dried skin of a buffalo (because this meat will prevent the afterbirth from coming out once the baby is born).
8. She should not attend a funeral.
9. She should not sew a pillow or a mattress before the baby is born.
10. She should not make clothing for the baby that is to be born. In fact, she should not begin to sew any clothes for the child until many days after it has been born, since the child might yet die.

BIRTH (Xiang Khouang)

When the pains begin coming, the woman should call an old man or the husband who will tie a rope to the rafters of the house. Then, every time she has a pain, the woman must pull hard on the rope as she lies on the floor.

Once the child is born, the old man will take a red cotton string and a black cotton string and wind or braid them together and then tie them around the neck of the woman to prevent the bad spirits from eating her. Then they wash the new baby, wrap it in a cloth and let it sleep in the middle of a flat rice basket for about a half an hour before they put it on the bed or mat with the mother.

Then the husband must move the bed near the fire and prepare the fire carefully. He will place the hot charcoal or wood under the woman's bed, directly under where she is sitting. He puts two poles at the end of the bed and ties another pole lengthwise between them so that the new mother can lean back against this as she sits over the fire. Sometimes, too, the new mother will spread salt on the bed and sit on this (right next to her skin) at the same time that she is sitting over the hot fire. They will boil water and tree roots for her and have her drink this hot root water. The woman is allowed to eat only rice, salt, and galangal during this period.

The woman must bathe three times a day in very hot water, and after each bath she must rub her face and body with salt, as she is not allowed to use soap while sitting over the fire. After five evenings she is allowed to wash her hair for the first time since the birth, using either rice water (water left over from washing the rice before cooking it) or she may wash it

with water in which a certain kind of citrus fruit has been boiled. Then she may eat rice with dried fish. However, she must eat two fish, not just one. She may also eat a soup made from a newly killed chicken (female only), ginger, red peppers, and galangal. She will sit over the fire somewhere between 10 and 15 days (occasionally less than this). On the day that she leaves the fire sitting, a baci is held for the mother and child.

NAMING THE CHILDREN (Borikhane)

Usually the Lao villagers in this area do not give their children names until they are about 20 days old or have come out of the fire-sitting ceremony with their mother safe and sound. Sometimes they won't give their children names for many months. Even if a name has been chosen, they will continue to call the child, "Ae", until he is older. Then they will generally call him by his full name or a part of his full name (ie. Boonkong becomes "Kong").

INTER-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

In the family, if the grandparents live with us, we must respect them before the other members of the family, and the grandfather most of all. Then, of course, come our parents. We must respect them and follow their orders, listen to what they say and not talk back or argue with them. We must do whatever they tell us to do. Once our parents are old, the oldest child, whether male or female, must take the responsibility of the work for the family. He must not allow the parents to do any hard physical labor. The oldest child must also look after the younger children. The younger children should respect the oldest child as though he were then equal with his parents. Whatever the oldest child tells his younger brothers and sisters to do, they should do, as long as it is in keeping with the ideas of the parents. The older children have the responsibility of teaching the younger children the right way to do things and the right behaviour. Usually the parents do not let the youngest child do any work until he is in his teens, since this is the mother's last child, and she wants to show special consideration for him. If he does any work at all, it is almost always the easiest.

FUNERAL TRADITIONS (Xieng Khouang)

After someone has died, the Lao will normally fold the dead person's hands in the attitude of prayer and place flowers and a candle in the folded hands. They cover the body with a white cloth. Then they will begin to make a casket out of wood. This casket is usually made in the shape of a That (cedi). The wide bottom part (base) is where the body is placed, and the smaller top sections are only decoration. They take colored paper and make flowers to attach to the casket. Once the dead person is placed in the casket, a table is placed next to the casket, with a picture of the deceased on the table. The casket is closed, but the body remains in the home or at the temple for three or four days before they cremate it.

On the day of the cremation, the casket is placed on a cart or in a truck, and the vehicle is pulled or driven slowly to the crematorium. The monks walk ahead of the vehicle, pulling on ropes attached to the casket and

vehicle. The family and friends of the dead person walk behind. On reaching the crematorium, the monks chant some religious verses. Then they open the casket and wash the dead man's face with young coconut water and spray the face with perfume. Finally, the casket is burned. When it seems to be mostly burnt, the guests leave, but a few members of the dead man's family remain behind to make sure that everything is burned properly.

The people who have attended the funeral do not go directly home, but must first visit the temple. There the monks will chant some more verses and sprinkle holy water over the people. Then the people return home. Three days later, someone in the family goes to the crematorium and picks up the remaining bones with the bark of a banana tree serving as gloves so that his hands do not touch the bones. He places these bones in a pottery or glass vase, and pours a pottle of perfume into the vase. Then he takes the ashes of the dead person and chooses a tree somewhere in the yard of the crematorium. At the foot of the chosen tree, he makes an outling of the human form with these left-over ashes. Then he takes the vase with the bones in it to the temple where food has already been brought for the ceremony which follows.

During this ceremony the monks again chant, and then sprinkle water over the clothing and other objects that belonged to the person who has just died. This must be done before these objects can be given away or used by the family. Then the monks eat the food which has been prepared for them. When they finish eating, it is time for the family and friends of the deceased to eat. When the eating is over, the ceremony is finished and the people return to their homes.

It is said that the person that has died does not know that he has died for the first few days. He continues to wander about his house looking for something to eat. He thinks that he is only dreaming. Even after he is cremated, he still does not understand that he is dead. Only when the ceremony of sprinkling his belongings with water at the temple is completed, does he finally realize that he is dead.

SOME ANIMISTIC FUNERAL TRADITIONS (Sam Neua)

In Sasana Phan (animism) there is no cremation. They bury their dead. They will kill a buffalo or a cow to have a feast for one or two nights for the friends and family of the person who died. They have the shaman (a villager who is in contact with the spirits) choose a good day for burying the man. Then they make a wooden casket for the body. The brother or some close relative of the deceased will choose a spot where he thinks the dead man should be buried. The brother will then take a chicken egg and drop it on the spot where he would like his brother to be buried. If the egg does not break, the body may be buried at that spot, since it means that this is the place where the dead man wants to stay.

ຟຣະມະຫາກະສັດ ຈົງສຳຄັນຂອງລາວ



ຄໍານຳ

ຂອງສະໄດດເຈົ້າສຸວັນນະພູມາ ນາຍົກຣັຖມົນຕຣີ

ເພື່ອນຮ່ວມຊາດທີ່ຮັກແພງທັງຫລາຍ,

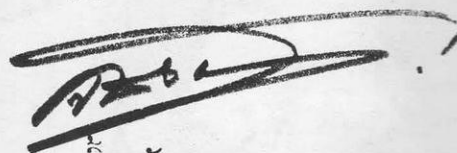
ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າມີຄວາມຍິນດີຍິນດີທີ່ສຸດ ທີ່ໄດ້ເຫັນຢ້ຽມຢາມສາດສະບາຍສີ "ພຣະມະຫາກະສັດອົງສຳຄັນຂອງລາວ" ນີ້ຕົກຢູ່ໃນມືຂອງພວກທ່ານ.

ໃນຂະນະທີ່ປະເທດຊາດຂອງເຮົາກຳລັງປະສົບກັບໄພສົງຄາມ ຈາກການຮຸກຮານຂອງພາຍນອກນີ້ ພວກເຮົາຕ້ອງລະລຶກເຖິງຄວາມອົງອາດກຳຫານເສັຽສະລະຂອງບັນພະບູຮູດ ແລະວິຣະກະສັດຂອງດິນແດນລາວຂອງເຮົາ. ຍ້ອນຄວາມອົງອາດກຳຫານເສັຽສະລະຂອງພຣະອົງ ດິນລາວຕອນນີ້ຈຶ່ງຕົກມາຮອດພວກເຮົາຈົນເທົ່າທຸກວັນນີ້. ສະນັ້ນພວກເຮົາທຸກຄົນ ຈຶ່ງມີໜ້າທີ່ຮັກສາຫວງແຫນ້ນ ແລະປ້ອງກັນເຂດນີ້ແດນດິນອັງຄັບຖວມຂອງພຣະຣາຊອານາຈັກລາວ ເພື່ອບໍ່ໃຫ້ສາຍສູນໄປຈາກແຜນທີ່ຂອງໂລກ.

ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ ໃນນາມເປັນຜູ້ນຳຂ່າວຮັບຮູ້ພາຍພຣະບາດສົມເດັດພຣະເຈົ້າມະຫາຊີວິດ ແລະເປັນນັກຊາດນິຍົມຜູ້ນຶ່ງ ຂໍເຊີນຊວມເພື່ອນຮ່ວມຊາດທຸກຄົນໄດ້ອ່ານຢ້ຽມຢາມສະບັບນີ້ຢ່າງຖີ່ຖອນແລ້ວສົ່ງຕໍ່ກັນໄປໃຫ້ໄດ້ຮູ້ໄດ້ອ່ານນຳກັນ.

ຊາດຈະເປັນຊາດແລະລາວຈະເປັນລາວຕໍ່ໄປ ກໍແຕ່ເມື່ອລາວທຸກຄົນບາກບັນຂັນໝັ້ນພຽນ ແລະຍອມເສັຽສະລະດັ່ງບັນພະບູຮູດຂອງເຮົານັ້ນ. ປະຊາຊົນຮຸ່ນທຸກລັງ ຈະຈາລຶກຄຸນງາມຄວາມດີຂອງພວກທ່ານໄວ້ຢ່າງບໍ່ຫລົງລືນ.

ນະຄອນວຽງຈັນ ທີ່ ໑ ມິຖຸນາ ໑໙໗໐



ເຈົ້າສຸວັນນະພູມາ
(ເຈົ້າກຣົມມະນາ)

ພຣະເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມ ພຣະບິດາຂອງຊາດລາວ

(ພ.ສ. ໑໙໔໙ ~ ໑໙໑໗)



ພຣະເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມ ປະສູດເມື່ອພ.ສ. ໑໙໔໙ ທີ່ເມືອງຊວາ ຊຶ່ງປັດຈຸບັນແມ່ນນະຄອນຫລວງ ພຣະບາງ ໃນສະໄໝນັ້ນຍັງບໍ່ມີພຣະຣາຊອານາຈັກລາວ ດັ່ງນີ້ແຕ່ເມືອງຕ່າງໆທີ່ເປັນອານາຈັກ ຂະໜາດນ້ອຍ ຄອຍຍາດແຍ່ງອຳນາດກັນ ໃນ ບັນດາເມືອງຕ່າງໆເຫລົ່ານີ້ມີເມືອງຊວາຢູ່ດ້ວຍ ເມືອງນຶ່ງ.

ເຖິງວ່າໃນໂລກນີ້ຈະມີປະເທດຕ່າງໆຢູ່ຫລາຍປະເທດ ແຕ່ປະເທດທີ່ເກົ່າແກ່ເຫລົ່ານີ້ພຣະຣາຊອານາຈັກລາວ ມີຢູ່ບໍ່ຫລາຍ ເຮົາຮູ້ກັນດີແລ້ວວ່າຜູ້ສ້າງຣາຊອານາຈັກເຫ່ງນີ້ແມ່ນພຣະເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມ.



ກະສັດເມືອງຊວາເພິດໃຈກັບຣາຊາວິໄລຄົດຍ້ອນ ນາງສະໄໝ ຈຶ່ງສົ່ງຂັບໄລ່ຣາຊາວິໄລຄົດແລະຣາຊາ ນັດດາ ຄືເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມອອກໄປຈາກເມືອງ

ເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມ ກັບພຣະບິດາລົງເຮືອໜີລ່ອງຕາມ ແມ່ນ້ຳຂອງ ແລະຫລາຍສັປດາຕໍ່ມາກໍໄປຮອດ ນະຄອນວັດ ປະເທດຂະເໝນ

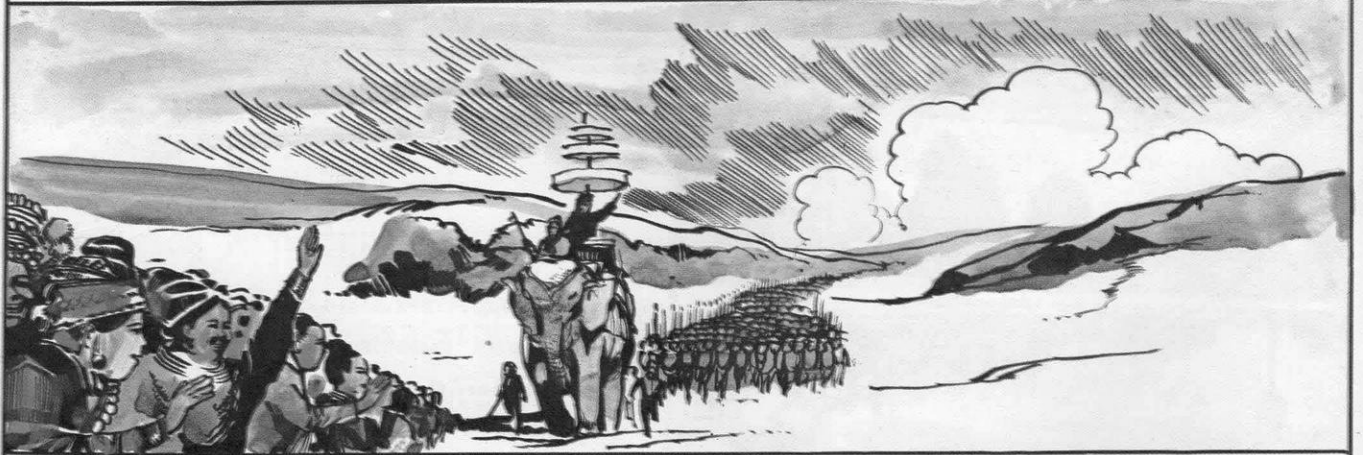


ເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມໄດ້ຮັບການລ້ຽງດູ ແລະຮຽນວິຊາ ຄວາມຮູ້ສິລະປະວິທະຍາການຕ່າງໆ ຈາກພຣະມະຫາ ປາສະມັນ ພຣະອົງຮຽນເກັ່ງ ແລະສຶກສາວິຊາດ້ວຍ ຄວາມເອົາໃຈໃສ່ມີລະຫລາຍຊົ່ວໂມງ



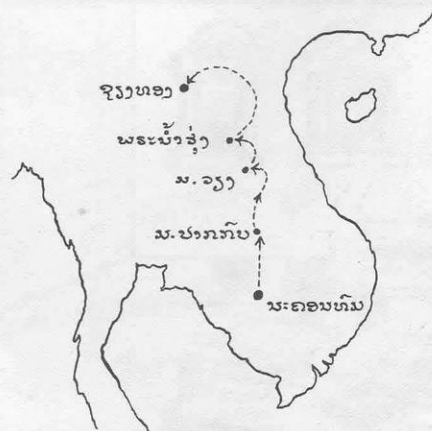
▲ ເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມຊົງມີຄວາມສະຫງົບສະຫຼຸບເອົາເອົາເອົາ
ຈົນພຣະເຈົ້າເຜ່ນດິນເມືອງຂຽນຊື່ມອບນາງແກ້ວ
ເກັບມາໃຫ້ເປັນພຣະເທວີຊອງເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມ

ເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມຊົງປາກົດມາຈະກັບຄືນມາຍັງເມືອງຊຸວາ
ເພື່ອເຕົ້າໂຮມອານາຈັກກັບອຸບຽ ທີ່ຍາດແບ່ງອຳນາດ
ກັນເຂົ້າເປັນປະເທດດຽວ ພຣະອົງພ້ອມກັບພຣະບິດາ
ຈຶ່ງຂໍກຳລັງທັບ ຈຳນວນສິບພັນຄົນຈາກພຣະເຈົ້າເຜ່ນ
ດິນຂຽນ



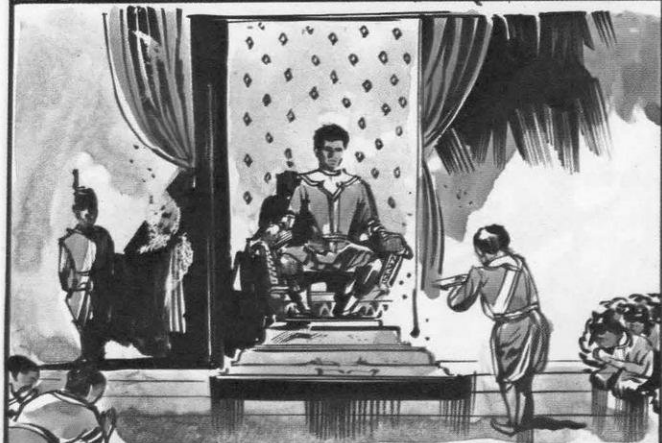
▲ ພຣະອົງພ້ອມກັບພຣະບິດາ ນຳກອງທັບເຂົ້າມາ
ສູ່ດິນແດນທີ່ເປັນພຣະຣາຊອານາຈັກລາວໃນ
ປັດຈຸບັນ ເມື່ອປະຊາຊົນຮູ້ວ່າພຣະອົງຍົກທັບມາ
ເພື່ອໂຮມລາວ ແລະຍຸຕິການຮົບຮ້າຂ້າພັນກັນ
ເຂົາເຈົ້າຈຶ່ງທຸລາຍການຕ້ອນຮັບດ້ວຍຄວາມປິຕິ
ຍິນດີ

ແຜນທີ່ສະແດງເສັ້ນທາງເດີນທັບຂອງເຈົ້າຟ້າ
ງຸ່ມ ຈາກຂຽນເພື່ອເຂົ້າມາໂຮມລາວ

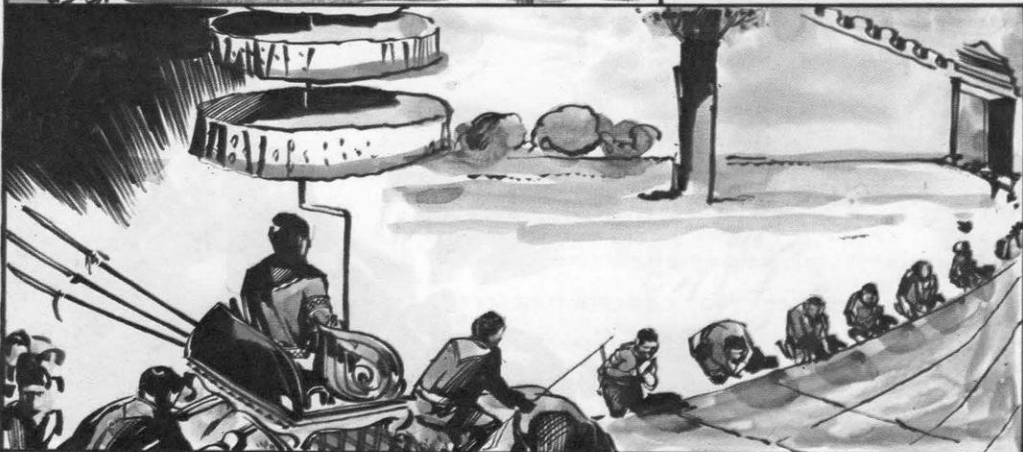




ພຣະບິດາຂອງເຈົ້າພັກງຸ່ມ
ສັງຊີວິດໃນລະຫວ່າງກອງ
ທັບເດີນທາງ ແລະເຈົ້າພັກ
ງຸ່ມຕື່ອາເມືອງຊວາໄດ້



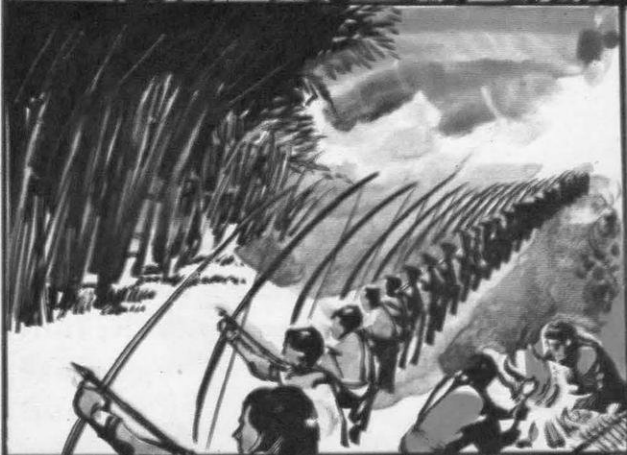
ພຣະເຈົ້າພັກງຸ່ມຂຶ້ນສະເວີຍຣາຊສົມບັດ
ເປັນກະສັດລ້ານຊ້າງ ແລະສະຫຼາປະນາອານາ
ຈັກລາວຂຶ້ນເປັນເທື່ອທຳອິດເມື່ອ ພ.ສ. ໑໘໙໖



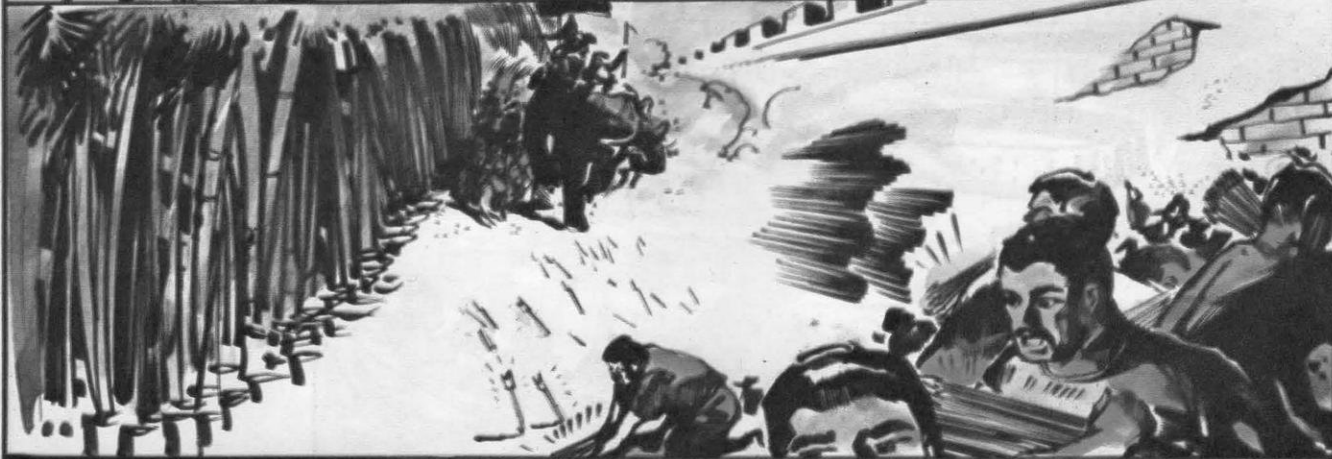
ເຈົ້າຜູ້ຄອງເມືອງຕ່າງໆທີ່ຢູ່ໃນອານາຈັກລາວຍອມຍົກໃຫ້
ພຣະເຈົ້າພັກງຸ່ມເປັນພຣະມະຫາກະສັດຂອງອານາຈັກລາວ
ເວັ້ນແຕ່ພຣະຍາເພັງ ເຈົ້າຜູ້ຄອງເມືອງໄຜ່ໜາມ ຊຶ່ງເປັນ
ນະຄອນວຽງຈັນໃນປັດຈຸບັນ



ພຣະເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມຊົງປາກຸນາຈະ
ເຕົ້າໂຮມເມືອງຕ່າງໆໃຫ້ເຂົ້າ
ເປັນອານາຈັກລາວອັນດຽວ
ພຣະອົງຈຶ່ງຍົກກອງທັບລົງ
ມາຕີເມືອງໃຜໜາມ ແຕ່ບໍ່
ສາມາດເຂົ້າຕີໄດ້ຍ້ອນວ່າມີ
ກໍໄຜ້ອ້ອມຮອບເມືອງບ່າງ
ເຫມັນໜາ



ພຣະອົງຊົງຫາອຸບາຍເຂົ້າເມືອງ ໂດຍຮັບສິ່ງໃຫ້ເຮົາເງິນ
ແລະຄໍາມາຕີເປັນຈຽງໜ້າແລ້ວຍິງສູ່ນິສະຖານກໍໄຜ້



ທະຫານຂອງເມືອງໃຜໜາມເຫັນຈຽງໜ້າເງິນຄໍາມີຄ່າຍິ່ງກວ່າ
ກໍໄຜ້ທີ່ເປັນກໍາແພງປ້ອງກັນເມືອງຂອງຕົນ ເຂົາເຈົ້າຈຶ່ງພາກັນ
ທຸກກໍໄຜ້ຊອກເອົາຈຽງໜ້າ



ພຣະເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມຈຶ່ງຍົກທັບເຂົ້າຕີເອົາເມືອງໄດ້ໄດ້ດຽວ ນັບເປັນ
ເທື່ອທຳອິດໃນປັດສາດ ທີ່ສາມາດໂຮມເມືອງທຸກເມືອງເຂົ້າ
ເປັນອານາຈັກອັນດຽວຄື ອານາຈັກລ້ານຊ້າງ ພຣະອົງຍົກທັບ
ໄປທາງໃຕ້ຕີເອົາເມືອງໂຄຣຣາດ ແລ້ວໂຮມເຂົ້າເປັນອານາເຂດ
ຂອງອານາຈັກລ້ານຊ້າງ



ອາວເມືອງໃຜໜາມ (ນະຄອນວຽງຈັນ
ໃນປັດຈຸບັນ) ກຸວາຍການຕ້ອນຮັບ
ເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມ ດ້ວຍການສລອງອຸປະຢູງ
ໃຫຍ່ໂຕ ທີ່ບ່ອນຊຶ່ງປັດຈຸບັນເປັນ
ໂຮງຮຽນເທັກນິກວຽງຈັນ

ທະຫານຂອງພຣະເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມ
ກຸວາຍພຣະພອນວ່າ “ພຣະອົງຊົງ
ນຳພວກຂ້າພຣະບາດໃຫ້ເປັນຜູ້
ກ້າຫານ ສຳມາດເອົາອຸປະຢູງ
ເມືອງອື່ນໄດ້ດ້ວຍຄວາມພາກ
ພູມໃຈ ພວກຂ້າພຣະບາດຂໍອັນ
ເຊີນພຣະອົງຂຶ້ນຄອງຣາຊບັນ
ສັງລ້ານຊ້າງອີກເທື່ອນຶ່ງ”

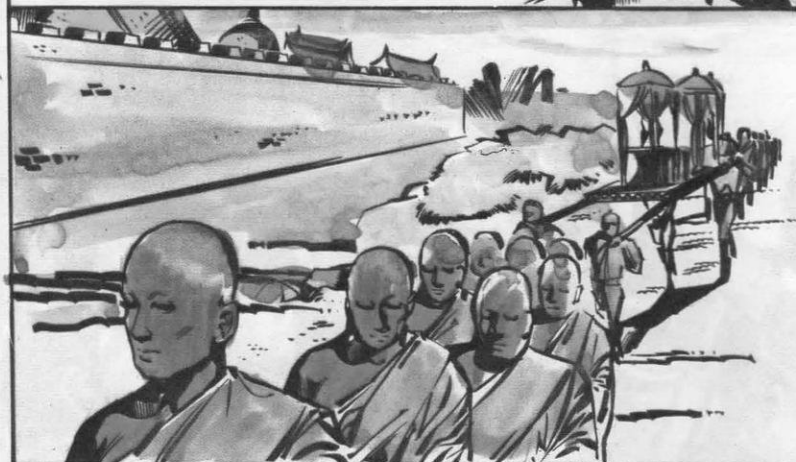


ພຣະເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມຊົງເຕືອນປະຊາຊົນໃຫ້ຮະວັງພັບການຮຸກຮານ
ຂອງສັດຕູ ແລະໃຫ້ທຸກຄົນຮາຍງານຕໍ່ທາງບ້ານເມືອງເມື່ອຮູ້
ຂ່າວການເຄື່ອນໄຫວຂອງຝ່າຍສັດຕູ ພຣະອົງຮັບສັ່ງວ່າ “ທ່ານ
ໃດທີ່ພວກເຈົ້າຮູ້ຂ່າວວ່າສັດຕູຕ່າງປະເທດຕິດຮ້າຍຕໍ່ຣາຊ
ອານາຈັກຂອງເຮົາ ເຈົ້າຈົງນຳຂ່າວນັ້ນມາເຈ້ງໂລດ ຢ່າສູ່
ອຳຂ່າວຮ້າຍນີ້ໄວ້”



ພວກເຮົາຄວນນຶກເຖິງກະແສຮັບສັ່ງຂອງພຣະເຈົ້າ
ຟ້າງຸ່ມ ຍ້ອນວ່າປັດຈຸບັນນີ້ ວຽດນາມເໜືອພວມ
ຮຸກຮານແລະຂົ່ມຂູ່ພຣະຣາຊອານາຈັກລາວຂອງເຮົາ.

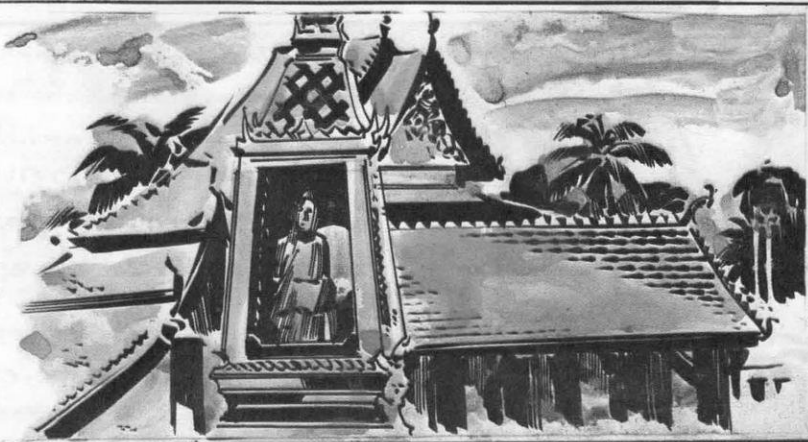
ເພື່ອໃຫ້ປະຊາຊົນເລີກນັບຖືຜີພ້າ
ຜີແຄນ ພຣະເຈົ້າພ້າງຸ່ມຈຶ່ງຊົງນິມົນ
ພຣະມະຫາປາສັມນ ພຣະອາຈານ
ເດີມຂອງພຣະອົງຈາກເມືອງຂຽນ
ມາສົ່ງສອນພຣະພຸດທະສາສນາໃນລາວ



ພຣະມະຫາປາສັມນ ພ້ອມດ້ວຍ
ພິກຂຸລິນ ແລະນັກປາດ ໄດ້ເອົາ
ພຣະບາງຊຶ່ງມີອາຍຸເກົ່າພັນປີ
ຄົ້ນພົບພຣະໄຕປິດກາແລະໜັງດັບ
ມະຫາໄພມານຳ

ຫລາຍສິບປີຕໍ່ມາ ເມືອງຊວາຊຶ່ງເປັນນະຄອນຫລວງ
ສັມຍພຣະເຈົ້າພ້າງຸ່ມ ກໍໄດ້ປ່ຽນຊື່ເປັນນະຄອນ
ຫລວງພຣະບາງ ຕາມຊື່ພຣະພຸດຮູບສັກສິດອົງນີ້

ເຖິງວ່າພຣະເຈົ້າພ້າງຸ່ມຈະສວັນນະ
ຄົດເມື່ອ ພ.ສ. ໑໙໑໗ ດົນນານ
ເກືອບຫົກຮ້ອຍປີມາແລ້ວ ແຕ່ພຣະ
ກຽດປວັດຂອງພຣະອົງຍັງຄົງຢູ່ໃນ
ຄວາມຊົງຈໍາຂອງປະຊາຊົນລາວທັງ
ຊາດ ຍ້ອນວ່າພຣະອົງຊົງເປັນຜູ້ສ້າງ
ພຣະຣາຊອານາຈັກລາວອັນເປັນທີ່
ຮັກຂອງເຮົານີ້





ພຣະເຈົ້າສາມແສນໄທ

ກະສັດຜູ້ຊົງສ້າງຊາດລາວ

(ພ.ສ. ໑໘໙໙-໑໙໕໘)



ພຣະເຈົ້າສາມແສນໄທ ເປັນໂອຣົດພຣະເຈົ້າ
ຟ້າງຸ່ມ ຂຶ້ນສະເລ່ຍຮາຊສົມບັດເມື່ອພຣະຊົນ
ນາຍ ໑໘ ປີ ໃນພ.ສ. ໑໙໑໗

ສາມປີຕໍ່ມາພຣະອົງຮັບສິ່ງ
ໃຫ້ທຳບັນຊີພົບເລິກ ປາກົດ
ວ່າສະພາະທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວລ້ານ
ມີສາມແສນຄົນ ດ້ວຍເຫດນີ້
ເສຍນາຍຜູ້ຊົງຖວາຍພຣະນາມ
“ພຣະຍາສາມແສນໄທ”



ພຣະເຈົ້າສາມແສນໄທຊົງເຫັນວ່າ
ອານາຈັກລ້ານຊ້າງທີ່ພຣະອົງສືບ
ຮາຊສົມບັດຈາກພຣະເຈົ້າຟ້າງຸ່ມ ມີ
ອານາເຂດກວ້າງຂວາງ ດ້ານບໍ່ຈັດກອງ
ທັບໃຫ້ແຂງແຮງຄົງຈະບໍ່ປອດພິບ
ພຣະອົງຊົງຈັດຮະບຽບກອງທັບໃຫ້
ເຂັ້ມແຂງ ໂດຍອາສັຍປະຊາຊົນທັງຊາດ
ໂຮມປ້ອງກັນອານາຈັກ.

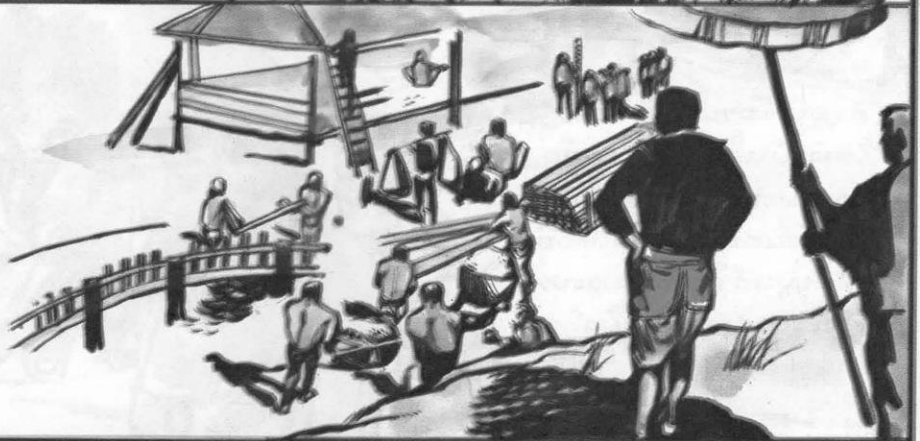
ກຳລັງທັບປ້ອງກັນອານາຈັກລ້ານຊ້າງຂອງພຣະເຈົ້າສາມແສນໄທ ແບ່ງ
ອອກເປັນກອງໆ ຄື ກອງຊ້າງ ກອງມ້າ ກອງຮົບ ກອງຮັກສາ
ຄວາມສັງເກດພາຍໃນ ແລະ ກອງທະຫານບ້ານ



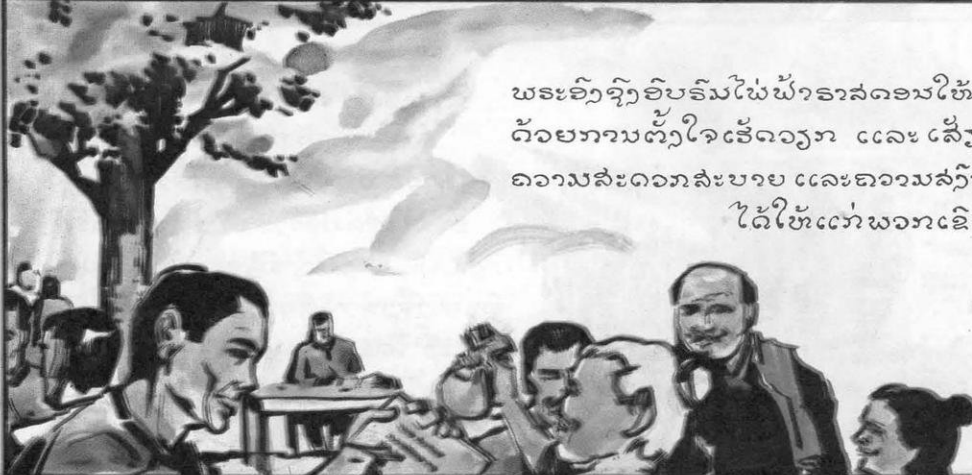
ທະຫານຂອງພຣະເຈົ້າສາມແສນໄທ ເອົາໃຈ
ໃສ່ຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອປະຊາຊົນເປັນຢ່າງດີ
ໄພ່ຟ້າປະຊາຊົນຈຶ່ງຍ້ອງຍໍແລະ
ຮັກແພງ ຄວາມພິຣະອາດທານ
ແລະຄວາມເກັ່ງກ້າໃນການຮົບ
ເປັນກິດສິບເລື້ອງລືໄປເຖິງປະເທດ
ຂ້າງຄຽງ ຈົນບໍ່ມີປະເທດໃດ
ທານມານຸກຮານ



ພຣະເຈົ້າສາມແສນໄທຊົງເຫັນ
ຄວາມສຳຄັນຂອງການປັກຄອງ
ປະເທດ ພຣະອົງຈຶ່ງຊົງທຳນຸ
ບຳນຸດການສຶກສາ ການຂົນ
ສົ່ງ ແລະການໂຍທາ.



ພຣະອົງຊົງອົບຮົມໄພ່ຟ້າຮາດອນໃຫ້ຮູ້ຈັກການຊ່ວຍຊາດ
ດ້ວຍການຕັ້ງໃຈເຮັດວຽກ ແລະ ເສັ້ນພາສີເພື່ອຕອບແທນ
ຄວາມສະດວກສະບາຍ ແລະຄວາມສັງເກດຢູ່ບ້ານເມືອງ
ໄດ້ໃຫ້ແກ່ພວກເຂົາ.



ປັດຈຸບັນການສ້າງສາແລະການປ້ອງກັນປະເທດຍັງຄົງເຮັດສືບຕໍ່ໄປ ຖ້າພຣະເຈົ້າສາມແລ່ນໄທຊົງສາມາດກັບ
ຄືນມາເຫັນພຣະຣາຊອານາຈັກລາວໃນຍຸກນີ້ ພຣະອົງ

ຄົງຈະຊົງພາກພູມໃຈໃນປະຊາ
ຈົນ ທະຫານແລະຮັບບານ
ຂອງເຮົາ.



ພຣະເຈົ້າສຸວັນນະບັນລັງ (ແຫ່ນຄຳ)

ຜູ້ຊົງຜາບແກວ (ພ,ສ, ໒໐໒໑~໒໐໓໓)

ໃນພ.ສ. ໒໐໒໒ ພຣະເຈົ້າແຜ່ນ
ດິນຜູ້ຊົງອຳນາດເມືອງແກວ
ຕຽມຍົກທັບມາຕີລາວໂດຍມີ
ສາເຫດບໍ່ພໍໃຈປະການນຶ່ງ



ພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະຈັກກະພັດ
ແຜ່ນແຜ່ນ ຊົງໄດ້ສັບການ
ຫຼວຍຊ້າງເຜືອກຕົວນຶ່ງຈາກ
ເຈົ້າເມືອງແກ່ນທ້າວ ເມື່ອພຣະ
ເຈົ້າແຜ່ນດິນເມືອງແກວຮູ້
ຂ່າວນີ້ຈຶ່ງແຕ່ງທູດມາຂໍຂຶ້ນ
ແລະເລັບຊ້າງ



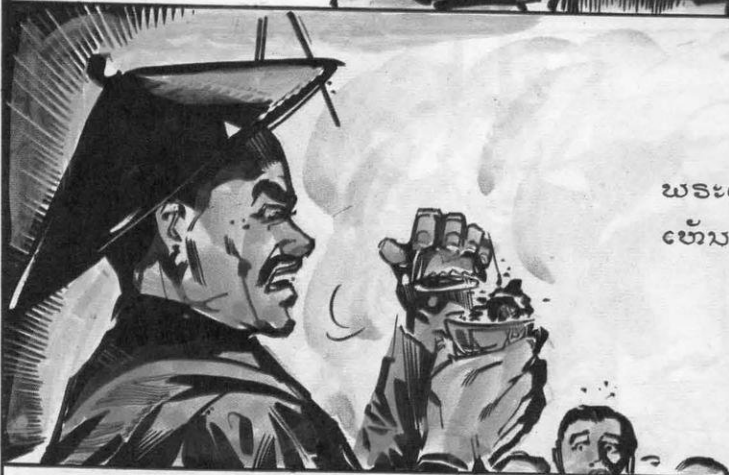
ພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະຈັກກະພັດ ຈຶ່ງຮັບສິ່ງໃຫ້ຄັດຂົນແລະ
ເລັບຊ້າງເຜືອກໃສ່ເອບຄຳສົ່ງໄປໃຫ້ພຣະເຈົ້າເຜ່ນ
ດິນເມືອງເກາວ



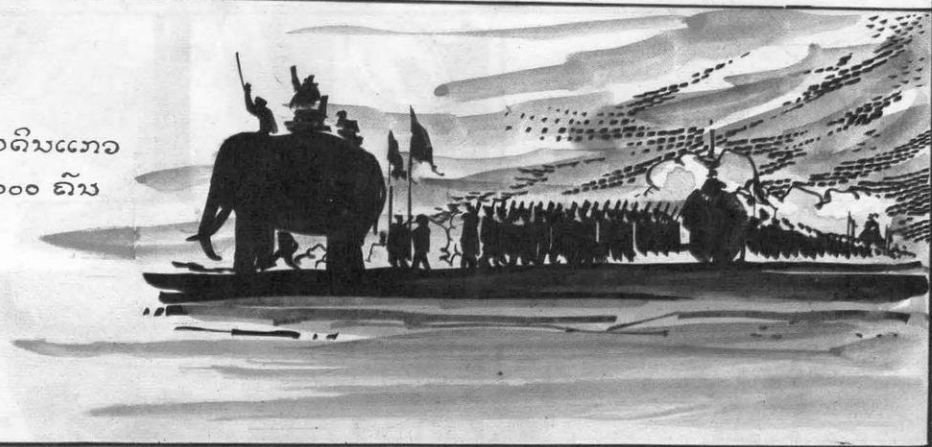
ແຕ່ມະຫາອຸປະຣາດບໍ່ພໍໃຈໃນການສອບ
ຂົນແລະເລັບໃຫ້ເຈົ້າເຜ່ນດິນເກາວ
ຈຶ່ງເອົາຊີ້ຊ້າງໃສ່ໃນເອບເທບ



ພຣະເຈົ້າເຜ່ນດິນເກາວຊົງເປີດເອບ
ເທບເປັນຊີ້ຊ້າງ ກໍຊົງພິໄຈດ



ດ້ວຍເຫດນີ້ພຣະເຈົ້າເຜ່ນດິນເກາວ
ຈຶ່ງຊົງນຳກຳລັງພົນ ໔໕໐,໐໐໐ ຄົນ
ຂ້າມແດນເຂົ້າມາຕີລາວ



ໂຕເຮົາເປັນໂຕທີ່ມີຄວາມສຳຄັນ

ທັບເກວຍົກຜ່ານພູ ບຸກລົງມາທາງໃຕ້
ຈົນເຖິງນະຄອນຫລວງພຣະບາງ ການທີ່
ທັບເກວສາມາດຕີເອົາເມືອງຕ່າງໆຕາມ
ສ່າຍທາງ ກໍຍ້ອນວ່າເກວມີກຳລັງພົນ
ຫລາຍກວ່າ



ຄູນົນທົນທາງຕາມໄປເມືອງມີ
ແຕ່ສັງຄົມຮ້ອງໄຫ້ຮຳໄຂ້ແລະ
ພຣະສົງສູດມົນເພື່ອໃຫ້ປ້ານ
ເມືອງພັ້ນຈາກຄວາມພິນາດ

ຍ້ອນທັບເກວມີກຳລັງພົນເຫລືອ
ຫລາຍ ທັບຜ່າຍລາວຈຶ່ງເລັ່ງໄຊ
ແລະພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະຈັກກະພັດ
ລະເດັດໜີອອກນະຄອນຫລວງ
ພຣະບາງ

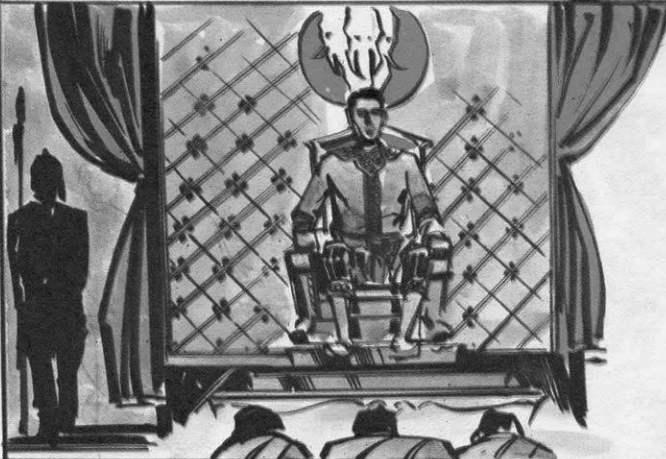


ແຕ່ເປັນບຸນຂອງລາວ ເຈົ້າເທ່ນຄຳ
ພຣະຣາຊໄອຣົດຂອງພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະຈັກກະ
ພັດບໍ່ຍອມໃຫ້ລາວຕົກເປັນເມືອງຂຶ້ນ
ຂອງເກວ



ເຖິງວ່າຈະມີຜູ້ຕັດຄ້ານວ່າບໍ່
ມີທາງຈະຕີກອງທັບເກວໃຫ້ຜ່າຍ
ແພ້ໄປໄດ້ ແຕ່ເຈົ້າເທ່ນຄຳກໍເກາະ
ເອົາທະຫານແລ້ວເປັນຜູ້ນຳ
ກອງທັບມຸ່ງໜ້າຕື່ນໄປນະ
ຄອນຫລວງພຣະບາງ

ຄວາມກ້າຫານເດັດດ່ຽວຂອງເຈົ້າ
ເທ່ນຄຳ ເປັນເຫດໃຫ້ທະຫານຜ່າຍ
ລາວມີຂວັນດີຫລາຍຈົນສາມາດຕີກອງທັບເກວ
ທີ່ຍຶດນະຄອນຫລວງພຣະບາງແຕກຜ່າຍໄປ
ນາຍທະຫານເກວ ໔,໐໐໐ ຄົນ
ເຫລືອກັບຕື່ນແຕ່ ໖໐໐ ຄົນເທົ່ານັ້ນ



ພວກເສຍອາາມາດຈຶ່ງພ້ອມກັນຮາຊາພິເສກເຈົ້າ
ເທ່ນຄຳ ຜູ້ກູ້ຊາດລາວແລະບ້ານເມືອງລາວ ຂຶ້ນ
ສະເລ່ຍຮາຊາສົມບັດ ທຸກຄົນພຣະນາມວ່າ ພຣະເຈົ້າ
ສຸວັນນະບັນລັງ



ບັດຈຸບັນ ວຽດນາມເໜືອຜູ້ຮຸກຮານ
ພວມຂຶ້ນຊູ່ປະເທດຂອງເຮົາເຂົາເຈົ້າ
ຮູ້ດີວ່າປະຊາຊົນລາວບໍ່ໄດ້ຄິດຮ້າຍ
ຕໍ່ວຽດນາມເໜືອ ແລະປາກຸນາ
ຈະຢູ່ຢ່າງສົງຄູ່ກ

ພວກວຽດນາມເໜືອຄວນຈະຮູ້ດີວ່າ ກຸ້ງເຂົາ
ເຈົ້າຍັງຮຸກຮານລາວຕໍ່ໄປ ເຂົາເຈົ້າກໍຈະ
ປະສົບຄວາມພ່າຍແພ້ ແລະຖືກຕີແຕກ
ໄປອີກ ເໝືອນດັ່ງເຈົ້າເທ່ນຕໍາເຄີຍຕີມາ
ແລ້ວເມື່ອບາງກ່ອນ ຂໍໃຫ້ວຽດນາມເໜືອ
ຈຶ່ງຈຳບັດຮຽນນີ້ໄວ້

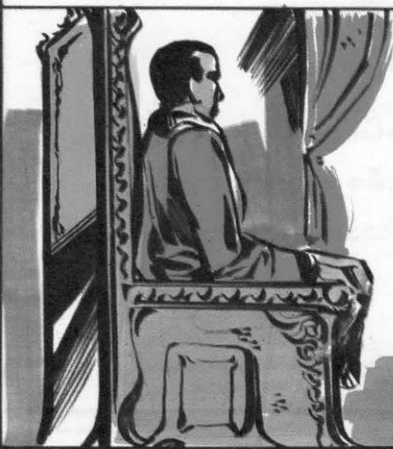
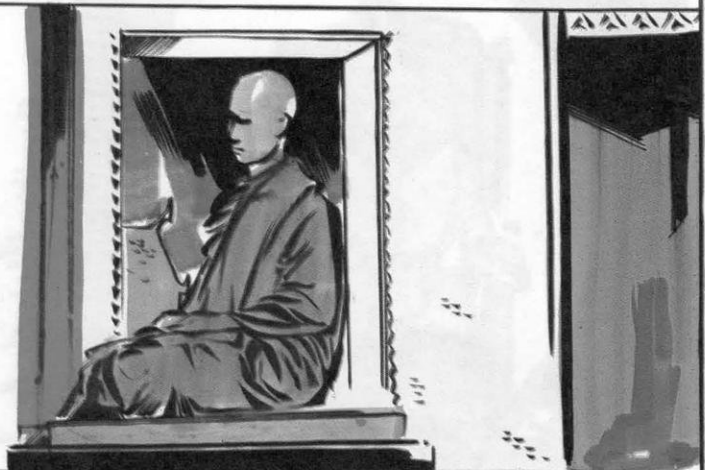


ພຣະເຈົ້າໂພທິສາຣະຣາຊເຈົ້າ

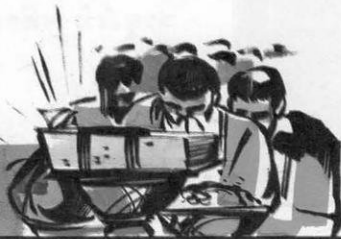
“ຄວາມສຳມັກຄີແມ່ນບຸນກຳລັງ”

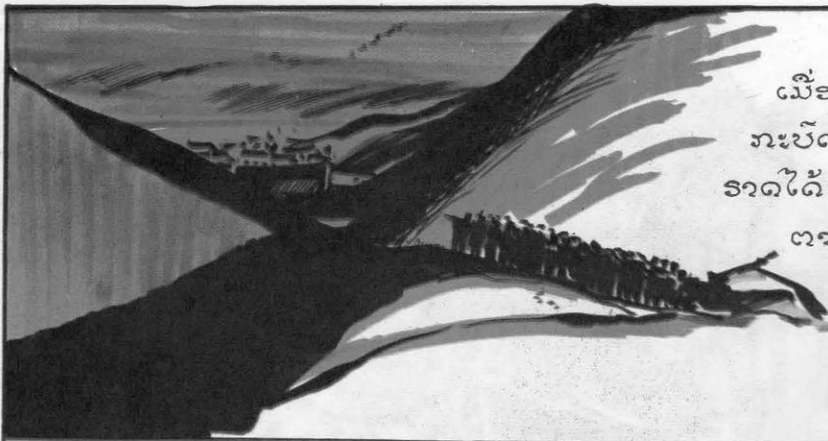
(໑໕໐໑ ~ ໑໕໔໐)

ຫລັງຈາກທີ່ພຣະອົງໄດ້ສະເວີຍຮ່າດໃນ
ປີ ໑໕໒໐ ເມື່ອພຣະອົງຈົບມີພຣະ
ຈົນສາຍູ້ໄດ້ ໑໙ ພັນສາ ພຣະອົງ
ເປັນກະສັດທີ່ເຊື່ອໝັ້ນໃນພຣະພຸທ-
ສາສນາ ໄດ້ອຸປະສັມບັດຈົ່ວຮະບະນົງ.



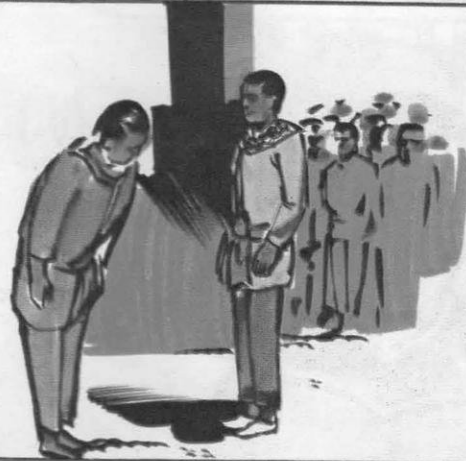
ພຣະເຈົ້າໂພທິສາຣະຣາຊ ເປັນກະສັດທີ່ເຂັ້ມແຂງເພາະວ່າ
ອານາຈັກຂອງພຣະອົງເປັນອັນນຶ່ງອັນດຽວກັນ ກະສັດ
ແກວໄດ້ແກງຂາມ ແລະນັບຖືພຣະອົງ
ຍ້ອນອານາຈັກຂອງພຣະອົງແຂງ
ແຂງກົມກຽວກັນ ສະນັ້ນກະສັດ
ແກວຈຶ່ງສົ່ງຮາຊາບັນນາການ
ມາຫຼວງພຣະອົງ.





ເມື່ອຜູ້ນຳແຂວງຊຽງຂວາງໄດ້ທຳການ
ກະບົດໃນປີ ໑໕໓໓ ພຣະເຈົ້າໂພທິສາຣະ
ຣາດໄດ້ປາບພວກກະບົດໃຫ້ຮາບຄາບ
ຕາມຣະບຽບ ເພື່ອຮັກສາໄວ້ຊຶ່ງຄວາມ
ເປັນປົກແຜ່ນແທ້ໝາຂອງ
ອານາຈັກ.

ໃນປີ ໑໕໔໐ ກະສັດອະຍຸທຍາໄດ້ໂຈມຕີວຽງຈັນ
ພຣະເຈົ້າໂພທິສາຣະຣາຊ ໄດ້ຜຸດສິ່ງໃຫ້ກະສັດ
ແສນຫລວງລ້ານຊ້າງທຳແຂກ ສົ່ງທະຫານໄປ
ຊ່ອຍ ກະສັດແສນຫລວງຜູ້ຈົງຮັກພັກດີໄດ້ສົ່ງ
ກອງທະຫານຂອງພຣະອົງໄປວຽງຈັນທັນທີ ເມື່ອ
ປ້ອງກັນປະເທດລາວເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າອານາຈັກຂອງ
ພຣະອົງບໍ່ໄດ້ຖືກບຸກຮຸກກໍຕາມ ທະຫານທັງສອງ
ຝ່າຍໄດ້ຊ່ອຍກັນຕີພວກອະຍຸທຍາໃຫ້ແຕກໄປ
ຍັງບໍ່ເປັນຣະບຽບ.



ພວກເສນາອາມາດແຫ່ງນະຄອນຊຽງໃໝ່ຮູ້ສຶກ
ເຖິງຄວາມເຂັ້ມແຂງ ແລະຄວາມເປັນກ້ອນເປັນ
ໝວຍຂອງອານາຈັກລາວ ພວກເຂົາເຈົ້າຈຶ່ງໄດ້
ຂໍໃຫ້ພຣະເຈົ້າໂພທິສາຣະຣາຊເອົາເຈົ້າເຊດທະ
ວົງໄສ ເມື່ອເປັນເຈົ້າແຜ່ນດິນໃນນະຄອນ
ຊຽງໃໝ່.



ພາຍຫລັງທີ່ໄດ້ຮາຊາພິເສກພຣະຣາຊໂອຣົດໃຫ້
ເປັນກະສັດຊຽງໃໝ່ແລ້ວ ພຣະເຈົ້າໂພທິສາຣະ
ຣາຊກໍນຳເອົາພຣະແກ້ວມໍຣະກົດເຂົ້າສູ່ວຽງຈັນ.



ໃນປີ ໑໕໕໐ ພຣະເຈົ້າໂພທິສາຣະຣາຊ ໄດ້ຊົງອັນເຊີນໃຫ້
ທູດຕ່າງປະເທດ ໑໕ ປະເທດໃຫ້ມາເປັນສັກຂີພິຍານ
ເບິ່ງວິທີຕ້ອງຊ້າງປ່າດ້ວຍບ້ວງບາດ ພຣະເຈົ້າໂພທິສາຣະ
ຣາຊເປັນຜູ້ຊຳນິຊຳນານໃນການຂີ່ຊ້າງຕໍ່ເພື່ອຕ້ອງຊ້າງປ່າ
ແຕ່ວ່າຊ້າງໃດນັ້ນຮ້າຍຫລາຍແລະເຮັດໃຫ້ພຣະອົງຕົກຈາກ
ຫລັງຊ້າງ ພຣະອົງໄດ້ຖືກຊ້າງຕໍ່ລົ້ມທັບແລະພຣະອົງໄດ້ສ້ຽງ
ພຣະຊົນໃນເຈັດວັນຕໍ່ມາ.

ພະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະເຊດຖາທິຣາດ ກະສັດຜູ້ສ້າງວັດ ແລະຜູ້ຜາບພະມ້າ



ປະຊາຊົນລາວຮູ້ຈັກເຖິງພະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະເຊດຖາທິຣາດຢູ່ສະເໝີ
ວ່າ ເປັນພະມະຫາກະສັດຜູ້ສ້າງວັດພະເກັ້ວ ແລະ
ພະທາດຫລວງ ທີ່ນະຄອນວຽງຈັນ

ປັດຈຸບັນເຮົາໄດ້ສ້າງອະນຸສາວະນີຂອງພະອົງໄວ້
ດ້ານໜ້າພະທາດຫລວງ ຈຶ່ງກັບອີກບ່ອນໜຶ່ງ
ຂອງພະອົງທີ່ຄົນລາວຈະບໍ່ມີວັນລືມກໍຄື
ພະອົງຊົງຜາບພະມ້າຜູ້ມາ
ຮຸກຮານ



ສະໄໝນີ້ພະມ້າເປັນມິດທີ່ດີຂອງເຮົາ
ເນື່ອງສະໄໝພະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະເຊດຖາທິ
ຣາດ ກະສັດບາຍິນຍອງແຫ່ງພະມ້າ
ໄດ້ຍົກທັບມາຮຸກຮານລາວ

ກອງທັບພະມ້າມີກຳລັງພົນຫລວງຫລາຍ ພຣະເຈົ້າ
 ໄຊຍະເຊດທາທິຣາດ ຈຶ່ງຕ້ອງຫຼອຍທັບເຖິງສ່ອງເທື່ອ
 ເທື່ອທຳອິດຫຼອຍຈາກນະຄອນຫລວງພຣະບາງ
 ແລະເທື່ອທີສອງຫຼອຍຈາກວຽງຈັນ
 ໄປຢູ່ ປາກງື່ມ



ແຕ່ປະຊາຊົນຕາມເມືອງແລະ
 ໝູ່ບ້ານ ຍັງຄົງຈົງຮັກພັກດີຕໍ່
 ພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະເຊດທາທິຣາດ
 ເຂົາເຈົ້າຈຶ່ງບໍ່ອ່ອນຍອມໃຫ້ແກ່
 ພະມ້າ



ຊາຍສະກັດລາວຈຶ່ງຈັດກຳລັງທັບເປັນກອງ
 ຫລອນ ຄອຍດັກສະກັດໂຈມຕີພະມ້າ



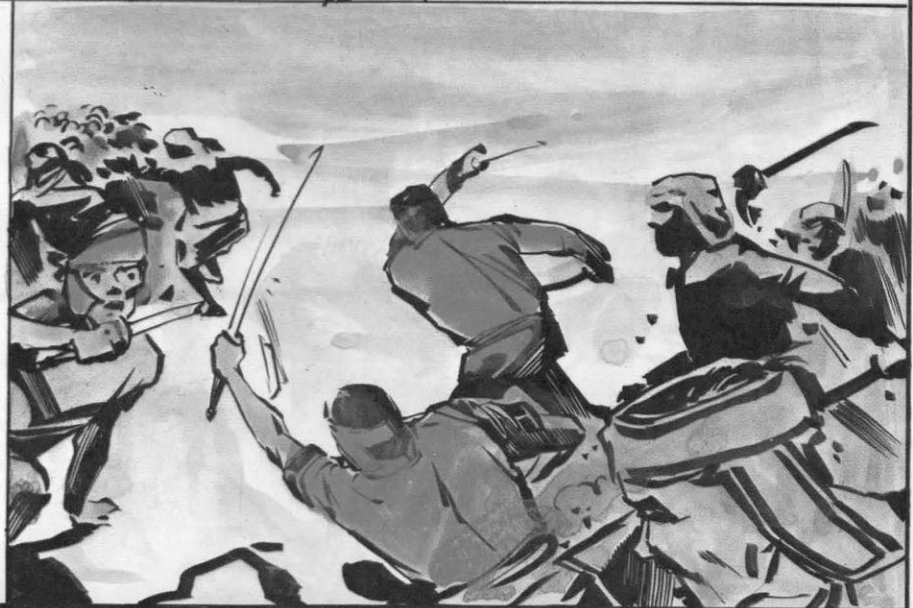
ແມ່ຍິງບໍ່ຍອມສົ່ງສະບຽງອາຫານຫລືໃຫ້ການຊ່ອຍເຫລືອ
 ພະມ້າຢ່າງໃດ ຍິ່ງກວ່ານັ້ນເຂົາເຈົ້າຍັງລັກສົ່ງຂ່າວ
 ການເຄື່ອນໄຫວຂອງພະມ້າໄປໃຫ້ພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະ
 ເຊດທາທິຣາດຊຶ່ງຊາບນຳ





ກອງທັບພະມ້າອ່ອນແອງ
ແລະເປັດໜ່າຍ ຍ້ອນຂາດ
ສະບຽງເຄື່ອງກິນ ອີກທັງ
ປະຊາຊົນຕາມອ້ອມເອ້ນ
ເມືອງກໍບໍ່ໃຫ້ການສະໜັບ
ສະໜູນ.

ພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະເຊດທາທິຣາດ
ຊົງຮູ້ເຖິງການເສັງກຳລັງໃຈ
ຂອງກອງທັບພະມ້າ ພຣະອົງ
ຈຶ່ງຊົງສັ່ງໃຫ້ທະຫານເຂົ້າໂຈມ
ຕີ ຈົນທັບພະມ້າແຕກຫີ
ຈັບຂະເລີຍພະມ້າແລະຊ້າງ
ໄດ້ເປັນອັນນາກ.



ພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະເຊດທາທິຣາດ ຊົງນຳປະຊາຊົນລາວເຂົ້າ
ຕ້ານຍືນກັບພະມ້າຈົນໄດ້ໄຊຊະນະເທື່ອນີ້ເປັນບັດຮຽນສ່ວນໃຫຍ່ເຮົາຮູ້ວ່າ
ເມື່ອຖືກສັດຕູຮຸກຮານ ແມ່ນວ່າຈະມີກຳລັງທັບຫລາຍປານໃດກໍຕາມ
ເທົ່າຜອງໃດທີ່ປະຊາຊົນລາວຍັງມີຄວາມຈົບຮັກພັກດີຕໍ່ພຣະມະຫາກະສັດ
ໃຫ້ການສະໜັບສະໜູນກອງທັບ ແລະປ່ອຍອະໄພມືກັບຜ່າຍສັດຕູ ເທົ່າຜອງ
ນັ້ນເຮົາຈະສາມາດທຳລາຍລ້າງມັນໄດ້ສະເໝີ ບັດອຸບັດເຮົາຈຳເປັນຕ້ອງ
ລະນຶກເຖິງບັດຮຽນສຳຄັນນີ້ແລ້ວ ຍ້ອນວ່າເຮົາພວມຖືກບຸກຮຸກຈາກ
ສັດຕູພາຍນອກຄືພວກຮຸກຮານວຽດນາມເໜືອ.

ພະເຈົ້າສຸຣິຍະວົງສາ

ກະສັດຜູ້ຍິ່ງໃຫຍ່ອົງສຸດທ້າຍຂອງລາວໃນສົມບັດບຸຣາຍ ພ.ສ. ໒໔໘໐-໒໔໙໗

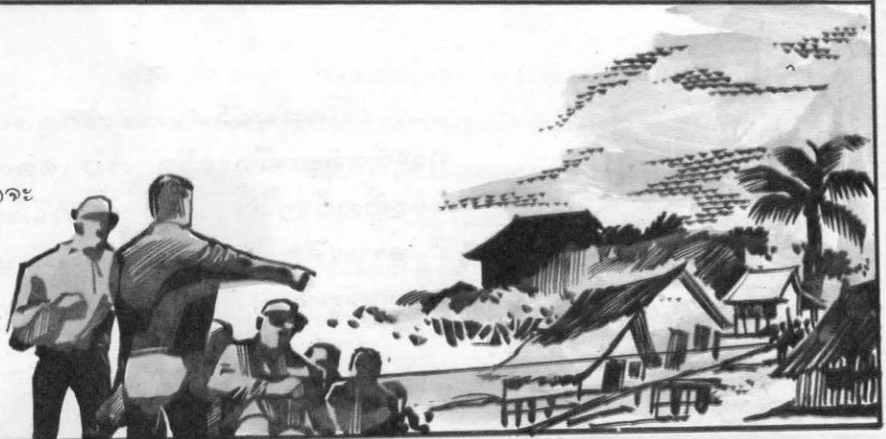


ຫລັງຈາກພຣະເຈົ້າໄຊຍະເຊດຖາທິຣາດ ລະເດັດສວັຣົດ
ແລ້ວ ລາວກໍ່ເສື່ອມອຳນາດລົງ ແລະເຕັກເຍກກັນໄປ
ຊົ່ວໄລຍະນຶ່ງ ຈົນຮອດສົມບັດຂອງພຣະເຈົ້າສຸຣິຍະວົງສາ
ຈຶ່ງໄດ້ທ້ອນໄຮມປະເທດ ແລະພົ້ນຜູ້ກຳລັງທັບໃຫ້ເຂັ້ມ
ແຂງຕື່ມ

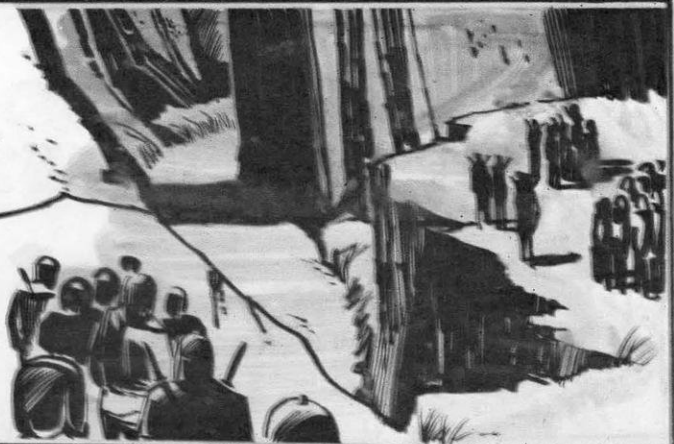


ເມື່ອກອງທັບລາວເຂັ້ມແຂງ ແລະການທ້ອນໄຮມ
ຊາດກໍ່ສຳເລັດລົງແລ້ວ ພຣະເຈົ້າສຸຣິຍະວົງສາກໍ່ໄດ້
ຊົງທຳສັນຍາສັນພັນທະໄມຕິກັບປະເທດໄທ ແລະ
ວຽດນາມ ຊຶ່ງຕ່າງຝ່າຍກໍ່ໄດ້ຮັບຕໍ່ສັນຍາທີ່ເຮັດ
ກັນໄວ້

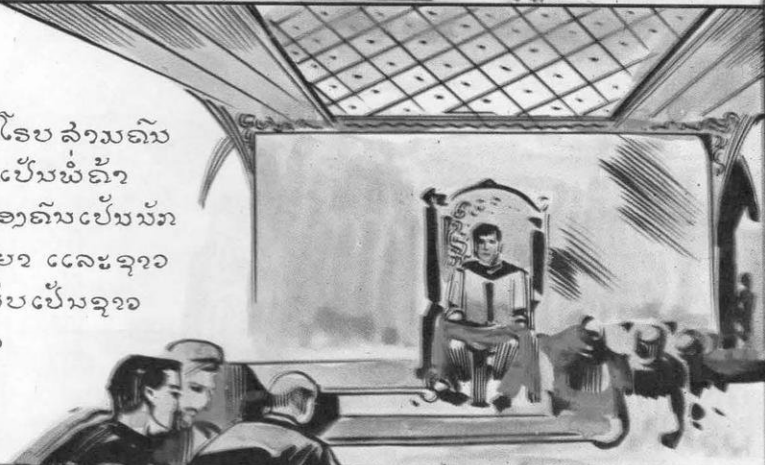
ໃນສັນຍາລະຫວ່າງລາວແລະວຽດ
ນາມນັ້ນ ໄດ້ມີຂໍ້ຕົກລົງວ່າ ເຮືອນ
ເບຍໃຕ້ກ້ອງລ່າງສູງ ແລະມີຮະບຽງຈະ
ຕ້ອງຢູ່ໃນເຂດເມືອງລາວ ແລະ
ເຮືອນທີ່ບຸກຕິດດິນ ຈະຕ້ອງຢູ່ໃນ
ເຂດວຽດນາມ



ຊາວວຽດນາມຍອມຮັບສັນຍານີ້ບ່ອນພຣະເຈົ້າ
ສຸຣິຍະວົງສາ ຊົງຕັ້ງກອງທະຫານຮັກສາທາງຜ່ານ
ຕາມຮ່ອມພູ ເພື່ອປ້ອງກັນການບຸກຮຸກດິນ
ແດນລາວ



ໃນສະໄໝພຣະເຈົ້າສຸຣິຍະວົງສາ ໄດ້ມີຊາວຢູໂຣບ ສ່ວນຄົນ
ເດີນທາງມາຢ້ຽມຢາມປະເທດລາວ ຄົນນຶ່ງເປັນພໍ່ຄ້າ
ຊາວຮີແລນ ຊື່ ເກີຣິຕ ຟອນ ລູສຕົບ ອີກສ່ວນຄົນເປັນນັກ
ບວດຄາທໍລິກ ຊາວອິຕາລີ ຊື່ ອີເທີ ເລີຣິຍາ ແລະຊາວ
ປັຕູເກດ ຊື່ ເດີມາຣິນີ ທັງສາມທ່ານນີ້ ນັບເປັນຊາວ
ຢູໂຣບພວກທຳອິດທີ່ໄດ້ມາຢ້ຽມຢາມລາວ



ລູສຕົບ ເລີຣິຍາ ແລະເດີມາຣິນີ ຮູ້ສຶກຊຶ້ງໃຈໃນຄວາມ
ສົມບູນ ແລະຄວາມຮຸ່ງເຮືອງທີ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າໄດ້ເຫັນ
ຫລາຍ ຈາກປຶ້ມທີ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າຂຽນໄວ້ເປັນຂໍ້ພິສູດ
ໄດ້ວ່າ ພຣະອາຊີນາຈັກລາວເລີຍເປັນຊາວ
ທີ່ນ່າພາກພູມໃຈ ແລະມີອາຣະຍະທັມສູງສຸດ
ແລ້ວເປັນເວລາດົນນານ ກ່ອນສະໄໝຕົກເປັນ
ອານານິຄົມ



ເມື່ອສົມເດັດພຣະເຈົ້າສຸຣິຍະວົງສາທັມມິກະຣາດ
ສະເດັດສຸຣະຄົດແລ້ວ ຕໍ່ມາຮອດປີ ຄ.ສ. ໑໖໙໘ ປະເທດ
ລາວທີ່ກວ້າງໃຫຍ່ໄພ່ສານ ກໍໄດ້ແບ່ງແຍກກັນອອກເປັນ
໓ ອານາຈັກ ຄື : ອານາຈັກລ້ານຊ້າງຫລວງພຣະບາງ ໑.
ອານາຈັກລ້ານຊ້າງວຽງຈັນ ໑. ອານາຈັກນະຄອນຈຳປາສັກ ໑.

ຟຣະເຈົ້າອະນຸ ໑໕໐໔-໑໕໒໕

ນັກຮົບເພື່ອກອບກູ້ອິສະຣະພາບ ແລະຄວາມເປັນອັນດຽວກັນ ຂອງອານາຈັກ

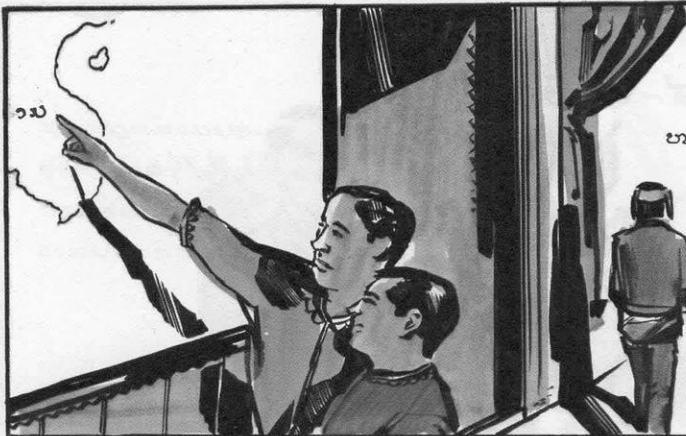


ພາຍຫລັງຫລັງທີ່ປະເທດລາວໄດ້
ແຍກອອກເປັນສາມອານາຈັກແລ້ວ ກະສັດ
ແຕ່ລະອານາຈັກບໍ່ມີຄວາມເຂັ້ມແຂງ ແລະ
ສາມາດພໍໃນການທີ່ຈະປົກປັກຮັກສາ
ເອກະລາດຂອງຕົນ ໃນປີ ໑໗໗໕ ທັງ
ສາມອານາຈັກລາວໄດ້ຕົກໄປຢູ່ໃຕ້
ອຳນາດຂອງໄທ ແລະອານາຈັກພາກ
ກາງຂອງລາວບາງສ່ວນໄດ້ຖືກແກວ
ຄວບຄຸມ.

ພຣະເຈົ້າອະນຸ ກະສັດແຫ່ງອານາຈັກວຽງ
ຈັນ ໄດ້ອ່ານເຣື່ອງຄວາມເຣື່ອງຊື່ສຽງ
ຂອງພົງສາວະດານລາວ ເມື່ອສະໄໝປະເທດ
ລາວເປັນອັນດຽວກັນແລະປາສຈາກ
ການຄວບຄຸມຂອງຕ່າງປະເທດ.



ພຣະເຈົ້າອະນຸບໍ່ພໍພຣະໃຈໃນການຄວບຄຸມຂອງຕ່າງປະເທດ
ພຣະອົງນຶກຢູ່ສະເລ່ຍວ່າມັນຈະຕ້ອງເປັນເຊັ່ນນີ້ຕອດໄປຖ້າ
ຫາກບໍ່ໄດ້ສະໄໝປະເທດເປັນອັນດຽວກັນ.
ພຣະອົງໄດ້ຕັດສິນໃຈທີ່ຈະເຕົ້າໂຮມລາວ
ແລະຕໍ່ສູ້ເພື່ອເອກະລາດ ພຣະອົງໄດ້ເຮັດ
ຈັດຂະບວນໃໝ່ພົນເພື່ອຕໍ່ສູ້ກັບໄທ.



ພະເຈົ້າອະນຸນຸສະມີວ່າ ພະອົງຈະບໍ່ສາມາດກູ້
ອິສະຣະພາບປະເທດລາວອອກຈາກອຳນາດຂອງໄທ
ທາກພະອົງບໍ່ໄດ້ເອົາລາວມາຈັກເຂົ້າເປັນອັນດຽວ
ກັນກ່ອນ ສະນັ້ນພະອົງຈຶ່ງຕຳຣັດສົ່ງໃຫ້ຮາຊາໄອຣິສຂອງ
ພະອົງ ຜູ້ຄອງນະຄອນຈຳປາສັກ ຈັດຂະບວນເພື່ອ
ລາວເທິງ (ຂ້າ) ເພື່ອຕໍ່ຕ້ານໄທ ພະອົງກໍໄດ້ສົ່ງ
ພະຣາຊສານໄປຕູວາຍເຈົ້າມັນທາຕູຣາດ ກະ
ສັດຫລວງພະບາງເຊັ່ນດຽວກັນ ເພື່ອຊັກຊວນ
ກຽວກ່ອນໃຫ້ຮ່ວມມືກັນທຳການກູ້ຊາດ.

ໃນປີ ໑໕໒໗ ພະເຈົ້າອະນຸໄດ້ຍືນຊ່າວເປົ້າປິວ
ວ່າ ປະເທດອັງກິດຈະໄຈມຕີບາງກອກ
ພະອົງເຫັນວ່າໄອກາດອຳນວຍພໍດີ
ໃນການກູ້ອິສະຣະພາບ ພະອົງນຳ
ກອງທັບມຸ່ງໜ້າສູ່ບາງກອກ ສ່ວນ
ຮາຊາໄອຣິດຂອງພະອົງນຳພວກຕໍ່
ຕ້ານຂ້າພາກໃຕ້ໄຈມຕີໄທ.



ແຕ່ບັງເອີນເປັນຄາວເຄາະ ເຈົ້າມັນທາ
ຕູຣາດແບ່ງຫລວງພະບາງບໍ່ສາມາດທີ່ຈະ
ສົ່ງກຳລັງໄປຊ່ອຍເຈົ້າອະນຸໄດ້ ເນື່ອງຈາກ
ພະອົງກຳລັງປ້ອງກັນຊາຍແດນຂອງພະ
ອົງທາງພາກເໜືອ ຊຶ່ງຕິດຕໍ່ກັບພະມ້າ
ແລະກຳລັງຖືກພະມ້າລຸກຄາມຢູ່.

ບໍ່ພໍເທົ່າໃດ ທະຫານໄທກໍຍຶດຄອງນະຄອນວຽງ
ຈັນ ແລະນະຄອນຈຳປາສັກ ໃນນະຄອນວຽງຈັນ
ພວກໄທໄດ້ທຳລາຍມ້າງເພປັນການໃຫຍ່ແລະ
ກໍໄດ້ນຳເອົາພະແກ້ວທີ່ສັກສິດຂອງລາວໄປພ້ອມ
ສ່ວນພະເຈົ້າອະນຸໄດ້ໄປປະເທດແກວພ້ອມທັງ
ທະຫານຂອງພະອົງ.





ເຈົ້າຣາຊວົງ (ເຫງົ້າ) ໂອຣົດເຈົ້າອະນຸເມ່ນທັບໜ້າຂອງລາວຮົບກັບພຍາບໍດີນ
 ເມ່ນທັບໄທ ພຍາບໍດີນເສັ້ນທ່າມ້າລົ້ມເຕັ້ງ ເຈົ້າຣາຊວົງເທງດ້ວຍຫອກ
 ສິ້ນຖືກກົກຂາປັກຄາດິນກໍາລັງຈະພັນດ້ວຍດາບ ແຕ່ພ້ອງຊາຍພຍາບໍ
 ດີນແລ່ນມາຊ່ອຍເລີຍຖືກເຈົ້າຣາຊວົງພັນຂາດເຖິງ ພຍາບໍດີນໄດ້ໂອກາດ
 ດິ້ນຫລຸດ ແລະເຈົ້າຣາຊວົງກໍຖືກຢິງຕົກຈາກຫລັງມ້າ ທະບານທັງສອງຝ່າຍ
 ຕ່າງກໍເອົານາຍຂອງຕົນໄປ.



ພຣະເຈົ້າອະນຸຮູ້ວ່າພວກເກວເລະໃທໄດ້
ຮັບຮາຊ້າພັນກັນຢູ່ເລື້ອຍໆ ພຣະອົງໄດ້
ຄິດວ່າຄວາມເປັນກາງ ເອກຣາດຂອງ
ປະເທດລາວຣະຫວ່າງໃທເລະເກວນັ້ນ
ອາດນຳຄວາມສັນຕິໄດ້ ສະນັ້ນພຣະ
ອົງຈຶ່ງກັບຈາກປະເທດເກວເພື່ອ
ເຈຣະຈາສັນຕິກັບໃທ.

ແຕ່ກໍບໍ່ໄດ້ຮັບຜົນແຕ່ຢ່າງໃດເພາະວ່າ
ໃທບໍ່ຍອມຮັບຄວາມປະນີປະນອມຂອງ
ເຈົ້າອະນຸ ພຣະອົງເຫັນທ່າບໍ່ດີ ຈຶ່ງຮວບ
ຮວມກຳລັງຂຶ້ນສູ່ດທ້າຍ ເພື່ອກຳຈັດພວກ
ໃທແຕ່ພຣະອົງມີທະຫານນ້ອຍກວ່າຫລາຍລົບ
ເທົ່າ ຈຶ່ງປະຈຸຢູ່ ໃນທີ່ສຸດກໍໄດ້ເອົາຕົວຫລົບ
ໄປໄທທາງຊຽງຂວາງ.



ພວກທະຫານໃທໃນທີ່ສຸດກໍຈຸດເລົ່າເຜົາຜານ
ນະຄອນວຽງຈັນທັງໝົດ ເລະຍັງຄົບໃຫ້ຄອບຄົວ
ປະຊາຣາສະດອນລາວນັບພັນໆ ຍ້າຍໄປຢູ່ພາກ
ຕະເວັນອອກເໜືອຂອງໃທ.

ພຣະເຈົ້າອະນຸໄດ້ຊີ້ກຳຈັດທີ່ເມືອງພວນ ແຂວງຊຽງ
ຂວາງ ໃນປີ ໑໕໒໙ ແລະຊີ້ກຳຈັດໄປບາງກອກ
ແລະແມ່ນບ່ອນທີ່ພຣະອົງໄດ້ຈັບຊີວິດລົງຍ້ອນ
ເສັ້ນພຣະໃທ ຄວາມຫວັງທີ່ພຣະອົງຈະນຳເອົາ
ຄວາມປອດໄພຂອງຊາດ ແລະເສຍພາບມາສູ່
ພຣະຣາຊອານາຈັກລາວຈຳຕ້ອງລົງຕໍ່ໄປ
ອີກ ໑໐໐ ກວ່າປີ ກ່ອນຈະກາຍມາ
ເປັນຄວາມຈິງ.

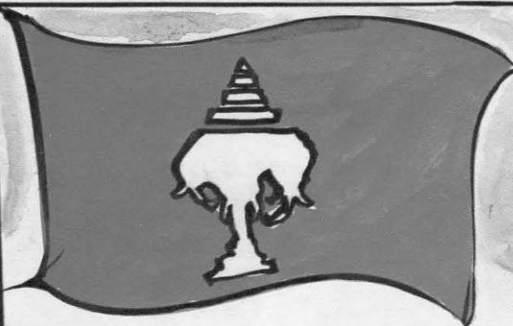


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ຄວາມຮູ້ສຶກໃນຂໍ້ທີ່ວ່າ ເຮົາເລີຍຍິ່ງໃຫຍ່
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HEALTH
AND OTHER

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

IN LAOS

OPERATION BROTHERHOOD INTERNATIONAL, INC.
VIENTIANE, LAOS

P R E F A C E

This compilation is intended to acquaint the new OB Filipino volunteer with the more common local beliefs and practices among the people of Laos. As much as possible, only those which in one way or another are related to disease and sickness were chosen, although there are some which deal with dreams and their interpretations.

Local practices being what they are, belief in one is not always uniform, i.e., no two regions may believe in the same practice with the same sincerity, nor two Lao mothers believe in the same with the same intensity. This is mentioned to make clear that what are listed here may not be universally held in all the villages of Laos.

Also, the core of a specific belief or practice may be constant, but its forms may be various. Needless to say, there are some individuals in Laos who do not put much stock in these beliefs and practices.

What are presented here we gathered (OB nurses, social workers, home technologists and others; specifically: Lolita Delaon, Teofista Razalan-de los Reyes, Petra Duruin, Jesusa Yap-Cruz, Marlene Jamero, Virginia Guzman-Azul, Josefina Pablo, Maria Aguilos, Angelita Abad, Asila Palma, and Souk Bounsong) some of whom have worked in Laos for more than five years in the rural areas where such beliefs and practices flourish and are firmly rooted in the collective unconscious.

THE EDITORS

I. INTRODUCTION

Belief in the phi

When a person is stricken sick, the Lao usually attributes the sickness to more than a physical reason. There is a phi or spirit responsible. A Phi comes in two kinds, the good and the bad. The latter is known as a phi phetu.

The phi phetu is by nature malevolent and causes illness for no reason at all. The simple phi, on the other hand, will not strike a person sick, unless it has been angered or slighted, or improperly appeased.

A phi phetu lurks in the jungles and forests, and strikes in dark places. It is believed to be present during moments when a prospective victim is most helpless, like during childbirth or a serious illness.

The 32 phis of the body

The living body, the Lao believes, contains 32 phis, each one of them presiding over one of the 32 organs of the body. If one of these spirits or souls should manage to escape, for instance through an accident, it must be coaxed back into the body in order that the organ injured during the accident may heal properly.

The Phi-pop

The phi phetu, which is also known as a phi-pop, is a wandering trouble maker, and may be owned by a living person. The Lao believe that, through an intense study of occult powers, it can be captured and kept as a slave.

Once you own a phi-pop, its powers for mischief are yours. You can command it to make sick somebody you do not particularly like, or drive him out of his mind. A person known to have a phi-pop is thus respected out of fear and is never made an enemy. As much as possible, he is distracted away from a house where a person lies sick or where a woman is delivering.

The Village Doctor

The village doctor may either be a simple herb doctor, who cures with the use of herbs and other substances, or a spirit doctor who is trained in the ways of the phi. Both herb and spirit doctors are held in high esteem and unquestioning respect by villagers who, despite the presence of university-trained doctors of medicine or a hospital in the area, will not fail to consult their local practitioners first.

The herb doctor carries with him the materials of his trade: roots, branches, bones and horns, and more often than that, a whetstone. Other things that he may need while treating a patient he sends for from the nearby woods or forest.

The spirit doctor or shaman (who was trained and handpicked by the last shaman in the village) comes into the house of a sick person with his secret and powerful prayers and incantations. He is received with lit candles and a tray of flowers, rice, wine, eggs, chicken, a sword or a spear-- all of which are utilized in exorcising the evil spirit which has possessed the sick person.

The following beliefs and practices are predominantly related to childbirth, health, and disease:

- . sit with her back against a fire because this causes placental retention;
- . color her face or dress garishly lest her child grow up vain;
- . step over a rope so that the umbilical cord of the unborn child will not coil around its neck;
- . prepare anything for the baby's birth, neither diapers, clothes nor crib, because preparation kills the baby during pregnancy, delivery or shortly after delivery;
- . let any member of the family make a pillow or mattress because a difficult delivery will result;
- . let her husband carry a dead person or a coffin because she will have a stillborn child;
- . transfer to a new house because the family will become sickly;
- . have sexual intercourse on her third month of pregnancy because this causes twins;
- . leave the house after nightfall because a phi might see her and make her sick;
- . plant bananas because they cause abnormal fingers for the baby;
- . make a machete handle because this causes a difficult delivery;

In order to facilitate delivery, a pregnant woman should:

- . braid her hair and make a bun;
- . turn her skirt upside down upon walking up in the morning so that the baby will emerge head first;

- rub a handful of sand on her abdomen when taking a bath in order to remove fatty tissues;
- wear abulbous plant known as wan on any part of the body;
- offer food daily to the monks so that the baby will become as good as the monks;
- hang laundered shirts, skirts, pants from their seams;

PREGNANCY, BIRTH & AFTER BIRTH PRACTICES

A. Pregnancy

A pregnant woman should not:

- eat or sit on the stairway or near the door, or any rock or stone, near a pestle and mortar in order to avoid difficult labor; her husband should not dig pits or make holes in wood because such actions will obstruct delivery;
- sleep excessively because this causes oversized babies;
- lie flat on her bed because an evil phi may touch her abdomen (she should always lie on her side) or else she may bear twins;
- sit on a leaf because this shall cause placental retention;
- eat while walking because this causes abdominal pain;
- eat rats because they induce bleeding; papaya because the foetus will grow too big; eggs because they thicken the uterus causing severe pains during delivery; coconut and bitter tasting food because these induce abortion; hot food because it kills the foetus; sugar cane, pineapple, eggplant because these thicken and harden the bag of water; oversized fish because it causes oversized babies; bananas which are too long and large because they cause the baby too grow big, resulting in a difficult delivery; also bananas fused together by their skins (twin bananas) because they cause twins; meat of pregnant pigs, cows and carabaos, and of birds which did not fall to the ground after being shot, and insects because they cause sore mouth which infects the foetus;
- eat from a pot or kettle because the foetus will not emerge at the expected time of delivery;
- eat anything with quinine in it;
- eat tansom, (shredded green papaya, with pepper and fish sauce) bananas and beans;

- drink alcoholic beverages because the child will become a drunkard and a ne'er-do-well;
- always wear a blouse (never expose her breasts) and a belt of string or small rope just below the navel, an inch above the pubis. The belt must be worn neither tightly or loosely, and must not be knotted twice;
- slaps her thighs softly on waking up in the morning and murmur, as if in prayer -- "Let the placenta fall, may the membrane enveloping the child fall away"; and
- brush her hair with the bones of an eel.

Labor

- When labor pains start, the mother's abdomen is rubbed with sand to hasten expulsion of the placenta;
- Relatives remove all hanging clothes, curtains, mosquito nets, etc., so that the mother suffers less pain and the baby emerges easily;
- Relatives make sure a pestle is not in its mortar (if the house has this equipment). Leaving the pestle inside the mortar causes difficult delivery.
- The mother is encouraged to walk around in order to guide the baby's head into the birth canal.
- A tiny rolled amulet of copper, silver or gold, inscribed with sacred Cambodian characters and fashioned by a monk, is attached to the mother's hair or hung from her neck in order to insure easy delivery.
- The mother drinks special holy water prepared by her family which gives her strength during labor.
- During labor, the number of women attending to the mother should not exceed two. More than two will cause profuse bleeding. However, female children under 10 are not counted.

Delivery

- One end of a rope or cloth is tied to a ceiling post or to a wall, while its other end is grasped tightly by the laboring mother. She assumes a sitting-kneeling-squatting position which supposedly facilitates the descent of the child and the placenta are delivered.

- A Child born by Caesarean operation is looked upon as a child of bad luck who, by being born through a method which caused the mother suffering, shall cause future sufferings to her and to her entire family. Thus, if there are any takers, the child born by Caesarean operation is given away.
- If the mother becomes restless or mentally deranged during delivery because of a phi phetu, a khanh ha is prepared composed of 5 flowers, 5 candles, 5 sticks, and money in 5 kip denominations worth 500 kip. These are offered to the mother's deceased ancestors or to the spirits, and strings are tied around her wrists, ankles and neck. This ritual returns the mother to her normal senses.

After Birth Practices

- Upon expulsion of the placenta, an attending woman blows holy water all over the mother's body, ties white cotton strings around her wrists, ankles and neck to protect her from phis.
- If the placenta is retained after delivery of the child, a leaf called ya kha is rubbed on the abdomen to cause its expulsion.
- The umbilical cord is cut by a person of good reputation so that the child will inherit his good characteristics. If the cord is cut with split bamboo the child will grow foolish; if cut with a knife, the child will grow clever and wise.
- The stump of the cord is left exposed until it dries and peels off.
- Stillborn babies or those who die right after birth are buried immediately so that a phi will not possess them. It is also believed that a baby born in the daytime will grow up to be a coward.
- Among some mountain tribes in Attopeu, 3 attendants are called to assist in the delivery; one cleans the baby, a third boils water, and the mother herself cuts the cord.
- A newborn baby is placed on the winnower which serves as his bed for 3 or 4 days so that a phi phetu will not enter its body. Then it is placed in the basket of flowers and candles to make it stop crying.

- After delivery, the mother sits on a chair or a specially made bench upon which salt and hot water were poured in order to preserve the perineum and prevent infection.
- The mother then takes a hot bath, the water boiled with bai nat leaves. By hastening the blood circulation, the bath gives the mother strength, keeps her body light, cleans her vision and prevents headaches.
- The mother recuperates on a bed elevated at the head part about 5 to 10 cms. from the floor in order to help drain the uterus of blood impurities.

Burning coals are placed a foot away from the bed. This promotes bleeding and thus washing away blood impurities faster. The more the mother bleeds, the better for her. She is required to stay near the heat from 8 days to a month.

- If a mother must stay heated for 15 days, she changes positions every 5 days -- she lays her head where her feet were 5 days ago, and vice versa after another 5 days.
- If it is not possible to place hot coals beside the bed of the mother, another bed is built beside the kitchen stove, or, heated flat stones or iron pieces are placed upon the mother's abdomen.

After the 5th day, the mother is transferred to another bed about 75 centimeters from the floor. Here, she stays for 10 or 15 days. Burning coals or embers are placed under or near the bed. It is believed that the fire not only purges her of bad blood but also gives her a good complexion, returns to normal the size of her abdomen, and strengthens her teeth and bones.

- During her stay near the fire, she is made to drink hot water to help heal the wounds of the uterus. In Keng Kok the water is boiled with local plants called kok mai, deng, mai, huat, kua mak tek, and hak hon hai.

The water is boiled with local herbs called hak kam noy, hak kham thao, and hak kam luang in order to stimulate milk production, promote good appetite and strengthen the mother.

The drink also lengthens intervals between pregnancies. (In Keng Kok, if a mother wished no more children, she refrains from eating frog meat.)

In Paksong, after 15 days in bed, the mother takes a bath with waters mixed with herbs called bai nat and bai mak ham, after which a thanksgiving ceremony or phanh khane is performed.

The new mother may not eat soup or any boiled food because it causes loose bowel movement for the baby; vegetables because they cause gas pains; deer meat because it causes bleeding and prolapse of the uterus; monkey meat because it shall make the baby naughty; and milk because it poisons when drunk near the fire.

In Attoupeu, the new mother's diet must be very dry -- dried fish, salted chicken, and dry vegetables. She drinks hot water mixed with ginger, herbs and barks of certain trees.

She is prohibited to eat beef, scaly fish, meat of female pig, deer meat, shrimps, cucumbers, mushrooms, watermelon, star apples and frogs, because these food cause edema, leukorrhea, vaginal bleeding and death.

Upon removal of the fire, the mother prepares candles, flowers and clothing materials for her midwife who removes the cotton strings tied around her wrists, ankles and neck.

If the mother is still weak after the removal of the fire, the husband consults the spirit doctor for the proper animals to sacrifice to the spirits.

In Paksong, after delivery, the mother eats with wine and an aromatic herb (scientific name - acorus calamus) known locally as wan dee kham to give her appetite and strength and to soothe pain. Some prefer to boil the herb and drink the solution.

For 10 to 15 days, she is allowed to eat only rice with dried meat. To eat the meat of a local bird named nok koho will result in severe abdominal pain, followed by convulsions and death.

Blood clotting inside the uterus is believed to be the cause of severe abdominal pain. To relieve pain, a bark of the cotton tree is boiled to drink, induces bleeding, and thus the blood clot is removed.

To combat blood poisoning, the mother's nape or back is scraped with a teaspoon or a piece of silver, causing the blood to circulate and to get rid of the poison.

C H I L D C A N E

Handling Problem Children

When children are naughty, difficult to feed, and sickly:

- the child's hair is cut in such a way that one, two or three areas of the scalp are left untrimmed. The uncut hair is braided until the ages of one, three, five or seven years, after which the hair is shaved;
- a cry baby is left in the market place; the mother then asked somebody to bring the baby home;
- the child is given to someone capable of rearing him;
- a monk is asked to name the child.

Curing Childhood Ills

- For flatulence, a Lao medicine known as makahing is applied with water around the navel.
- For colds, a mixture of camphor and white ginger is applied on top of the child's head.
- For burns, betel nut is chewed carefully, then blown over the burned area. Coconut oil or holy oil is applied afterwards on the burn.
- For boils, red lime is applied after the recitation of some incantations.

Rearing Children

- Mother's milk is supplemented with glutinous rice which the mother chews, then feeds to the baby with a little amount of water. In most cases the mother feeds the rice directly.
- For sore eyes, mother's milk is applied.
- To prevent the baby from crying, the parents fashion a bamboo basket in which a pair of candles, a fried spider, fried house lizard, and one white stone are placed. The basket is hung from the middle of the ceiling.
- When the child is grown, the basket is brought down and given to him.
- A Child should not eat the following: eggs because they cause tooth decay; chicken kidney because it thickens his heart; frog liver because it darkens his face; chicken's

feet because they shall make of him an adulterer; and pig's tail because the pig's ghost will enter his body.

- No adult is allowed to touch the growing teeth of the child because a touch can arrest growth.
- The child will not suffer gas pains if its placenta was burned where the mother's fire was built, and where her water for drinking was boiled.
- Among the Lao Thung tribe, ear-holing of children is accompanied by feasting -- pork and chicken are served with lao hai, a sweetish rice wine. The feasting prevents the wounds of the earlobes from bleeding because the spirits are appeased.

ON DISEASES AND TREATMENT

Fever

- For fever, a root called wan dee kam is boiled, and the liquid is taken with or without wine. The root is boiled over and over until the extract becomes clear. The sick person continues drinking this until the fever is gone.
- A sick person is treated with a variety of medicinal herbs. Also, sacred water is blown all over the body by the herb doctor.

If, despite treatment, the patient's condition gets worse, the immediate relatives prepare an offering to the herb doctor consisting of flowers and candles.

The herb doctor asks the spirits what kind of food they would prefer; and accordingly the family dresses a chicken or a pig. A jar of local lao-hai is also included in the offering.

Highland Attitudes

- Among the members of the Yahern tribe in Attoupeu, when a member of the household gets sick, the others just sit around and watch. They may not touch or do anything to alleviate the suffering of the sick person because any such gestures might displease the bad spirits and cause them to enter into their own bodies.
- Among members of the Lavae tribe, it is also believed that fever and other forms of sickness are caused by spirits. To appease them and recover health, offerings are made.
- In the case of a slight fever, or a common ailment, the immediate relatives of the afflicted person have to call upon a good phi known askwanh. If the kwanh ever decides to leave the body of a sick man, death follows.

In invoking the kwanh, a small piece of live charcoal is tied to a stick, carried about within the house, and finally brought before the patient, who thereupon touches the stick and says in a hoarse whisper, "Kwanh ma, kwanh ma." ("Ma" is the Lao word for "come." - ed.)

If still the patient does not improve, the village doctor is called, who then gets in touch with the spirits by dropping rice grains into a cup one by one and examining

the grains inside to determine what kind of food offering is desired. The family then makes an offering of the meat of a chicken, a pig, a cat or a cow, as the case may be. It is beleived that the patient immediately gets well after this.

Headaches & Dizziness

- For headaches and dizziness, finger pressure is applied on the temples, the neck is massaged and the hair pulled at lightly. It is believed that headaches are caused by too much bad blood in the head, so that parts of the temples are pressed and pinched until a little blood is drawn.

Also, to relieve headaches and dizziness, medicinal herbs of various kinds are pounded and wrapped in a black cloth, with which the head is gently massaged.

Lime applied on sliced lemons is also applied on the temples to relieve pain.

- For abdominal pains and stomach aches, the abdomen is stepped upon and massaged, ostensibly to make it softer.
- Also, the bad phi is exorcised from the sick person by means of an offering to the spirits of the house.

Abdominal Pains and the Phi-pop

- If the phi-pop which feeds upon human blood and intestines is involved, the spirit doctor tries to identify it by asking the sick person.

Once the spirit is identified, the spirit doctor shouts its name and threatens to kill it. Frightened, the phi-pop makes an exit, leaving the patients vomiting for awhile. Recovery is expected to take place at once.

The offering, which may be a dressed pig or chicken, is given to the doctor.

Scorpion and Snake Bites

- For scorpion bite, blood of the house lizard is applied on the wound, and lime spread over it to suck the toxin out. Furthermore, the victim may not come into the house until after he is all right. If he enters the house before this, he dies.
- The victim of snake bite is not allowed to enter the house. To do so is to court instant death as the act angers the house phis and aggravates the person's condition. A tent or a lean-to is set up for him beside the house, in which he shall remain until he recovers, or dies.

The spirit doctor is called to attend to the victim. He blows sacred water all over the body, recites some prayers and makes and offering. The patient is enjoined not to do any traveling, especially by boat. Medicines and injections are likewise prohibited.

Killing the offending snake is not allowed, as this would transfer the poison in its body to the body of the victim and cause instant death. If the snakebite victim lives, the thanksgiving boun is held in honor of the phi, and there is feasting and drinking the whole day. During the boun, the doctor is paid with money or material gifts.

Food Taboos

Persons suffering from abscesses and skin diseases may not eat the following: pepper, padek (salted fish), fishes with teeth and red tails, rice cakes, potatoes and vegetables, otherwise the following complications will arise, namely, a burning sensation around the abscess, increased pain, itchiness all over, and swelling.

If the patient has intestinal infections, the above foods could cause severe pains, serious coughing, and death. Fishes' teeth are especially dangerous as they are believed to inflict additional damage to the wounds or sores.

A person suffering from diarrhea, vomiting, and gas pains is kept on a regimen of water boiled with a kind of aromatic grass, garlic, onion and guava leaves. Sometimes, ashes are added, and the mixture is taken by the patient. In no case must the patient be allowed to eat raw vegetables, beans, cucumber, shrimp, big fish, carabao meat, sour foods, and eggplant.

A person suffering from coughing may not take sweet and bitter foods as these will make it worse.

OTHER BELIEFS & PRACTICES

A girl who is undergoing her monthly period may not enter the wat. A wife who is undergoing her monthly period may not sleep with the husband.

Touching the head of a man or boy who has studied in the wat is a sign of innocence.

A man may not pass under a clothesline.

Old coins are placed inside the posts of beds being constructed.

- ° Cats should be prevented from jumping over the body of a dead person as this will cause the corpse to rise.
- ° Religion forbids the eating of snake, dog, and monkey meat.
- ° For durability, flowers and thread are placed before the posts of a new house.
- ° Weavers should not give in to hunger while working in order that the yarn will stretch properly.
- ° Encountering a deer during a journey means bad luck. On the other hand, a snake means good luck.
- ° Loud and repeated cawing of the crow means that news is imminent.
- ° A person may not leave the house if a house lizard croaks repeatedly, or if it falls front of him, or a black cat crosses his way, or a spider bites itself, or if singing as if to the dead is heard, otherwise an accident or death will befall him.
- ° Washing one's face with coconut water after a cremation ceremony is a guarantee against evil spirits disturbing one's dreams.
- ° Misfortune will befall a person who gives away a knife, however small, for free. A fee must be charged, even if it is only a kip.
- ° To forestall misfortune befalling a family, the posts of a house under construction should be free from marks or blemishes, especially at the middle.
- ° Duck dishes should not be served to visiting relatives or friends, otherwise separation from them will follow.
- ° New farms should be cleared by fire on a Monday, so that the fire will not spread to adjoining areas.
- ° Cobwebs in the house should be left alone, as the person who removes them will become sick, and may even die.
- ° Seeing an earthworm means bad luck.
- ° The use of cogon grass for a toothpick brings bad luck upon one's self.
- ° Eating under the rafters of a house will bring bad luck.
- ° Women may not ride on male elephants, otherwise the tusks of the animal will crack.

Dreams

- Dreaming of losing front teeth means that a x cousin, relative or friend will get sick, and, of losing a molar, that one's mother or an elderly relative, like grandfather, will die.
- When a husband dreams of acquiring jewelry, it means that his wife will become pregnant, and that the child will be a girl.
- Dreaming of having hair cut means getting sick. To avoid this, a little hair is cut off.
- Dreaming of eating lap (Lao recipe of raw meat stewed in spices) means meeting with misfortune.
- Dreaming of a flood means catching a cold.
- Seeing a snake means good fortune; a deer, misfortune.
- Dreaming of losing teeth means having meat the next day.
- Dreaming of losing teeth means sickness or bad luck for the dreamer.
- Dreaming of receiving rings, gold, clothes means good luck.
- The following dreams bring bad luck: riding a boat which capsizes, dancing, holding a boun, marrying someone, putting on white clothes having a tree fall on one's self.

Marriages

- Two members of the same family may not get married within the same year.
- Marriages may take place only during even-numbered months. Even months are divisible by 2, a number symbolic of man and wife. Marrying otherwise will bring death upon one of the spouses.
- Marriage may not take place if a person in the family or in the village is sick or dead.
- A young girl may not get married if her mother is pregnant, otherwise the mother will get sick, or the family will become poor.
- After marriage arrangements have been made and the date of the wedding has been fixed, the prospective groom may not travel too far away, nor take part in festivities, much less court another girl.

Good food served during the wedding party insures a happy married life.

Arguing or quarreling among guests or the breakage of anything during the wedding party brings bad luck.

The newlyweds may not sleep together until after the third day of their marriage, or go out to work within this period, in order to prevent accidents, but they are allowed to sleep in the same room.

The marriage bed is prepared by an elderly man and woman. In bed, the groom stays on the right side and the bride on the left side in order to have a baby boy. If a baby girl is desired, the positions are reversed.

The "baci" tree used during the ceremony may not be removed until after the third day.

At table, the husband should touch the food first before the wife does. Also, he goes to bed first before his spouse, although it is the woman who must get up first in the morning.

The newlyweds may not eat boiled eggs for a week.

Cremation and Burial among the Lao

The remains of a person who suffers violent death must not be allowed in a house, otherwise the same fate will befall the other members of the family.

When a person dies outside his house, his body is not allowed in the house, otherwise sickness or bad luck will befall the other members of the family.

The bodies of those who die of violence or outside their houses are usually interred in the village wat.

Cremation is performed for those who die of illness or old age, and burying for those who die of violent deaths.

Children who die under ten years of age are buried as quickly as possible. Cremation is not performed for fear that death may befall the parents.

Cremation & Burial Among the Highland Tribes

Among the members of the Yahern tribe in Attapeu, only those people who live in the household of the dead man or woman may attend the funeral.

Among the members of the Lavae tribe in the same province, weeping is prohibited, in order to insure a happy reincarnation for the deceased.

As the corpse is carried out of the house, the members of the family whip pieces of cloth about the house, against the walls, posts, and so on. This is done to drive evil spirits away.

On coming back from the burial grounds, each member of the family breaks off a branch of a tree, or a twig, which is then placed in front of the ladder to protect the house from the ghost of the deceased.

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I Benson

PROGRAM FOR LAO NEW YEAR

Luang Prabang

April 10 - 21, 1972

A. Ceremony of Sang Hiang Keuy (Elephants receive their advice)

April 10

0800 - Sang Hiang Keuy at Wat Mai Souvanna Phoumaram
and Wat Xieng Thong.

April 11

0800 - Same schedule as April 10.

April 12

0800 - At Wat Mai Souvanna Phoumaram, Wat Xieng Thong,
and Wat Visounnarath.

B. Mu Sang Khane Pai (Last day of the old year)

April 13, Thursday - All offices closed, including USAID

0700 - Market Fair on the Main Street -- from the Circle
Privée to the Crown Prince's residence.

1200 - Ceremony of bathing Buddhas at different Wats.

1400 - Civilians, merchants, the Elders, Naibans, Tassangs,
City members, Lao officials, Military, Police,
General MR-I, Prefet/LP, Chao Khoueng/LP --
will gather at Muong Khoun Island in the Mekong River
(Ban Xieng Mene) to build sand temples (each office
makes one sand temple).

2000 - Burn candles and illuminate various Wats.

C. Mu Sang Khane Naw (Day of transition between old and new year)

April 14, Friday - All offices closed, including USAID

The first round of the procession of He Vo, from the south to the north:

1400 - Procession of the Vo, including young girls from Wat Chomsi, Wat Mai, Wat That, Wat Veesoun, Wat Aham areas to Wat Xieng Thong. After the religious ceremony, the dance of Pougneu Nhagneu (Father and Mother of the Lao Nation).

2000 - Burn candles and illuminate various Wats.

D. Mu Sang Khane Khun (First day of the New Year)

April 15, Saturday - All offices closed

The Royal Baci

- 0800 - The following gather at the Palace: merchants, civilians, the Elders, Tassengs, Naibans, all Government officials, Military, Police, General MR-I, Chao Khoueng, Prefet/LP, Department heads, Ministers, members of the Lao National Assembly and the King's Council, with wives.
- 0815 - Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Prime Minister, President of the National Assembly, President of the King's Council, and their wives arrive at the Palace.
- 0820 - Presidents of the King's Council and the National Assembly, Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, all Generals of the Army, all Government officials, all Ministers, Chao Khoueng, Prefet, all department heads, all military officers, all police officers, merchants, civilians - give the Baci for the King and Queen.
- The King speaks and gives his wishes for Pi Mai.
 - The King gives and assigns titles to dignitaries.
 - The King gives medals.

April 15, Saturday (continued)

Dress for the Royal Baci:

- For government officials: white coat with Pha, black shoes and socks, medals.
- For military and police: white suit with medals.
- For city members, tassengs, naibans and civilians: white coat and long Pha, with medals.
- Foreigners do not attend.

The second round of the procession of He Vo, from the north to the south.

1400 - Procession of the He Vo, including young girls from Wat Mai, Chomsi, Xieng Thong, walk down to Wat That to bathe Buddhas. Then continue to Wat Visoun (this time no Pougneu Nhagneu dances). Procession of the Vo from Wat Visoun, Wat Aham, followed by Phougneu and Nhagneu dances. Then the young girls will return to Wat Visounnarath for the traditional Vo procession.

1845 - Royal Reception at the Palace (by Royal invitation)
(Dress: Black tie for foreigners)

Invited guests arrive at the Palace Reception Hall at 1845 in order to be in place before the arrival of Their Majesties the King and Queen and the Diplomatic Corps. In past years the guests other than the D. C. are seated on either side of the "red carpet" which forms a walkway to the Hall. After the procession of Their Majesties and the D. C. (who are seated on the porch), the program of classical music and dances takes place on the "red carpet". The program, while very colorful, is lengthy (better to eat beforehand). At its termination, a buffet supper is served, after which the King usually holds auditions with each foreign ambassador (this may take until long after midnight), while music is provided for Lao and Western dancing and drinks are served.

1930 - Illumination of different wats.

E. Ceremony of Nam Nam Luang (the King bathes the Buddhas)

April 16, Sunday

- 1435 - Civilians, merchants, the Elders, Naibans, Tassengs, City Members, Chiefs of Service in LP, General MR-I, Chao Khoueng/LP, Prefet/LP, all Directors -- gather at Wat Visounnarath in order to honor the King or his representative.
- 1440 - Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Prime Minister, President of the National Assembly, and the King's Council -- arrive at the Palace in order to escort the King or his representative.
- 1450 - The King (or his rep) proceeds by car to Wat Visoun with dignitaries mentioned above.
 - The King bathes the Buddhas.
 - Pougneu Nhagneu dances at Wat Visoun.
- 1545 - All the above dignitaries arrive at Wat Xieng Thong to honor the King (or his rep).
- 1600 - The King (or his rep) arrives at Wat Xieng Thong by car.
 - The King bathes the Buddhas (No dances).
- Dress: For Government officials and civilians, white coat with Pha.
For military and police, No. 4 yellow suit.
For Tassengs and Naibans, traditional dress.
- 2000 - Illumination of different wats.
Sermons at Wat Visoun, followed by Pougneu Nhagneu dances.

F. Nam Namh Sang Kha Lok (the King bathes Buddhas at Wat Sangkhalok)

April 17, Monday

- 1500 - Civilians, merchants, military, police, all Ministers, all dignitaries gather at Sankhalok to honor the King. 10 minutes later the CINC-Army, Prime Minister, Presidents of National Assembly and King's Council arrive to escort the King.

April 17, Monday (continued)

1530 - The King arrives at Sanghalok by car with escort.

- The King bathes the Buddhas.

Dress: same as April 16.

2000 - The wats are illuminated.

G. Ceremony of paying respect to Phra Thene -
Bathing Buddhas at Done Khoun, Nam Nam Tham Ting, and
Wat Pak Ou.

April 18, Tuesday - RLG offices closed, USAID open.

0630 - Royal boat and its escorts move from the Royal Port and proceed to Done Khoun and Pak Ou.

0700 - Dignitaries, government officials, military, police, Chao Khoueng, Prefet, Chiefs of services in LP, etc. arrive at the dock.

0715 - CinC of Army, Prime Minister, Presidents of National Assembly and King's Council arrive at the Palace in order to take the trip with the King.

0730 - The King, or his representative, proceeds to Done Khoun, Tham Ting, and Wat Pak Ou by boat.

- The King arrives at Done Khoun.
- Pray to Phra Thene and bathing the Buddhas.
- Proceed to Tham Ting cave - pray to and bathing of Buddhas at: 1. Upper cave; 2. Lower cave.
- Lunch at the King's pavillion at the river bank.

1430 - King proceeds to Pak Ou. Chao Muong/Pak Ou, Chiefs of services, Tasseng, Naiban, and villagers in Pak Ou area bring flowers to welcome the King.

- The King pays respect and bathes the Buddhas at Wat Pak Ou. After the ceremony, the King returns to LP.

2000 - Traditional ceremony at Pak Ou.

Dress: Same as April 16.

April 19, Wednesday - RLG offices closed, USAID open.

Free - no program.

H. Ceremony of bathing Prabang at Wat Mai

April 20, Thursday - RLG offices closed, USAID open.

- 0800 - All citizens, merchants, Tassengs, Naibans, city members, chiefs of services, military, police, General MR-I, Chao Khoueng, Prefet - gather at Wat Mai. They then follow the monks to the Palace in order to take the Prabang to Wat Mai.
- 0830 - The Prabang is taken by a procession from the Palace to Wat Mai.
- 1000 - All dignitaries and citizens gather at the Palace to escort the King and Queen to bathe the Prabang at Wat Mai. CinC-Army, Prime Minister, Presidents of National Assembly and King's Council, with wives, arrive at the Palace to escort the King and Queen.
- 1010 - Their Majesties the King and Queen and their party proceed on foot to Wat Mai.
 - Troops honored.
 - Music (traditional).
 - The Minister of Culture, Chao Khoueng, Prefet, and General MR-I salute their Majesties at the gate of Wat Mai.
 - Their Majesties pray for the Buddhas.
 - Pougneu Nhagneu dances.
 - Their Majesties bathe the Prabang.
 - Their Majesties and party return to the Palace.
- 2000 - Burn candles and decorate Wats with lights. The Government officials will alternate guarding the Prabang. Everyone can come to bathe the Prabang all night long.

I. Ceremony of Song Pha Naivang (bathing Buddhas at the Palace)

April 21, Friday - RLG offices closed, USAID open.

- 1100 - Their Majesties offer lunch for monks at the Palace.
- 1430 - All Ministers, all Directors from other provinces, General MR-I, Chao Khoueng, Prefet, and Mesdames, merchants and civilians gather at the palace in order to bathe Phra Sangkharath (Chief of the Buddhist Clergy). CinC-Army, Prime Minister, and Presidents of King's Council and National Assembly also attend with wives.
- 1440 - Ceremonial procession of the Phra Sangkharath from Wat Mai arrive at Palace.
 - Bathing Phra Sangkharath.
 - Baci and pay respect to the monks.
 - After the ceremony, the procession of Prabang returns to the Palace.

Remarks:

1. From April 10 - 21, all residences and buildings on the streets where their Majesties will pass by should be decorated with Lao flags.
2. For all events other than the Royal reception Saturday, April 15, at which black-tie dress will be worn, the normal dress for foreigners will be tenue de ville.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

RICE-GROWING DAY CEREMONY AND BOAT RACES - 1972

Friday, September 1, 1972

1300 - Boat practice at Nam Khan in front of Pavilion Hat Hien.

Monday, September 4

People from villages in Tasseng Pak Lung, Muong Khay, Salueane, and Xieng Mene come to Ban Pak Lung. Celebration at night.

Tuesday, September 5

- 0600 - Market Fair at Ban Pak Lung.
- 0900 - Take offering to the protective spirits of the city at Sob Dong, Sob Hob, Sob Mouth, Sob Chan and Khok Thone.
- 1200 - Boats which will race at Yung Dong arrive at Pavilion Sob Dong. Then boat practice begins.
- 1330 - Government officials, military, police - arrive Pavilion Dob Dong.
- 1345 - Government staff, House representative Staff and Council Staff arrive Pavilion Sob Dong.
- 1400 - King, or representative, arrives Pavilion by boat.
Troop honor.
Traditional music honor.
- 1410 - King takes offering to Buddhist Footprint (Hoy Pha Bat) and Sob Dong.
Start boat race (by lots), dispatch from Tha Pha Bat to the Pavilion.
Gifts for each boat

Wednesday, September 6

- 0600-1200 - Market Fair on street downtown from Ban Tat Mo to South evening market.
- 1200-1700 - All boats from villages and muongs arrive at Nam Khan and Mekong.
Chiefs of the boats must go to Staff Committee at Prefet Office.
- At night there will be a celebration at Pavilion Nam Khan.

Thursday, September 7

- 0600 - Arrival of Government officials--civil, military, police-- and people at Royal Palace -- for Buddhiat Fair.
Government Staff, House representative Staff, Council Staff arrive at Royal Palace.
- 0615 - Alms for 140 monks.
- 0900 - Take offering to protective spirits "Chao Tong Khuang" at Sob Khan and Nang Dam Nand Done at Kok Houea.
- 1100 - All boats come in front of Pavilion NamKhan.
- 1200 - Government officials--civil, military, police--gather at Pavilion Nam Khan.
- 1205 - Guests arrive at Pavilion Nam Khan.
- 1210 - Government Staff, House Representative Staff and Council Staff arrive at Pavilion Nam Khan by car.
- King's boat leaves from boat landing
- 1220 - Prime Minister, President of House Representative, President of Council arrive Pavilion Nam Khan by car.
- 1230 - King's party arrives Pavilion Nam Khan by boat.
- Troop honor
- Traditional music honor.
- 1240 - King takes offering to the protective spirits "Chao Tong Khuang" at Sob Khan (by boat, then Sao-Then Kham) Nang Dam and Nang Done boat races.
- 1300 - Boat races for winner start.
- Awards to the winner.
- King and party return to Royal Palace (with proper ceremonies of respect)
- 2000 - Soirée at Royal Palace (by invitation only)

REMARKS:

Lao holidays: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday--September 5, 6 and 7, 1972

USAID holiday: Thursday, September 7 only.

Dress for boat races September 7: Tenue de ville.

Dress for Soirée at Royal Palace: Tenue de soirée (dinner jacket)

LEGENDS OF BAN XIENG THONG

Ban Xieng Thong in Luang Prabang is a place where the "Old Learning" and traditions are jealously guarded. Many of the old men are "Masters of Spirit Lore"; others are accorded the honorific title of "Professor" (Ajan) because they can remember the stories of how Ban Xieng Thong came to be. Several of the more venerated Wats of Luang Prabang, including the royal Wat Xieng Thong and the patriarchal Wat Khily, are located here too. Many of the monks in these wats remember legends and myths which purport to relate specific parts of the wats to incidents in an amorphous, and as yet unwritten, traditional "History of the Genesis of the Lao Nation."

As literacy becomes more common, it is inevitable that young people will come to assign more importance to the printed word than to the words of the old men. Thus, many stories must eventually be forgotten, and those that are written down for posterity will come to have fewer inconsistent details and fewer optional variations.

The collection of odds and ends below represents fragments of legendary history overheard more or less by chance over a period of several years in Ban Xieng Thong. No attempt is made to work them into a single consistent story. When a more or less accepted historical fact seems relevant to a particular item, it will be cited. No apology need be made for the many contradictions. These myths and legends are still being transmitted in a preliterate fashion and thus are subject to many of the same sorts of idiosyncracies ~~that~~ as those that plague scholars of Europe's preliterate period. The most serious of ~~these~~ ^{these} is a telescoping of time and, at times, obvious anachronism. All of the stories are thought of as having happened only a short time ago, perhaps a generation or two back. Also, most of the legends regarding the founding of Luang Prabang are didactic in a way not often readily perceived even by the story teller himself. Stories that seem to deal with a reconciliation between the light-skinned immigrant Lao-Thai peoples and the dark-skinned aborigines (presentday Lao Theung or Kha tribes), for example, seem to vary according to whether the ~~stories~~ two peoples are seen as coexisting equally or whether the Lao are

seen as the conquerors of the "slave" Kha peoples.

With the above cautions in mind, one may perhaps put the following notes into their proper perspective. They are not complete in themselves, but rather are footnotes to an as yet unwritten "Epic of the Lao Nation."

ORIGINS

Most of the old men have heard that the Lao originally lived in southern China. Some of them say that Fa Ngum called his kingdom Lan Xang because that was the name of an earlier Lao empire in presentday Yunnan; these men point out that modern maps often label the portion of the Mekong in Yunnan province of China as the "Lantzang" river. It might be interesting to find out why the Chinese call the river the "Lantzang."

The real beginning of Lao prehistory, however, is in the Dienbienphu valley at the headwaters of the Nam Ou. The "Lord of the Sky" sent Khoun Borom and his seven sons to found the Lao-Thai race there. Some people take the term "Lord of the Sky" literally and assume that Khoun Borom came across the golden bridge that connected the realm of the gods in the sky with the realm of men; this bridge and its destruction are mentioned in the introductory portions of the Lao and Thai versions of the Ramayana. Thus, people who explain Khoun Borom's origin in this manner are accepting a cosmological scheme that is basically Hindu in origin. Others explain that the Chinese emperors called themselves "Kings of the Sky" and that Khoun Borom was thus a colonist sent out by the Chinese.

At this point, the chronology of the myths becomes confused. The story-segments in question are those of the pumpkins and of Phou Gneu and Gna Gneu. According to the story of the pumpkins, briefly, Khoun Borom heard strange noises coming from inside some large pumpkins he found. Curious, he poked a hole in one of them with a charred firebrand; dark-skinned, ugly people (supposedly the aboriginal Kha peoples) came crawling out. So Khoun Borom cut clean holes in the other pumpkins with his knife, and the light-skinned Lao-Thai peoples crawled out.

There are many highly embellished versions of the Phou Gneu-Gna Gneu story extant. Most of them emphasize the conflict between the "dark" forces of the earth and the "light" forces of the sky. At any rate, in the simplest versions

of the story, someone (usually Khoun Borom or his son Tiao Lô) curses the sun for scorching the earth and, in response, a large World-Tree sprang up to shelter men from the sun. But eventually, this tree covered the whole earth so that no crops would grow and people died of starvation. An old man and an old woman, Phou Gneu and Gna Gneu, volunteered to save mankind from extinction by chopping the tree down, knowing all the while that the penalty for chopping down the tree was death. Phou Gneu and Gna Gneu are thus referred to as the "Father and Mother of the Lao Race," in contrast to Khoun Borom, who is the Originator of the Race. The chopping down of the World-Tree is commemorated annually during Lao New Year festivities by the Phou Gneu-Gna Gneu dances held in the yards of the four Luang Prabang wats that represent the four points of the compass.

The chronological problem is that these stories can be put together in different ways. According to some, both sets of events took place before the Lao migration (i. e., at Dienbienphu) -- first the genesis of the race from the pumpkin and then the chopping of the world-tree. Some say that the pumpkins grew on the World-Tree, in which case one must ask where Phou Gneu and Gna Gneu came from to chop the tree down and allow Khoun Borom to pierce the pumpkins. And some have one or the other or both of the stories take place on the present site of Wat Xieng Thong, in which case the pumpkin vine and the World-Tree are identified with the Thong Tree (about which more later). But if the genesis of the Lao race occurred after Khoun Borom reached his destination, then one must ask who it was that took part in the great Lao migration down the Nam Ou with Khoun Borom.

THE MIGRATION

The refugees from the Nam Ou valley have a number of stories as to events that are supposed to have happened at particular places along the Nam Ou where Khoun Borom and his entourage are supposed to have stopped and made encampments. These refugees, incidentally, are of interest in that they ~~don't~~ do not fit any of the normal categorizations of Lao-Thai minorities. They are generally categorized by Lowland Lao as Thai Dam or Lu according to whether they wear their ethnic costume or not. They refer to themselves as Lao Theng, Phou Thai, or Lu, making their distinctions largely on the basis of dialect. They have a collection of hazily remembered stories of a time when they were the center of a

powerful, civilized principedom that had suzerainty over all the Lao-Thai peoples. These stories may have some truth in them; there is a limited amount of philological evidence for the existence of a Lu "Principedom of the Nam Ou"

This, of course, makes a mish-mash of the Fa Ngum story.
that used an Indic script a century or so before the beginning of the recorded history of any other Lao-Thai group. ^A Their stories of the Lao migration down

the Nam Ou are a hodge-podge, probably because most of the stories are tightly linked with specific geographical locations. To make any sense of them, one would have to go and stand at a specific point on the banks of the Nam Ou in order to get an old man to tell a highly embellished story of the deeds of Khoun Borom and his seven sons "that happened on this very spot."

The people of Ban Xieng Thong pick up the thread of the story again when Khoun Borom and his sons reached Pak Ou (the mouth of the Nam Ou) and established the capital of a principedom there. The old men of Ban Xieng Thong have more contradictory versions of the Pak Ou Story than of any other story they tell. Only two elements are common to all of them: 1) Something happened there that effectively reconciled two warring factions, and 2) The Tham Ting (sacred caves) became a permanent monument to that reconciliation.

Several transcriptions of the most common "Romeo-Juliet" Pak Ou story exist in French, all of them done by students at the colonial Lycee Pavie in Vientiane. Frankly, I am suspicious of these transcriptions because of their startling similarity to a description of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in E. V. Gatenby's English readers, a French adaptation of which appears in several sets of French language texts. The gist of the "Romeo-Juliet" Pak Ou stories is as follows: Two princely families (both ethnically Lao) were at a virtual state of war over the issue of succession to the throne then occupied by either Khoun Borom or his son Tiao Lô. The eldest son from one of the families and the eldest daughter of the other fell in love and planned to marry. The families, however, forbade the union, so the lovers leapt to their deaths from the cliff above the lower cave of the Tham Ting. The two families, horrified by the result of their enmity, agreed to live together in peace for ever and to respect the Tham Ting as a visible sign of their reconciliation. Some storytellers go on to say that the family of the prince became the Royal House of Luang Prabang while the family of the princess became the Viceregal (Ouparat) House.

There are two somewhat less Shakespearean versions of the story, both of which involve intermarriage between the migrating Lao-Thai peoples and the indigenous Kha peoples. In one of them, the marriage is between various sons and daughters of the Lao Prince of Pak Ou and the sons and daughters of the local Kha (probably Khmu) chieftain -- a sort of ceremonial ^{and organic} intermingling of the races. In the other, the migrating Lao were attacked by various supernatural forces, including "dark-skinned dwarfs" and a supernaturally caused plague. Two of Khoun Borom's seven sons died during this time of ~~misery~~ adversity. Finally, to prevent further decimation of his people, Khoun Borom agreed to a marriage between his eldest remaining son and the eldest daughter of the indigenous (i. e., Kha) chieftain, who could control the local spirits which were responsible for the difficulties.

For obvious reasons, Luang Prabang aristocrats do not take an active part in the dissemination of the versions of the Pak Ou story that involve miscegenation. After all, who would want to admit that the legitimacy of his aristocratic rank derives from intermarriage with "dirty, dark Kha" peoples? Nevertheless, when the old men tell the story, the intermarriage variations are more common than the "Romeo-Juliet" variation. In all of the variations the Tham Ting are a sort of sacramental reminder of the reconciliation. And to this day a representative of the House of Luang Prabang must go to Pak Ou during each year's Lao New Year ceremonies to bathe the Buddha images in the Tham Ting. There is every reason to believe that Pak Ou and the Tham Ting play a fundamental part in the genesis of the power of the House of Luang Prabang and of the various associated noble houses.

An interesting digression ~~on~~ the Tham Ting legends is the explanation the old men give of the Lao Royal Houses. There are either five or seven of them, depending on whether the particular "Professor" has heard of the Sip Song Chao Thai and the Sip Song Phan Na. (The Sip Song Chao Thai is a federation of twelve Thai-Lao princedoms, ten of which now compose the Tai Autonomous region of North Vietnam and two of which are part of Samneua Province of Laos. The Sip Song Phan Na, or "Twelve Thousand Paddies", is a federation of princedoms that ranges along the southern border of Yunnan province of China; informants say that the Phou Thai and Lu regions of the Nam Ou and Nam Beng ~~valleys~~ valleys are administered by the Chinese as a single unit with the Sip Song Phan Na.) If one accepts the

version of the Pak Ou story that has two of Khoun Borom's sons killed by the "dark-skinned dwarfs," then five sons of the god-king remain to legitimize five Royal Houses of Laos: Xieng Mai, Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, Vientiane, and Champassak. If one accepts a version of the story in which all seven sons live, then both the five ~~XXXX~~ Royal Houses and the two princely federations can trace their descent from a king sent by the "Lord of the Sky." Of all the descendants of the "Lord of the Sky," however, only the House of Luang Prabang maintains its hereditary legitimacy.

The next two stages of the migration from Dienbienphou to Luang Prabang involve two islands in the Mekong. After the great reconciliation at Pak Ou, either Khoun Borom or his son Tiao Lô led the people downstream on the Mekong to Dône Khoun ("the prince's island"), which is opposite the gardens of the Kings of Luang Prabang at Pak Seuang. The migrants made a fortified encampment on the island and stayed "throughout the whole rainy season," and then moved on because without rain there was no source of fresh water. To get from Pak Ou to Dône Khoun takes about four hours of paddling in a local dugout canoe. The only evidence of Khoun Borom's stay on the island that remains today is the name. ~~XXXX~~ Today, the island is a wilderness hermitage for monks seeking the kinds of spiritual development that require absolute solitude; it is revered as one of the places where the Buddha slept before he went on to preach to the Cambodian emperors. One can see the footprint which the Buddha left on Dône Khoun as he strode off in the morning. The second footprint of that same morning may be seen near the ~~foot of Phou Sy~~ foot of Phou Sy in the little pavilion -- not really a wat -- called Wat Tham Thao (the "wat of the ancient cave") just above Wat Sri Phoutta Bat (the "wat of the sacred footprint of the Buddha"). There is another footprint of the Buddha (widely suspected of being a fake) at the Vietnamese wat in Ban Pak Seng-Ban Tao Mou; the latter footprint has square toes, in contrast to the two at Dône Khoun and Tham Thao, which seem to be a matched pair.

The second island involved in Khoun Borom's Lao-Thai migration is the Dône Sai Moung Khoun, immediately opposite the white staircase to the Mekong from Wat Xieng Thong. This island is the one to which the entire population of Luang Prabang goes to build sand temples during each Lao New Year Festival. At this point in the story, Khoun Borom and his son Tiao Lô tend to be

be mentioned less and less frequently. Various other members of the family are mentioned as having led the party to Dône Sai Moungh Khoun. At any rate, when the party of migrants woke in the morning, they discovered that the sand and pebbles of the island had turned to pure gold. They decided that this was the sign for which they had been waiting, and so they went ashore at the site of the present staircase of Wat Xieng Thong. There they found a group of savages who worshipped a huge, ancient tree called the Thong Tree.

The descendants of Khoun Borom used half of the gold from the Dône Sai Moungh Khoun to build a fortified city where the Nam Khane flows into the Mekong. The present level Wat yard covers the same area as the palace which the migrants built for their princes. According to the monks at Wat Xieng Thong, the present low wall around the wat yard is built on the ancient foundations of this palace. If the monks are to be believed, the section of the wall next to the red posts where the King's elephants hear their sermon at Lao New Year time is part of the original palace wall; it has only been stuccoed over to prevent further deterioration of the original brick.

The oldest edifice on the wat grounds marks the site of the dais on which the throne of the first Lao kings sat. Immediately behind the ahaam of the wat (where a stylized picture of the Thong Tree has been done in glass-tile mosaic) is a low post with pineapple-shaped mosaic top. This post is shorter than the other posts, which mark the sacred confines of the ahaam, and is almost level with the ground. It marks the site of the roots of the Thong Tree. A little further behind the wat is a plain, white chapel -- designed for use by monks or laymen who wish to meditate alone. The upper part of the chapel is more or less recent construction, but its base, reportedly a perfect cube, is supposed to contain one-fourth of the pure gold from Dône Sai Moungh Khoun which remained after half of the original total had been used to build the fortifications of the city of Xieng Thong. And it was atop this cube, in the shade of the Thong Tree, that the first Lao kings established their throne. The chapel that occupies the site of the throne is repaired almost annually -- and must be because its foundations are so ancient that it constantly allows the later superstructure to crack and sag. But no one has yet had the temerity to break open the cube where the gold of Dône Sai Moungh Khoun is kept.

The remainder of the gold was divided three ways for placement in shrines that

would mark the corners of the new kingdom. The traditional locations of these caches of gold vary according to which monk tells you the story, but the most commonly mentioned among the three are Phou Souang and Phou Din Deng. The inhabitants of Ban Nounsavath have interesting stories to tell about the images of the Buddha that were placed in the shrine with the gold on top of Phou Souang. These images are said to hold more spiritual power even than the primeval representatives of the forces of the Earth and Death, the Nagas.

Perhaps a digression on Nagas is in order here. The basic idea of the Naga comes from the Hindic strain of the Lao culture. The traditional Indic Naga is a many-headed snake, somewhat like the Greek hydra, and represents the most inexorable of the forces of the earth: Life, Death, Fertility, Barrenness, Catastrophe, Peace. As the image of the Naga was carried through Tibet to China and Japan, it gradually became the traditional Mahayana Buddhist image of the Dragon. As transmitted through Theravada Buddhist tradition, the Naga remained more or less the image of a large snake. In Luang Prabang, the two Buddhist traditions meet. In fact, there are two special words for creatures of this category (both of which look more or less like dragons to Westerners): a "naak" is more like a Theravada Buddhist snake, whereas a "Ngeuak" is more like a Chinese dragon. Ngeuaks, as a rule, live in rivers (two or three of them live in the Nam Khane, and a particularly nasty one capsizes boats on the way up the Mekong to Pak Ou). Naaks are more associated with mountains (though there are exceptions) and have a lot to do with primeval forces of fertility. Part of the authority of the Kings of Luang Prabang has to do with the fact that true Kings are masters of the Nagas. ~~The~~ In the King's annual New Year entertainment on the Palace lawn, the first item on the agenda is a torchlight parade escorting an image of the Naga down from the top of Phou Sy (the sacred mountain in front of the Palace) to float it in a ceremonial circular pool on the Palace grounds. Some informants say that the bottom of this ceremonial pool is the center of the earth. None of the masters of spirit lore of my acquaintance will have anything to do with a Naga, though they don't hesitate to lock horns with other terrifying manifestations of the supernatural. Thus, the Nagas are the most horrendous of the earth-forces with which mankind is faced; yet even the Nagas are reportedly afraid of the Buddha Images of Phou Souang. These images are thus something very special.

Henri Mouhot was the French archaeologist and naturalist who discovered Angkor Wat in Cambodia. His grave (he died in 1861) is just out of Luang Prabang on the banks of the Nam Khane, at the foot of Phou Souang and on the outskirts of Ban Nounsavath. Local legend has it that Mouhot died trying to find the legendary Buddha images of Phou Souang. He made it to the shrine on top of Phou Souang where the gold from Dône Sai Moungh Khoun is guarded by the ancient images of the Buddha. He managed to touch one of the images before he collapsed, the victim of a tropical fever (probably malaria). He died three days later on the banks of the Nam Khane and was buried there by his comrades. The French government still pays two men from Ban Nounsavath to whitewash the tomb once a year and to clean the moss out of the two marble plaques that mark it.

The villagers still recount the story of the "terrible time of the spirits" when Mouhot touched the ancient images. The spirits of the mountain howled for three days in such a way that most listeners became instantly insane. The King of Luang Prabang (Tiantha Rarath) heard of the difficulties and went on foot, wearing a monk's robes to Nounsavath. He arrived on the third day. He left his retinue in the village and went up the mountain alone. No one heard the words he spoke, but Henri Mouhot died and the King reportedly brought the Images of Phou Souang down the mountain in an ornately gilded trunk. The villagers say that the King promised that he and his successors would protect the images forever and that they would someday have vengeance on the white men who dared to disturb such an ancient shrine. The gold is still reportedly on top of Phou Souang, but no one dares to go and get it.

Where the images are, no one seems to know -- or at least they aren't telling a white man. I have talked with several people who claim to have seen the Images from Phou Souang, and they all describe a huge, fat-bellied image that sounds like the traditional Tibetan Buddha. One informant says that Tiantha Rarath's son, King Oun Kham, erected an exact replica of the largest of the Phou Souang images just outside the upper cave at Pak Ou; and that image is very definitely ~~2~~ more Tibetan than ~~He~~ is Southeast-Asian.

The important thing, at least historically, about these images is that they were considered ancient, and therefore worthy of guarding the corner-post of the kingdom, at the time when the very first Lao throne of Xieng Thong was established. If these images were available for inspection, perhaps scholars

could establish once and for all that the Lao were Buddhists, perhaps even converts taught by Tibetan monks who left southern China partly because of religious persecution. All of this supposition would rest on an evaluation of the images of Phou Souang and the dates ~~assigned~~ assigned to them. But do these images really exist?

That, at any rate, is the fate of one of the portions of the gold of Dône Sai MOUNG KHOUN. No one knows what happened to the other two portions that were placed at the corners of the earliest Lao kingdom here.

And thus ends the prehistory of the kingdom that has had its seat at Luang Prabang for at least six centuries. From the time of Tiao Fa Ngum on, the history of the nation is fairly attested by the chronicles. Thus, most of the following notes will be confined to "facts" known by the old men of Ban Xieng Thong that do not seem to have found their way into print yet. As an interlude, however, it may be wise to take note of the so-called "names" of Luang Prabang.

NAMES OF LUANG PRABANG

Several articles have appeared in western journals on the subject of names ~~xxx~~ once used for the place now called Luang Prabang. Much is made of both "Xieng Thong" and "Muong Swa." According to the old men of Ban Xieng Thong, "Xieng Thong" took its name from the ancient Thong Tree that stood behind the Wat (and you can look at the monument that marks the place, if you don't believe it.) As for Muong Swa, it is a completely different town. Most of the really ancient princely towns in Lao-Thai areas have a shrine that marks the principal corner post of the ancient city, somewhat on the order of Wat Simuong in Vientiane. In almost every case, this "post of the city" achieved its distinction in the same way. When the boundaries of the city were being marked with huge, heavy teak posts, a young virgin (sometimes a woman pregnant for the first time) was seized by the spirits of the place and leapt into the hole to be crushed by the post as it was set in place.

The site of the city post ("lak muong") of Xieng Thong is located on the side street just toward the mouth of the Nam Khane from Wat Xieng Thong. The site is cleaned up and venerated by the people of Ban Xieng Thong twice yearly, but otherwise looks more like a ~~weedy~~ weed patch in somebody's back yard. At the festival, one of the masters of spirit lore recites in expemporaneously composed verse the story

of how a young girl came to give her life for the sake of the city of Xieng Thong. Then there is a quiet neighborhood Boun that gives the young men of Ban Xieng Thong an opportunity to sing explicit love songs to special girlfriends.

As for Muong Swa, its city post is located in a small pyramid of decaying dressed stone by the side of the road just before the house of the Surveillant Generale of the Ecole Normale on the road to the Lycee. Recently, a colonel in the government army sponsored the building of a large wooden spirit temple in front of the site of the city post. It had been so long since a proper spirit temple had been built that it took a whole year to find old men who could remember the proper dimensions of such a temple. Before, there were annual festivals of individuals who simply came on certain days to pay homage to the spirit post that consecrated the corner of Muong Swa. Now that there is a proper temple, there are large festivals twice a year.

The "city" of Muong Swa has had a hard time in recent years. It had dwindled until it was the tiny village of Houanakang, and then, ^{twenty}~~ten~~ years ago a plague (typhus, according to the doctors) killed two thirds of the villagers. The remainder moved into Luang Prabang. The land formerly occupied by the village then became the campus of the Ecole Normale; the wat yard is now the football field and parts of the wat foundations are still dug up now and again. The only thing that remains of Muong Swa is the temple of the city post, in a grove by the side of the road.

When listening to the old men talk about Muong Swa and Houanakang, one can still detect the Lao prejudice against dark-skinned people and against miscegenation. Muong Swa (or Houanakang) was punished because its inhabitants were half Lao and Half Kha. If the storytellers are to be believed, for many centuries the princes who had their seat at Xieng Thong and the half-caste princes who had their seat at Houanakang (less than two kilometers away) exercised sovereignty over an intermixed ~~patchwork~~ patchwork of villages.

THE KINGDOM OF LAN XANG

With the arrival of Prince Fa Ngum, the recorded history of the kings of Luang Prabang -- and indeed, a mini-empire of Lan Xang -- begins. One can consult the chronicles or translations thereof for an account of the mix-up in the line of succession that caused Fa Ngum to end up as the protege of

Cambodia. The important thing is that he returned to Luang Prabang as the legitimate claimant to a vacant throne. And he brought a Theravada Buddhist mission with him. He claimed his throne in the ancient palace of Xieng Thong, but the monks who came with him cut down the Thong Tree that was the reason for the ceremonial throne's being located where it was. This was presumably in violation of the Buddha's command to the monks that they always "respect the religion of the place." Immediately when the monks cut down the Thong Tree, another huge tree sprang up at the downstream corner of the palace-wat walls. This tree, a Rain Tree, is still there. Most of the spirits exorcised from houses in Ban Xieng Thong end up living in or around the rain tree.

It is about this time in history that the Palace of Xieng Thong became primarily a ceremonial palace. The "residential palace," or place where the king lived is cited variously as having been on the site of the present Royal Palace, on the site of the present Crown Prince's house, or on the site of a large old house next to the Luang Prabang Group Scholaire. With the disappearance of the ancient Thong Tree, Phou Sy (the sacred mountain) became the single most important place of habitation for the old fertility spirits.

The monks who came with Prince Fa Ngum established the first Theravada Buddhist monastery at the site of the present Wat Vixoun, and this is the first wat recorded in written Lao history. However, the old men say that there had always been a proper Buddhist wat in Ban Tao Mou, approximately on the site of the slaughterhouse built by the French. (Someone in the French colonial administration must have been horribly insensitive to have chosen such a site on which to build a "model slaughterhouse".) The old men say further that the monks at Ban Tao Mou were "proper monks," but nevertheless at odds with Fa Ngum's monks at Wat Vixoun.

THE PASSING OF THE KINGDOM

In 1563 Setthathirath, probably the most glorious King of Lan Xang, became heir to the thrones of both Vientiane and Luang Prabang. He moved the seat of his kingdom from Luang Prabang to Vientiane. He left the Prabang, the famous "Thin Buddha" in Luang Prabang as a symbol of his kingship. Some of the monks at Wat Xieng Thong say that at this time the Prabang was exhibited on the site of the ~~thrones~~ ancient throne of the Kings of Laos -- the dais behind the present ahaam of Wat Xieng Thong. At this point in history, the interpreters of

the chronicles comment that "Muong Swa became Luang Prabang." This is nonsensical. Luang Prabang is in one place and Muong Swa in in another, ~~however~~ near the two may be. Obviously, the explanation is that at this point in history the site of the Palace of Xieng Thong began to be referred to in the chronicles as "Muong Luang Prabang": the "Royal City of the Prabang," emphasizing that the city was part of the traditional Lao monarchy and that the Prabang was kept here as a symbol of the fact, even in the absence of the person of the King.

It was during Setthathirat's reign that the present site of Wat Xieng Thong was converted from ceremonial palace to wat. If the monks are to be believed, it was an especially beautiful wat, though little remains of its former glory. Only the present ahaam, the dais that supports the chapel behind the ahaam, the ornate gateway facing toward the main street, and portions of the walls remain from Setthathirat's time. The other parts of the wat were razed once by the Burmese under Bayinnaung and twice by the Chinese -- really by the Hô pirates, who were Chinese renegades.

There is some ~~semi~~-archaeological evidence for dating various parts of the wat. One may or may not accept the date of the cube supposedly filled with gold nuggets under the ancient throne of the kings of Laos.

F. Benson

LAO NEW YEAR - LUANG PRABANG

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Lao New Year festivities, better known in Laos as the "Fifth Month Festival", mark the official opening of the lunar new year and are an occasion for great rejoicing. Though the first month of the lunar year occurs in December, the "Hors" (astrologers) of ancient times decided to delay the opening of the new year by several months until a time when the zodiacal signs were more auspicious. In December the nights are getting longer, the world is darker and thus unhappy. In April, however, the days are getting longer, and a year beginning at that time offers excellent prospects of brightness and prosperity.

Despite the overall atmosphere of merriment, the Lao New Year festivities still retain much of their traditional religious character. This is a time for purification, and water is the symbolic agent for this purification. People who have committed religious sins will pour water on images of the Buddha or on Buddhist priests in order to wash their own sins away. They pour water on the King or on their fellows in order to rid themselves of their secular wrongs.

But, as anyone who has participated in Pi Mai Lao can assure you, it is essentially a time for fun, particularly for the young. During the ten days of festivities anyone is a fair target for a bucketful of water, so be prepared to join in. It is also a time when the girls get even with the boys, tearing their shirts and smearing a combination of soot and grease on their faces.

Ceremony of SangHiang Keuy (page 1 of attached program)

Royal elephants are paraded to several wats (indicated on program) where they stand before a red, wooden arch and listen to a sermon. The tradition dates from the era when elephants were used in warfare. It was thought that this sermon would make them more cooperative and effective.

Mu Sang Khane Fai (page 1)

Market fair - Of special interest are the birds and fish which people buy and then release in order to gain merit, and the sticks with long streamers with zodiacal symbols of the Lao years painted on them (Year of the Chicken, Year of the Snake, etc.)

Sand temples -- Different groups of people build "thats" which they top with long streamers painted with zodiacal signs. The builders beg that the gods grant them the favor of a long life, of wonderful days filled with happiness and wealth as numerous as the sands the "thats" are made of. Pi Mai revelry reaches one of its heights at this ceremony.

Mu Sang Khane Naw (page 2)

The Procession of the He Vo -- Traditionally, the King's major wife lived in the Wat Xieng Thong area in the northern part of town and his minor wife at Wat That in the southern part. Every year a group of young girls from the south would go to Wat Xieng Thong to pay their respects to the girls of the major wife's circle and settle any disputes which had come up during the year. So on this day girls from the Wat Chomsi, Wat Mai, Wat That, Wat Visoun, and Wat Aham quarters of the city of Luang Prabang parade up the main street to Wat Xieng Thong. After religious ceremonies is the dance of the Phougneu Nhagneu, the first male and female Lao ancestors. At a given moment, they kowtow to the Sovereign and present him with the best wishes of all the Laotians--past, present, and future.

Mu Sang Khane Khun (page 2 and 3)

The Royal Baci -- and the Presentation of the Fruit of Longevity -- is a very elaborate version of the traditional Lao baci ceremony, with members of the nobility and military and civilian officials paying their respects to the Royal Family.

The Royal Reception -- The program usually begins with the procession of Sisathanak, the dragon who resides at Phou Si, coming down the steps from Wat Chomsi, and school children carrying lanterns. The dragon then enters the Palace grounds. This procession is followed by a program of Lao classical music and dancing. The dancers are all students from primary schools in Luang Prabang, a new group being chosen and trained each year. The musicians are also young students, but they are attached to the Palace for longer periods of time and receive a stipend.

Ceremony of Bathing the Prabang at Wat Mai (page 5)

The Prabang (or Phra Bang) is the most famous image of the Buddha in Laos. It was brought to Muong Swa (now the city of Luang Prabang) by a Buddhist mission from Cambodia in 1358 AD during the reign of Fa Ngum, the founder of the Kingdom of Lane Xang. The city later took the name of the image. In 1778 the Siamese attacked Laos and took the Phra Bang and Phra Keo (the Emerald Buddha) to Bangkok. King Mongkut of Siam returned the Phra Bang to Laos in 1867.

PROGRAM FOR LAO NEW YEAR

Luang Prabang

APRIL 10-21, 1973

Buddhist Year: 2,515 / 2,516

Lao Year: 1,334 / 1,335

A. Ceremony of Sang Hiang Keuy (Elephants receive their advice)

April 10, Tuesday

0800 - Sang Hiang Keuy at Wat Mai Souvanna Phoumaram
and Wat Xieng Thong

April 11, Wednesday

0800 - Same schedule as April 10.

April 12, Thursday

0800 - At Wat Mai Souvanna Phoumaram, Wat Xieng Thong,
and Wat Visounnarath

B. Mu Sang Khane Pai (last day of the old year)

April 13, Friday (RLG and USAID offices closed)

0700 - Market Fair on the main street - from the Cercle
Privee to the Crown Prince's residence

1200 - Ceremony of bathing Buddhas at all wats

1400 - Civilians, merchants, the Elders, Naibans, Tassengs,
City Members, Lao officials, Military, Police,
General MR-I, Prefect/LP, Chao Khoueng/LP --
all gather at Muong Khoun Island in the Mekong River
(Ban Xieng Mene) to build sand temples (each office
makes one sand temple).

2000 - Lighting of candles at various Wats.

C. Mu Sang Khane Naw (day of transition between old and new year)

April 14, Saturday (all offices closed)

The first round of the procession of He Vo - from the south to the north:

- 1400 - Procession of the Vo, including young girls from Wat Chomsi, Wat Mai, Wat That, Wat Visoun, Wat Aham areas to Wat Xieng Thong. After the religious ceremony, the dance of Pougneu Nhagneu (Father and Mother of the Lao Nation)
- 2000 - Burn candles at Wat; music.

D. Mu Sang Khane Khun (first day of the new year)

April 15, Sunday (all offices closed)

The Royal Baci (foreigners do not attend)

- 0800 - Officials, functionaires, and wives assemble at the Palace.
- 0815 - Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Prime Minister, President of the National Assembly, President of the King's Council, and their wives arrive at the Palace.
- 0820 - Baci is given for the King and Queen.
 - The King speaks and gives his wishes for Pi Mai.
 - The King gives and assigns titles to dignitaries.
 - The King gives out medals.

The second round of the procession of He Vo - from the north to the south:

- 1400 - Procession of the He Vo, including young girls from Wats Mai, Chomsi, Xieng Thong, Walk down to Wat That to bathe Buddha; then continue to Wat Visoun (no Pougneu Nhagneu dances). Procession of the Vo from Wat Visoun, Wat Aham, followed by Phougneu Nhagneu dances. Then the young girls return to Wat Visounnarath for traditional He Vo ceremony.

April 15, Sunday (continued)

- 1845 - Royal Reception at the Palace (by Royal invitation)
(Dress for foreigners: Black tie)

Invited guests arrive outside the Palace Reception Hall at 1845 in order to be in place before the arrival of Their Majesties the King and Queen and the Diplomatic Corps. Their Majesties generally receive the Diplomatic Corps on the veranda of the Palace itself; the other invited guests are seated on either side of the "red carpet" which forms a walkway to the Hall. After the procession of Their Majesties and the Diplomatic Corps from the Palace to the latter area, where they are seated on the porch, the program of classical music and dances takes place on the "red carpet". The program, while very colorful, is lengthy and it is better to eat beforehand. At its termination, a buffet supper is served, after which the King usually holds audiences with each foreign ambassador. During this time, music is provided for Lao and Western dancing and drinks are served.

- 1930 - Illumination of wats.

E. Ceremony of Nam Nam Luang (the King bathes the Buddhas)

April 16, Monday (full moon) (RLG offices closed)

- 1435 - Officials, functionaires, merchants, etc. gather at Wat Visounnarath in order to honor the King.
- 1440 - Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Prime Minister, President of the National Assembly, and the King's Council arrive at the Palace.
- 1450 - The King, escorted by the dignitaries mentioned above, proceeds by car to Wat Visounnarath.
- The King bathes the Buddhas.
 - Pougneu Nhagneu and Singkeo Singkham dances.

April 16, Monday (continued)

- 1545 - The officials and functionaires go to Wat Xieng Thong to honor the King.
- 1600 - The King, accompanied by his official escorts, arrives at Wat Xieng Thong by car.
 - The King bathes the Buddhas (no dances)
- 2000 - Burning incense sticks and candles at Wats, music. Sermons at WatVisoun, followed by Pougneu Nhagneu dances.

F. Nam Namh Sang Kha Lok (the King bathes Buddhas at Wat Sangkhalok)

April 17, Tuesday (RLG offices closed)

- 1500 - Civilians, merchants, military, police, all Ministers, all dignitaries assemble at Wat Sangkhalok to honor the King. Ten minutes later the CinC of the Army, the Prime Minister, Presidents of National Assembly and King's Council arrive.
- 1530 - The King arrives at Wat Sangkhalok by car with escort.
 - The King bathes the Buddhas.
- 2000 - The wats are illuminated; music.

G. Ceremony of paying respect to Phra Thene - bathing Buddhas at Done Khoune, Nam Nam Tham Ting, and Wat Pak Ou

April 18, Wednesday (RLG offices closed)

- 0630 - Royal boat and its escorts arrive at the Royal Dock.
- 0700 - Chao Khoueng, Prefet, Chiefs of Service/LP, other government officials, military, and police arrive at the Royal Dock, followed fifteen minutes later by the CinC of the Army, Prime Minister, Presidents of the National Assembly and King's Council.

April 18, Wednesday (continued)

- 0730 - The King (or his representative) arrives, and the Royal boats proceed up-river.
- At Wat Done Khoune (an island in the Mekong near Pak Xuang), the Royal party arrives, and prayers are made to Phra Thene and the Buddhas are bathed.
 - The Royal party then proceeds up-river to Tham Ting cave (across the river from Pak Ou). Prayers and bathing of the Buddhas, first at the upper cave, and then at the lower cave.
 - Lunch at the King's pavilion at the river bank.
- 1430 - The King and his escorts cross the river to Pak Ou. The Chao Muong/Pak Ou, Chiefs of Services, Tasseng, Naiban, and villagers in Pak Ou area bring flowers to welcome the King.
- The King pays respects and bathes the Buddhas at Wat Pak Ou. A Baci is given to honor the King. After these ceremonies, the King returns to Luang Prabang.
- 2000 - Traditional ceremony at Pak Ou (ancient Lao music).

April 19, Thursday

Free - no program (RLG offices closed)

H. Ceremony of bathing Prabang at Wat Mai

April 20, Friday (RLG offices closed)

- 0800 - All citizens, merchants, tassengs, naibans, city members, chiefs of services, military, police, General of MR-I, Chao Khoueng, Prefet - gather at Wat Mai. They then follow the monks to the Palace to get the Prabang and take it to Wat Mai.

April 20, Friday (continued)

- 0830 - The Prabang is carried from the Palace to Wat Mai.
 - 1000 - Dignitaries and the official escort group arrive at the Palace to escort the King and Queen.
 - 1010 - Their Majesties the King and Queen and their escorts proceed on foot to Wat Mai.
 - Troops honor the King.
 - Music (traditional)
 - The Minister of Culture, Chao Khoueng/LP, Prefet, and the General of MR-I await at the gate of Wat Mai to greet Their Majesties.
 - Their Majesties pray to the Buddhas.
 - Pougneu Nhagneu dances.
 - Their Majesties bathe the Prabang.
- Their Majesties return to the Palace, and others may bathe the Prabang.
- 2000 - At Wat Mai, Government officials alternate guarding the Prabang through the night. Incense and candles are burned, and the Wat is decorated with lights. Anyone may come to bathe the Prabang all night long.

I. Ceremony of Song Pha Naivang (bathing Buddhas at the Palace)

April 21, Saturday (all offices closed)

- 1100 - Their Majesties offer lunch to the monks at the Palace.
 - 1430 - All officials assemble at the Palace.
 - 1500 - Ceremonial procession of the Phra Sangkharath (the Buddhist Patriarch of all Laos) with the Prabang to the Palace from Wat Mai.
 - Bathing of Phra Sangkharath.
 - Baci for the monks.
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