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Relations with the Lao Nationals - Language and Personal Relations;

A Recorded Interview with Mr. Richard Thomas Smith, Jr., IVS,

Kenneth G. Orr
Research and Evaluation Officer
USAID/Laos
March 14, 1966

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(Editorial note: Following is a transcription of a tape recording made of a conversation between Mr. Richard Thomas Smith, Jr., IVS, and myself on March 9, 1966. This is one of a series of studies undertaken in conjunction with Mr. Ward B. Melody, Chief, Communications Media Division, USAID/Laos to provide material for an orientation tape requested by USAID/Washington.)

March 9, 1966.

Introduction

This is Kenneth Orr recording in Vientiane, Laos, at USAID Headquarters. In the background you may hear two gentlemen, two young men, speaking the Lao language. One of them is "Chip" Smith, an American; the gentleman we are going to talk to today and he is going to help us understand some facts about relations with the Lao Nationals particularly those having to do with the Lao language and personal relations.

(Mr. Smith and Mr. Bounmee are heard speaking Lao)

1. Q. Orr: Excuse me, gentlemen, I would like to introduce Mr. Bounmee, my assistant, and then we will talk with Mr. Chip Smith. Bounmee, how does Chip speak the Lao language, pretty well or is it hard to understand him?
A. According to my understanding, Chip, he speaks Lao very good.
2. Q. Orr: When you listen to him, can you tell he is an American?
A. Bounmee: Sure, I can tell he is an American.
3. Q. Orr: But he gets his ideas across anyway.
A. Bounmee: Yes, that is true.
4. Q. Orr: Thanks a lot Bounmee. Now I think we'll talk to Chip and see if we can get some answers to some of our interests here. Chip, - what is your full name and how did you get the name "Chip"?
A. Smith: My full name is Richard Thomas, Jr. I guess the "Junior" is to blame for my nickname. My parents decided I was a "chip off the old block so I got the name "Chip".
5. Q. Orr: Where were you born, where's your home?
A. Smith: I was born in Harrisburg and my home is in Pennsylvania near Philadelphia.

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6. Q. Orr: That is right, we had earlier established that you had graduated from a high school that was a rival of the high school from which I graduated, namely Lower Merian, and that is one of the reasons why I thought you did not have an accent because you talked very much like I did

A. Smith: Well, I'm with you--you don't have much of one either.

7. Q. Orr: Well, thanks a lot..I am glad we agree on that. What are you doing here, Chip?

A. Smith: I have been working with IVS -- International Voluntary Service located in the south of Laos, north of Pakse, the largest city in the south. I have been working with and in Rural Development mostly. First year with fundamental educational workers -- men who are trained by the Laos government in Rural Development methods, but for a long time received no support from government; and IVS has during the past couple of years worked a great deal with those people attempting to give them the support that they need in order to accomplish something in the villages.

A Technique for learning Lao

8. Q. Orr: Yes, I visited you in the village Lao Khone Peng in Wapikhamthong Province and the thing that impressed me is that you are living right there in the village with the Lao people and more than that, you were speaking the language, eat their food, and you seem to have gotten very well into the life of the people. Of course, this is the thing I would like to talk about today. How did you learn how to speak the Lao language

A. Smith: Well, the first step was when we first arrived in Laos. We were spirited up to Luang Prabang and given a 5-6 week course in the Lao - language. During this time, I guess the best and most important results of this course were the picking up of the sounds and also the alphabet. Because we did not do much work in the patterns of the language, a very important part of learning a language. Unfortunately, vocabulary was stressed an awful lot, but because I got the pronunciation down all right and because I had the alphabet under my belt, I could then study on my own when I was out in the field. Probably the most important part of learning the language was being in Lao Khone Peng and not having an interpreter and being forced to work directly with my counterpart.

9. Q. Orr: I think it's very interesting you mentioned these particular points, namely the sounds of the language and then the alphabet--how to write the language. Because usually the people do stress the vocabulary and how to say things. I think you are right because I have had this problem myself, and I am still struggling with the problem of how to write the language. I think I can say most of the sounds, but once you know how to do this you can operate pretty much on your own. How much of the day would you say that you spend in speaking Lao. How much time do you have to spend in speaking Lao

A. Smith: This depends a great deal on what job I'm involved in. More - recently I have been working with Commission of Rural Affairs survey workers in the south and here, especially during the training period, when I was the main teacher and everything else -- I was speaking Lao most of the day as an interpreter to these men...holding seminar session and this sort of thing. The average day, I would say, Lao is not spoken that often unless you're

out on a field trip or something like that. Not that often -- I should say a couple of hours a day, no doubt. But during meals and so on, when you're with the other IVSers or talking with the CDAs (Community - Development Advisors) -- a large part of the run of the mill business is in English. All of the work with counterparts and with your neighbors making friends and this sort of thing make the life interesting, in Lao, of course.

is done

10. Q. Orr: So how would you characterize the study facilities at the Post here? Of course, one of the main things would be that you have Lao people to talk to. Would you advise people to have their own private language teacher, or to join a class? How is the best way to get into it?

A. Smith: I believe the best way to get into it is to involve yourself completely in learning the language. Studying one hour a week, or one hour a day is just not enough. I believe that especially for the first couple weeks, 2-3 weeks, that you should do nothing but study the language; try to get the sounds down and the basic patterns. Go out and spend time talking to kids and so on. Make friends and wander around the town, buy things, go to the market, etc. After these first couple of weeks, you have established a sort of basic confidence -- you have gotten your first sentence across and have been understood. You know how to inquire what word mean. You can ask a person, "What are you doing?" and ask him "What is this? What is that?" and begin building from there on your own. Of course, the best deal would be to study for three weeks solid on the language -- four weeks, a month, or something like that. And then as you work into your job and responsibility and continue working about two hours a day, or something like this, and attempt to, instead of depending on an interpreter, try to use the language whenever possible.

The Importance of Knowing Lao

11. Q. Orr: Well, I think that gives us a good idea of how we can approach the problem of learning to speak Lao. How have you found this ability to speak the language useful in your work and in your social life?

A. Smith: I think probably the most useful part of knowing the language is merely in opening up of your relationships with the people you are working with, with local officials, or with your counterparts. An example of this would be the fact that one must talk over plans, one must talk over one's ideas with one's counterpart and very often the very subtle ideas, the very little things that matter, his comments, his reactions, will not be translated by an interpreter, by an assistant. One also finds in a meeting, in a public meeting, where you're meeting with Chao Mung for instance, and fundamental education workers or -- whoever one's counterpart might be. Ideas are expressed in such rapid fire succession here that your interpreter just can't keep up. It would be annoying to everyone present there, if he would ^{try} to tell you just what the discussion was. If one can understand the discussion, then if there is an idea of some way which you could be helpful, you can just pop into the conversation just as if you were speaking in English.

12. Q. Orr: Are the villagers generally surprised when they learn that you can speak Lao?

A. Smith: It certainly seems this way, yes. It gets to a point after awhile that you become tired of the fact that everyone says, "Oh, you can speak Lao very well." If you can speak two sentences almost every comes out with this comment, but I think this is indicative of the fact that until just recently, very few people outside of Laos could speak the language. Especially if one goes back into areas where there has seldom been any foreigners. It is obvious that the people are pleased that you can speak the language and that they do not have to worry about trying to explain ideas through an interpreter, which for one thing, simply takes time. They want to ask you how you are and they don't want to take five minutes to do it as it is interpreted and interpreted back.

13. Q. Orr: What kind of personal relations are open to you by the virtue of your knowledge of the language?

A. Smith: One can make relations with just about any age group of person if one can speak the language. Certain ones are more difficult ones to get along with, to open up, to learn with, to win their confidence. The more important thing, of course, when you come into a country is to try to win their confidence, and win their trust. This is the only way you can accomplish anything. It's the only way you can make friends; it's the only way you can have a profitable experience in a country anywhere. Here probably the easiest people to talk with at first are the kids. And yet, really the language that they understand and they speak, the most natural language, is probably the hardest one to come by. The colloquial expressions that they speak in are the most difficult to understand until you've been around for awhile. The people you can speak with first off are the people who have had some experience with foreign people. These are the local officials, or provincial officials, interpreters and so on -- people who have had some experience. The next, I think is with adults, no doubt. Then after the adults, after you have been able to make some friends there, the younger people are perhaps the most enjoyable to get to know because they are our own age group.

14. Q. Orr: Yes, so you find that most everyone in the Lao society is friend and easily approachable. You don't find them formal or stuffy or anything like that.

A. Smith: No, I think that is definitely true. If you make an attempt, Lao people are very understanding in attempting to understand your concoctions of Lao. I remember when I first arrived in Lao Khone Peng that I knew very, very little so a lot of my Lao was stumbling. The people I worked with, the fundamental education workers knew no English so they act in a way as my interpreters. (For Chip's Lao). They understood me when there was a way to understand me and they would pass this on to the villagers in the area. Then as my ability developed over the time, I no longer depended upon them so much and then the people themselves helped out a lot and were willing to answer my question or try to interpret; to interpret to themselves for me, ask me question and that's a thing that helps the most when they asked me questions, when they don't just sit there and say "I don't understand", when you don't run into this,

15. Q. Orr: I would think immediately one of the things that would be valuable would be that you would be able to bargain in the market place in buying things. Have you found this true? If you do not know how to speak the language, they can give you any price. I know they don't, but there is a tendency.

A. Smith: Oh, you're right about that. Knowing the language certainly helps. However, most of these people here can raise up their fingers and say one or two or three, so when you're first here you can get along. The next point is that it's more experience of the country, knowing what kind of price they are likely to ask; how much to markup is likely to be and - knowing the several ploys which sometimes work, that manage to bring the price down even lower than they would usually be willing to give an American.

16. Q. Orr: I think this is valuable and we Americans are interested in this. Could you tell us how this pattern goes, this ploy that you mentioned, that allows you to get it at a cheaper price?

A. Smith: Well, the first thing is merely to explain that the price he is asking is much too expensive -- much too high. You should indicate your interest in buying the article -- say that it is very beautiful, that you like it very much. Then say you would like to buy it but you don't have enough money and you feel that the price should be for a lower amount. I don't think you can set a percentage on this. You just sort of have to estimate -- know what friends got it for and how good at bargaining your friends are, and so on. Then mark down to the price that you want to buy it for. When you have asked the price and he has given it, you go below price you hope to get it for. Then work your way up, back and forth, back and forth. When you finally reach it and the other man doesn't seem - willing to come down to your price, then you start saying, "Oh, but I don't make much money." In Lao they say, "Please take a little pity on me and give it to me for this price." Usually when you ask them like this, they finally end up giving it to you (i.e. for your price).

17. Q. Orr: Yes, I know that these encounters can be very pleasant. I think there is a lot of joking and laughing in regard to this also.

A. Smith: Oh, there is no doubt.

Interpersonal Relations with the Laotians

18. Q. Orr: This is, of course, something I think we ought to touch on. Namely, the general attitude of interpersonal relations among the people. They seem to be rather jolly and one goes around pretty much with a smile on his face. Is this correct?

A. Smith: I think you are right. In most of the ordinary run of the mill activities during the day there is a little ceremonial sort of thing, a pattern of talk, expected things you can say and so on, and if you vary these a little bit, they provide some kind of humor and entertainment for everybody. There is a special pattern of jokes and this sort of thing that makes things kind of fun.

19. Q. Orr: What kind of social affairs, or ceremonial affairs, have you been invited to take part in by virtue of knowing the language?

Smith: There are a number of ways in which the Lao people relax and enjoy themselves. The first and the biggest way is the community Boun, which is usually planned three weeks ahead of time and the entertainment consists of often a dance, the Lamvong -- the traditional Lao dance, also the Molam Lao folk singers. During the Boun, which runs from about 6:00 o'clock in the evening until dawn, the girls from the villages -- near, set up stands around the center area where the Lamvong is held and sell such things as rice whiskey and chicken and things to entice the young men from the area to come and sit with them. Usually the guys will travel around in groups of two or three and sit down with one girl or a group of girls and spend most of the evening talking with them, and so on.

20. Q. Orr: Well, what about the Molam, or play, at the Boun. Do you listen to it and can you understand it?

A. Smith: Well, I spend an hour or so attempting to listen to the Molam. The language of it is so much more flowery than normal business language and of course it is sung this makes it all the more difficult to understand, but the music itself is usually very enjoyable to listen to. After you have been here for awhile, you develop a liking for it, and at the same time, I can usually follow the trend of the story. Usually there is a man and a woman who sing alternately and I can follow the bites and -- barbs they throw at one another and occasionally can laugh along with the rest of the people who are there.

21. Q. Orr: I think this is important to point out that even though you have been here for nearly two years now, and have spent most of your time -- speaking Lao, that you still don't consider yourself an old Pro at it. Is that correct?

A. Smith: This is very definitely the case. I think that a person who has learned the language will be able to understand the Molam. This is the peak that I have been aiming at for two years and really have not been able to reach it yet.

22. Q. Orr: What about the social events that the Lao have?

A. Smith: The most informal, and yet in some ways the most enjoyable, -- social event is just to climb up in someone's house -- that is, to be invited up to someone's house, to sit around with a group of friends and have the shot of Lao Lao passed around the people who are there and -- merely to talk about, I don't know, to talk about everything.

23. Q. Orr: What is this Lao Lao ^h that you mentioned?

A. Smith: Lao Lao ^h is a rice whiskey that they usually make in each one of the villages. It varies all over the country; it's got many distinctive tastes, it takes some getting used to, let us put it that way.

24. Q. Orr: OK. Now you are going to tell us about this home visit, a group of friends together in an evening. Do you have to wait for an invitation before you go into one of these things? Is it formal that way?

A. Smith: No, in the evening, in fact the usual form of pastime in the -- evening is just to wander around from house to house; climb up and sit down, just

talk, and maybe drink a little bit. This is called Lin in Lao. Pai Lin is the word that is used all the time and since the Lao don't have books and generally don't have movies, they depend a great deal on just their talking, their joking with one another to pass the time.

Points of Lao Etiquette

25. Q. Orr: Well, this is quite informal, but perhaps there are some rules that one could keep in mind in regard to etiquette. Would you like to mention a few, say in regard to the house visit?

A. Smith: OK, well — the first thing is that you take your shoes off. I suppose everyone knows this. Not necessary when you are climbing up the ladder into the house, but there is usually a porch outside the house and you take your shoes off and there climb on to the porch. Generally the people will put down a mat on the floor and you will sit down on the mat and the people will usually sit around in a circle and you cross your legs in front of you. It is impolite to have the sole of your foot pointed at any one. So usually the men will sit with their legs akimbo and the girls, the polite way is to sit with their legs to one side. Incidentally, this is the more polite way, or if you are in a Wat or in the presence of a monk, men should also sit with their legs to one side. When you are seated and the people pass around the glass of LaoⁿLao, the person who is doing the pouring, must drink first. This cause general amusement if the person does not drink and tries to pass it off to someone else. This sometimes happens when he has had a lot and doesn't want to drink any more. It is a lot of fun so you generally pour him a drink first, which is the point — the thing to be done. It is part of Lao custom and provides amusement because you force him to drink against his will when likely he really wants to drink anyway. Then I guess there aren't any other taboos really. Even the taboos — these things are matter of etiquette, not really a matter of taboo because the people are very flexible, very lenient, when they understand that a person is a foreigner — they will accept almost everything. You can do almost anything without really arousing their dislike.

26. Q. Orr: While on the other hand, I would think, if you would observe the form that they are used to, then this would call for some appreciation on their part.

A. Smith: I think this very definitely so, especially if you have been around awhile, they expect you to understand the customs — if you have been in the country for awhile.

27. Q. Orr: What about the so-called wy — the prayerful attitude that is used for greeting. Could you tell us a little bit about that. When is it used and how is it used?

A. Smith: The wy is the sign of greeting, and of parting, and when you come into a group, or see a group of people, you generally raise your hands. The official, the most respected way is to raise them all the way to your forehead, and the most customary way is to bring them merely to chin high or something like that. This is not done all the time, and when you are

very friendly with the people you are joining, there is no need to wy. But generally if you are a stranger, or if there is a respected man in the group, you will raise your hands -- you will greet him in this way.

28. Q. Orr: Well, an important subject is not wearing your welcome out and, of course, when you are a guest in a Lao house, it is sometimes expensive. How do you handle this problem?

A. Smith: The best way to do it is to help provide the food -- the meat side of the meal; that you are sharing with the people. The rice and the fish sauce are the things that the people will provide themselves. But you -- should offer very often to buy chicken for the meal. Perhaps if you are going to be there several days, or if you have several in your group, buy a small pig or something like this and this usually is enough. The people are quite willing to provide the rice and so on. Especially if you are going to live there for a long time, some permanent arrangement should be made. Usually people will pay by the month -- then the host will take care of everything.

29. Q. Orr: How about gifts and little mementos that you want to leave with your friend. How would you go about this?

A. Smith: The best way to leave a gift is to have a part in the Sou Khouan ceremony which is given. This is the Baci or Sou Khouan, they call it, where if a person is leaving the village to go on a trip, or is returning from a trip, or if you have an important visitor who has come to the village the people will conduct a ceremony. The guest, or the honored person, is on one side of the very decorative vase with flowers and usually foodstuff is placed in front of the honored man. On the other side will be the elders and important people of the village, the older women and so on. One of the older of the village, one of the most respected, will conduct the ceremony. Usually this is done in Pali, or very high Lao and then after he speaks his words which can go on for some time, sometimes, the people will gather -- around and tie strings on the arm of the honored person and wish him good luck -- many years, a pretty wife and this sort of thing. At this time if you want to give a present to the man, you can have it a part of the decorative piece at the center. You can place this on a tray in front. This will do.

30. Q. Orr: These strings that are tied on the wrist are quite a trademark of Laos. How long do you have to keep them on there after they have been tied on at the Baci ceremony?

A. Smith: Traditionally, they say you should leave them on there until they wear off. However, the common practice now in Laos is to leave them on for three days. After the third day, you should untie them, or they can be -- broken off, but they should not be cut. Then you save these and put them away some place in a safe place and keep them.

Understanding the Lao

31. Q. Orr: Let's talk a little bit about the important problem of understanding the Lao. Some of the ideas that we may have about the Asiatic people, - including the Lao, may not be true. For example, there is the idea that the eastern oriental person is apt to be inscrutable and is apt to hide his emotions and feelings behind a smile, as it were, and is very hard to really get to know. Well, you contacted them directly in their own language, what do you think Chip?

A. Smith: I can understand that this reputation would develop. I can understand for instance, if an American comes to the country, and very many people do come in and ask direct questions, they have an answer -- their own answer in their mind, and the people are rather shrewd in figuring out what the person asking the question expects as an answer. The last thing they want to do is to disappoint a person so that very often though they will just give the answer that is expected. Unless you are aware of this, have been around for awhile, or are interested in the people, are really interested in the answer, interested in what they truly feel, you probably accept it (the expected answer) and act and begin working in this direction. Only later will you find out that when they said "yes" they want a school, the people might not have wanted a school so badly, maybe the little shack over on the side is adequate now and the people necessary don't want to go to all the work to get the wood and put up a school, but at the time they said, "Yes, of course," they would like it because you expected them to say it this way. As you can see giving a "yes" answer where they really felt "no" is what meant by this inscrutability, I think. It depends more on the person asking the question than on the people themselves, I believe.

32. Q. Orr: How do you get beyond this level of politeness and get down to really the way the people feel and what they are really interested in?

A. Smith: I believe first of all you have the attitude that you really are interested in what the Lao people have to say. You respect them in their judgments; you feel that this is their country and so on, and that they are aware to a certain extent of their own needs. They are certainly - aware of what they feel. The outsider is looking for this, is looking - for this information and if you are truly seeking out what the people - feel, then I think you will eventually become aware of their reactions. You would be aware of when they are tightening up, when they are reacting to a suggestion in an apparent false way. When you see this thing, you - back off and begin approaching them from a different tact. Instead of - asking question with a yes or no answer, something like that, you come in and you ask their opinion. If you know the language a little bit, you - can ask their opinion and understand their answer. Very often a person who does not know language well enough merely asks questions that require a yes or no answer and gets it. He feels satisfied and proud of the fact that he can speak the language and ask it in the Lao language, you know, and aware of the fact that he really hasn't communicated it at all.

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Summary

33. Q. Orr: Finally, Chip, would you please give us some of the main points that the newcomer in Laos might keep in mind in making his stay here more successful from the standpoint of his job and also of enjoying - himself.

A. Smith: I believe the first month, or two months, or six months are the most critical ones. During this time the newcomer has to almost subjugate himself to the Lao people, to the Lao culture and forget himself completely. If eventually he hopes to be able to strike the balance between the Lao culture and his own. Not that this should be a permanent thing that a person should just give himself over to the Lao, but during this first period, he should just really forget about himself, lose all his inhibitions, be willing to make mistakes, have a sense of humor — an unflinching sense of humor.

Only in this way will you be able to learn the language, will you be able to make the stumbling first steps that are so important. Only in this way will you be ever hope to get to know the Lao people. If you try to impose our own values, our own customs, and so on, on these people, there is no hope really for success. This first six months' period is most critical, I think. You can be assured during this time, when things may feel most difficult — you can pacify your frustrations and this — sort of thing — by realizing that your second year, or the second six months in the second year, or the third year that you are here will be immeasurably more enjoyable because you have taken this effort during the first six months of your stay.

34. Q. Orr: That sounds like excellent advice, Chip, and also it sounds like a lot of fun. Thanks for giving us the benefit of your most unique and interesting experience with the Lao.

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UNITED STATES A.I.D. MISSION TO LAOS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Norman L. Sweet, Program Officer Date: April 20, 1966

FROM: Mr. Kenneth G. Orr, Research and Evaluation Officer *KGO*

SUBJECT: Paper: "Interviews in a Satellite Village Near Vientiane, Laos"

The attached paper, above subject, resulted from tape recordings made in a village near Vientiane while demonstrating interviewing techniques for a class of Rural Development research trainees on March 23, 1966. It emphasizes a special type of Lao community, the "satellite village", which is undergoing rapid and often chaotic change by virtue of its proximity to centers of modern (Western Culture) influences.

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INTERVIEWS IN A SATELLITE VILLAGE NEAR VIENTIANE, LAOS

Kenneth G. Orr
Research and Evaluation Officer
USAID/Laos
April 5, 1966

Introduction

Following is a verbatim translation of a tape recording made March 23, 1966 while visiting a Lao village located a few kilometers from Vientiane. The purpose of the visit was to demonstrate interviewing techniques for behavioral research to a group of thirteen Lao trainees attached to RD Training Office, USAID/Laos. The demonstration formed a part of an orientation course in anthropological field techniques carried out March 21 - April 4, 1966 at the request of the Rural Development Division.

We had arranged with the Naiban the day before to visit the village. He acted as our guide as we walked through the village stopping occasionally to talk with the villagers. A portable tape recorder allowed the recording of the discussions which threw light on some of the problems and aspirations to be found in a new kind of Lao town. The term "satellite village" is applied to those which depend increasingly on the cash economy of the rapidly growing urban areas of the nation. They are to be found encircling towns such as Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Pakse and other centers.

RD assistants Mr. Boonchoo Jaikla, Mr. Thone Chanek and Mr. Phanarak Kamankorn interpreted for me and later transcribed and translated the tapes.

Background of the Village

1. Q. Assistant: Your village has grown rapidly, because 2, 3, 4, 5 years ago I used to come to fish at the swamp next to this village. At that time this village was not as big as nowadays.

A. Naiban: In fact we have a school, but it is already transferred to the village next to ours. This school is the center for the school children from three villages including our own.
2. Q. Assistant: Where was the location of the school before?

A. Naiban: Formerly our school was in the wat. Since the site of the wat is too small, the villagers decided to move the school to the place of the old wat because it has a big area. This school became a groupe scolaire three years ago. (Complete elementary school = grades 1 through 6.)
3. Q. Trainee: Does this village have a Tasseng (township head) and Nai Ban (village head)?

A. Naiban: Yes.

4. Q. Assistant: How many teachers are in the school?

A. Naiban: Last year there were 11 but this year there are only 6 teachers.

5. Q. Orr: How big is this village, do you think we can take a walk around it?

A. Naiban: Yes, we can, it is not so big.

6. Q. Orr: We would like to talk about the wat first, then later on we will go to the school and other places. This wat was built how long ago?

A. Naiban: Sixty-five years ago.

7. Q. Orr: How old is the village?

A. Naiban: The villagers who settled down in this village came from Moungr Prachan Takham (Thailand) 65 years ago and this wat was built at that time, too.

8. Q. Orr: Aside from the Lao people, are there some of the other group of people living in this village?

A. Naiban: No, except the Thai from the northeast Thailand and Lao people.

The Lao people were evacuated to Thailand two times, the first time was in the reign of Chao Anou (Prince Anou), the second time was in the reign of Chao Noi Moungr Phouan (the King of Xieng Khouang Kingdom). It was said that those refugees were evacuated to Thailand for the first time, have returned to Laos again and settled down in this village.

9. Q. Orr: This wat is large, we would like to know how many monks are here.

A. Naiban: There are four monks and five novices. (A medium size wat).

A Family Handicraft - weaving the Lao Border

10. Q. Orr: Is that your house?

A. Naiban: Yes, it is.

11. Q. Orr: What is the lady there doing under the house?

A. Naiban: She is weaving the skirt border.

12. Q. Orr: Can we go and see how she is doing it?..

A. Naiban: Yes, please go ahead.

13. Q. Orr: I have never seen this before, will you please ask Meh Tou (mother-old) to explain to us what she is doing now.

A. Naiban: Right now she is spinning the thread for her daughter to make the border of the skirt, the thing which is turning around is called La and the other one near by is called Kong.

14. Q. Orr: Nya Meh (honored mother) will you please explain to me what are these things called, because I do not know.
- A. Meh Tou: That is a la and this is kong.
15. Q. Orr: This is kong, is it?
- A. Meh Tou: Yes, it is. ha...ha...ha... This is kong and that is lek nai for spinning.
16. Q. Orr: Where do you get the threads, do you buy them from Vientiane?
- A. Meh Tou: Yes, we have to buy these threads from Vientiane because we don't know how to make them. (The spinning of thread = a traditional craft that is being forgotten)
17. Q. Orr: After you have bought the threads from downtown, do you have any other methods of making these threads better, or you just have them spun and they're ready for weaving?
- A. Meh Tou: Yes, if it is cotton thread we must soak it in the rice starch first, to make the thread tough and last longer but if it's special kind of thread like this (pointing to the nylon thread) we don't need to soak in the starch any more.
18. Q. Orr: What are you going to do with the cloth when you will finish weaving?
- A. Meh Tou: That is the border-of-Lao skirt. We will attach it, to another piece of cloth just like that I have now. (sin Lao, Lao skirt, a short sarong)
19. Q. Orr: Oh! I see you are making the border-of-Lao skirt.
- A. Meh Tou: Yes, we are making the border-of-Lao skirt.
20. Q. Orr: Are you making it for sale or just for your own family only.
- A. Meh Tou: We just make it for our own family, we do not make it for sale.
21. Q. Orr: Do you have to do this every day?
- A. Meh Tou: No, just once a year, last year we made one loom and next year we will make another but if somebody will make it for sale they have to do it all year round.
22. Q. Orr: Does it take you about two weeks or how to finish this?
- A. Meh Tou: It takes us about 3 weeks, but this one will take us about one month because it is very difficult to plan the design and approximately it takes us four days to finish one border-of-skirt. (About 8 inches by 6 feet).
23. Q. Orr: How many meters of Lao skirt do you make in a year?
- A. Hi...Hi...Hi... I don't know exactly but this year I intended to make about

23. (Continued)

ten Wa (20 meters; one Wa is the distance between outstretched arms -- about two meters)

24. Q. Orr: Do you change the design every year or are they just all the same?

A. Meh Tou: Yes, it is depended on our desire. Sometimes we like yellow, violet or white.

25. Q. Orr: Do you have names for each design?

A. Meh Tou: Yes, we have Mee Lak (design-drawn), Mee Laua, Mee Khom (design-round), Mee Lom (design-Lom), Mee Nak (design-Naga snake).

26. Q. Orr: Please tell me what do you call that design. (Pointing to one being made on loom)

A. Meh Tou: Well, I don't know what to call that ha...ha...ha...but we have Dock Ngern (flower-silver), Dock Dam (flower-black) and Dock Khao (flower-white).

A Progressive Chao Attikan (Abbot) in the Village Wat

27. Q. Orr: This is a tape recorder. Today I would like to talk with you about the development of this village, and the wat. If you don't mind we would like to record your voice while we are talking.

How long have you been in this wat?

A. Chao Attikan: I lived here (in the wat) for four years.

28. Q. Orr: Are you from this village or from some other place?

A. Chao Attikan: I am from this village.

29. Q. Orr: We want to know about the education in the wat. Are you a teacher, teaching in this wat?

A. Chao Attikan: Yes, I teach Pali and Dhamma (Law of Buddha), but we lack of many school equipments like tables, chairs, etc. (the Abbot knows about USAID and is mentioning "needs" just in case --).

30. Q. Orr: If you put up the Pali school here, how many students do you expect to have?

A. Chao Attikan: Oh! Plenty of students will come to study, if we have Pali school but as of now we don't have enough school equipment nor a teacher.

31. Q. Orr: They say that the Pali language is very difficult to study, is that right sir?

A. Chao Attikan: Yes, it is quite difficult. At present many students, some are monks and some are villagers, come to study both during the day and night time. Last night they studied French, English, Dhamma and Pali.

32. Q. Orr: Regarding the Pali language -- do they use it only in Buddhist teaching or it is also used widely by the people?

A. Chao Attikan: The people are also interested in Pali language as well as Dhamma.

33. Q. Orr: How did you decide to become a monk?

A. Chao Attikan: I decided to become a monk because my heart required it. To be a monk in Buddhist religion is to gain a big merit because I will have chances to give Buddha's instruction to the people.

34. Q. Orr: What about teaching the Buddhist people. How do you teach them and on what occasions?

A. Chao Attikan: Usually we give instruction to the Buddhist people on the 7th, 8th, 14th and 15th day of the Lunar month. We teach them about the Buddha's instruction.

35. Q. Orr: You are from this village and have grown up here and this village seems to have been much developed and changed -- well, what are the things that have been developed and changed?

A. Chao Attikan: As for this wat we have nothing better than what you can see now by way of development and beside that the people still like to come to attend the instruction as usual.

36. Q. Orr: How was this horjak (tower-giving; wat meeting house) built?

A. Chao Attikan: The construction of this horjak depended on the villagers' money for the buying of bricks, cement and iron, but the labor was provided by the monks and novices.

37. Q. Orr: Do you mean that the monks and the novices took part in the labor alone or the villagers also helped you?

A. Chao Attikan: The monks and the villagers worked together, but most of the money was donated by the villagers.

38. Q. Orr: Who designed the plan of this horjak, as we see here this horjak is quite a modern one.

A. Chao Attikan: I was the one who made the plan.

39. Q. Orr: Have you ever travelled in the other places before, we noticed that you have new ideas? (As seen in the horjak design).

A. Chao Attikan: I used to stay in Bangkok for four years.

40. Q. Orr: Do the horjaks in Thailand look the same with this one.

A. Chao Attikan: Yes, they are almost the same.

41. Q. Orr: We ask you these questions because this building is quite a modern one and we want to know how did you get this idea.
- A. Chao Attikan: I got this idea from the different places where I have been, some in Thailand and some in Laos.
42. Q. Orr: How about the development program in the village, what are the things that have been improved?
- A. Chao Attikan: The things that have been improved in this village are the construction of the wat, vegetable planting and rice farming. (Compare with Answer No. 95. The Abbot is typical in knowing little about farming.)
43. Q. Orr: How many young men in this village have motorcycles?
- A. Chao Attikan: There are some, but just a few only.
44. Q. Orr: Since the time when you were a young boy and up to the present, can you see anything in this village has been improved and changed or are they just about the same as in the old time?
- A. Chao Attikan: At the present time there are many things have been changed and very much better than before.
45. Q. Orr: Can you tell me a certain kind of thing that you think it is better than before?
- A. Chao Attikan: Well, I should say that the education is very much improved, the people have good discipline and culture.
47. Q. Orr: I have heard that there was a school for the children in the wat here and it had transferred to another place. What do you think if we will have the primary school in the wat?
- A. Chao Attikan: It is also good to have the primary school in the wat, but at present the village is much civilized, then they removed to another better place because they have enough money to put up a good school building. (Many horjaks were formerly used as classrooms).
48. Q. Orr: When the villagers come to visit you in the wat, what are the matters you always talk with them about?
- A. Chao Attikan: I like to talk with them about the Dhamma and how to make merit.
49. Q. Orr: How do you talk with them about the Dhamma, what are the most important things?
- A. Chao Attikan: I teach them why they have to come to the wat and to tell them about virtues and sin, what wicked thing to be avoided and the good thing to be practiced.

50. Q. Orr: As you see I am an American, a foreigner, my purpose in coming here is to study the way of life of the people so that I can understand your people better. Can you make any suggestion on giving me some advice so that it will help me to have a good understanding.

A. Chao Attikan: I am very glad that you have come to visit our village.

51. Q. Orr: I mean that what advices can you give me.

A. Chao Attikan: I cannot give you answer, I have no idea.

52. Q. Orr: For example: The people in this village believe in Buddhism and they want to gain merit (Boon), such as by building the wat. But how about making something for the good of the public, such as making the school, roads, and digging the wall, do you think they will be able to gain boon, too?

A. Chao Attikan: The boon can be deserved not only in the wat but it can also be deserved in making something for the good of the public such as building the road, school, and digging the wall. (After expressing gratitude the group moved on through the town).

A Walk through Main Street

53. Q. Orr: How many people in this village have the vegetable gardens?

A. Naiban: There are about 50 families out of 150 have the vegetable gardens.

54. Q. Orr: It means one third of them, is that right?

A. Naiban: Yes, that right.

55. Q. Orr: (Pointing to vegetables in a small grocery store) Are these things from this village or from other place?

A. Naiban: All these things came from the Vientiane market.

56. Q. Orr: Is the corn growing in this village?

A. Naiban: No.

57. Q. Orr: Do the people here like to eat corn?

A. Naiban: They like to eat very much.

58. Q. Orr: Is there any corn growing in your garden?

A. Naiban: Well, we grow it in a certain period of time. The period of growing corn for our village is in May to August only, and it brings the good result. As I have seen the lands along the bank of the Mekong River are very suitable for planting the corn for the whole year round unlike in our village.

58. (Continued)

(No vegetables are being grown now. The idea of preserving vegetables is unknown except for Bamboo Shoots which are preserved by squeezing them in brine).

59. Q. Orr: As we see here the road is covered with rubbish and dirt. By the way, who is the one to do the cleaning of it?

A. Naiban: We don't have a person in charge for that but the owner of the house near by will be the one to clean.

60. Q. Orr: What will happen if they do not want to clean?

A. Naiban: As I am the Yai Ban, I have the right to give them a warning (A polite request).

61. Q. Orr: If we have warned them, but they did not comply with the warning, what are you going to do with that case?

A. Naiban: Many times warning still not obeyed I have the right to tell the police to take action but since our village is not included in the municipal area, it is impossible for us to be too strict.

An Ambitious Entrepreneur - A Chaokong Han (Shop Owner)

62. Q. Orr: These young men are students. They come to study the way of life, the culture and society of the people in the rural areas. Later they will be assigned to the different places in Laos. They are from USAID, Vientiane. If you don't mind, we would like to ask you some questions about the store for awhile.

A. Chaokong Han: You are welcome. (Baw Pin Nyung, it doesn't matter). The commodities that I am selling here are just the miscellaneous goods.

63. Q. Orr: How long this store have been set up?

A. Chaokong Han: It has been set up for over a year.

64. Q. Orr: How did you decide to become a merchant?

A. Chaokong Han: Oh! I just want the people to be able to buy everything they wish. So that some of the government officials and villagers can have what they need.

65. Q. Orr: Were you born here or did you come from some other place?

A. Chaokong Han: Yes, I was born here.

66. Q. Orr: Was your father also a merchant?

A. Chaokong Han: No, my father is a farmer.

67. Q. Orr: What are the things that the people want to buy most?

A. Chao Kong Han: I can sell all of these miscellaneous things like matches, cigarettes, pencils and note books for the school children.

68. Q. Orr: Is that a bottle of laoh lao?

A. Chao Kong Han: Yes, that is Lao whiskey.

69. Q. Orr: How much does a bottle of laoh lao cost?

A. Chao Kong Han: That small bottle cost 100 kip, but the bigger one is 150.

70. Q. Orr: This one is nail polish for the girls to use to beautify their nails. Approximately how many bottles of that are you able to sell in a month?

A. Chao Kong Han: I think these nail polisher is for the women's make up. (He probably understood - but couldn't think of the answer quickly).

71. Q. Orr: No, I mean to say that how many bottles of them you are able to sell out in a month?

A. Chao Kong Han: I can sell about 20-30 bottles in a month. (An exaggerated answer -- maybe 10 or 15)

72. Q. Orr: Do the girls like to apply the nail polish to their toe nails, too?

A. Chao Kong Han: Yes, they apply to finger nails and toe nails too. (laughter)

73. Q. Orr: What are those shells used for? (A small collection of seashells)

A. Chao Kong Han: I got them from Bangkok when I went there. They are not for sale, I just keep them for the children to see and use as the decoration of the house.

74. Q. Orr: I have collected some shells too, it is a wonderful hobby. Oh! there I can see some of the tooth paste and tooth brushes. How many of them can you sell in a month?

A. Chao Kong Han: I did not notice, but maybe about one or two dozens in a month. (Perhaps correct).

75. Q. Orr: I think this is the modern kind of tooth brush, how about before what tool did they use to brush their teeth. (Not common - use finger and salt mostly).

A. Chao Kong Han: In the old time a piece of a stick was used as the tooth brush.

76. Q. Orr: How about the tooth paste in the old time?

A. Chao Kong Han: They have the salt. Salt can be used as tooth paste

(I purchase a bottle of Snake Brand Laoh Lao - "100 K for you", he said)

77. Q. Orr: Why do you say that the snake brand whiskey is better?

A. Chao Kong Han: Because the snake brand whiskey contained some of the medical solution and after drinking it can relieve body and back ache. (General amusement at this).

78. Q. Orr: As you said you are interested in livestock. How do you plan about the livestock raising and what kind of animals would you like to raise?

A. Chao Kong Han: I'd like to raise chickens because our country does not have enough chicken farm yet. I have bought some lumber for the poultry house already and it cost me 20,000 Kip. I have talked about chicken-raising with my friends. They said they like this idea, but they do not want to cooperate with me.

79. Q. Orr: If you are going to build the poultry house, can you van (cooperative labor) the people to come to help you?

A. Chao Kong Han: Yes, this can be done, but I want to have somebody to take a part with me. I intended not to raise just only 5 or 10 heads of chickens, I want to raise as many as I can that's why I want some friends to take a part with me. I myself cannot do it alone.

80. Q. Orr: When are you going to put up the farm and how can you get the co-operators?

A. Chao Kong Han: I am planning to have two farms, one in the rice field and the other at the garden and in each farm will have about 60 hens. I think that 100 hens might be able to give at least 60 eggs a day. I am even have a plan to buy a hatching machines to hatch the eggs.

81. Q. Orr: Do you have someone who can advise you on the proper way of chicken-raising?

A. Chao Kong Han: No, but I have discussed with Mr. _____ a teacher of the agricultural school in Hat Dock Kee (Experimental Station). He told me that the location of my farm is very suitable and he promised to support me in every way.

Problems and Perspectives on the Village Economy

82. Q. Orr: Where did the firewood come from?

A. Naiban: They brought them from the forest.

83. Q. Orr: In each village there must be some rich, average and poor families. How about this village, can you tell us how many of each kind of them?

A. Naiban: As I am the nai ban and have governed this village for some time, I can say that there are two third of families which can classify as average families and one third of them are poor.

84. Q. Orr: But you have not talked about the rich families yet. Do you know how many?

A. Naiban: The rich family are not much, there are only 5-6 families which can afford to buy their own cars, but they are not really rich.

85. Q. Orr: How can we know which family is rich or poor, can we judge them by the number of the cattles which they own?

A. Naiban: Those families who can afford to buy the car or the rice mill without borrowing any money from the others are considered as the rich families. The average families just have enough food to eat and can afford to buy some things which they need but the poor one do not have much money.

86. Q. Orr: We have observed that some of the posts of the houses here are made of concrete. How long does this idea have come into your village?

A. Naiban: The concrete post came into this village four years ago, because the people have learned that the wooden post do not last as long, then some of us have to change to the concrete posts. (Wooden posts are said to last 20 or 30 years - so another factor may be present, i.e., prestige).

87. Q. Orr: Did they make it themselves or they just bought the whole posts from the town?

A. Naiban: They have to buy only cement and iron rods from down town, then hire the mason to make it for them - or some families just do it themselves.

88. Q. Orr: Is that a water seal toilet? (pointing)

A. Naiban: Yes, it is.

89. Q. Orr: How many water seal toilets are there in this village?

A. Naiban: I cannot tell you how many, when the WHO's officials came into our village, they said they will try to help all of the families to have the water seal toilets, but some families still use it together.

90. Q. Orr: How much does a water seal toilet cost?

A. Naiban: A water seal toilet was cost only 300 Kip because the cement was provided by the WHO official. The villagers have to pay only for the sand and gravel. A truck of sand (4 cubic meter) was cost about 600 Kip.

91. Q. Orr: Why do some families not like to have the water seal toilets?

A. Naiban: Maybe because of they were not home at that time when the WHO officials came to work in our village, but however after he left we still have a teacher to continue his work. (An evasive answer).

92. Q. Orr: I would like to talk with you about the rice multiplication program. Was there any in this village?

A. Naiban: No, but in fact the agriculture extension worker have come to our village to encourage the people to use the new improved seeds but the

92. Continued

villagers refused them because these varieties of rice seeds used by the villagers here for a long, long time.

93. Q. Orr: What are those varieties?

A. Naiban: They are the Khao Pokha, Khao Keo Lay, Khao Naon Do. These are the varieties that the extension workers tried to bring in but we have grown them before they came.

94. Q. Orr: Is there somebody in your village used the new improved seeds from the government.

A. Naiban: No, nobody.

95. Q. Orr: Has the rice planting been improved in this village or they are just the same as before?

A. Naiban: Our rice fields are dependent on the rain and the new improved seeds from the government could not be used in our paddies because our paddies are very low, the level of water is so deep. The rice planting in our village at present is not as good as before. Those who were able to get as much as 500 to 700 meun have decreased to 300 meun only. (1 meun equals 12 kilo).

96. Q. Orr: Why is that so?

A. Naiban: Because of the water from Pakpassak River was cut off, and water from Mekong River could not reach our paddies. The water from Mekong River used to be very useful to us in the past because it carried fertilizers to our paddies. (enriched mud; probably cut off by road and other construction).

97. Q. Orr: How can you solve this problem, so that you can get more yield again?

A. Naiban: The tasseng, nai ban and the villagers are planning to request the government to open the Pakphasak river for us, so that we can have good yield as before. If the government cannot help us our rice farming will be in trouble and beside that we will have shortage of fish too.

98. Q. Orr: What was the number of the houses in this village at ten years ago?

A. Naiban: There were about 120 houses. The number of houses become larger every year. (Wage earners working in Vientiane).

99. Q. Orr: If there is someone like to come to live in your village, where will be a place for them, is it over there?

A. Naiban: Yes, we have but it is not here, it is over there at the east of the village.

SUMMARY

The satellite village is growing rapidly largely by the addition of wage earners with jobs in nearby Vientiane. Increasing emphasis is being put on getting a cash income so as to successfully enter the relatively new cash economy. Traditional methods of livelihood are dropping away. Rice production has sharply declined in recent years. Modern consumer goods are beginning to flood into the village and displace traditional handicrafts with which they compete. Wrappers from these goods, as well as cans and bottles, clutter up the streets since the culture lacked a "department of sanitation" in its traditional organization. The Naiban doesn't quite know how to deal with the new problems arising as a result of the changing patterns of living.

Old handicrafts are still practiced in the family -- especially those dealing with deep-rooted values. One of these is the ethnic identification of the Lao women through the Lao border on their sarong skirts. This emphasizes a basic fact of ethnic separatism which is characteristic of the peoples of Southeast Asia generally. Most of the village families still grow rice and follow their traditional patterns of living. Since the wat has modern and fine construction this indicates a town which is relatively "rich" -- due in part to government salaries. The wat remains the center of community life, but the school is growing in importance. Ideas are coming into the village from the outside -- Thailand, Vientiane of course, as well as modern means of communication, the radio and the newspaper. The average man is beginning to become ambitious to make more money -- as in the case of the store owner. Some schemes are beyond their capacity to carry out. In a word the traditional village is beginning to metamorphose into a hybrid cultural form by virtue of culture change through contact mainly with Westernization forces. The result is characterized by slum conditions and various other inadequacies and instabilities.

Certain suggestions for USAID development work are inherent in the data: (1) keen interest in entrepreneur activities with need for guidance increasingly offer an opportunity to develop small businesses in the Lao community, (2) the possible use of the Buddhist monks to encourage self-help projects by indicating their "merit" value may stimulate motivation in this area. (3) Agricultural problems of cutting off water supply by road construction around cities, and (4) lack of preservation facilities for vegetables suggest possible areas for development. (5) Need for instruction for village officials in satellite villages on meeting modern type problems. Finally, USAID emphasis on Cluster Villages in the more remote rural areas should not lead to overlooking the growing problems of the satellite villages.

Field Notes of a Visit to Village #1, Wapikhamthong Province, Southern
Laos, December 2-3, 1965

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
USAID/Laos, Program Office
June 30, 1966

Field Notes on a Visit to Village #1, Wapikhamthong Province, December 2-3, 1965

K.G. Orr, June 30, 1966

Lao Hospitality: -- We arrived at dusk at Village #1 and were greeted by the Naiban dressed in army green fatigue clothes and carrying a carbine over his shoulder. He invited us to stay with him, saying that only in this way he could guarantee our security during the night since the village was on the edge of P.L. territory. This may have been a plot to ensure our presence at the large village reception which followed in his home. Actually, the Naiban, who according to Lao customs is supposed to provide lodgings for visitors, felt responsible for us. It seemed as if the whole village turned out to greet us. A score or so of prettily dressed phou sao (person-female) or young girls individually greeted us with a respectful wy (prayerful attitude of hands) and sat next to us during the evening--to the mild discomfort of my wife who considered them much too attractive. Music on the reed organ or kane and singing accompaniment were provided for entertainment. I recorded the songs on my tape recorder and played them back to the vast enjoyment of the group. A spread of food followed including sticky rice in individual cylindrical baskets, bowls of soups, sauces, and stews of various kinds served on a reed mat on the floor of the large hall which was open at both ends. It was a royal welcome and one reserved for those whom the villagers considered kon sam kan (persons-important). They had advance warning of our coming (always an appreciated procedure) and were ready for us.

About 10:00 PM, shortly after finishing the meal, the crowd who had been watching us (only the most important people ate with us) departed. Mrs. Orr and I were directed to the large, wooden guest bed at one end of the great hall, and a small kerosine night lamp was placed on the table nearby. The Naiban and his family retired to the large room flanking the hall. Six young men put their pads down in a row next to our bed and prepared to settle-in for the night. Since Mrs. Orr and I, like most Americans are used to privacy at night, this communality of sleeping quarters caused us momentary embarrassment - until it was seen that no one was "putting on his pajamas". The Lao can sleep in their day clothes if they wish. There are no special night clothes - a saraong, usually without shirt sufficing. When this was realized our problem was still not solved since we had the American custom of changing into night clothes and needed privacy for this purpose. This was soon achieved through the medium of a blanket and a fair night's sleep was had except when some of Alice's clothes fell over the balcony to the surprise of the dogs and pigs under the house and had to be retrieved by her intrepid husband.

A Tour of the Village: -- Early the next morning, after a brief breakfast of corn flakes and kippers on crackers, Mrs. Orr and I, accompanied by our interpreters and led by the Naiban, visited the wat. The monastery consisted of a large double gabled wooden house on stilts where the monks stay and a smaller square meeting house set in a large compound surrounded by a wooden fence. While we paid logically a respect visit to the religious center first we didn't stop to talk with the saffron-robed monks, who watched us with intensity from their dormitory.

We then visited a group of about a dozen men who were busily building a lao-khow or rice storage loft (granary). This was a traditional self-help group known as a van (ask). Since we had seen all of the workers

the night before, they greeted us cordially and immediately offered a hospitable drink of laoh-lao (rice whiskey). The leader of the work gang was plying the helpers with this stimulant as they carried out their various tasks. One group was digging post holes which were about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep and $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter. The tool used was ingeniously conceived. It was called mai dut meaning "bamboo pick up" -- a five foot length of bamboo split at one end. The split end was pounded into the sandy soil picking up a large plug of earth which was then removed. A half coconut shell acted as a scoop. For tough digging a long handled, but tiny steel headed shovel was used. A measuring stick the desired length of the hole completed the equipment of the diggers. Four rows of four holes each were being dug to receive the posts on which the granary was to rest. Several other men were shaping the posts to receive the floor boards. Others were making rafters (kieh) by using a siew (iron chisel) which they hit with a short wooden club called con taw siew (stick-pound-chisel). The work was proceeding merrily, with gusto and much laughter.

In talking with the Naiban and the workers I ascertained that the owner of the loft had requested this help of his friends and neighbors and that it was cheerfully given. In return the owner provided the drinks and food. We soon saw a fine lump of beef being carried on a pole between two young men who were taking it to the kitchen. The following conversation took place between myself and members of the group:

- Q. How much does it cost the owner to put up the granary?
- A. About 3,000 kip -- all of this for the food and drink since the materials come from the forest and the men provide the labor free.
- Q. Do the villagers like to work this way?
- A. (Enthusiastically) They like it very much.
- Q. Is this a big lao-khow?
- A. No, it's a rather small one.
- Q. Do you build residence houses this way?
- A. Yes, many houses are built by the van. Rich men, however, may hire laborers to build especially large houses.
- Q. How much did it cost to build this house (pointing to a medium sized one nearby in which I learned 7 persons live)?
- A. It cost about 2,000 kip 2 years ago when food didn't cost so much as it does now. The cost would be about 8,000 kip today.

As we were leaving one of the men volunteered the information that when the posts were put up a special ceremony took place in which bi kuun (leaves of Kuun tree) were used. He showed me how a bundle of the leaves were attached to the pole during this ceremony to assure the good fortune of the granary. We left them hard at work - no doubt contemplating the good food and fellowship that would be their reward for this pleasant cooperative work.

The Tahan Ban (soldiers-village): --- The Naiban steered us to the Tasseng's house outside of which were three small wall tents on raised bamboo floors. In one of the tents two soldiers in army green fatigue clothes were winding a generator to power a radio set. The Tasseng greeted us cordially and explained that he was the commander (nai muot; leader-group) of the village soldiers. The Naiban, he explained, was second in command, and the other ranks, included a sergeant and corporal whose position reflected the local standing of the young men for all came from this village. There were 19 soldiers now, but there had been 27 earlier. Some had been sent to be trained in Thailand. I asked the Tasseng the following:

Q. Please tell me about the history of the village soldiers' organization.

A. The tahan ban as such was started here in 1959. They are supplied with arms and equipment by the FAR army and are called ADC (Auto Defense Corps). They receive pay on the following scale: privates get 1000 kip per month (\$2), squadron leaders get 5000 kip per month. The soldiers are chosen by the Tasseng from among the strong and good boys of the village who can be counted on to defend the village in time of trouble. They were taught to shoot at Khong Sedone (provincial capital) by regular soldiers.

Q. What about earlier - were there any village defenders?

A. Before there were the mahatlik (palace soldiers, retainers, and sub-officials) in the palace of the Prince of Champassak. Later mulit (police) who were trained by the French as a special force for work in the villages.

Q. What about in ancient times before the French?

A. Everyman was a defender of his village in olden times. One always had weapons in hand, and the Tassengs and Naibans were the leaders just as now. The old weapons were the nyaw (sword), the haok (spear), the nah (cross-bow), and the peun (Lao gun; a musket). But they had no shields since the real warriors were considered to be invulnerable. Magical devices which are still used for this purpose included tatooing of magical inscriptions and the wearing of buddha charms, the most powerful of which is the lek lai (iron flowing), a natural iron pellet in the shape of the buddha. It was also important to avoid boastfulness. We will show you some of the traditional weapons which are still in use to protect the individual households.

Some of the soldiers and the officers kindly posed for photos. One followed us around as a guard of honor. When I first noticed this young laj I thought he had brought an ancient Lao gun for me to see. It was a Lao gun, but not a relic at all. The peun was part of the soldier's regular equipment. It was a muzzle loading, cap and ball gun complete with powder horn containing black gun powder and small lead pellets. This weapon was not to be despised, however, since it was apparently lethal up to a few hundred feet, as the soldier had kindly demonstrated for me later by shooting down a coconut from a nearby tree.

The Village Economy: — We then proceeded to wander around town looking at the houses, granaries, and the fields which surround the village. I incessantly asked questions as we walked—questions which the Tasseng and the group of farmers who tagged along with us never seemed to tire of answering. It was all in a day's work to me, (getting at "common understandings", the basic ingredients of culture and society) but I was pleased to note that the villagers relished the interest which was shown in them. Encouraged by the warmth of response I fired off the following questions:

Q. How many families are there in the village?

A. There are 147 families in all.

Q. How would you describe their economic standing?

A. Most of the families own their own farms. However, there are 4 poor families and 11 or 12 rich families.

Q. How large are the farms?

A. A big farm is about 10 or 11 hectares (one hectare is 100 meters on a side—the French measurement); a medium sized is about 6 hectares; small farms are 4 or 5 hectares. The poor people have no farms but work for others usually getting 50 muen of rice for the whole season at the end of the harvest (12 kilograms in one muen).

Q. What crops are sold — how about tobacco?

A. Tobacco is grown only for family use. We sell a lot of rice. Merchants, who are mainly Chinese come from Khong Sedone and Pakse. Previously they have asked Lao people to come with them to assist in the buying. The intermediary is usually one of the merchant's neighbors who is paid to help in this way. One muen of rice ordinarily costs 200 kip, but the merchant will charge 220 kip and the 20 kip then goes (as commission) to the Lao intermediary.

At this point in the discussions there was a commotion nearby and everyone in our group rushed up to two men who arrived carrying several small partridge-like birds. The birds known as nak pao (bird lump) were quickly bought (for 50 kip a piece). The incident suggested an avid interest in wild game to supplement the farmers' diet — and this turned out to be the case, as these birds are relished for their flavor. I soon resumed my questioning.

Q. About how much rice was raised in the village last year and how much sold?

A. About 40,000 muen was raised, and about 10,000 muen sold.

Q. Do you sell much livestock?

A. Only a little and these mainly chickens.

Q. I wonder if you would be so kind as to give an estimate of the economic resources of the rich, average, and poor families of the village?

- T A. Gladly. In regard to rice: A rich family will raise 700 to 1000 muen a year, an average family 300 to 400 muen, and a poor family will receive 50 or 60 muen as wages. Only the rich families own cows, and herds of up to 50 are common. The rich will own from 7 to 10 buffalos also. While the average family has no cows they will have about 3 buffalo used to cultivate the paddy rice. The poor own no buffalo since they have no land. The houses of the rich are large to accommodate a family of 10 to 15 with walls usually made of board though sometimes of leaf. (Some of the wealthy are not ostentatious about their houses - see below). The average house has board or leaf walls and is made to accommodate an average size family of from 5 to 10 persons. Poor families, such as the widow's house which you see there, are small and poorly constructed...such families have few if any able bodied men. A certain amount of cash is kept in the family. Rich families may have as much as 120,000 to 150,000 kip, average families, 40,000 to 50,000 and poor families 1,000 or 2,000 kip.
- Q. Would the Tasseng rather live in a leaf walled house or a board walled one?
- A. (Laughter) Board, of course. But some rich men would rather have the money and live in an inexpensive house.
- Q. How much would a board house like this one here (pointing to an average size house) cost?
- A. About 60,000 kip.
- Q. How much would the poor widow's house cost?
- A. Two thousand kip.
- Q. Where do the families keep their money?
- A. In the house. This is in case someone wants to sell something for example, they use the money to buy buffalo. The money is passed down to the children at the death of the parents.
- Q. Yes, but where in the house would such large sums of money be kept?
- A. It is covered with a cloth and sometimes put under the mattress, or in a bamboo section or in the ceiling.

Public Safety: --

- Q. Are there many cases of stealing?
- A. Sometimes. Also sometimes the termites get the money. (Much laughter.)

- Q. That reminds me of the "tight wads" in the states whose billfolds exude moths when they are infrequently referred to. (Laughter) Suppose someone stole money from a home in the village. What would happen?
- A. Well the suspect would be brought before the Tasseng who would try to get at the truth of the matter and then send the man to court.
- Q. How do you get at the truth in a case like this?
- A. You get some of the answers by observation. For example, how much money the suspect has recently spent in contrast to how much he is known to have.
- Q. Is there a police force in this town?
- A. No, everything is "on" the Tasseng and Naiban.
- Q. Is there a need for a police force in the village?
- A. The village doesn't need a police force; we can keep the place secure ourselves. When the police stay here they stop everyone for small inconsequential mistakes which they may make. This causes a lot of trouble and unhappiness. Ordinarily we just overlook such mistakes, excuse the culprit and it usually doesn't happen again.
- Q. Where do the police come from?
- A. They come from Mueng Khong Sedone for observation from time to time and usually want to stay. But the police are not welcome. Another reason is that the village soldiers (thakan ban) and the police don't understand each other. Also the soldiers can do everything like the police if necessary.

The School: -- Most of the time we had been talking we had sat on the ground in the shade conversed easily and with considerable interest from the group of farmers who sat around the Tasseng and contributed their answers and reactions to his. Now we moved off to see the two schools of the village. One school was just in the process of being built. It was a long, multi-roomed building being put up by "force account" (outside funds and labor) and the other, the older, small, one room (partitioned) school had been built by self-help. The laborers constructing the school were Thai carpenters, about a dozen of them.

- Q. Do the villagers help on this school also?
- A. Yes, we provide from 4 to 10 men to do common labor like picking up things and in general helping the carpenters.
- Q. Are the villagers paid for this?
- A. No. The Tasseng tells who should come and help. There is no pay. It's like the traditional van (see above) where neighbors help each other. The self-help school there (pointing) was different. The villagers built it themselves.

Q. Who provided the food and drink?

A. Everyone brought his own.

Q. How long did it take to build?

A. About one month. All the materials were provided by the villagers except the tin roofing which came from USAID.

Q. If food and drink were provided do you think the school could have been built in less time?

A. Yes, in our self-help system (van) if you want to get things done in a hurry you have to bring on the food and Lao-Lao.

Q. Could the villagers build a big school like the new one?

A. No. They are not so skilled as the Thai carpenters and so are happy to have their excellent assistance as they know more about building schools.

Q. How much did the villagers actually help on the new school?

A. They provided common laborers and sand and gravel. The lumber is from USAID.

We visited the old school with its palm leaf partitions, and small collections consisting of scorpions, snakes, worms in bottles, an eagle claw and the like. I couldn't help but feel an enormous step had been accomplished by the new school with its fine blackboards, neat carpentry and large classrooms. Inscribed in the gable about the front steps was the name of the school and its donor - the USAID engineer who did the actual building. Later in Pakse I joked with the engineer about his receiving credit for the deed - to his considerable embarrassment. We understood the villagers attitude of needing to assign an individual to a public gift -- just as in the wats where all donations have the donors name proudly emblazoned on the gift. The idea of an impersonal organization, such as USAID, or the American people per se getting the credit seemed beyond the current understandings and experience of the villagers.

The Well: -- In returning to the Naiban's house we passed a drilled well produced recently by USAID.

Q. How do the people like the new well?

A. They prefer the water from the old well for drinking since the new well water has an "odor" -- it tastes and smells unpleasant to them. So the water is being used mainly to wash clothes. However, when the old well goes dry (in the dry season) it will be used for drinking.

The new water came from a strata deep below the surface of the earth (a couple of hundred feet) and was tasteless as far as I could determine. However, it didn't have the rich brew of surface run off found in the old well - and to which the villagers were so well accustomed. We passed the old well - a shallow shaft surrounded by a wooden wall.

The Pa Soum (meet-together): -- On returning to the scene of our last evening's gaily we found a number of the old men and the leading farmers of the village waiting for us seated on reed mats. I had requested this meeting and the Tasseng gladly complied with the request. Some of the old men had brought a sword, cross bow, spear which I examined and later took pictures of with them holding them in traditional poses. All wanted to hear the tape recordings of the kene reed organ and singing made last night and greatly enjoyed hearing them again. Apparently the words of the songs are somewhat risqué so they make excellent entertainment. Then we settled down to discuss problems of development. I must say there wasn't any keen interest shown in "development" such as shown in the kene music, or in bouns or discussions of their other cultural practices. However, they maintained polite attention as the discussion proceeded. Some villagers left probably to have the noon meal. We had been served lunch while the recorder was playing -- warmed over dishes of the night before. As usual the Tasseng acted as spokesman.

The Tasseng started the discussions by saying that he understood I was from USAID and he would like to express a wish for help in building a temple in the wat. I indicated that I was here to get research information in general and not to discuss specific requests although I was glad to know of their interests. This hurdle seemingly surmounted, we got down to the subject at hand.

Q. I would like to have the ideas of the old men and village leaders about the new school. What do they think of it?

A. They all were very glad to have the new school. The old school was too small. The new one has six rooms.

Q. Did the villagers have a hand in planning the school?

A. The villagers didn't suggest the new school. The head master of the schools in Konsedone came one day to ask their opinion as to whether they would like to have a new school. They replied that if possible they would be very glad to have one.

Q. How did the villagers plan the old school.

A. They didn't plan it. In 1962 the Headmaster suggested this to the Tasseng and Naiban who took up the question with the villagers in a meeting. They agreed and then the Tasseng directed the villagers to work according to a pre-arranged schedule.

Q. Before the Government and USAID assisted in development how did the villagers maintain their community and develop it?

A. They would work together to dig a well or raise a house, and in each other fields arranging for this by themselves. They would also improve the wat buildings under direction of the old men. The Tasseng and Naiban are now active in development work at the request of the Government, but in the past they would mainly tell the people to keep the paths and houses and yards clean.

- Q. When was the main road built to the village (Highway #13) and who did this work?
- A. In 1945. It was done by the villagers under the French who ruled that every villager must give five days of labor each year to the Government. The people didn't like the French system.
- Q. Why not? It got them the road they needed (Laughter).
- A. Well for one thing the French commander would punish the villagers if they didn't do the work. (An old man in his late 60's recalls) The French paid us 2 pennies for one day's work (laughter).
- Q. Do you think the road building would have been well received if food and drink had been provided like in a van?
- A. (Great interest and commotion at this then the Naiban explains) Our villagers are used to helping each other. When someone asks for help the next day we would gladly go and help because one knows that he will be helped also if he needs it. But they are not used to public works building such as roads where there is no such repayment. When they work in the vat everyone also benefits by 1 using the improvements and also getting boun (merit) for it.
- Q. But how can the villagers get a road or other public works? It appears as if they are interested in private cooperation but not in public works.
- A. Villagers don't know enough to build a good road. However, they are interested in the Public Works but cannot help too much. Mainly because if they do this public work they will have to neglect their own work and this is against the idea of "self-help" (i.e. personal development, there is a strong current of individualism in economic pursuits in these attitudes). You noticed the rough ox cart road into the village (about 3 kilometers in length). The Government suggests that we make this into an improved road by village labor. This is not a popular idea since no one in the town has a car or a truck - so why cut a road for such conveyances. It is quite adequate for the ox cart.
- Q. This seems to make sense but how do you get what is really wanted by working together.
- A. In building houses and other structures and in transplanting the rice on the farm people will ask help and get it (the van). At present some are hiring people to help them but this is new and never happened in the past. It depends on the individual, some families are large enough to do the work themselves, some ask for help. Very poor people are hired now (as described above).

Q. Do you build dams and dig walls this way?

A. No dams, but in 1961 the villagers got together and dug a well - the one you saw. This is how it happened. One of the deputies of parliament promised through a person representing him that if the villagers voted for the deputy and he was elected he would give the village 15,000 kip to build a well (which the representative knew the villagers wanted). The deputies representative said "I will give you the money and you can hire men to dig it for you or work together using the money for food and drinks". The deputy was elected and they got the money.

Q. Which did they do?

A. The villagers organized a meeting with the Tasseng as chairman and asked what they should do; hire the men or do the work themselves. Some wanted to hire five men for the job. But most thought it would be better to use the money for improving the wat so they dug the well themselves and gave the money to the monks.

Q. Tell me about the villagers working in the wat.

A. Every villager works for the wat. The old men of the village see that the wat is short of something and advise the Tasseng and Naiban who organize the villagers and see that it is provided.

Q. Can you give an example of something done for the wat recently?

A. A home (dormitory) was built for the monks in the wat by the villagers, who also periodically clear the yard.

Q. Which villagers worked on this project?

A. Everyone worked on it.

Q. Why is it that everyone is so interested in working in the wat?

A. The wat is the most important place in the village. Everyone respects it and the buddhist religion. You and the King can go and wy (give mutual respect with prayerful attitude of hands to head) in the wat.

Q. Do the villagers really need outside help to improve the wat as you requested earlier?

A. They need some help from the outside, because we don't have skilled carpenters and our work is simple and crude...not sufficient to build a sim (temple).

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Q. Does the Tasseng think the Government should help the people with the temple?

- A. The Government should help. They should favor and "treat well" the wat, and should help the monks at all times. The Government has a Ministry of Religion in charge of this important work.
- Q. But with so many villages and wats, how can the Government help them all.
- A. The Government can help little by little. According to the condition of the village, the wat should be correspondingly improved. If the village can't do it, the Government should help.
- Q. Where is the Government going to get the money for such improvements?
- A. I don't know, but there is much interest in the subject. In a recent conference in the National Assembly, the deputies of each province suggested to the Government that 15 - 20,000 kip be made available for all villages which would like to repair their wats.
- Q. Where would this money come from?
- A. Some might be given by the deputies or the King. Some may come from the foreign countries, for example, American aid.
- Q. What do you know about USAID?
- A. We don't know many things but we know that USAID program is to help the Laotians and, therefore, would like to suggest the following projects as worthy ones that would be most appreciated by the villagers. Firstly, the wat is too low. In the rainy season, for example, water covers the yard. We would like the wat grounds to occupy the highest place in the village as fitting. We could make canals to drain the water, but if the water runs off fast it would cut the surface away. It would be best to bring in earth and build up the yard. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, we need a sim or temple in the wat. Since there is no sim we cannot adequately perform the ceremony of Boun Kong buot (marit-things-making monk) which makes a person into a monk and through which all young men have to pass. We are using temporary bamboo house for this important ceremony.
- Q. I can appreciate your interest in the sim. But tell me if you didn't have a school and the Government said they would help with a school or a sim which would you take?
- A. We would take the school first (the old men and everyone agreed on this).
- Q. Why do you feel the school is so important?
- A. Because it brings civilization into the village (i.e. it allows them to train their children so that they can compete in modern living and so that they won't be ashamed of being called ignorant. This is not because the forms of Western or modern civilization are so well liked. The traditional forms such as the wat are preferred but the necessity of training their children to successfully compete in the changing world takes precedent.
- Q. If the Government said there was money to help you grow more rice and develop your farms or for improving the wat, which would you take?
- A. The development of the wat comes next after the school.

- Q. If the Government had money for getting more water or developing the farm, which would you take?
- A. We would take the water since this would benefit everyone. Development on farms is development of private property. The Government should concern itself with improvements which everyone can use not just for some people on private property.
- Q. Thank you for this information which I will try to pass along to those concerned.
- A. We would like you to make these suggestions to USAID.
- Q. I am unable to make suggestions of special projects for particular villages, but I can attempt to pass along your attitudes and interests.
- A. Of course, we understand this, but perhaps you could bring the subject of our interests up in a meeting say as information for the higher grade and influential people.
- Q. Is this village like many others in the vicinity or different?
- A. This is like every other village in the neighborhood with the exception of one village which has two kinds of people-- the Kha and the Lao. The Kha are different.
- Q. What about La Khone Bang? How does it compare with this village?
- A. It is just like this one.

An Reveoir for now: -- Here the Fasseng made a special point of emphasizing that he was "very much interested in Americans". He said this with a particular sincerity that indicated to me that continued rapport might be expected from him. I answered, of course, "We are much interested in Laotians."

The meeting tapered off in an examination of the beautifully carved silver sword, massive brass bow and rusty spear which the old men had brought for me to see. They indicated that these weapons were still important in defending the household though seldom used. I took pictures of the old men who brought them in characteristic poses using the weapons. The Fasseng asked me about the early history of America and the possible use of similar weapons there. Just before leaving I asked him if I could leave some money with the Naiban to compensate him for his expenses. He agreed this would be very welcome. It was a reciprocal arrangement of mutual benefit where for a few dollars one could be sure of not wearing out one's welcome. A number of photographs were taken on this trip - both for the record and to use when I return. These treasured souvenirs along with the recordings will ensure a degree of rapport which should produce increasingly intimate conversations by which I may come to know the Lao.

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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

CODIFIED LAW AND CUSTOMARY USAGES
IN THE CREDIT SYSTEMS OF LAOS: A PREVIEW

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Vientiane, Sept. 22, 1966

(NOTE: This is a working paper, and may be expanded, modified, or withdrawn at any time. It is issued to interested USAID and related organizations in the hope that comments may be elicited which may be incorporated into a subsequent revised edition.)

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CODIFIED LAW AND CUSTOMARY USAGES

IN THE CREDIT SYSTEMS OF LAOS: A PREVIEW

Research continued on the credit systems of Laos, a cooperative project of USAID/OEA and OP on September 21 with Edward Krowitz, Program Economist, OEA, and Kenneth Orr, Research and Evaluation Officer, OP, exploring the relationship between the written law and current practices in regard to the systems of lending and borrowing among the Lao. The method of research consisted of reviewing the written law with three Lao interviewees to get their viewpoints on the applicability and non-applicability of each article of law to present-day practices as they understood them. Interviewee A was described in Orr, September 19, 1966, page 1-a 26 year old self-educated villager. Interviewee B is a Lao scholar in his late fifties and an expert on Lao ethnology and social psychology. Interviewee C is a Vientiane-raised Westernized young man of about 25 years of age.

The written material reviewed is translated for meaning from the Lao in Royal Government of Laos, the National Assembly, Civil Code Law No. 68 of March 31, 1950, Vientiane, Chapters 19 and 20. The same text was reprinted recently (n.d.) by the Department of Justice (Nyuthi Dham, ultimate-law) in French and Lao (the same as the 1950 version) as Code Civil. The original of these two reprints (present and 1950) was Ministry of Interior, Codes Laotiens. Code Civil. Code Penal. Code de Procedures, Hanoi-Haiphong, Imprimerie d'Extreme Orient, 1908. The written law on credit then has not been changed since 1908, and, we suspect, the common usages in regard to credit are considerably more ancient. A translation of the 1950 reprint of Code Civil will be followed by comments of the interviewees.

Chapter 19 Section 1: How to Borrow Money to Spend

Article 280: This article is about a man lending money to another man to use for his purposes. There has to be a contract and other obligations. The debtor has to pay the creditor back in due time according to the agreement mentioned in the contract. The property or money which the debtor will return should be the same quality and the same nature of value.

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Article 281: If the price of the borrowed money or property is less than 100 piastres, there is usually no need to make a contract. If the price of the property is more than 100 piastres, there has to be a contract or some kind of paper to show "as the law" (kot mai - order - reserve in mind) and in it there has to be some conditions to satisfy the two sides. Before this paper can be submitted to a court, it must be registered first.

Interviewee B's Comments: In the French period, one piastre was equivalent to one kip (Vientiane Kingdom coinage), one lian (Champassak Southern Laos Kingdom coinage, a Cambodian word), and one man (Luang Prabang Kingdom coinage). Along with the use of circular coins were the ngeun lat (Money-common), a bar of silver copper or bronze about 2 to 6 inches long. In the French period, 10 at equaled 1 bee; 10 bee equaled 1 kip. Shell money consisting of small univalve seashells (bia - money) was probably the first medium of exchange; bia are still found in the villages but are now used as heirlooms to pass down to the children. Today the old lian; kip and man coins are worth about 600 or 700 kip. So we may say that Article 281 required a contract for over 60,000 or 70,000 kip in present-day values.

Actually, there is not set rule in common usage today for requiring a contract. If the borrower (Phou yeum ngeun - person-lend-money) and creditor (Phou Hay Yeum Ngeun - person - lend - money) are good and trusted friends, the sum of 10,000 kip may be borrowed without contract. Over this a contract is usually required. If a person is not trusted, he can't get credit under any conditions. As for registration of the contract, this seems to be necessary only when an issue arises in regard to it, then the civil authorities do the registering. It is believed that the Chao Muong or Tasseng may have a registration list of debt (this would be an important source of information on community debts if true). The contract and agreement have the force of law (when based on customary usages, it seems to have more than the "force" of central government law as seen below).

Article 282: The paper mentioned earlier has to have the date, month, year, profession, and address of the debtor as well as the creditor and the guarantor, witnesses, writer, all of whom sign their names down so it will be a completed contract. This contract must cover the amount of the money being lent to a man and the interest which has to be agreed upon.

When the debtor has paid back the money, such contract should be returned to the debtor which means he is not any longer in debt and everything is cleared for all parties.

Interviewee A's Comments: Some naibans have a written form of the contract for the credit transaction. The form is used as a model, and the writer, anyone who helps the borrower, just changes the names. I recently had to buy some bricks to build my house and I secured credit from the brickmaker for one month until I could pay for the bricks. There was no interest charged.

I bought 10,000 bricks for 50,000 kip. We made out the contract and both he and I signed it. I had one copy, he the other. When I paid, the brickmaker gave me his copy to tear up.

My wife was a witness and I didn't need a guarantor except a man in the village who knew the brickseller well and knew me too. He got business for him for a small commission. This type of man is called phou tit taw (man-contract) or broker who contacts other people for the paw kakai (father-trade). A brick merchant is called paw kakai dinkeo (bricks). The Phou tit taw is usually an important man whom people trust from a good family - a notable person. He knows the price of the merchandise but leaves the bargaining up to the merchant and the customer. He gets very little commission, maybe 2 or 3%. Some brokers handle a lot of items; others, the more successful, concentrate on one item. There are phou tit taw who specialise in credit, bringing money lender and borrower together.

The suggestion is that the phou tit taw would be important also in "selling" the farmer on government credit and arranging for the details along with the guarantor (see below). The use of existing role positions.* Interviewee A continues:

As far as bargaining goes, one usually tries to get the merchant to lower his price. It depends on who the merchant is (that is, his ethnic group). Cambodian merchants have the reputation of putting up the prices of their goods 100%, then they reduce them 50% and say that they are losing money but will sell "for love of you" (the customer). Lao merchants can be expected to lower their prices about 20% but not lower than that and mark them up accordingly.

The ethnic group factor in commerce is well-known to the customer and tactics are adjusted to the "social personality" of the seller. Indian merchants have the highest mark-ups in Vientiane; Chinese, next; then Vietnamese; and the Lao have the lowest. The customer also has some effect. Wealthy foreigners (i.e. Americans) are charged most and bargain least, and indigenes get the best prices of all.

Article 283: The law says that there should be only 8% for each 100 piastres or lian (medal - old term for kip) in each year. The highest interest is not more than 12% if this money is going to be used for commercial purposes. It is up to the creditor and the debtor to agree how much as they desire.

It is the function of the court to determine how much to charge in all categories whether it is for commercial purposes or other. It will be based largely on how the loan money has been spent.

If that amount of money has been used for buying goods (merchandise) or for the benefit of things for producing into merchandise, it will be counted as trade.

The reliance upon a contact man for making credit arrangements would seem of particular significance for the proposed loan fund for small industries. Foreign banking establishments in Asia have for many years relied upon such a person, called a comprador, who would not be guarantor in the usual sense, but whose appraisal of the probity of the proposed borrower would guide the bank in making its decision.

The commercial banks could very well fill the role for the Credit National as they will probably have access to information not usually discovered in auditing balance sheets. The usefulness of the banks, in this role is correspondingly increased, to the extent their contacts extend into several of the mutually exclusive ethnic groups in the Vientiane area (Lao, Thai, Chinese and Vietnamese). EJK

Interviewee B's Comments: The interest rate mentioned in the law is much below that actually charged. In actual practice when you borrow 1000 kip, you pay back 200 or 300 kip. This takes about 4 months and 5% per month is a usual charge (this amounts to 60% per annum). The law is used only in case of trouble between the contracting persons (obviously with no reference to Article 283). Under the French, the rate was as given in Article 283. Most of the credit could be had for 6% per annum, but this law no longer applies. In the French days most Lao had no use for money as such but would borrow things paying interest for them in things (see below). Lao believe that the law (kot mai) must be flexible to allow for custom or pa phence (objective-thing-leave-break). Custom depends on the attitudes of the people or pasee. The Lao first and foremost follow and obey the Buddhist orders or precepts, the vinay. If they don't obey these, they will hurt themselves individually by gaining bab (sin). If they obey, on the other hand, they get boun (merit). The monks are bound by 125 precepts and the people by fewer.

Interviewee C's Comments: This boun and bab business is all superstition.

Interviewee C had several times laughed at B's comments. C is very modern wearing an Elvis Presley haircut like other smart urbanites and the latest fashion in pointed shoes, and likes to hum modern pop songs like "This Land is Mine." He was trained at the Lycee in Vientiane. The young urbanites appear to feel antagonistic to some of the old Lao ways and to look down on them--according to Halpern, about 3 or 4% of the country's population are urbanites (Halpern, p. 83 in Firth and Yamay, Capital. Saving and Credit in Peasant Society 1964), and most of these are Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai. The suggestion is that the urbanites are not bound by some of the old laws, particularly the religious, but follow along with the customary usages, is. C agreed with the comments on the laws given here up to the point where religion came into the discussion. Historically, however, we may regard the Buddhist laws as the original governing laws of the Lao community with its wat as the central administration, joined together in a theocracy headed by a god-king (Robert Heine-Geldern, Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell, 1956). Perhaps central government laws have always been subservient to customary usages when they

concerned village matters. Now the government is beginning to exercise direct control in the villages over things which were traditionally in the sphere of pa phenee, customary usages.

Interviewee B continues: You bargain for interest rates today as the villagers always have. Interest rates stay much the same regardless of the situation; the flood will probably not affect them. Some money lenders will give lower rates to compete with others. There is no difference between commercial rates and other rates when money is involved. When you borrow things to make money (as buffalo) in the village, you give more in return since you have it than if you borrowed to live (see below).

Article 284: If the interest is higher than the fixed rule above, the judge will have to reduce that down to the normal rate, that is to say, 12% per each 100 piastres per annum. If the interest which a debtor paid to the creditor is over the rate, it is necessary to count that amount left over as the capital payment until all the money is paid. If it is found out at the last minute that the debtor has paid too much over the needed capital because of somehow including the interest, the creditor will have to reimburse him according to the official rate which will begin from the day the debtor has started to overcharge him. Besides, the creditor will have to be sentenced according to the Penal Code, Article 200.

Interviewees' Comments: This law doesn't apply. If the creditor charges too much, the borrower simply won't take the loan (caveat emptor). There is a saying that the interest should be higher in a good season and lower if the season (farming) is bad.

One gets the idea of desire for flexibility above all in the credit relationship to adjust to the particular factors mentioned above. The suggestion is that a modern law should avoid narrow and binding clauses which are certain to be ignored as were Articles 283 and 284.

Article 285: The amount of the interest will never exceed the amount of the capital of the loan. If the judge has received such a request for payment of the debt and interest, it is necessary to reduce the total interest if it exceeds the capital. On the other hand, it is prohibited to count the interest as capital and count that for an extra interest again, even if it is indicated in the contract.

Interviewees' Comments: The idea of paying interest on interest (or compound interest), is foreign to traditional Lao thinking. However, the interest on a loan can and often does exceed the capital value of the loan. There is a new idea among some judges when the interest is abnormally high, and this is to cut it in half, a sort of 50-50 "dividing" of the burden between creditor and borrower. This is, of course,

when such cases are brought into the court. Custom and tradition mean the "average" way of doing things, and this is what judges a new law. The average is, of course, "common sense" as seen by the Lao people. When a conventional (codified) national law has to be interpreted by the judge, he has to know human psychology, anthropology, and indeed every facet of human life. The judge (jasarn: official person-court) decides after hearing the case pleaded by the advocate or ta nai khwum (man-master-word). It is well understood that traditional (customary) law always wins. Inflexible laws are very dangerous and usually cannot be applied.

Article 286: If the contract states that no interest is required and the creditor wants to modify that contract before it is due, this is also prohibited. If the debtor does not pay back what he has borrowed, he will be forced to pay the creditor starting from the day he borrow with the interest.

Comment: The contract is binding but, of course, can be changed by consent of the two parties.

Article 287: When the due date has arrived but the creditor refuses to accept the money from the debtor, which he is willing to pay in this case, such money will not be counted for the interest. And if the court has sentenced the creditor to accept the amount of money at the request of the debtor but he still refuses, in this case the creditor will be fined to pay all the fees required by the court.

Comment: Not many creditors will want to keep a borrower in debt on a single contract although this possibly happens. Creditors however are thought of as trying to keep a "good" borrower in debt as often as possible to make more money for himself.

Article 288: The creditor will not be able to draw back whatever has been lent to a man before it is due except in the event of the debtor's death. In this case, the creditor can ask for his payment immediately before the heir sells the property of the dead man to pay for his debts first before all the existing property can be inherited.

Comment: However, a debtor may pay up his debt before the due date if he wishes. In case of the death of the debtor and if the debt is not a great sum, the creditor may often "sacrifice" the money as a contribution to funeral costs. He gets a great deal of merit in this way, hence, respect in the eyes of the villagers; such would be "good for business."

Article 289: Borrowing money among the relatives, such as father, mother, grandparents, or children who are not yet married, is not counted for interest at all.

Interviewees' Comments: This is the family credit system, and the law states the general truth. However, some families do charge interest to its members if, for example, the money is to be used for starting a commercial business. But if the family members are poor and needy, never mind. Long-range agreements are common.

Article 290: If the parents and children live in the same house and they borrow from each other for buying things to be used in the family, they cannot claim for that amount of money because it is being used on behalf of the family as a whole.

Interviewees' Comments: This is according to the respect idea, that is, the natural obligations owed by one member of the family to another.

Article 291: Borrowing money to spend in the family, for example, grandparents, parents, children or children's children that live in the same house have agreed together unanimously to borrow money from someone and have signed their names on the paper which is certified by an authority. This means that they really have borrowed money from other people as it is indicated in Article 281. However, this kind of borrowing can be reimbursed only when there are three witnesses.

Comments: The head of the family (pau huan - father-household and mee huan - mother-household) and the grandparents (the wife's parents since the system is mainly matrilocal), if any, only sign. Every person takes care of one part of the debt, and witnesses are needed to assure an understanding of this in the contract.

Article 292: When any family has borrowed the money as mentioned herein, and unfortunately one person of the group or many of them have died, the ones that are still living have to pay back all the money lent to them.

Article 293: If a wife and husband have borrowed money, then the husband has gone somewhere for business and cannot return in time, the creditor can get back only the original capital until the husband returns at which time he can claim the interest.

If the husband died while he is away and the wife finds that there is nothing to reimburse the creditor and if he is going to claim to get the property of her dead husband, in this case, the creditor will get only what is indicated in the Civil Code Article 32 which describes the household effects of marriage (the property owned jointly by husband and wife).

Comments: These articles follow "common sense" and are practiced in the manner stated in the law.

Article 294: If the creditor rushes (lat leng - to push) a debtor by claiming without having witnesses that, that person has borrowed or the creditor claims for more than what a man really owes and this thing is investigated or it is found out that the creditor is not dealing honestly, the court will sentence him to pay half of the loan to the debtor for wasting his time or half of the amount of money claimed by the creditor as the case may be.

Article 295: It is the same thing with the debtor. If there are witnesses to certify that a debtor is not honest to the creditor, the court will undoubtedly treat with him as it indicated in Article 294.

Comments: Don't know about this problem. It doesn't happen often but when it does, it is probably handled in this way.

Chapter 19 Section 2: Borrowing Thing to Use

Article 296: Borrowing things to use is also a contract of the people to give something to each other for the purpose of using them. And when it is due these things should be returned to the owner in good condition. This kind of borrowing is not supposed to claim interest at all. Every borrower when he borrows something whether it is a living thing or non-living thing he has to be responsible for the borrowed item.

Comments: No, this is not correct. Something is always given to the lender in appreciation for the loan of the object or animal. Sometimes it is hard to recognize as such; for example, if A borrows a female buffalo from B and the buffalo has a calf while being used and fed by A, then the calf is returned with the buffalo as the interest for the use of the animal. When there is no calf involved, then A gives about 1/3 of his rice production to B resulting from the use of the animal.

Article 297: In case the thing borrowed is lost or broken prior to an estimating of the price, the borrower has to set the price of that thing or animal through witnesses and the owner of the property too.

Comments: Yes, but there are some extenuating circumstances in many cases. For example, if the buffalo you borrow is eaten by a tiger, the former borrowing must take the responsibility since he didn't protect it. But if the death or damage to the animal was out of the control of the borrower, allowances are sure to be made. Don't know the interpretation for borrowed animals lost during the recent flood.

Article 298: When one is borrowing an elephant or other kinds of beasts of burden (domestic animals) to use or carry something like commodities and if that animal is sick or badly wounded, then the borrower will have to look after it. He must buy it paying the price of the animal as if it was not sick or before this

thing happened.

Comments: Yes, with the reservations stated in comments for Article 297 above.

Article 299: The employer will to be responsible for the works of his subordinates such as to provide them with the rice or food for his provision in case the subordinates has to borrow from other people during their voyage (trip), except if the place they went is close to the house of the employer, and does not involve a long journey.

Chapter 19 Section 3: Transfer the Creditor (New Assignment for Another Man as a Second Creditor)

Article 300: The first creditor can assign other people to take his place but his debtor should be agreed with him first (see Article 791).

Article 301: The debtor can be assigned to other people too if the creditor will agree and work out some papers required to make sure that the original debtor does not continue to owe anything to the creditor; that he has transferred the debts to the second debtor.

Chapter 20: The Guarantee

Article 302: The guarantee is an agreement in the event the borrower cannot satisfy the creditor. The guarantor, any person who agrees, has to make everything satisfactory according to the original understanding.

Article 303: This guarantee must be clearly mentioned in the contract. It can be made in writing for reference or by speaking (verbally) depending on the amount of money involved less or more than 100 lian or piastres.

Article 304: Concerning the debt, the guarantor can insure all or just half of it. The one that guarantees will ordinarily not be responsible for the interest. Claims for interest or capital can be requested directly from the debtor unless there is some kinds of the papers involved with the guarantor himself which might included.

Article 305: When the due date arrives but debtor has nothing to pay, the guarantor has to pay all the original capital or one part according to how he insures the loan. If the property of the debtor can be used for the payment of about half of the debt, the guarantor himself will nevertheless have to pay what is left on his part.

Comments: These laws are generally observed in customary usages.

Article 306: The guarantor can claim for what he has paid to the creditor from the debtor, including the interest if he guaranteed it. This is something to which the court will pay special consideration as indicated in the Article 283.

Comments: The guarantor usually doesn't get paid for his backing but, of course, builds up goodwill with the borrower who may become his guarantor some day. He must be "very strong" financially. Usually people like to be in this position since they get a good reputation and het boun (make merit) by helping their neighbors in this way. In the contract it is not mentioned that the borrower's property is liable for confiscation first to satisfy a debt-this is derderstood to be the case. You may be sure that creditors find out all about their prospective borrowers property as well as his reputation before lending him anything so that embarrassment is usually avoided.

In bringing our study to a close we tried to get at some of the basic attitudes of the Lao villagers about debts. We know, for example, that villagers will seldom admit to having debts. Why this secrecy?

Comments: The real reason people hide their debts is that people may not respect you (napthoeu - count hold to carry; respect) if they know you are in debt. This is because of the Buddhist precept that man must be responsible for himself. There is a Pali saying well-known to the monks and the villagers: attahi attano matho which is translated in Lao as ton le pen thee pheung kong ton (body-is-at-a place to live-of-body) ~~in~~ ^{is} in. "a man ought to stand on his own feet." For example, the Lao villager is personally responsible for his merit and demerit which judges to himself. This is not to say that the Lao doesn't have titni or obligation. One is always in debt to one's parents, for example, for everything they have done, to the monks for making meritorious acts possible and for their guidance in Buddha's teaching. One is in debt to the government for their help and protection. Life is a constant struggle to pay back debts in this sense and to build up one's own capital in napthoeu (respect), boun (merit) and ngeun (money) and property - and to avoid the opposite. In this sense, debt nee sin is like bab (sin) in the mind of the villager and they don't like to think about either or admit that they have it. The feeling is uncomfortable and the opposite of the ideal feeling or relaxation, happiness and bo pen nyong (no ask why) or it doesn't matter, i.e. no obligation.

This last data from our interviewees is perhaps among the most basic-that relating to the perspectives on the activity of borrowing and lending or cultural values. Underlying the values are the value premises concerning the nature of the Buddhist world as viewed by the Lao.

Some core features of the Lao credit system are given in a Lao book, The Ancient law of Laos, published by the Literary Committee of Laos, Buddhist Era 2499 (1950), at Vientiane, pages 35-36. The date of the ancient law is not known but the language is that of at least 100 years ago, certainly in the pre-French era.

Borrowing Thing or Money from Other People By Having Witnesses

Article 95: This article deals about borrowing things and money to use as one desires. For example, the relatives, father, mother, or children if any families have borrowed the money or household affects outside or inside of the family. If they refuse to repay and it is found out that they are really in debt. In this case, everything can be arranged by the assistance of the authority by seizing their properties as the repayment.

If the one who has borrowed has died, the property which he supposes to get should be sold for repayment for his debt. It does not matter whether their, his or her relatives have used or spent that thing with them or not. He still has to pay for it there are witnesses to certify correctly or some people have seen when that sum of money was being lent to them.

It may be seen that many features of the Lao credit system are "ingrained" in the practices of the villagers coming from ancient times. One of the objectives of continued research on this subject is to determine those features which may be changed and in what direction, in order to create a modern credit system. Equally important are the key features of the credit systems which may not be tampered with at the peril of complete failure. The lowering which, however widespread at the time of the law, has fallen into disuse for one or another reason. Now cheap credit may face similar perils.

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September 22, 1966

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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

Psychological Characteristics of the Laotian Peoples;
A Preliminary Anthropological and Medical
Survey

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November 7, 1966

(This is a working paper, and may be expanded, modified, or withdrawn at any time. It is issued to interested USAID and related organization in the hope that comments may be elicited which may be incorporated into a subsequent revised edition.)

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Psychological Characteristics of the Laotian Peoples; A Preliminary Anthropological and Medical Survey

Following is a transcription of a taped conversation between a cultural anthropologist and medical doctor on the subject of the psychological characteristics of the Laotian peoples. This is the first of the proposed series of studies attempting to gain an understanding of the mental processes of the people of Laos with whom USAID technicians are dealing in the USAID/RLG development programs. It is also hoped that light may be shed on pertinent American processes of thought, thus bringing into focus some basic problems of development work involving the juxtaposition of different systems of thought and behavior; the Laotian and the American.

Introduction

Orr: November 3rd, 1966, Vientiane. This is Kenneth Orr with Dr. - Westermeyer who has kindly consented to explore an area of mutual interest with me. We have both been working in Laos about the same length of time--15 months. We are interested in attempting to get at the mental processes of the Laotian peoples, and are mutually exchanging ideas derived from our experiences with them. We hope to get an idea of their social psychology as well as some of their mental problems. With further research we expect to be able to relate our findings concerning the psychology of the individual cases and traits observed to the structure of Laotian societies, their value premises, values, institutions and behavior patterns. First I would like to find out a little bit about you, Doctor, How did you become interested in this subject, - which we might call ethnic psychology and transcultural psychiatry?

Westermeyer: While in college I loaded up heavily on electives in the area of the humanities and psychology. During medical school my interest waned because areas relating to psychology seemed to be a - pseudo-science rather than an actual science, particularly compared to the more exact psychological science. During internship and then - during practice my interest in these things reawakened. However, - Freudian interpretations did not seem to be valid in the majority of cases. So I registered at the University of Minnesota part-time and began to take anthropology courses. In this way I became interested in a cultural approach to mental processes and a cultural approach to mental disease.

Orr: I wonder if you'd give us some idea of your ethnic and cultural background? Do you come from Minnesota?

Westermeyer: I come from Chicago. On my father's side, we had come to the states some generations ago, and--to the best of my knowledge--had lived mostly in the Middle West. My grandparents on my mother's - side came from Ireland, and she was raised in an

Irish neighborhood in Chicago. I was raised in Chicago, and have only spent the last dozen years or so in Minnesota. Increasingly over the last half dozen years, I've had interest relating to cultural psychiatry and to the social problems of the Indians in Minnesota. Perhaps this is in some way related to my interests in transcultural mental and psychiatric phenomena.

Orr: Your name is Gernam and that's your father's ethnic background, right? Well that's a good cocktail right there. What sort of work have you been doing here and what kind of contacts have you had with the Laotian people?

Westermeyer: My work here unfortunately has involved some straight administrative work. Particularly when the chief of division is gone, I've had to act in his stead. This has also involved some interesting contacts with the Lao ministry of Public Health, and also with WHO. Much of my more rewarding work, however, has been out in the field with the medics, merely observing or responding to their calls for help when there were a large number of sick people, and also at _____ Hospital up in the Meo area.

Orr: Then I take it you've had most of your contacts with the Meo and the ethnic Lao?

Westermeyer: Primarily, although I had had some contacts with some Lao Theung ("Lao of the mountainside") people, the Lu (Thai language family) over in the Sayaboury region, the Khmu up in the Xieng Khouang Sam Neua area and the Dyaheun and Laven down on the plateau de Boloven (of the Mon-Kmer language family).

Absence of Universal Empathy in the American Sense

Orr: You mentioned you had been collecting some anecdotal data on your observations of these various people. Well it's difficult to know where to start, but perhaps I could ask you to tell us about some of your more impressive experiences. To be more specific—perhaps you could think of some experiences which brought out differences between the behavior of the people here and those that you were used to in the States.

Westermeyer: I've worked with elementary health workers in the field, also with what we call nurses at _____ Hospital. These are girls that have had a few months supervised training on the ward. The one thing that impressed me in a negative way the most was the lack of empathy and lack of real concern for the seriously injured or seriously ill person* is a blood relative. In other words they will care for the patient much the same way we might care for a sick horse or a sick cat that belongs to somebody else. Often times this will

* Add " (Such as any American would display at home)- - unless the sick person — " "

lead to very maddening problems on our part. The individual may be instructed or requested to carry out such and such a procedure overnight—a very important procedure. The nurse will leave the patient to go eat or go to some form of recreation and the patient will die. Or she will examine the blood pressure, as instructed — all night long, as it goes down and down. Finally it goes down to zero and the patient dies, the nurse not even thinking of coming to call the doctor. The Laotian medical helpers seem to be empathetic and relate in a very personal way only to those very close to them. Perhaps this is realistic since traditionally they haven't been able to do very much for other people. Perhaps they'd just be wasting emotional energy if they were universally empathetic to sick or suffering people. (This last is typical American "benefit of the doubt" thinking to excuse peculiar other culture behavior". —Orr)

Orr: I think you've touched on one of the basic differences between Americans and the people in this part of the world. You are quite correct in pointing out that your nurses didn't feel any compulsion to extend to the patient a sympathetic viewpoint other than was just perfunctory in their roles as nurses. I would think as you do that the degree of warmth which they showed to patients would depend on the closeness of kinship involved. This refers I believe to the social structure in which the loyalties are local, since the communities are largely isolated and were often hostile in the past. Secondly—perhaps more basically—the indifference noted related to the value premises of the Buddhists. Most Americans come from the Judeo-Christian tradition where there is a feeling of brotherhood and responsibility for your brother. We are taught this from a very early period in our lives. The Buddhist individual on the other hand is taught that he is responsible first and foremost for himself. Everyone is on the wheel of existence for eternity and one cannot assume the burdens of another person. To interfere with another's fate is regarded almost as impertinence. This situation presents some real problems to you, as you have mentioned. And it would be interesting to try to figure out how the necessary values that go with good nursing (a Western culture institution) can be interjected into people that don't have them to start with.

Westermeyer: Those are some excellent interpretations that I hadn't previously considered. However, we find the same problem with the Meo and Lao Theng who presumably have had little direct exposure to Buddhism although there is no doubt that these people have been extensively influenced by the Chinese in the case of Meo and by the Lao in the case of the Lao Theng peoples.

Orr: Yes, I think the attitude we are talking about can come from many sources. The Buddhist faith has institutionalized it in their value system. It seems to be typical of the Far East in general. What about the patients in the hospital, do they show reactions such as you would expect, or are there some surprises?

Attitudes Towards Sickness and Injury

Westermeyer: We see Laotians that have illnesses varying from a minor cold to very severe illnesses—people in extremis with typhoid; people have had ruptured appendix for several days and have peritonitis. We don't see people with many minor injuries—they seem to take care of these themselves—but we do see minor lacerations. We see shrapnel injuries of moderate severity; we see bullet injuries of moderate to severe nature, and we see cases where the persons become very disfigured. They 've stepped on a land mine and lost a foot or they 've had a severe injury to an eye. And it's interesting to observe the reactions of the Laotian patients to these ailments.

Oftentimes in the case of a very severe injury—a land mine injury; a shrapnel injury to the abdomen; the head injury—the patient lies very quietly, is very cooperative in almost everything we do, although we 're doing strange things to him. For example, we're giving spinal anesthesia; we're bringing him into an operating room, administering local anesthetics of one kind or another. Oftentimes the Laotians are extremely cooperative; as cooperative as you would expect an American to be under similar circumstances. There are occasionally exceptions as when the patient has lost a lot of blood and has a low blood pressure, and his irritational behavior is most likely explained on the basis of the shock syndrom. Very often the people who accompany such a severely injured person are very concerned and make quite a thing of looking after a patient. They want to come into the operating room; they want to see everything that is going on about the patient; they want to see what we are doing to the patient.

Oftentimes, on the other hand, with an injury of less severity, sometimes a very minor injury, you see a great deal of emotionalism involved. The patient over-reacts to the injection of the local anesthetic, and does not behave in the way that you would expect the average American to behave. The same holds true for illness. The severely sick person is often a good deal more manageable than the less sick person. While in hospital the individual who initially was very sick or severely injured and very tractable, becomes less tractable and more hyper-reactive and complaining as he improves.

It's also been interesting to note the reaction of large numbers of injured people. As an American you might assume that a whole ward full of injured people who have lost limbs, who have lost eyes, and who have lost parts of hands would be a pretty depressed group of people. Whereas much to the contrary, the morale is very high. Usually there are one or two very sick people in the ward. The others watch this person very carefully and know from experience that he has a good chance of dying. They watch when the doctors examine this person. They watch when the nurses care for him, they kind of have a weather eye to this person. Much of the joviality ceases when this person is examined. But on the whole, there is very good morale.

So far as the Laotians reaction to physical mutilation, there has never been any difficulty in removing an obviously destroyed or distored limb. However, in the case of a limb where the blood supply is impaired, a slowly developing gangrene of the limb, the patient won't let us take the limb off until he can plainly see that the portion of the limb is dead or dying, or infected and very painful. The same is true of injuries to the eye. We've seen many eyes that ought to be removed. The Laotian patient will not allow removal of the eye until it is almost too plain that the eye is grossly infected, and he is going to have progressive difficulty if the eye isn't taken care of. Perhaps from their point of view this is a rational decision—they want to hold on to what they have and they * each portion of the body is obviously useless or even dangerous to the person.

Orr: There are a number of interesting observations you've made there which bring up Lao values and basic attitudes. The one about optimism in the ward refers to the idea state for the individual which is known to the Lao as having a "cool heart". This means avoidance of mention of difficulty or trouble, a person with this attitude radiates a kind of serene pleasantness. This can be infuriating at times too. Recently American newspaper men writing about the people of Thailand referred to them as a "nation of Cheshire Cats" according to a British Overseas Broadcast, naturally to the reported wrath of some Thais - (at least those who had read "Alice in Wonderland"). But we must think of this type of behavior as stemming from a strong psychological - impulse which, even in dire conditions, such as you have been describing here, seems to come through.

Your mention of the problem encountered in removing parts of the body of Laotians would seem to have some relationship to the stigma which is attached to the amputee. He is a person whom "bad luck has branded." When he returns to village life things are never the same—people will feel this "bad luck," which he radiates, and avoid him. Consequently he must be sure such disfiguring is absolutely necessary. I understand it is something of a problem to figure out what to do with the amputees as a group. Some of the Lao generals have wanted to put them all together in one village. They are in a sense "bad luck lepers" who have a problem in being accepted back into normal life.

Psycho-Physiological Disorders

Let us now talk about the Psycho-Physiological reactions of the Laotians people which would set them apart, or perhaps throw them together with Americans.

* Add: " don't want to loss any part of the obdy until they see that _____"

Westermeyer: I've been particularly interested in noting the psycho-physiologic diseases of the people in Laos and I find them amazingly similar to these of the people in the States. They have tension headaches; they have migraine headaches though perhaps less commonly than in the States; they have hive reactions to stress. There is less of what we might call the allergic rhinitis, or hayfever, syndrome than in the States, but that occurs also. They do get gastritis symptoms and while there is perhaps less spastic colon or irritable colitis, or mucous colitis here this may just be a factor of the large number of people in the states who regard abnormality of bowel habit as unusual and present the cases to the doctor. Whether there would be differences in quantity I wouldn't like to say but certainly this irritable colon syndrome does exist here.

The Laotian people do have symptoms of early ulcer or gastritis here. In fact, I've seen a good deal more of these types of problems among Tai Dam, and Lao, and Meo people that work directly with Americans, they seem to have a good deal more psycho-physiological symptoms than others. Whether this is that these type of people are drawn to work with Americans or Americans are producing the symptoms, it's difficult for me to comment on. However, one thing I have seen a good deal less of than in the states is the severe ulcer: perforated or obstructed or bleeding ulcer. The only really bad bleeding ulcer I've seen in Laos so far was in a Chinese high school teacher who was teaching English. I saw him in Vientiane. Aside from this one instance I have not seen any other severe ulcer syndrome. So in general I'd say the Laotian people are very much the same qualitatively if not quantitatively, and perhaps you don't see the severe, incapacitated psycho-physiologic case as often as you see it in the States.

Orr: Your mentioning of the Laotians who work with Americans having American type disorders is interesting. In west Africa I had noticed an absence of neurotic type disorders among the tribal people, but a high incidence of it among the urban people. This is well recognized by the city people who more or less associated it with the rapid pace and special stresses of Westernization, as they got it in the cities.

The Traditional Medical Systems

This brings up the general problem of your contacts with the traditional medical system. For example do you have any problems with attitudes towards the phi or spirits which figure in many of the cases of illness in the village? In the hospital do the Laotians just forget about their traditional concepts of illness?

Westermeyer: I would say that in virtually all cases among Lao and Meo also Lao Theng especially when there is a serious illness, we copractise with the phi. In other words the patient is going to cover all eventualities, he gets certain rocks or certain herbs, or

receives advice from the phi doctor at the same time he is receiving penicillin or chloromycetin. I'd say as far as an injury is concerned, particularly battlefield-type injury, there is very little reversion to phi doctor or to traditional forms of medicine. They seem to be very willing for us to care for these types of things on our own.

It is interesting to note in regard to the Meo that when I first came to the hospital about a year ago, it was smaller. Most of the severely injured were brought down to Vientiane and the mortality was quite high. As a result we would often just be getting over the hump, and the Meo family would remove the patient from the hospital. The reason was they wanted him to die at home. Recently they are bringing in to the hospital severely injured or ill persons whom, a year or more ago, they would have left to die at home to receive the ministrations of the phi doctor. I haven't run into any problems working with phi medicine or phi doctors, I've tried to utilize them as much as possible. I did run into one missionary who castigated me at some length for treating anybody who was using phi medicine at the same time that Western medicine was being used. His thought was that in these instances the phi medicine would receive all the credit. None of the credit would be left to Western medicine and the patient would never see any reason for religious conversion. I don't agree with this attitude, and I find that people tend to give the devil his due. When Western medicine is helping them they have no compunctions about utilizing it.

Orr: You are to be complimented on your very modern attitude toward the use of traditional medicine.

Westermeyer: There are a few instances where I'm not completely happy with traditional methods, particularly down on the Plateau de Bolovens where they are very concerned about leprosy, there is high incident of leprosy. The traditional or phi doctor will burn out with a hot rod whatever the skin disease might be. I'm afraid that in a large number of cases they are burning out psoriasis or just chronic skin infestations. Interestingly enough, this is a traditional method of * my way to wage war against these methods. I think the attitudes of the phi doctor are too important to antagonize him at this point in time.

Types of Mental Disorders

Orr: Well, we're just touching on various subjects here in this introductory discussion. Would you like to talk about mental disorders that you have observed?

Westermeyer: I've given this a good deal of thought so I have some organized ideas along these lines. On a spectrum of the psychiatric diseases from the least serious in a psychiatric sense--the psycho-physiologic disorders (such as tension headaches); up to hysterical type disorders (in other words the numb arm or numb legs)

* Add: " treating leprosy in India. A few other methods I don't think are particularly helpful to individual, but haven't gone of _____"

are a "first line" of psychological defense. One goes from that lower order the more serious neurotic anxiety or depression. And thence on to the most serious, schizophrenia or other types of psychosis. I've made some interesting observations among the Lao, Meo and Lao Theng peoples in this country.

I think that psycho-physiologic disorders and hysterical disorders are quite common. Hysteria disorders are very uncommon in the States--that is the inability to talk, or the blindness, without any physical basis for the disorder. Whereas, here in Lao they are fairly common. In the States you see a great deal of depression and a great deal of anxiety. In Laos I've seen very little of this. I've seen only one really depressed individual and his depression was paramount to a psychotic depression rather than to the garden variety neurotic depression that we see so commonly back in the States.

So far as anxiety goes, most of the anxiety that I've seen has been based somewhat in reality. The individuals that are concerned have been in battle the last day or so and attacked by enemy and are concerned that they are going to be attacked again. These people have shown classical anxiety symptoms. There isn't some inter-personal relationship or some vague Freudian ideology for their problem.

Advancing to the psychotic problem I have seen classical schizophrenia here in the country. I haven't seen a large number of manic-depressive psychotics although they do occur. Interestingly enough the schizophrenia seems to be an mostly undifferentiated schizophrenia. There isn't very much of a paranoid aspect to the Schizophrenia; whereas in the States paranoid schizophrenia is very common. So I would say that we see a good deal more of ailments on extremes of the spectrum--on the hysteria psycho-physiologic side and the psychotic side, with very little in between; whereas in the states, so far as percentages are concerned, there is a great deal more in the middle--the neurotic anxiety or the neurotic depressive individual. So far as comparing absolute numbers of these disorders--people in the States to people here in Laos--I certainly would be reluctant to venture a guess. Overall there seems to be less but I think probably a large number of them are not coming to our attention. They are being taken care of by traditional means. They aren't being removed from their village to a larger village where there is a medic, or to a hospital such as we have at

Psychological Problems in the Village

Orr: Some very interesting observations there. I don't want to take the time to go into them here. But we would certainly expect that in the supposedly idealic village life of the Lao there would be relatively little of the classical pattern of anxiety that is so common in the States. Perhaps the extremes that you mentioned might

be related to spirit possession as a cultural feature. That is the practices of the mediums who interpret for the spirits and are possessed by them. This is just a hypothesis tossed out in passing--something we can double back on, and check later. What do you think about the hypotheses I just made--about this "idealistic" culture where everyone has a wonderful time? Do you find there are some kinds of mental disorders within the traditional framework? What about the crimes of violence in the villages--the sudden murders, the tossing of the grenade by the jilted lover and the like. The whole phenomenon of sudden irrational, aggressive behavior--elsewhere in Southeast Asia is referred to as "running amok."

Westermeyer: The so-called idealistic life of the Lao I don't think exists. There are certainly interpersonal tensions that do exist. They exist on a slower rate, in other words they don't seem to have the time limitations that we have back in the states. But tensions and problems do exist. It isn't quite as idealistic as one might think. There are some aspects which are different: the individual depends more on his family; he is more subject to the whims of nature. But there are interpersonal conflicts within the family, interpersonal conflicts between siblings, between husband and wife, between neighbors. Conflicts exist. So far as crimes of violence are concerned, in the villages the Laotians can usually tell you all the crimes of violence that have occurred within the last 50 years. They know about them and talk about them and the history of these events are significant in their day-to-day knowledge of people and of what goes on. Certainly crimes of violence having to do with grenades and shooting episodes occur today. But most of them have, to my knowledge, occurred in metropolitan or quasi-metropolitan areas where the traditional cultural structure of the people has been disrupted. The people who have come from the village have broken many of their ties and are living in a big city. They no longer marry with the ceremonies such as they did in the village. Some of their customs relating to birth, relating to important happening in their life no longer hold as they did in the village. I would tend to think that crimes of violence have increased with urbanism in Laos, if you want to call a town of four or five thousand people "urban"; In Laos I would.

Orr: This has been a most interesting introductory session, Doctor. To sum it up: we have been talking about the psychological processes of the Laotian peoples under different sets of circumstances and making broad references to some of their psychological reactions of both normal and pathological types. We have been trying to briefly examine the roots of such reactions by reference to their cultural backgrounds, degree of Westernization, and immediate experiences. As you have pointed out Westernization seems to have had a strong effect psychologically on the individual; but a substratum of traditional psychological responses arising out of village conditions also exists. It would be interesting to see if, in spite of the differences in ethnic backgrounds of the variety of Laotian peoples, the individuals react similarly to Westernization, or whether their reactions would depend on their cultural backgrounds to some degree. A number of fruitful hypotheses and possible areas for study seem to be emerging from our discussion.

Observations and Conclusions

This paper is, to the best of our knowledge, the first data on Laotian psychology and psychiatry to be presented as such. The potential of such data for utilization in American development work is tremendous, but the field is practically virgin territory. The attempt made here, to be continued in subsequent papers, should be regarded as an exploratory survey. USAID technicians and administrators who read this are requested to be patient in regard to the deriving of "operational conclusions" from the study.

Some interesting suggestions, in addition to those touched on in the body of the paper, may be mentioned here as preliminary hypotheses.

1. The absence of expected emotions in Laotians such as lack of empathy in the hospital nurses, is a frequent complaint of USAID technicians. Lao are corresponding surprises to find their own emotions lacking, or occupying a low value in American behavior. For example, most Lao are surprised at the American traits of seriousness in their work, strictness in regard to time, and emphasis on capability rather than family connections in employment practices. These American values and the emotions and behavior connected with them contrast sharply with the Lao leisurely attitude toward work in which play is often mixed, the bo pen nyung (no-is-why; who cares) complex, and the importance of family hierarchies and familism generally in their culture. This is to be expected in two cultures which are historically so remote and foreign. It must be realized that disillusionment at such discoveries affect both Americans and Laotians and moral judgments to the detriment of the opposite group are usually made. Communists made great gains on misunderstandings caused by such hiatuses.

Obviously, the subject has operational importance. It would seem that USAID efforts should not rest on emotional values that are not there. Values and motivations which are present must be relied on since the process of remaking thought patterns of a population is a matter of generations. Indeed some policy attitudes on this seem to be to write off the old and mature individuals and concentrate on shaping the young through education. Even if we had communist-type controls on enculturation, this would be impractical for the Laotian traditional mind and its hybrid form will be a major factor to deal with for many years to come.

2. Western medicine should not be regarded as in competition with the traditional medical system nor should other Western institutions such as modern agriculture, administration, and the like be regarded as competing with Laotian traditional institutions. The doctor's attitude on this is realistic and quite rare.

3. The high morale noted in the ward may stem from powerful emotions which could be put to far wider use if adroitly encouraged. It seems to sustain the Laotians in dire circumstances; surely a most important motivation.

4. The low incident or lack of certain mental disorders which are common in the States suggests a fruitful field for further study. Although we are concerned with mental pathology here it may be shown that such is "part of the spectrum" of normal behavior.

5. The suggestion that Western type neuroses are associated with Westernized Laotians suggests that we may be exporting more than the "benefits of civilization"; i.e., its scourges, also. This seems to be a world wide phenomenon that deserves the closest attention if our development efforts are to bear the expected fruit.

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November 8, 1966

THE LAO ASTROLOGICAL CANE;
THE ARTIFACT AND THE INSTITUTION OF ASTROLOGY IN LAOS

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THE LAO ASTROLOGICAL CANE;

THE ARTIFACT AND THE INSTITUTION OF ASTROLOGY IN LAOS

Introduction

When Redfield pointed out that human culture consists of "common understandings shared by a community and manifested in act and artifact,"¹ he emphasized the interrelationship of objects of material culture to the nonmaterial culture such as behavior, institutions, and values. Kroeber states this interrelationship thusly:

"A distinction often made between material and nonmaterial culture is mentioned here only as probably having no first-rank significance. The literal difference is of course obvious: physical objects as against institutions and ideas. But do they stand for something basically different? Do they function with significant difference in culture? The answer seems No. What counts is not the physical ax or coat or wheat but the idea of them, the knowledge how to produce and use them, their place in life. It is this knowledge, concept, and function that get themselves handed down through the generations, or diffused into other cultures, while the objects themselves are quickly worn out or consumed."²

Fairservis, speaking as an archaeologist, indicates the importance of material culture objects in reconstructing whole societies of the past: "The archaeologist may be said to use a his slogan for identifying the cultures of the past, 'by their tools you shall know them'"³

In this paper I would like to examine an artifact of the present-day Lao people, the Tai-speaking, glutinous rice-eating people, of the Mekong Valley in Laos. This artifact, a decorated walking cane, was bought in a store in Vientiane in December, 1965, and forms part of a collection of material culture objects utilized by this office in studying Lao culture. A knowledge of the cane gets us well into an understanding of the institution of astrology which is widely practiced in Southeast Asia. This knowledge is a facet of the Lao mind, and can be important in American-Lao relationships including those involving development projects. It is concerned mainly with beliefs in auspicious or lucky and inauspicious or unlucky days -- a powerful motivation in the daily life of the majority of the Lao people.

¹ Robert Redfield, late Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, University of Chicago. Course in Social Anthropology, 1942.

² Kroeber, Alfred L. Anthropology. London, Harrap, 1948, p. 295.

³ Fairservis, Walter A., Jr. The Origins of Oriental Civilization. New York, Mentor, 1962, p. 57.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Thao Kene, Lao scholar, member of the Literary Committee of the Kingdom of Laos, and Senior Research Assistant of this office. His understandings of the Lao culture and his art work (Fig. 1) are included herein.

The Cane

The artifact under study is a mai khon thao (wood-cane-leaning on earth) or walking cane, made of mai peck (~~wood-diamond~~ hard), a solid bamboo reed found in clumps six feet high on hilly and rocky ground. The cane measures 3 feet, 1½ inches in length. It is 1 inch in diameter at the head, which is slightly rounded, and tapers to 6 inches in diameter at the tip (Fig. 1 - i). Except for the rounded head and squared off end, the reed is unworked. Ten natural sections or cells of the small bamboo stem provide areas for decoration which is done by a negative process (luat lai). The designs are made by putting the stick in a fire to produce a dark brown color while protecting the original color (light tan) under "wet string" which traces out the designs. When the stick is fired and the "string" removed, the contrast of darker and lighter brown provides the negative designs shown as single lines in Fig. 1 a-g.

The Artisan

The third section of the cane (Fig. 1-b) tells us in arabic numerals and alphabet letters that it was made in the Buddhist year 2507 (1964) at Muong Kenthao, the capital of a country area in Luang Prabang Province, northern Laos. This Western writing gives a modern touch to the cane which is otherwise strictly traditional Laotian in style. The name of the maker, Phommachack (Brahmin-wheel of law), is also given in the same section. The comparative excellence of the art work and the high-toned name of the maker indicates that he is a sang see meu (expert-artful hand) or artisan. I also have a large-celled bamboo drinking "glass" made by the same artisan. This is decorated with a negative goat, two roses, and some designs similar to those on the cane. He probably started learning the art of decorative bamboo as an apprentice, after which he passed an examination given secretly by master artisans, and underwent a ceremony to consecrate him as a sang see meu.

Each artisan has a genii or spirit (phi meu; spirit hand) who is the supernatural master of the particular art under whom he works. He is obliged to pray to this spirit using flowers and candles on the 7th, 8th, 14th and 15th of each lunar month. The spirit of the art enters the artisan and gives him his veesah (professional ability or talent). The making of the cane doesn't take long -- about two weeks, most of the time being used to season the green reeds. They sell for about 250 kip a piece (50¢). Actually, walking cane artists are found only in the north of Laos although canes are sold widely throughout the country. This is perhaps a reflection of the age-old custom of collecting artisans around the palace of the Kings of Laos -- the capital of the Kingdom of Lan Xang (14th-18th centuries) was located in Luang Prabang.

Motifs

The main motif of the cane (Fig. 1-a) is an astrological table nyam ta hah pamma hek kook (time-square-five-sky man or brahman - art - power). The horizontal columns give the days of the week from "1" for Sunday to "7" for Saturday. The Lao week is essentially the same as ours and the days refer to planets. Both Western and Eastern cultures appear to have derived the week concept from the same Indo-European language source. The vertical columns give the five times of day: sow, morning from 6 to 9 AM; suai, before lunch, 9-11 AM; thyung, noontime 11 AM - 1 PM; bai, afternoon 1-3 PM; leng, evening 3-6 PM.

The column on the extreme left gives the legend of the table from top to bottom as follows: o - do not walk (inauspicious time); 8 - will be good (auspicious time); 8 8 - very profitable (very auspicious); "3" - good day; x - unhappy (very inauspicious time).

The owner of the cane is supposed to follow the astrological table when he is planning important work. He must choose the correct time for such events as a marriage in the family, a long trip, a funeral, collecting of ashes after cremation, housewarming, and the like. This is the province of astrology (hora sat; horoscope-science) and is not a simple matter in any respect. For the correct use of the cane one should go to an astrologer, maw du nyam (expert-study-time), who for a fee will readjust the table according to the year and day of the owner's birth. The cane is often used "as is".

In Lao society, the big man -- that is one who has both supernatural and natural power -- "makes his own luck" and can decide events by sheer force of his will. Such a person is not concerned with the astrological tables for the most part, although he will respect them. At the other end of the social scale, the small or poor man finds astrology too expensive for him and must operate for the most part without horoscopic guidance -- although he too will have a high respect for the "science". The average man, comprising 70-80% of the population, however, must consult the astrological tables frequently to guide him in everyday life. The walking cane is a help and comfort in events involving journeying or walking. The cane is consulted prior to the planned activity to get the right time to carry it out, and is carried on the journey as shown in Fig. 1-h. A person with such a cane is fortified as to his present and future actions. This is understood by on-lookers, who will give additional respect to the traveler, although the cane as such doesn't contain power to otherwise protect its owner. The cane must never be used as a weapon, as this would show disrespect for hora sat.

The other motifs are auxiliary zodiacal signs which add appropriate symbols since they refer to directions as follows: horse (Fig. 1-c) is the guardian of the Northwestern door; cow or ox (Fig. 1-d) is the guardian of the Eastern door; lion (Fig. 1-e) is the guardian of the Southwestern door; and tiger (Fig. 1-f) is guardian of the Northern door. The zodiacal figures are also used to designate years and days and are considered to be the influences impinging on the individual by virtue of the time of his birth.



Fig. 1. The Lao Walking Cane with negative designs a-g: a. astrological table for walking; b. name of maker, place and year of manufacture; c. the Horse (Northwest); d. the Cow (East); e. the Lion (Southwest); f. the Tiger (North); g. designs; h. Old Lao man using cane; i. the Cane showing areas of motifs a-g. Scale: a-g; full scale; i. 1/6 scale.

The Institution of Astrology in Southeast Asia

The institution of astrology among the Lao is often referred to in the literature although I have not seen a reference on astrological canes as such. Lebar et al describe the institution in connection with other religious beliefs of the Lao stemming from the pre-Buddhist period:

"In practically every village there is in addition one older person, usually a male, with special knowledge of spirits and how to deal with them. Combining this knowledge with astrology and other occult lore, he may be called upon to choose an auspicious day for a wedding, locate lost property, conduct household rites, or perform the yearly ritual of feeding the village spirits." ⁴

The HRAF handbook on Laos mentions that bonzes (Buddhist monks) often specialize in astrological lore where it is essential in the propitious naming of the infants.

Mention is also made of the importance of auspicious days arrived at through astrological lore in the raising of rice:

"For the Lao the raising of rice is both an essential economic activity and a way of life closely interwoven with the supernatural. Each stage in its cultivation is accompanied by appropriate rituals, from the initial planting ceremonies on a day chosen as auspicious by the local astrologer to the special rites for the opening of the storage sheds after harvesting has been completed." ⁵

Even the date for the beginning of each New Year is fixed by astrologers:

"The months are numbered, the first beginning in late November or early December of the Gregorian calendar. This, however, is not considered the beginning of the new year. Finding the zodiacal signs unpropitious at this season, the Lao astrologers fix by intricate calculation a time for the opening of the new year in April. The exact day varies but is always between the sixth day of the waning moon of the fifth month and the sixth day of the waning moon of the sixth month." ⁶

Kingshill describes the same institution of astrology among the people of Northern Thailand who are closely related to the Lao:

⁴ Lebar, Frank M., Gerald C. Hickey, John K. Musgrave. Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia. New Haven, Human Relations Area Files (HRAF), 1964, p. 219.

⁵ Lebar, Frank M. and Adreinne Suddard (eds.). Laos; Its People, Its Society, Its Culture. New Haven, Human Relations Area Files (HRAF), 1963. p. 53.

⁶ IB., D., p. 201.

⁷ Lebar, Op. Cit., p. 95.

"Most villagers still follow customs with regard to the selection of auspicious days for all kinds of celebrations and ceremonies, although most of those questioned deny that they actually believe in this practice. Here again we have an example of an underlying tenet that it is better to play safe. In cases of old, it was known that a person who did not follow the advice of an astrologer (maw du) was visited by bad luck."⁸

Even here where more Westernization has taken place than among the Lao, the old concepts are "a considerable residue of practices reflecting anxiety about the future, from a time when everything in the villagers' daily life must have been governed by them."⁹

DeYoung, writing about the life of the Thai peasants who live outside the Bangkok delta plain, emphasizes the complexity of astrological calculations:

"The times of important ceremonies, such as housewarrings, funerals and ordinations, are never set without consulting the abbot of the local wat who makes lunar calculations to ensure an auspicious date. The times of unlucky dates are not consistent, for not only are they controlled by the lunar calendar, but they will vary according to the month, year, and cycle of birth of each person. An unlucky day for a man born in the Year of the Goat might not be unlucky day for a man born in the Year of the Dog. In November, March and July, Tuesday is considered an unlucky day on which to start an important undertaking, whereas for the other nine months it may not be so. Certain specific dates are lucky or auspicious such as the 13th, 14th and 15th of every month. The determination of lucky and unlucky days is so complex that only the monks with their books of astrology and charts can make the proper calculations. In almost every incident of daily life, the animal zodiac cycle and the lunar calendar will be consulted. Certain animal-year combinations bring happiness in marriage, other combinations will doom it to failure. A woman born in the Year of the Rat, for example, should not marry a man born in the Year of the Dog, if a happy marriage is desired. Much of this old superstition is waning, but elements of it still cling tenaciously in the rural areas."¹⁰

The Vietnamese also believe in astrology as described by Hickey for the villagers of the Lower Mekong Delta:

⁸ Kingshill, Konrad. Ku Daeng - The Red Tomb; A Village Study in Northern Thailand. Bangkok, Bangkok Christian College, 1965, p. 135.

⁹ Iem, p. 139.

¹⁰ DeYoung, John E. Village Life in Modern Thailand. Berkeley, University of California, 1963, p. 134.

"The villagers believe that certain periods in everyone's life are auspicious or inauspicious, and there are prescribed ways of finding out when they occur....In order to avoid tam tai (the three misfortunes: fatal accidents, sickness, and loss of good fortune) the individual consults with one proficient at analyzing the lunar calendar (this would include some elderly villagers, the cu si, and some of the healers) to find a propitious time during the first months of the year for the tam tai ritual."

Finally, Burling identifies the diffusion of Hindu traits throughout Southeast Asia in the pre-Buddhist period:

"The local languages lacked not only a script, but also words for the philosophical, religious and legal concepts which came from India. As a result, hundreds of words of Indian origin were borrowed by local languages just as Latin and French terms have been borrowed by English. The calendar used in most of the mainland countries is based directly upon Indian models....This imported calendar has regulated the ceremonial cycle, and it has also been widely used for astrological calculations. Southeast Asians have taken the motions of the heavenly bodies very seriously as prognostications of the future. Every Burmese child is provided with an inscription which states the exact moment of his birth, so that astrologers will be able to foretell his future with precision, and the Burmese chose 3:40 A.M. on January 4, 1948 as the moment to gain their formal independence from Britain because the arrangement of the planets at that time was judged to be auspicious."

Thus we see that we are dealing with a widespread and ancient institution with firm rootings in the psychology and everyday life of the Southeast Asians. As indicated in Burling's last comment above, astrology is also deeply connected with the affairs of the nations.

Astrology and the Nation of Laos

Thus far we have been dealing primarily with hokra sat, the relationship of astrology to the life of the individual. We mentioned that the beginning of New Year in Laos is determined by astrological calculations. This is, strictly speaking, the "science" of du leuk ryan (study-fundamental-time), astrology for the nation and the society. In addition to New Year's calculations, astrology is used for the good of the Lao community and the nation as

¹¹ Hickey, Gerald Cannon. Village in Vietnam. New Haven, Yale University, 1964, p. 75.

¹² Burling, Robbin. Hill Farms and Paddy Fields; Life in Mainland Southeast Asia. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1965, p. 69.

a whole in a number of ways. The dedication of public (including religious) works, for example, should be worked out by monk astrologers connected with the RLG Ministry of Cults. Such persons as the chao khana wat (ruler-group-wat; bishop) or chao attikon wat (ruler-great-work-wat; abbot) are experts in these matters just as the maw nyam are for personal astrology. They determine by a series of intricate calculations the best time and date to begin a piece of work and also to dedicate it -- to assure its success. It is said that the most expert of the monks concern themselves with the study of the astrological future of Laos and the Laotians.

During the French period it was customary to get such astrological assistance for the building of ordinary public buildings such as schools. The French called this "premiere pierre" (first stone), something like our ground-breaking ceremony. More recently this custom has died out in regard to strictly secular projects. This is generally regretted by the average Lao (although not by the more Westernized) who believes that the old ways were the best, and considers that "every organization has fallen down" by neglecting the traditional spiritual values and procedures. A sense of security and faith in the control of the future seems to have gone with this lapse of tradition. The dropping of astrological ritualism in public works is generally associated with increase in Western culture influence where astrology, along with many other supernatural beliefs of the Laotians, is usually regarded as a superstition.

Significance of These Data for USAID

The significance of these preliminary understandings of Lao astrology for USAID development programs in Laos is not clear at this point. The complex institution of astrology has many facets which would seem to lend themselves to increasing the effectiveness of development projects. However, a period of exploration and continued research is needed to determine its value and methods for utilization. It would seem that the confidence of the Lao public in a particular development project would be increased if they thought its future was auspicious and destined for success rather than inauspicious and doomed to indifferent success or failure from the start.

It would also seem that a sense of security and faith in the future of the country could be instilled by the judicious use of astrological assistance. Recently the public mind has been depressed with augurs of calamity for Laos's future manifested by signs of the finding of dragon's eggs (which heralded the recent catastrophic Mekong flood), battles between red and black ants, and most recently a crying Buddha statue in the main wat of Vientiane. There is a feeling that some of the Lao leaders are deserting the tried and true Lao ways of the past. One account said that a high Lao official could have prevented the flood by appropriate ceremonies to the water dragon (naga) after its eggs were found, but didn't because he feared his American friends would think him superstitious. Another account said the flood was caused by a Lao General's incorrect handling of the dragon eggs which were turned over to him -- he supposedly gave two to American friends who sent them to the United States. (Orr to Sweet, monthly reports, September and October 1966, para. 1, October 10 and November 10, 1966, USAID/Laos, Program Office, Unclassified.)

Americans who have worked closely with Lao may be puzzled by the apparent nonappearance of astrological considerations in their counterparts's behavior or that of the Lao organization concerned.¹³ This may be explained by the fact that (1) the Lao with whom most Americans come in contact are heavily Westernized and may have discarded astrology in part of their behavior, (2) they usually know Americans look down on astrology as superstition (note Kingshill's comment above on the Thai villagers' reluctance to disclose their belief to him), and/or (3) they believe that Americans are taking responsibility for the sata or fate of an enterprise or project and thus overrule the lesser person's astrological considerations (see "big man" position above). Perhaps this lack of astrological involvement of the Lao in USAID projects may keep them from feeling responsible for its success. Or to say this another way -- perhaps the use of astrological assistance in setting "most auspicious" days for beginning and dedicating USAID projects, and the like, may result in a greater sense of involvement and responsibility on the part of the Lao, and in this way contribute to the greater integration of USAID efforts in the Lao culture and society.

I raised the question with Thao Kene, my research assistant, of USAID utilizing astrological dates for beginning and finishing their joint USAID-RLG projects. He said it was "a very good suggestion" and would be an important ceremonial approach which would have a desirable effect on the minds of the Lao people. In line with this idea he asked what the birth date of USAID was, as this must figure prominently in the calculations. I told him one would have to ask our own experts in Washington about this astrological problem.

Conclusions

1. The Lao astrological cane, one of a number of artifacts associated with the ancient institution of astrology, serves to introduce a body of beliefs and practices which still play an important part in the lives of individuals and groups in Laos.

2. A knowledge of the system of astrological belief is necessary for understanding the mind and the behavior of the Lao on the individual, community, and government levels.

3. Because of the importance of astrology to the Lao people, it is suggested that experimental research be conducted to determine possible uses of astrological assistance for increasing the effectiveness of USAID projects and American assistance activities in general.

¹³ In a recent trip report ("Trip Report", May 19, 1967, Unclassified), Mr. Paul H. Skuse, Chief, PSD, USAID/Laos, records an interesting note on the astrological baton, a modern military adaptation of the cane:

4. Astrology as practiced in Laos should not be considered as "superstition" (as it is in America) but as an integral part of the religious and world view of the average Lao. As such, the institution is seen as potentially strengthening the confidence of the Lao in the efficacy of American assistance and in the future of their country and culture.

Kenneth G. Orr
Research and Evaluation Officer
USAID/Laos
Vientiane, November 21, 1966

13 (contd) "Our arrivals and departures were right on time with the exception of our arrival back in Ban _____ on the night of April 27th, when the barge on which we were travelling hit a reef and broke a crankshaft, causing a delay of about an hour and a half until we could be ferried in by small boats. On this particular day General _____ and Police Colonel _____ were somewhat jittery all day because the magic formula carved on their batons * indicated that between the hours of 6 and 8, morning and evening, was a bad time to travel. Sure enough we piled up on the rocks about 1900 hours. Yet there are some uninformed persons who scoff at Laos superstitions!!

* (See Dr. K.G. Orr's research paper: The Lao Astrological Cane:
"The Artifact and Institution of Astrology in Laos.")

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MEMORANDUM

United States Agency for International Development
Mission to Laos

December 19, 1966

TO: Mr. Remo Ray Garufi, Acting Program Officer

FROM: K. G. Orr, Research and Evaluation Officer

SUBJECT: Research Paper: The Lao Farmer and the Proposed Artificial
Fertilizer Program in Laos

The attached paper, above subject, containing comments on the proposed artificial fertilizer program of USAID/AGR in terms of the ethnography of the Lao and related Southeast Asian farmers, is submitted as requested.

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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

THE LAO FARMER AND THE PROPOSED
ARTIFICIAL FERTILIZER PROGRAM IN LAOS

(This is a working paper, and may be expanded, modified, or withdrawn at any time. It is issued to interested USAID and related organizations in the hope that comments may be elicited which may be incorporated into a subsequent revised edition.)

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
Program Office, USAID/Laos
December 13, 1966

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the kind cooperation and assistance of the following USAID/Laos personnel and organizations in the preparation of this paper: Mr. Walter Scott, Extension Advisor Area, Luang Prabang, Agriculture Division; Thao Kene, Member of the Literary Committee, Officer de l'Ordre de l'Instruction Publique of the Kingdom of Laos, and Senior Research Assistant, and Mr. Bourmy Sengdara, Junior Research Assistant, Research and Evaluation Branch, Program Office; Mrs. Mary Katherine Bergen, Secretary, Highway Division (BPR) who typed the final draft, and Miss Carol Fowler, Secretary, Program Office, who typed the stencils, and; the Communications Media Branch for running off the stencils.

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The Lao Farmer and the Proposed Artificial Fertilizer
Program in Laos

Introduction

Linton was discussing the classical anthropological conception of change by innovation in human culture when he wrote the following:

"Suffice it to say that in spite of the occasional realization of brand-new needs by a society, with the consequent introduction into the culture of elements with new functions, the bulk of all cultural changes are in the nature of replacements. The newly introduced element takes over the uses or functions of a pre-existing element. Its general acceptance by the members of a society will depend very largely on whether it performs these functions more efficiently."¹

Foster carries the analysis of change somewhat farther by emphasizing that, the existing cultural patterns in the society under study, have a great deal to do with whether or not the innovation has a chance of being accepted or not.

"The lesson of syncretism is important to the strategy of planned culture change: The probability of acceptance is increased to the extent that innovations are susceptible of reinterpretation in the conceptual framework of the recipient group. Aspirin tablets, for example, are easily incorporated into folk medical pharmacopoeias, which also include pain killers. The practice of vaccination is much more difficult to sell, however, because preventive medicine plays a relatively less important role in most peasant groups."²

¹ Linton, Ralph. The Study of Man. New York, Appleton-Century, 1936, pp. 279-280

² Foster, George M. Traditional Cultures: and the Impact of Technological Change. New York, Harper and Row, 1962, p.28/

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Finally, Erasmus puts his finger on a crucial area for research on problems of cultural change - the individual within the recipient society:

"In this changing world of cultural behavior I view man's motivational and cognitive attributes as the active agents of causality, and his environmental conditions (both physical and cultural) as passive - passive in the sense that they determine culture only as a consequence of man's actions. The pins in a pinball machine determine the path of the ball only when the ball has been set in motion." ³

In this paper I would like to explore the relationship between the innovators' plans and expectations and assumed reactions on the part of the recipient culture. In this case, the innovation is designed to increase rice production by the introduction of artificial fertilizer which is now virtually unknown in Laos. We will be concerned with the cultural practices and attitudes of the major ethnic group - The Tai-speaking, glutinous-rice eating, Buddhist villagers who inhabit the Mekong valley and its tributaries and call themselves the Phou Lao (people-Lao). I will undertake to gauge the reactions of the Lao farmers to the introduction of artificial fertilizer on the basis of 16 months anthropological field work with them.

The innovators' plans now in the process of formation were initiated by Dr. Gilbert R. Muhr, Soils Advisor, Agriculture Division,⁴ with major comments by Mr. Donald W. Murray, Staff Assistant, Office of the Director,⁵ and Mr. John Walsh, Program Analyst Operations, Program Office;⁶ in addition, Mr. Murray has written two comprehensive surveys of the general

³Erasmus, Charles J. *Man Takes Control; Cultural Development and American Aid*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1961, p. 11.

⁴Muhr, Gilbert R. *Fertilizer Vital to Agriculture in Developing Nations*. Reprint from Bulletin de Nouvelles, American Embassy, Vientiane, Laos, 1966.

⁵Murray, Don. *Fertilizer Distribution Program*, Memorandum to Norman Sweet, Program Officer, USAID/Laos, Vientiane, November 25, 1966.

⁶Walsh, John. *Fertilizer Distribution Proposal*. Memorandum to Norman Sweet, Program Officer, USAID/Laos, December 2, 1966.

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problem of increasing rice production. ⁷

The Innovators' Plans

Muhr's plan calls for an artificial fertilizer program to at first distribute fertilizer on a grant basis to the Lao farmers (some 600 tons in 50 pound lots to 24,000 farmers) and later to sell it on a partial credit basis through private or government distribution system until it becomes an integral part of the national economy system. The Lao farmer is to be taught about the new fertilizer through carefully-worded leaflets contained in the give-away sacks. The well written plan gives an enthusiastic picture of the results.

Murray feels that while the plan will surely get a lot of fertilizer in the hands of the farmers in short order (fertilizer now in USAID warehouses) there are serious drawbacks. He mentions the administrative burden of the give-away involving an estimated 400 villages, the staggering bookkeeping task of the expanded credit program, as well as its high subsidy, the competition offered private dealers, and the unknown factors of the general effect on the Lao farmer. He would like to equalize emphasis on other methods of rice increase such as irrigation, improved seeds, and other methods and give fertilizer its place in the total picture of agricultural development.

Walsh favors the plan, but would try additional methods of financing like pay-back according to rice yield, and the like, and he doesn't share Murray's apprehensions about how the Lao farmers will react. A number of issues raised by these papers related to specific data which this office has collected and an attempt may now be made to apply such information to some of the problems raised. To refer back to the Erasmus quotation above - it's as though the pins are being set to direct the best rolling of the ball - only "will the ball roll?"

⁷Murray, Don. USAID's Program to Increase Rice Production. Memorandum to Joseph A. Mendenhall, Director, USAID/Laos, December 1, 1966; and Agricultural Issues. Memorandum of Conversation, USAID/Laos, Vientiane, November 29, 1966.

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Lao Farmers' Interest in Artificial Fertilizer

No mention is made in the innovators' reports on the current state of need for or interest in artificial fertilizer on the part of the farmer. This would seem a necessary preliminary to setting up a plan and also in assessing the effectiveness of the artificial fertilizer demonstration. As a contribution to this subject, I would like to present the result of a survey conducted of 74 households in eight villages of Wapikhamthong Province, Southern Laos, in which three questions directly related to artificial fertilizer were asked of the Lao farmers (Table 1):⁸

⁸Orr, Kenneth G. A Behavioral Research Project for the Sedone Valley Program, Southern Laos; Preliminary Presentation of Interviews and Questionnaire data From Lao Villagers. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, June 30, 1966. Table 2. Questions 47, 51, 55.

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Table 1. Frequency of Interest in Artificial Fertilizer Shown in Responses of 74 Lao Farmers in Eight Villages, and Three Ecological Zones, Wapikhamthong Province, Southern Laos, May 1-6, 1966^a.

A. F. - Artificial
Fertilizer
(7) - Group Totals
50.00 - Percentiles

Village and Zone	Now Using A.F.	Used A.F.	If had enough money would use A.F. A.F. Socio-Economic Classes			Totals
			Hang Mee (Rich)	Paw Pan Kang (Average)	Thuk (Poor)	
Village #1, Zone #2	0	0	0 (2)	5 (7)	3 (7)	50.00 8 (16)
Village #2, Zone #1	0	0	1 (1)	3 (4)	2 (2)	85.71 6 (7)
Village #3, Zone #3	0	1 ^b	1 (2)	2 (3)	1 (2)	57.14 4 (7)
Village #4, Zone #1	0	0	1 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	16.67 1 (6)
Village #5, Zone #2	0	0	3 (4)	2 (5)	2 (2)	63.64 7 (11)
Village #6, Zone #1	0	0	2 (2)	1 (3)	1 (2)	57.14 4 (7)
Village #7, Zone #1	0	0	1 (2)	1 (3)	1 (3)	37.50 3 (8)
Village #8, Zone #2	0	0	3 (3)	4 (6)	3 (3)	83.33 10 (12)
Village Totals	0	1	66.67 12 (18)	54.55 18 (33)	56.52 13 (23)	58.12 43 (74)
Zone #1 (Dry, Poor Soil)	0	0	5 (7)	5 (12)	4 (9)	50.00 14 (28)
Zone #2 (Dry, good soil)	0	0	6 (9)	11 (18)	8 (12)	64.10 25 (39)
Zone #3 (River)	0	1	1 (2)	2 (3)	1 (2)	57.14 4 (7)
Zone Totals	0	1	66.67 12 (18)	54.55 18 (33)	56.52 13 (23)	58.11 43 (74)

^aFrom Orr, K.G., op. cit. June 30, 1966, Table 2

^bFrom Paw Pan Kang (average) group

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Question 51 of the Survey asked - "Do you apply artificial fertilizer to your land?" and received negative responses from all interviewees indicating, as the Innovators' had assumed, an open field for development of the Lao villages. Question 47 asked - "In what way have you changed your method of farming since you first started on your own?" As seen in column two, Table 1, one farmer responded that he had tried artificial fertilizer and also insecticide. This raises the suspicion that some exposure to the idea of artificial fertilizer had taken place there. Most of them knew about puis (artificial fertilizer, a Thai word). Perhaps they had heard of the fertilizer through agricultural extension agents who had distributed improved rice seed to 39 of the farmers in seven of the villages. (Survey question 48 b). At any rate when question 17 was put: "What things would you buy first if you had the money to buy them without difficulty?" and four items were called for -- none of the farmers mentioned wanting to buy fertilizer. The farmers wanted household items, rice fields, buffalo and oxen, tractors, farming tools, ox carts, motorcycles, car, rice mills and the like - a subject which will be discussed in further detail in a final report on the Sedone Valley Behavioral Research Project now in process. Survey question 55 asked - "If you had the money on hand, what would you like to change about your farm? Use more water pumps? Use more artificial fertilizer? Use better kinds of rice? Use machines in farming? Raise other crops? Buy more land? Use more insecticide? Other (specify)." The results on the portion concerning fertilizer is presented in some detail in Table 1. There are six variables involving socio-economic classes and ecological zones of significance in interpreting the results:

Socio-economic classes: In the Lao village three classes of families are recognized by the Lao themselves: (1) the hang mee (wealth-have) or "rich" class; (2) the paw pan kang (enough-dimension-middle) or "average" class; and (3) the thuk (poor) or "poor" class. When I asked Tasseng (township superintendent) in Village #1 to give an estimate of the economic resources of the three kinds of households, he said:

Tasseng: "Gladly. In regard to rice: a rich family will raise 700 to 1000 meun (one muen equals 12 kilograms) a year, an average family 300 to 400 muen, and a poor family will receive 50 to 60 meun muen as wages. Only the rich families own cows and herds of up to 50 are common. The rich will own from 7 to 10 buffalo also. While the average family has no cows, it will have about 3 buffalo used to cultivate the paddy rice.

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The poor own no buffalo since they have no land. The houses of the rich are large to accommodate a family of 10 to 15 with walls usually made of board, though sometimes of leaf. (Some of the wealthy are not ostentatious about their houses - see below). The average house has board or leaf walls and is made to accommodate an average size family of from 5 to 10 persons. Poor families such as the widow's house which you see there (pointing) are small and poorly constructed - such families have few if any able-bodied men. A certain amount of cash is kept in the family (house). Rich families may have as much as 120,000 to 150,000 kip (\$240-\$300), average families 40,000 to 50,000 (\$80-\$100) and poor families 1,000 to 2,000 kip (\$2 to \$4)."⁹

While our results modify this picture somewhat they bear out this common understanding.

Ecological zones: The initial information on ecological zones in the Sedone Valley area under study also came from a knowledgeable Lao, in this case the Chao Khoueng (ruler-province) or governor:

"Chao Khoueng: I would like to suggest that you divide the survey area into three zones: (1) livestock zone with no water; (2) agricultural zone with no water; (3) livestock-agricultural zone along the bank of the river with plenty of water. After the survey we would know what problems could be solved in each zone. Most important in all zones is agriculture. There are two kinds of agriculture: (1) rice, and (2) vegetables. This province is very rich in rice, but it has a shortage of vegetables and fruits because there is not enough water. Vegetable raising can be improved in those villages along the bank of the river; in this zone, therefore, we should solve the vegetable problem first before the other problems."¹⁰

Our investigations showed that Zone 1, located above the 500 foot contour line in a tributary of the Sedone River had lack of water as the number one problem - due to scarcity during the dry season and often paucity due to the rainy season.

⁹Orr, K. G. op. cit., June 30, 1966, p. 19.

¹⁰Orr, K. G., op. cit., June 30, 1966, p. 7

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The soil was also rocky and poor here. The farmers showed a great interest in livestock. We note in Table 1, the farmers of Zone 1 showed less interest in artificial fertilizer (50%) than did the farmers of Zone 2 and 3. In Village #4, Zone #1 only 17% of the farmers seemed interested. An interview with the Paw Ban (father-village) or head man of Village #4 brought out the following points:

Orr: What about the "felt needs" of the villagers?

Paw Ban: The most important need is water for the rice fields.

Orr: How are you going to get more water for the fields?

Paw Ban: Well, a pipe line could be run from the river. (General laughter at this.) When the river was back up we tried to get some water into our fields, but failed.

Orr: How about using better seeds and fertilizer so as to get more rice out of the present supply of water?

Baw Ban: I've heard of the high yield rice seeds and like the idea of trying them, but have not to date. I don't have any faith in fertilizer and although I have not tried it, I distrust the idea since I've heard the results are not good.¹¹

It might be that a fertilizer program in Zone 1 would be doomed to failure by lack of water and rocky soil. Perhaps the main effort in this "cattle country" should be on beef raising. On the other hand, some areas in Zone 1 - like Village #6 have pockets of good soil. Village #2, also showing high interest in fertilizer is located directly on the tributary river. Zone #2 located on the slopes of the high saddle of Zone #1 contained relatively fertile soil, and we find the farmers here most interested of all to try artificial fertilizer (64%). A relatively high interest is also shown in the very small sample of one village in Zone #3. Perhaps the data is most useful in pointing out that interests in and, we presume, uses for artificial fertilizer will vary with the ecological conditions of the specific village.

¹¹Orr, K. G. op. cit. June 30, 1966, p. 43

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Interest of the Classes: Well-to-do farmers are thought to be most interested in innovations because they are more likely to "take a chance" having resources to fall back on if they should fail. Also, they will have tried other types of innovations which they can afford. Our data shows the "rich" farmers showing more interest (66%) than the average (55%) or the poor group (56%). These figures are suggestive only since we will not take the time here to test their statistical significance (standard error of the difference between two proportions).

We see a lively interest displayed in artificial fertilizer by well over half of the farmers in most villages. It would seem that the Innovators are "barking up the right tree" - yet, there is a formidable over-40% of the farmers who appear to be indifferent to artificial fertilizer, and these frequencies suggest the acceptance of this innovation is not a foregone conclusion.

Intellectual Capabilities of the Lao Farmer

The intellectual capabilities of the Lao farmer to comprehend the uses of artificial fertilizer and apply it correctly after a little introduction is an article of faith with the Innovators:

"There are those who say we do not have enough research data to make sound recommendations. There are others who say the Lao farmer is not far enough advanced to use fertilizer properly. We should take little stock in these statements . . . surely many of them may not be able to read or write and to some extent they are steeped in old traditions, but he (the Lao farmer) is intelligent. In many ways he knows more about crops and their production under his conditions than those who question his capability. There is little doubt that once he sees for himself what fertilizer means on his own farm in the way of increasing yields, he will use it. Providing, of course, it is made available at a price whereby he may have a fair profit."¹²

¹²Muhr, Gilbert R. op. cit. July 1966, p. 2

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Muhr also mentions how the farmers of Laos have tried in a "meager" way to use fertilizer and compost, but that when they read the leaflet (or more probably have it read to them) they will quickly get the idea and start using the fertilizer. Such arguments are appealing to Americans who see in the Lao peasant another American-under-the-skin, hampered by superstitious traditional ideas which will soon disappear when the profits of the innovation are high enough. Unfortunately, the interpretation is too simple. One becomes suspicious on the mention of a Lao traditional system with which it will be competing. What is the nature of this traditional system?

The value of natural fertilizer, manures and green compost, are well known to the Lao farmer. Phoon (manure) in the form of animal droppings are distributed by the farmer and by the animals. Some soil is very fertile naturally but most benefit by phoon. Kee ku (excrement-chicken) and kee mu (excrement-pig) are often mixed with empty rice husks and placed in vegetable gardens. Buffalo and oxen manure collected from under the house where the animals are usually kept are placed on the seed beds in order to get sturdy plants for replanting in the na (paddy) rice fields. The na fields are naturally manured every dry season (December - April) as the cattle are pastured there to feeding on the rice stubble. Rice fields near the house act as the traditional latrine area for the whole family and is used discreetly at all times in the central and Southern areas of Laos (In the North streams are used for latrine areas). However, the use of human manure for fertilizer is deliberately avoided as unseemly, although it is general knowledge that Vietnamese use night soil. There is a feeling that different plants demand different kinds of manure: chicken and pig manure (thought to be the strongest) is not used on rice. There is also the conception that it is possible to have too much manure for a certain kind of plant, causing the stem and leaves to grow well but stunting the grain or fruit.

There is a correct way, the tried and true traditional way, for farming which the paw na (father-field) farmer knows, and departures from these ways is considered risky and subject to failures which the farmer cannot afford. The phi na (spirit-paddy field) who causes the rice to grow, inhabiting a small spirit house in the corner of the field (haw phi na) knows these traditional ways and resents purposeless innovations.

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Everyone knows that phi na do not like chicken manure used on rice seedlings. This spirit may also not like the new artificial fertilizer. If this is the case, the spirit will cause something unpleasant to happen to the rice, such as insects destroying it, rot and the like. The canny, traditionally-minded farmer will recognize this as a problem, and may talk to the phi na in the field or at its hut about the proposed change in farming procedures. If the new fertilizer proves a success the phi na has obviously agreed with him -- if not, then the gods are against it.

In view of these well defined attitudes and concepts about fertilizer, it would appear unlikely that a new type of fertilizer would be accepted on the strength of a written leaflet which someone else has to read to the farmer. Too many questions and cautions would arise which would almost certainly have to be set to rights by deliberate and carefully planned instructions and indoctrination on the uses of the innovation. Above all, it is highly important for the demonstration tests to succeed.

The process of innovation in this case would seem to require the replacement of some traditional ideas about fertilizer and the acquiring of new procedures - certainly not an easy matter.

Motivations of the Lao Farmer

Muhr assumed (see above) that the Lao farmer will be motivated to increase his rice production by a "fair profit" once he sees that the fertilizer works. Murray, on the other hand, doubts that "the farmer will want to apply fertilizer without diminishing the area planted, and to increase his total rice production . . . he will work less if he chooses to use fertilizers at all . . . I doubt our ability to instill such a drive (strong motivation for increasing production) through an approach that has us trying to deal with 24,000 farmers scattered across the countryside."¹³ Walsh generally disagrees with this idea: "As regards the caveat that farmers may use fertilizer to reduce their area planted, I believe this is highly unlikely. The phenomenon of a farmer striving for the same constant total yield each year . . . means the farmer knows of no possible benefit..."¹⁴

¹³Murray, Don. Op.Cit. Nov. 25, 1966, p. 4

¹⁴Walsh, J. Op. Cit. Dec. 2, 1966, p. 3

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What do the farmers themselves say? Some people (like myself, who are products of a society based on a money-economy, technologically-oriented economic system) have difficulty in appreciating that other people (like the Lao) who are just entering the money-economy from a subsistence economy, socio-religious culture, may have stronger motivations than cash profit. Accustomed though I am to non-American motivations, I am always somewhat surprised when I get this other-culture viewpoint as I did in Wapikhamthong Province, Village #4:

"Orr: What do the Lao farmers consider to be the necessary elements of muan the satisfactory life?"

(All were immediately interested in this subject and volunteered data which the Tasseng summed up.)

"Tasseng: The first necessary element is het boun (make-merit). This means holding festivals, in the wats or the homes, that stress togetherness, harmony, and the pleasure of life as well as religious ceremonies (it was clear that all agreed in thinking this of prime importance in life, but the Tasseng reconsidered the problem and thinking of the harsher realities of life - or of this American's prejudices - placed het boun in fourth place). Really, the most important element in muan is not to be short of rice. The second is to have lots of money. The third is not to have any fighting (the older men especially agreed with this). Then would come het boun." ¹⁵

Again, the emphasis on socio-religious values as primary ones came out in a meeting in Village #1:

"Orr: What do you know about USAID?"

"Tasseng: We don't know many things but we know that USAID program is to help the Laotians and, therefore, would like to suggest the following projects as worthy ones that would be most appreciated by the villagers: Firstly, the wat is too low. In the rainy season, for example, water covers the yard. We would like the wat grounds to occupy the highest place in the village as is only fitting. We could make canals to drain the water, but if the water runs off fast, it would cut the surface away.

¹⁵Orr, K. G. Op. cit. June 30, 1966, p. 43

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Secondly, as mentioned earlier, we need a sim or temple in the wat. Since there is no sim, we cannot adequately perform the ceremony of Boun Kong Buot (Merit-things-making monk) which makes a person into a monk and through which all our young men have to pass. We are using a temporary bamboo house for this important ceremony."¹⁶

A frank Chao Muong (Ruler-Muong) or Country Governor, in Village #4 further reinforced this viewpoint:

"Orr: Are the farmers essentially conservative or are they interested in modernization?"

"Chao Muong: The pressure for modernization has come from government orders for development work. The people naturally have responded to this. But they really aren't that badly off (i.e., to need modernization). Most are comfortable; they are not hard pressed for land, and they are not too interested in development projects."¹⁷

This Chao Muong has now been replaced by another - a "go-getter" more in line with government policy.

The attitudes of some villages (villagers) are changing - especially those near the towns like Vientiane where there is a need for and use for cash money. I met one Lao farmer in a village near Vientiane who was running a small store:

"Orr: You say you are interested in livestock. How do you plan to go about the livestock raising, and what kind of animals would you like to raise?"

"Chao Mong Man (ruler-things-store or store-owner): I'd like to raise chickens because our country does not have enough chicken farms yet. I have bought some lumber for the poultry house already and it cost me 20,000 kip (\$40). I have talked about chicken

¹⁶Orr, K. G. Op. cit., June 30, 1966, p. 25

¹⁷Orr, K. G. Op. cit., June 30, 1966, p. 45

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raising with my friends. They said they liked this idea, but they do not want to cooperate with me."

"Orr: If you are going to build the poultry house, can you van ("ask" - i.e., cooperate labor group) the people to come to help you?"

"Chao Kong Han: Yes, this can be done, but I want to have somebody to take a part with me. I intended not to raise just 5 or 10 heads of chickens. I want to raise as many as I can that's why I want some friends to take a part with me. I myself cannot do it alone."¹⁸

We are not saying that the Lao farmer is immutably cast in a traditional state of mind which cannot be changed - only that his viewpoint is logical for the situation in which he finds himself. The whole situation must change before his viewpoint does radically. What is his present situation in regard to the adoption of artificial fertilizer into his well-knit agricultural economy?

Typical attitudes of the Lao farmer in resisting an innovation such as artificial fertilizer are visualized as follows:

1. Any kind of change in traditional procedures for gaining one's livelihood by subsistence farming is unknown, risky and probably dangerous. If the crop should fail the family will suffer severely. Why take a chance on such a vital matter?
2. The present uses of natural fertilizer are probably adequate to the needs of the crops. Besides, to use the new fertilizer takes extra work and one's work schedule is an ingrained set of habits which are difficult to change - at least in the direction of more work. Even water buffalo resent having to work more than usual, and will give the farmer the horn if the animal is worked harder than he is used to.
3. Even if more rice is grown with the same amount of energy output what will happen to the excess profits? Perhaps marauding army groups will take it or unfair government officials may commandeer it. Robbers are

¹⁸Orr, K. G. Interviews in a Satellite Village Near Vientiane, Laos
USAID/Laos, April 5, 1965, P. 10.

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everywhere and one does what he can to hide opulence for fear of inviting them. Excess money in the house (there are no banks outside of the rafters) is to attract them. Except for those farmers near big towns there is little which they can buy with their money. These are bad times to excite other peoples' issa (envy) by getting more than one's due, for bad luck can follow swiftly on evil thoughts of this kind.

4. The farmer doesn't think of planning for an expanding future - this is a Western culture idea. He is content to grow as much as he can; "this is enough for me to live on" and his whole society is geared to this subsistence economy in which he has a definite and known place.

Following are attitudes of Lao farmers which are conducive to acceptance of the innovation of artificial fertilizer:

1. While the farmer is content with simply fulfilling his needs, these are constantly enlarging - as his family grows and as the money-economy encroaches with demands for cash to buy the necessities of life (kerosine, cotton cloth, luxury items, including toothbrushes and toothpaste). He will, therefore, feel a pinch for money and be interested in trying a new method of getting more money. Rich farmers are better able than average and poor farmers to undertake such a change.

2. When it is seen that artificial fertilizer really works well, the example of others who have successfully used it will be quickly followed. There is a strong emotion of yarn mou leun (afraid-group, friend-get-more) or jealousy which operates in this case and once a successful start has been made by a venturesome farmer, the others will soon follow provided the innovation can be readily obtained.

3. Especially if the innovation doesn't disarrange their schedules for work and play - for the Lao are creatures of habit - artificial fertilizer will be accepted. At present he is limited and strictly controlled by the means and energy of production in relationship to the uses and consumption of the products - it's a nicely "balanced aquarium." An innovation even if producing abundance causes problems - in this regard we can think of our own problem of farm over-production. Increased production through artificial fertilization should be accompanied by increased security and opportunity for utilizing the abundance. Except in some areas at certain

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times, periods of starvation is not a problem of the Lao. Can the Innovators provide an incentive for growing more, at the same time producing ways and means of preserving the Lao joie de vivre motivation?

Comparative Data

LeBar et al emphasize the religio-economic nature of the Lao agricultural system, a large factor in the thinking of the Lao farmer; the chant quoted in the passage also reveals his materialistic side and his utopian dreams of prosperity:

"For the Lao the raising of rice is both an essential economic activity and a way of life closely interwoven with the supernatural. Each stage in its cultivation is accompanied by appropriate rituals, from the initial planting ceremonies on a day chosen as auspicious by the local astrologer to the special rites for the opening of the storage sheds after harvesting has been completed. Central to these rituals is the belief in the power for good or evil of the Phi of the rice fields and much attention is given to their propitiation through offerings of food, alcohol, and cigarettes. Most paddy fields will contain a small altar in one corner for these offerings."

"The nature of these rituals can be surmised from the transplanting ceremonies, Lieng Phi Ta Hek, literally "to feed the Phi Ta Hek," as described by Boun Than Sinayong in "Agrarian Rites in Laos" (cited by Joel Halpern in "Aspects of the Village Life and Cultures Change in Laos). Glutinous rice, having been mixed with grains of paddy and shaped into ears of rice to symbolize abundance, is placed on the paddy altar, together with four banana leaves rolled into horns to contain betel. The Phi appears, the first seven shoots of rice are reverently planted to the accompaniment of this chant:

I plant the first shoot	
May you be green as the Thao	
I plant the second shoot,	
May you be green as the grass	(green color associated
of ninth month.	with "power"; Thao is
	a superior man.)

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I plant the third shoot,
May the gong of nine kam (one kam is the width of a hand)
be mine.
I plant the fourth shoot,
May ninety thousand pounds ("9" is complete, ideal number)
of gold be mine.
I plant the fifth shoot,
May ninety thousand baskets of
rice be mine.
I plant the sixth shoot,
May I have a wife to sleep by my side.
I plant the seventh shoot,
May a rare (white) elephant saddled in
gold and silver be mine.
Glory!
Prosperity!"¹⁹

DeYoung writing of Thai farmers about 1955 notes their dependence on natural fertilizer for vegetables and special crops in a manner similar to the Lao to whom they are closely related culturally. His comments on the attempts to introduce chemical fertilizer are pertinent because it reflects initial Thai reactions and similar reactions to be expected in Laos:

"The only chemical fertilizer used at all widely in Thailand has been ammonia sulfate, and this is used only by the commercial vegetable growers near Bangkok, who are Chinese. Rice farmers do not use inorganic fertilizers. In various sections of the country, the central government has attempted to show the farmer the benefits of using chemical fertilizer by setting up test plots, but nowhere has the attempt been successful, even in the delta region where, conceivably, a well-to-do farmer could afford to buy fertilizer. The chemical fertilizers would benefit the northeastern region greatly but since this is a non-commercial farming area, the farmers here cannot afford them, and with over five million peasants in the region, the government cannot afford to underwrite now, or in the future, any sizeable chemical fertilizer program. Thus, any discussion of a modern fertilizer

¹⁹LeBar, Frank M. and Adrienne Suddard (eds).
Laos, its People, its Society, its Culture. New Haven, Human
Relations Area Files, 1960, p. 201

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program is somewhat academic, although it may have potentialities for the commercial rice growers of the delta. A factor not often taken into consideration by agricultural experts who stress the use of chemical fertilizers is that only a long, slow period of demonstration can convince the peasant that he will benefit from such a drastic new measure. Also, in other parts of Southeast Asia where large scale chemical fertilizer experiments have been attempted, not enough attention has been paid to analyzing types of soils and local types of plants. Simply dumping a load of chemical fertilizer on a paddy field does not ensure higher yield; it may even decrease it. The Thai peasant is a long way from being able to use the techniques of scientific farming without direct supervision. This supervision the government is not prepared to give, even if it had the chemical fertilizer, for an agricultural extension program is almost non-existent."²⁰

In talking with Mr. Charles O. Lantz, International Development Fellow, Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University, who has been studying the Thai town of Loi et (101) for the past 12 months, I learn that artificial fertilizer is now widely used by the Thai farmers, in the Northeastern area, suggesting that a radical change had taken place within the past 10 years. The story of this change would be most interesting to learn since we may hypothecate that the Lao will be going through similar experiences with artificial fertilizer as did their cultural brothers across the Mekong. (See Appendix A).

Hickey gives a valuable account of the acceptance and use of artificial fertilizer by the Vietnamese peasants of the Lower Mekong delta. The apparent ease of acceptance of artificial fertilizer appears to contrast with the case of its resistance by the Thai and a comparative study of these two cases would be useful in pinpointing factors at work in each situation. One fact does stand out: The Vietnamese are different culturally from the Thai and the Lao and we cannot expect the data from one culture area to apply to that of the other without careful testing:

²⁰DeYoung, John E. Village Life in Modern Thailand. Berkeley, University of California, 1963, P. 191-192

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"All rice farmers in Kanh Hau use chemical fertilizer. Before its introduction most farmers employed a mixture of buffalo manure, ashes, and a compost of straw and dead leaves - a fertilizer now restricted to gardens. Exactly when and how chemical fertilizer was introduced into the village are points of disagreement. The consensus is that it occurred over 20 years ago when a French entrepreneur proposed to Ong Ke Hien that he experiment with a sample on several hectares. The results were favorable; the plants were visibly hardier and had heavier heads than plants in other fields. Ong Ke Hien agreed to purchase a large amount of the fertilizer, and within 15 years all farmers were using it."

"Prior to 1958, the most popular brand of fertilizer was Than Nong, a phosphate tricalcic, containing 30 percent P_2O_5 . Importation of this product was discontinued in 1957; it was replaced by Than Tai which had the same ingredients and Tam Tai which varied somewhat, containing 25 percent P_2O_5 . Two brands of ammonium sulfate, Chim and Tien, both referred to as diom (sulfate) by the villagers are available locally, and both contain 20 percent nitrogen. Purchasing either type is an annual financial problem for most villagers; fertilizer is used relatively late in the growing season when most farmers are short of cash, and fertilizer prices have fluctuated in recent years, usually rising, sometimes as much as 40 percent, when the need is greater. Several aid programs designed to fix prices and make fertilizer available by extending government credit have been organized. In 1958, the Agricultural Credit Program of the government extended its benefits to the village, and with low-interest loans, many farmers were able to purchase fertilizer during the planting season. The National Revolutionary Movement, the predominant political party of the village, also organized a cooperative to purchase chemical fertilizer at lower prices for its members, and this was the primary function of the village Agricultural Cooperative which was dissolved 1959, and the more recently organized Farmers' Association launched by the government.

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"The use of the chemical fertilizer is based on one's past experience, and consequently it varies considerably. Most farmers mix the phosphate tricalcic with rice husks or ashes, but they prefer the ammonium sulfate in its pure form. The common reference seems to be to use phosphate tricalcic shortly after transplanting and one application of the ammonium sulfate about a month before the harvest. Some farmers time the second application of fertilizer by the appearance of the buds; others feel that the best time is when the plants are about one meter high. Farmers cultivating rice of lower quality sometimes mix the phosphate tricalcic and ammonium sulfate (1:2) for the second application.

"There is a common belief that the more fertilizer employed, the more abundant the harvest. A well-to-do farmer is, therefore, apt to use a good deal more than the poor farmer (and with the Agricultural Credit Loans, the amount of fertilizer employed in the village has undoubtedly increased greatly). Some farmers reported that they normally use 100 kilos of phosphate tricalcic and 25 kilos of ammonium sulfate to the hectare, while others claimed they use 250 kilos and 150 kilos, respectively. Another common belief among the farmers is that after years of applying chemical fertilizer, abandoning the practice would result in soil infertility."²¹

Hendry writing about the same area gives additional data on factors of acceptance of the innovation in South Vietnamese peasant society:

"The single most important concern for the crop after transplantation centers around the use of fertilizer, and it would be difficult to over-emphasize the importance which the villagers attach to this activity. The precise date at which fertilizer was first introduced into the village cannot be fixed with accuracy, but in the fifteen to twenty years during which it has been widely used there, it has become thoroughly established. The farmers believe that it is indispensable to the success of their crop, favorable conditions prevailing, and it is used by even the very poorest tenant farmers. Some villagers have stated that their land has become so used to fertilizer that they could grow nothing without it. Whether they believe this literally

²¹Hickey, Gerald Cannon. Village in Vietnam. New Haven, Yale University, 1964, p. 139-140.

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or not, the example they chose to use indicates the complete acceptance chemical fertilizers have won."

"While the use of chemical fertilizer is virtually universal, the manner in which it is applied reflects a number of inter-related considerations. In questioning the villagers about their use of fertilizer, it quickly became evident that their present techniques are the result of local experimentation over time, rather than any specific technical advice received. As far as can be determined, no study of the soils in the village has even been made for the purpose of recommending kinds or amounts of fertilizer to be used. The merchants who first introduced fertilizer in the area may have had some idea of what kinds would have suited the soils found there and perhaps offered general advice on quantities to be applied, but this is all. Some importing firms handling chemical fertilizers have prepared pamphlets of instruction in the use of their products. Unfortunately, these often use only the chemical terms and are probably not widely understood at all. Farmers know only the brand names or commonly used general terms."²²

Implications of These Data for the
Proposed Artificial Fertilizer Program

The following suggestions arise from a consideration of the above data:

1. There are pertinent data from the behavioral sciences of value in suggesting directions of innovation plans for the Lao culture and these should be used in planning, implementing and evaluating USAID projects. Where hundreds of thousands of dollars and the economic life of thousands of peoples are concerned, time should be taken for a "look before you leap." Muhr may be correct in his claims, but as an old professor of mine used to say to his students - "ver ess der effidence?"

²²Hendry, James E. The Small World of Khanh Hau. Chicago, Aldine, 1964, p. 66-67

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2. It would seem highly unlikely that a mass give-away plan for artificial fertilizer would succeed due to suspected factors of the Lao farmers' receptivity and lack of personnel to achieve good demonstrations except on a spotty basis, e.g., farmers in the Vientiane area and elsewhere who have already tried improved seed, fertilizer, and insecticide would be most likely to react favorably. Some dry areas like Zone 1 (above) would seem to be non-promising being more concerned with the vital water supply problem.

3. Successes (and failures) of the artificial fertilizer program in Thailand should be carefully examined for suggestions on the plan (s) to use here. (See Appendix A)

4. It seems safe to predict that in the long run the Lao farmer will accept artificial fertilizer for rice and vegetable production. The only problem comes in the difficulties and expenses encountered in getting to this ideal point. Certainly, the rest of the culture will have to move in the desired direction also. That fertilizer for increased production can be a powerful determinant in the direction of change in the Lao farmer society cannot be doubted . . . but it is one of many and should be dovetailed with other efforts in irrigation, improved seed, and the less tangible factors of increased security, improved outlets of selling, increased consumer goods and investment possibilities for excess money to result from increased production, improved local administration and the like.

5. Distribution of fertilizer, touched on above, is a secondary but important problem. Comparisons with Thailand would be useful here - rumors are to the effect that Chinese merchants often control the distribution there. Here there are few Lao entrepreneurs (but a growing group) and distribution may fall also into Vietnamese or Chinese hands with resultant problems of excess profits and high costs (See Appendix A).

6. I would like to suggest that a number of plans be tried experimentally the first year with careful observations of the results - so that even the failures can supply important information for the future. This research approach, considered (erroneously) by some to be a "waste of time" is in fact the only way the USAID technicians and administrator are going to know the causes of their success and failure, for example:

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Plan "A": Distribute sacks of artificial fertilizer to all farmers in the village according to the Murh plan, with leaflet attached. Try a number of villages in different ecological zones.

Plan "B": Select best farmers in village to put on demonstration - guarantee their losses (if any from the experiment). Use demonstration to instruct villagers on value and methods of using artificial fertilizer. Try in different ecological areas.

Plan "C": Work with Van (assistance) groups in the village who will run their own demonstration plots (subsidized), give prize for the best demonstration (e.g., money for a new roof on the wat temple).

Other plans may be thought of - or other factors introduced in the testing process.

7. The above suggestion (6) will call for research-minded people to supervise the procedures. I believe that the existing force of agricultural extension agents - utilizing the village leaders - would be sufficient, but are the USAID agriculturalists geared to do on-the-project behavioral research? I believe they are -- if they will.

8. There are some who will argue that the main purpose is not to find out how to effectively introduce and distribute artificial fertilizer, but to just get rid of 600 tons of fertilizer. In my ten years with USAID, I have found that impatience is sometimes characteristic of our technicians and administrators who are constantly looking for a magic formula to "success" without being willing to do the hard work of experimentation and evaluation. The attitude is understandable in terms of American cultural drives, but are scarcely realistic in terms of working effectively in the largely unknown world of Laotian behavior.

9. In regard to the uses to which the Lao farmer may put the new production ability made possible by artificial fertilizer, we may expect a number of reactions in terms of traditional value system and the new Western culture motivations spreading out from the urban centers. Since traditionally

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increased wealth is used to produce leisure time for het boun (making merit) much of this may well occur. It should be borne in mind, however, that participation in bouns in the wat or home, or just attending the wat to het boun is not regarded as a leisure activity by the Lao however much they enjoy it. Such activities are included in the duties and privileges of man to improve himself according to the Nang Seu Thum (Letters-principles) of Buddha. If artificial fertilizer increases the ability for such "leisure" time, it allows the Lao to make boun capital of use in gaining necessary merit for successful reincarnation and a full life in this existence and naptheu, that most prized of intangibles - the respect of one's fellow-man.

Conclusions

We don't know for sure how the Lao farmer will react to attempts to introduce artificial fertilizer into his economy. This doesn't mean that it is "anybody's guess" as to what will happen. The more pertinent data on the behavioral factors involved in an innovation, the greater the probability of predicting its course of action. At present, we have inconclusive though suggestive data on this problem.

Artificial fertilizer will undoubtedly be eventually incorporated into the Lao economy just as it was in Vietnam and Thailand. The questions are how expensive will this process be and what are the best ways of accomplishing it. One fact stands out - the introduction of artificial fertilizer cannot be accomplished overnight. The year's time allowed by the Murh plan seems too brief a span. It is sufficient, however, to secure a lot of needed behavioral and technological information on the subject which can be used to guide the future.

It is suggested that a number of plans be tried during this period in a number of different village situations (including also non-Lao tribal groups not mentioned in this paper, but obviously interested also). A systematic research attitude toward these experimentations is vital at this point and both quantitative and qualitative observations should be made and recorded. Some of the expected variables have been mentioned in this paper: ecological zones, socio-economic classes, security factor, proximity to urban centers and the like, and others may be determined.

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Perhaps the real problem and challenge is not so much in getting the Laotians to use artificial fertilizer "just to get more money," but in helping them, as they so fervently desire, to use this great tool of production to perpetuate and improve the finest and the best in their culture.

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
Program Office, USAID/Laos
Vientiane, December 27, 1966

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Appendix A

The Introduction of Artificial Fertilizer and Related
Events in Thailand

The story of the introduction of artificial fertilizer to the Thai peasants is of particular interest to Innovators in Laos faced with similar problems due to the close cultural similarities of the two peoples. The peasants of the Northeast Thailand area are Phou Lao (people-Lao) or Laotian Tai as are those across the Mekong River in Laos.¹ Similar reactions to an innovation such as artificial fertilizer may be expected of the Phou Lao whether they are on one side of the river or the other. We were fortunate in being able to interview an American agricultural advisor (now working in Laos) on this subject. He had formerly spent a number of years in Thailand working with the Thai farmers. His account of the efforts to introduce artificial fertilizer in Thailand 1963-65 contrasts sharply with DeYoung's pessimistic picture of non-interest on the part of the Thai peasants in 1955 cited above.²

The interview (December 22, 1966) may be paraphrased as follows:

"In 1963, we were interested in making a quick impact on the Thai villages, and artificial fertilizer is one of the best ways I know to do this. We selected three provinces in Northern Thailand and distributed 100 tons of artificial fertilizer in 50 pound bags to about 3000 villages, giving the bag of fertilizer to one farmer in each village. The farmer was selected by the headman to demonstrate effectiveness of the fertilizer on the rice crop. The fertilizer was enough for one rai or 1/6th of a hectare. No other subsidy was given. Distribution was done through the improved rice seed program organization of the Agricultural Extension agents, but it was done so fast that in many cases the villagers didn't see the agricultural officer. It was of interest to note, however, that in every case the whole

¹Lebar, Frank M., Gerald C. Hickey, John K. Musgrave. Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia. New Haven Human Relations Area Files, 1964, p. 215 and Map, "Ethnolinguistic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia."

²DeYoung, John E. Village Life in Modern Thailand. Berkeley, University of California, 1963, p. 191-192.

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village knew about the program - one could see this by asking where the demonstration was upon entering any of the test villages. The villagers always knew where the demonstration was going on and how it was doing.

"At that time according to our information less than 100 tons of artificial fertilizer was being sold by dealers for 15 Provinces in Northeastern Thailand and this entirely for vegetables. So we could only guess at its reception for use on the rice crop. In checking with the retail dealers (all Chinese) in 1964, the year after the demonstration, we found that they had sold 5000 tons of fertilizer. We assumed the farmers liked it!

"During this time, I worked closely with an anthropologist then stationed in Bangkok and we exchanged a lot of ideas together. He was interested in the attitudes of the farmers toward the artificial fertilizer. So was I, and certain ideas seemed to emerge from the demonstration. I notice, and I'm sure you have, that when you give something to the farmers in this area and then ask them how they like it they usually are polite and say they 'like it very much.' We got the usual answer on this, and when we asked if they planned to use artificial fertilizer next year, they said 'yes.' However, the answer that really impressed me was when the farmers gave their reason for liking the fertilizer. They would say, 'I now have the best field of rice in the village.' I believe this prestige factor (of having the best crop) is a big one in introducing fertilizer. Fertilizer always makes the crop look a lot better. In contrast, improved seed may make it look less good, e.g., it may be shorter. Everybody can see what good the fertilizer does. The other reason is that they can figure cost and return better than some people think.

"Of course, all was not 'roses.' There was some resistance. The most common complaint was that the artificial fertilizer had 'poisoned the land.' This complaint even got to the Minister of Agriculture. I believe there are two reasons for this idea. In 1960 there was one case where an agricultural officer put some fertilizer on land that had a high salt content - with naturally bad results. Some communists spread this information, but not many farmers believed it.

"We didn't work with the cooperative groups in introducing the 50 pound bag into the village - just with the leading farmers selected by the village headmen, and we didn't guarantee them anything. Our policy was to say,

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"we'd like you to try the fertilizer. 'We don't know what it will do.' Of course, we did know, but this protects you if the fertilizer is put on any salty spots. I don't agree with the idea of giving the fertilizer to everyone in the village, or even to all who think they want to try. Everybody is not interested in trying something new like this. But it is an honor to be picked to demonstrate the fertilizer and the selected farmer usually makes good.

"The problem of distribution in Thailand was solved by the existence of merchants, Chinese, who were ready to sell the fertilizer after the first year of demonstration. When you demonstrate it one year you have to be ready next year.³ This problem of distribution faces us in Laos now. Personally, I think it is a mistake to go through the merchants - Chinese or otherwise.⁴ Most of the merchants are skilled in figuring ways and means of cheating the farmers.⁵ I can visualize say 10 tons of subsidized fertilizer consigned to a local merchant at say Savannakhet being handled as follows: That night (after receiving it) the merchant goes across the Mekong to see his cousin on the Thai side (most of them have cousins there) and tells him about getting the fertilizer at say 45 kip a kilo; leaving it with the cousin for 55 kip a kilo the following night. He then sells it the next day at 80-90 kip on the local Thai market. The Thai farmers have built up a strong resentment against the local merchants over a long period of years since they have been cheated on price, weights and exorbitant interest rates (40-600%). Fertilizer is bought largely on credit in Thailand, and credit is the big bottleneck to agricultural development there at the present time.

"I believe the joint RLG/USAID organization, ADO, will have to take a hand in distribution at first, but perhaps cooperation clubs like we have in Thailand could be developed to take over. Thai cooperatives are related to the big family association groups (the anthropologist could tell you more about this). The farmers' clubs were first started in the Central Plains area about 1958. By 1961 there were 200 farmers' clubs and they are becoming more popular every year. Thai agricultural officials were sent to Taiwan to learn about modern cooperatives. The multi-purpose cooperatives appeal to the Thai farmers very much. For one thing, it gives them a chance to benefit together and they don't have to depend so much on unscrupulous local merchants. We had annual meetings of the farm clubs with a 5 day training period devoting 20% of the time to organization, and the rest to improved farming methods.

3,4,5, See Addenda

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"In 1963, we brought the chairman of each of the 400 clubs to Bangkok for a national meeting. In 1964, there were 500 clubs and each region elected national officers. They also drew up a list of problems and resolutions. In May 1964, they adopted these resolutions, and I thought 'well that's the last we'll hear of that.'

"To my surprise, in December 1964, the Minister of Agriculture presented these resolutions to the Cabinet - who referred them to the appropriate ministries for action. We then brought the 8 national officers to Bangkok every 2 months. These officers got invited to the homes of the Ministers (something never done before) and had a lot of publicity which tended to raise the prestige of the farmer. It had a very good effect everywhere in Thailand. Farmers respond to a little recognition.

"I believe the farmers' club can handle credit, but it is hard to convince some Americans that this is so. They think the farmers are not to be trusted. I had one farmer explain it to me in this way: 'When dealing among ourselves and with our own money we are honest with each other. If we deal with the government it's ok to try to beat them out, and if you can cheat a Chinese merchant, you're a hero.' Some farmers clubs are developing capital of their own by farming joint land, the income of which they put into a club treasury and lend to their members. It is reported to be working well.

"The two Far Eastern countries where artificial fertilizer has had the great success are in Japan and Taiwan. In both cases, the governments were in the program strongly at first and then bowed out gradually with local cooperatives taking over successfully. The latter takes training and this might be done here with young capable farmers attached to farmers' clubs. Such persons could be trained readily to take over as managers of the cooperative to handle the distribution problem with local or national credit. Of course, the joint RIG-US organization will be necessary for some time - just to keep everybody honest!"

As our interviewee was talking, and I hope I'm not doing his good thoughts too much injustice in this resume, I kept thinking - this sounds a lot like my experience with the tribal farmers in Liberia, my last post. I concluded, as I'm sure the reader will, that a number of splendid hypotheses are suggested by the Thailand experience as related by him. Perhaps some can be tested here.

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Addenda

(Note: The following additional comments were received from the interviewee after the typing of this paper. They are inserted as footnotes above and entered below.)

3 "We did work with wholesale dealers and encouraged them to set up more dealers. They did this because of our promotion program."

4 "Especially if it is to be subsidized."

5 "or USAID."

6 "Regardless of the approach we follow in Laos, it is very important that we train the farm leaders and involve them in planning the local programs. I should add that even though the Northeastern Thai farmer is (ethnic) Lao, he has received more training than his cousin on the Laos side. Also, the Thai agricultural officer is better trained. For this reason, American advisors will have to exercise more leadership and control in Laos."

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UNITED STATES A.I.D. MISSION TO LAOS

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 13, 1967

TO: Norman L. Sweet, Program Officer

FROM: Kenneth G. Orr, Research and Evaluation Officer (C/O)

SUBJECT: Research Memorandum "Common Errors in Socio-cultural Reports on Laos," January 9, 1967, Unclassified

The above research memorandum (attached), completed in connection with a requested evaluation of a classified report on sociological aspects of Laos, is believed to be of general interest and is submitted for distribution.

OP:KGOOR:db
1/16/67

Distribution:

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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM:

Common Errors in Socio-cultural Reports
on Laos

Kenneth G. Orr Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
USAID/Laos
Vientiane, January 9, 1967

(This is a working paper, and may be expanded, modified, or withdrawn at any time. It is issued to interested USAID and related organizations in the hope that comments may be elicited which may be incorporated into a subsequent revised edition.)

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Common Errors in Socio-cultural Reports on Laos

I was recently asked to check on the "accuracy, completeness, and up-dating" of a classified report on sociological aspects of Laos. Reading through the report gave me an opportunity to consider some of the errors that commonly appear in reports on Laos and in everyday communications in the USAID/Laos Mission. The more glaring of the errors are discussed here as a contribution to efforts to improve the quality of reporting and analyzing socio-cultural conditions in a foreign nation.

Over-classification: The report in question was marked "confidential," yet its content was similar or identical to that in standard references on Laos, such as Lebar et al, 1964¹ or Halpern, 1964². The report was obviously over-classified--as undesirable a situation as if it were under-classified. The effect of classification is to suggest to the reader that there is something hush-hush or even offensive about commonplace facts of everyday life in Laos. Of course ethnocentric viewpoints involving other-culture value judgments (see below) can cause "injustice" by faulty interpretations. But most Laotians are used to this and make allowances for the astigmatism of the foreign eye when focused on their customs. There are also taboos areas which good manners (Laotian) require delicate handling--especially in regard to personalities and status relationships. But we Americans are apt to be much more sensitive to "odd" Laotian behavior patterns than the Laotians themselves who are ordinarily proud of their customs--until someone comes along and suggests otherwise. A case in point is the belief in phi (spirits) and/or hora sat (horoscope-science) astrology. Villagers near urban areas will feel ashamed to tell foreigners about these "superstitions," but those in more pristine areas are happy to expose these "truths." Generally speaking ethnographic data should not be classified.

Paucity of References: The report under study makes a few references in passing to sources of the material used. The references are both informal and incomplete. Since this is a segment of a longer report there probably is a final section on "Sources." However, the point is no footnotes are used and the reader has no way of checking the assertions of the writer. The use of research materials in governmental work requires the use of scholarly methods of presentation. This would greatly aid in checking the document and lend authority to its content.

Incorrect Terminology for Ethnic Groups: In an area like Laos where dozens of ethnic groups exist, it is understandable that misspelling of some groups might turn up in reports--especially those of minor groups for whom there is no standardization of terminology. However, where standardization exists there is no excuse for errors. The report in question gives a good example of what often happens. "Lao" is used alternately to refer to the ethnic group and to all of the people of Laos (Laotians). We are

¹Lebar, Frank M., Gerald C. Hickey, John K. Musgrave. Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia. New Haven, Human Relations Area Files, 1964.

²Halpern, Joel M. Government, Politics and Social Structure in Laos. New Haven, Southeast Asia Studies Yale University, 1964.

told that two thirds of the Lao belong to the Thai ethnic group. What is meant is that two-thirds of the Laotian are members of the "tai" linguistic family. "Thai" is a synonym for the Siamese Tai. There are "tribal Tai" in Laos but no "Tribal Thai"--which term is a misnomer--although of course, there are many Thai.

Other inaccuracies are commonplace--such as the use of polite or political terms like Lao-Theng (Lao of the mountain sides) to describe the essentially Mon-Khmer speaking group in an effort to avoid use of the actual designation of "Kha" (meaning "slave" in Lao). The report thereby uses a general and inaccurate term as if it were a scientific label. Two standard references on correct terminology on Laotian ethnic groups are Lebar et al,³ and Halpern, 1964b⁴, who also give some comprehensive estimates on population of the ethnic groups.

Simplistic Model of the Laotian Society: In the report under study we are given a simple tripartite model of the Laotian society with an "upper class" ruling elite, an emerging "middle class" and a depressed "lower class" consisting largely of villagers with the tribal groups at the bottom of the pyramid. The interpretation following from this model is that the "gap" between elite and villager is being narrowed by RLG and USAID efforts. It is an appealing picture but scarcely accurate. In actuality the elite form the apex of traditional Lao ethnic group pyramids which consists of hang me (wealth-have) the wealthy class, the paw pan kang (enough-dimension-middle) average class, and thuk (poor) poor class and follow old kingdom groupings (Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Champassak, etc.). Each ethnic group has its own pyramid, and while the dominant Lao area pyramid is on top there is constant jockeying for superordination position by individuals and their related families and their ethnic groups as a whole. In the Lao pyramid, Western culture influences have greatly widened the gap between the elite and the rest of the classes by the introduction of new modes of behavior and new concepts.

The "middle class" is in reality a hybrid group of Laotians and other cultural groups (Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese) ranging from samlaw drivers to small business owners who are developing a "modern phase" of Laotian culture under the direct stimulus of Western Culture influence. It is neither traditional nor Western but a conglomeration of each. Traits from the hybrid class (centering in urban areas) are spreading to the villages with resultant disequilibrium in the established order. In many areas hiatuses are appearing such as the weakening of traditional authorities (paw ban, village head, and monks) which are capitalized upon by the communists. The picture can only be hinted at here. But enough may be seen to suggest that simplistic paradigms are worse than none at all--leading as they do to self-deluding, albeit attractive conclusions. An accurate model of the socio-cultural structure of the nation must be clearly in mind before the inter-relationships of its parts can be dealt with analytically.

³Lebar, et al, Op cit, 1964.

⁴Halpern, Joel M. Economy and Society of Laos. New Haven, Southeast Asia Studies, Yale University, 1964, p. 2 et seq, Table 1-6.

Faulty Social Organization Models: The report discusses a few of the social organizations to be found in Laos. Major attention is given to the Lao family and the Buddhist hierarchy. We are told that the Lao kinship system is the same as in the United States--but enough data is given to suggest that this is far from the case. The Lao system is characterized as "patrilineal" in the report when actually the matrilineal side is of equal importance. The vital institution of matrilineal residence whereby the husband of the most recently married daughter occupies the homestead is not touched on. The tribal group social organization is presented as a "dead" series of trait lists. The inter-relationship of the organizations, which makes up the woof and warp of the society is barely hinted at. In fact, the report is little more than a conglomeration of undigested descriptions. If these institutions are to be understood and dealt with, they require competent professional analysis. In this case a little knowledge is a dangerous thing since it leads to faulty conclusions and ineffective actions.

Difficulty of Understanding the Individual: Individuals are the products of their societies and since the types of societies vary in Laos we would expect the types of individual to vary also. In the paper under discussion we are not sure if the writer intends his description of the psychological characteristics of the "Lao Individual" means all Laotians or just the ethnic Lao. At any rate a fair description of the Lao individuals' characteristics only are given and these related primarily to religious (Buddhist) values. The Lao is portrayed as valuing serenity, equanimity, imperturbability, respect for others, and manifesting a keen interest in religion merit and "pleasure"--in fact a "lotus eater." There is some mention of tensions behind the placid front but none of the necessary details are given on the highly prevalent emotions of jealousy, keen competition for status, black magic and astrology, although the importance of the supernatural spirits is touched on.

Nevertheless, the Lao as portrayed by the report writer seems plausible until we read that he is willing to work only to get the necessities of life and is not much interested in the acquisition of wealth. Further analysis reveals this as a half truth, trick of logic, and a play on words.

Actually, the Lao individual is vitally interested in the acquisition of wealth--however, his traditional capital is religious merit and honors (house and vat festivals). Each person's worth is measured in the number of boxes of this merit capital which he has--with which to purchase napthuh (respect), long and successful life, and a better reincarnation.

Such "mistaking of the form for the function" is commonplace in socio-cultural analyses and most inferences about Laotians written by foreigners. The Lao, like the Americans, are interested in wealth, development, happiness, virtue, goodness and any number of general concepts one can mention--only the definition of each is different from that of other cultures. We tend to look for the form of our own definition and when it is not there we assume the function or basic emotion is also absent. As the Lao culture changes with Westernization--so do the forms and symbols of wealth, and the modern Lao begins to be as interested in acquiring money (wealth) as he was in achieving merit (wealth).

The Ethnocentric Viewpoint: Much of the so-called analyses of the Laotian cultures is as ethnocentric as an old-fashioned missionary's viewpoint. A good example is a section in the report under study on health and sanitation. One commenter on this section said that unfortunately it sounded like propaganda for the USAID Public Health Division. Health conditions are so bad, according to the report that one wonders how any Laotians have survived to the present time. The mystery deepens when we are told that the water is not potable without boiling, and that no one boils the water. Again the ethnocentric bias enters--the dismal descriptions are not far short of being literally correct but the writer doesn't say that although such primitive conditions would probably kill an American (the basis of their judgement) the Laotians seem to thrive under the conditions. Of course anyone who stops to think will realize that the Laotian is an adjustment to his environment, cultural and natural, just as is any organism. The health conditions which are required for Americans may not at all be necessary for Laotians and vice versa. In this section as in most reports stemming from special interest groups, such as some development organizations, there is no mention of the indigenous medical system which is studded with herb doctors, magicians, bone setters, midwives and an extensive pharmacopoeia developed over the eons during which the Laotians too have had to exist. This is not to say that we Americans do not have much to offer them--we do, especially in the miracle drugs and surgery techniques. But to infer that there was no medical system until we arrived is equivalent to--as I mentioned above--the claims of the old-fashioned missionaries.

A basic problem not mentioned in the account is that the faith of the villagers in their traditional medicine is being weakened by lack of recognition by Western medicine and much is falling into disuse--before Western medical facilities are sufficient to care for their needs. One USAID doctor who has worked among the Laotians for fifteen months presents a refreshing viewpoint: "There are a few instances where I am not completely happy with traditional methods...methods I do not think are particularly helpful to the individual, but (I) have not gone out of my way to wage war against these methods. I think the attitudes of the phi doctor are too important to antagonize him at this point in time."⁵

SUMMARY

The factors of foreign (American) ethnocentric viewpoints and perspectives, poor scholarship practices, and data omissions as exemplified by a recently reviewed report on the sociological aspects of Laos are errors which result in a skewed picture of reality in Laos. It is, of course, hazardous to base action decisions on such faulty and incomplete information. It is

⁵Orr, Kenneth G. and Joseph J. Westermeyer. Psychological Characteristics of the Laotian Peoples; a Preliminary Anthropological and Medical Survey. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, November 7, 1966, p. 7.

suggested that correcting the errors along the lines mentioned above would assist in improving the quality of behavioral research reporting with a resultant improvement in development programs for the betterment of this country.

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
Program Office, USAID/Laos
January 9, 1967

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UNITED STATES A.I.D. MISSION TO LAOS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Norman L. Sweet, Program Officer Date: February 6, 1967
FROM: Kenneth G. Orr, Research and Evaluation Officer
SUBJECT: Research Memorandum: "Common Errors in Socio-cultural Reports on Laos - II,"
February 2, 1967, Unclassified.

The above research memorandum (attached), completed in connection with a requested evaluation of a classified report on sociological aspects of religious, educational and public information institutions of Laos, is believed to be of general interest and is submitted for distribution.

OP:KGOr:cef:2/6/67

DIST:

OD/DD, AD/RD, AD/MD-3, EDU, AGR, IVS Chief of Party, OP-2, OP-Wiarda, OP-Grr-25,
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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

Common Errors in Socio-cultural Reports on Laos - II

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
USAID/Laos
Vientiane
February 2, 1967

(Note: This is a working paper, and may be expanded, modified or withdrawn at any time. It is issued to interested USAID and related organizations in the hope that comments may be elicited which may be incorporated into a subsequent revised edition.)

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Common Errors in Socio-cultural Reports en Laos - II

This paper is a continuation of an earlier paper on common errors in socio-cultural reports on Laos¹ and is made possible by an additional assignment requesting me to review the "accuracy, completeness and timeliness" of a classified report on sociological aspects of the religious, educational and public information institutions of Laos. Review of the present report gives me a further opportunity to consider some of the errors that commonly appear in reports on Laos and in everyday communications in the USAID/Laos mission. It is hoped that this discussion will contribute to efforts to improve the quality of reporting and analyzing socio-cultural conditions in a foreign nation such as Laos.

Inaccurate use of Lao Terminology: The report in question is unusual in employing Lao terms frequently to designate Lao institutions and concepts. This in itself is praiseworthy since most reports do not even make the attempt. However there is a high incident of error and inconsistency which negates the advantage of using accurate labels. For example: that luang, the shrine where Buddha's ashes are reported to be and an annual festival to celebrate these relics is confused with Boun Pee Mai Lao (festival-year-new-Lao) or Buddhist New Year Festival. The ranks of the monks are incorrectly stated as Xa, "khrou", and Lakkham, and the order of ascendancy is actually Choua (novice) nya khou (authority-teacher), and nya Xa (authority-highest) with lakkham (pot-gold) a position similar to Somdet (religious-superior) rather than a rank. The terms "stupa", "Karma", and "Dharma" are non-Lao words meaning that (funerial shrine), vasana or Kam (fate) and phra dham (law and discipline of Buddha). "Pagoda" is used alternately to mean sim (temple) and wat (entire monastery) when it could conceivably be used (not posing as a Lao word) only to mean that (funerial shrine).

The errors and inconsistencies noted above are probably the result of errors in the sources used to write the paper (see sources below). Surely, however, English-speaking Lao could be located to check such important linguistic labels, as well as the concepts behind them. These data are not esoteric but are common knowledge to most Lao. Unfortunately, most papers written in the United States, like the one under discussion, deal only with written sources and seldom use Lao informants whose information could greatly enhance the value of the report document.

Incorrect Assessment of the Strength of Traditional Institutions: The report under study gives a mass of details on the religious institutions of the Laotians while largely ignoring traditional educational and public information institutions and practices (see below). We are led to believe that the Buddhist and animistic beliefs are quaint survivals from the distant past which are more or less happily declining in popularity and fading away.

¹Orr, K. G. Common Errors in Socio-cultural Reports on Laos. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, January 9, 1967

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Members of the Lao elite are pictured as showing reverence for Buddhist ceremonies and holy places largely out of a feeling of national pride in them as historical monument - rather than for "religious" reasons. A golden age of Buddhism contemporary with the Kingdom of Lan Xang is pictured with an increasing decline in the influence and importance of the sangha (community of monks) to the present. This is a false picture for the culture as a whole although it may be the view of a few heavily-Westernized Lao and some recent cultural-hybrid products of the urban centers and Western school system.

The bulk of the Lao including the scholars of the culture and the great men of the society continue to think of Buddhism as a system of thought which is growing and developing constantly. "It is not the Buddhist religion which is getting weak - but some people who desert it" is the common response to the argument of its decline. The present ills of the nation (war, flood, corruption) are widely thought to be the results of the deviation from tried and true paths of Buddhism on the part of some leaders. The leaders themselves are almost to a man devote Buddhists - at least they are so regarded by the Lao who attribute almost supernatural power to them as a result of the boun (merit) they accumulate by meritorious deeds and thoughts. Even the Pathet Lao (communist) leaders are aware of this and some are credited, even by anti-communists, with being good men in the Buddhist sense. The true meaning of the Lao religion - as providing the individual with not only a description of the nature of reality, but giving him strength and character, and the means whereby he achieves respect and success in life - is not brought out in the study under analysis. Rather, an insipid interpretation is presented of a set of antiquated and outdated beliefs and customs. In actual fact, the Lao's cosmology is a worldview by which modern events are being interpreted. It is true that older non-functional aspects of the religion are being sluffed off, but the basic perspective of Buddhism, the "eyes" through which the Lao see the world, while reinterpreted is far from disposed of. I've recently learned, for example, that some modern Lao tend to think of current American influence in Laos as a sort of "neo-Buddhism" - a new way of life to be reinterpreted through the age-old perspectives. Whatever the form of the future may be for Laos, one may be sure that the Buddhist viewpoint will be important in shaping the institutions and behavior patterns. Like the Lao language which adapts new words until they become Lao - so the traditional cosmological-ideological framework will adapt and reinterpret in the formation of a modern Laotian culture.

Value Judgments: One of the most common errors to be found in reports, or any evaluations, of other cultures - and this is surely a universal phenomenon - arises from the myopic vision of the ethno-centric viewpoint. For example, I remember seeing a native woman, in ankle-length sarong passing an American woman in a bathing suit on a beach in West Africa. Each registered disgust at the attire of the other. The African was shocked at the bare legs of the

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American, and she in turn was scandalized at the bare bosom of the African. In the report under study we find a similar moralistic indignation at the apathy and indolence of the illiterate Laotian rural population - which attitude is credited with hindering progress. The report never refers to "Western Culture" educational systems (French, American, and, yes, Communist) replacing "Traditional Laotian systems" - but infers that the only education available to the natives prior to the advent of the French was a sort of Sunday-school class in the wats; and that happily this is being replaced by a "secular" system based on intellectual reasoning. It seems only right, therefore, according to the report that little attention is paid to the indigenous system - and no analytical studies of it referred to.

It is clear that while the report gives little or no conception of cultural relativism ~~it~~ is strongly imbued with an ethno-centric viewpoint - an attitude which is worthless for trying to understand what is really taking place as the Laotians undergo increasing doses of acculturation from the world of Western Civilization. Actually, the education systems of any culture is an enculturation device closely geared to the total socio-cultural pattern of the society in which the system is found. Merely an acceptance of this viewpoint would go far to explaining the difficulties which Western education systems are encountering in Laos (and elsewhere in the non-Western Culture world), and would avoid the fruitless depreciating of foreign ways so dear to the heart of the true aborigines - whether American or Laotian. We may expect the Laotians to be shocked at our "hard" attitudes toward the separation of work and play, strictness in regard to time, and materialistic and economic obsessions as seen in our "development" activities. But in our roles as helper in the modern world we must surmount the pettiness of special interest arguments on either side, and go directly to the real problems of dealing with clashing galaxies of different cultural values and behavior. Du Bois under scores the point:

"The point to be made is that the receiving culture (Laotian) either resists, selects, or reinterprets what impinges upon it from the outside (American, French, etc.). When absorptions of new traits occur over a wide field of cultural activities whole new cultural constellations may be created. This situation I believe to be the case in large parts of Asia today. It has certainly been true of Japan in the last seventy years."²

The reactions of the recipient culture (Laotian) depends on its indigenous perspectives and institutions (traditional Lao systems) - hence the vital necessity of relating the wat educational system to its would be successor. Contrary to indications in the report this indigenous system is rich in detail and persistent in time.

²Du Bois, Cora. Social Forces in Southeast Asia. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 17.

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Cross-cultural comparisons: While comparisons between Laotian behavior patterns and American are commonplace, as seen in the discussion above, those between Laotian culture and other cultures - the Thai, Vietnamese, etc. - are rarer but equally fraught with snares and pitfalls for the unwary report writer. For example, in the report under discussion we are told that while the Vietnamese hated the French the Laotians liked them. Actually the distaste for much of the French culture behavior imposed on the Laotians was probably as severe as that of the Vietnamese. It is to be noted, however, that while the Laotians seek to conceal their dislike, the Vietnamese are well known for their outspokenness. It is the interpersonal relations system of showing hostility that is being compared and a false, misleading inference drawn from the comparison.

Assumed Indifference of Villagers to National Events: The section of the report dealing with public information is guilty of ignoring the indigenous Lao system of public information beyond a brief reference in passing to rumor and molam (news/entertainment). The results give a skewed picture of supposedly isolated and ignorant villagers who are largely indifferent to national events. To explain this, a truism which could apply equally to any community of people, is offered: Namely, that most Laotian villagers lack interest in developments outside of the village which do not directly affect them. Actually, a great deal is happening that directly affects the village - the war, the recent flood, government activities and the like. Contrary to the inference in the report we find an active public opinion which is important to know about. The vitality of this opinion should not be discredited because the news is often cloaked in supernatural interpretations - as when the flood was seen as Buddha's warning, through the water dragon (ngougk or naga) for incorrect and corrupt political leadership. The intricacies of the Molam are at least as important as the discussion of mimeographed news sheets (with which the report is studded), and would repay an analysis in some depth. Again the fascinating language of indirection and analogy through which public information is spread in cafes, wats, and market places merits close attention in any competent analysis of public information in Laos.³

Inadequate Sources: The lack of footnotes and paucity of references noted for the first analysis holds true also for the report in question - which does, however, have a section on sources. Very few standard references appear in the listing of sources. It was surprising to note the absence

³Attention is directed to USAID/Laos, Program Office, Monthly Reports Orr to Sweet: "The Crying Buddha", December 13, 1966, Para. 1; "The (Battle of) Red and the Black Ants," November 10, 1966, Para 1; "The Flood," October 10, 1966, Para. 1.

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of Joel M. Halpern's papers with the exception of one on education.⁴ The major sources seem to have been "Official U.S. Reports" which are unfortunately not listed and hence cannot be evaluated. There is also an incorrect assumption of a gap in knowledge at least in regard to the discussion on the influence of Christianity in Laos since the papers of Barney and Smalley are apparently not used.⁵ The results give a skewed and incomplete picture as discussed above. It must be emphasized that a report to be authoritative must be comprehensive and detailed. The basic tenets of scholarship are often forgotten in getting out a hasty and slipshod job.

Summary: A review of a classified report on the religious, educational and public information institutions of Laos revealed a common error which greatly reduces the value of such reports by resulting in inaccuracies, omissions, false and misleading models of the socio-cultural situation and in general a skewed picture of reality in Laos. The major villain in such reports are seen as the American cultural perspectives in the writer - who does not attempt to view the institutions under study as a Laotian would but who makes value judgments of Laotian institutions using alien culture (American) criteria. These American ethno-centric viewpoints may seem to support American institutions and objectives, but in reality are self-defeating. Not only are warped interpretations presented as bonafide analysis but research into the nature of Lao culture and society and its true interaction with the American culture is discouraged. Accurate facts to provide insights necessary for successfully guiding American policy are thus lacking in such reports.

⁴ Among the missing references are: Halpern, Joel M. Economy and Society of Laos. New Haven, Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, no. 4, 1964; a series of papers edited by Halpern for the Laos Project, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1959-61; and LeBar, Frank M. and Adrienne Suddard (eds.), Laos, its People, Its Society, its Culture. New Haven, Human Relations Area Files, 1963.

⁵ Barney, George L. "The Meo and Incipient Church", Practical Anthropology, IV, no. 2, 1957 and Smalley, William A. "The Gospel and Cultures of Laos", Practical Anthropology II, no. 3, 1956.

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
Program Office, USAID/Laos
Vientiane, Feb. 2, 1967

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Behavioral Research Papers on Lao Culture and Society

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
Program Office, USAID/Laos
Feb. 8, 1967, Vientiane

The following unclassified papers on Lao Society and Culture in relationship to general and specific USAID development problems and interests have been issued by this office. Reference copies are filed in the USAID Technical Reference Library, and copies may be secured by interested persons and offices on request:

1. "A Taped Interview with the Naibon of a Lao Village in Vientiane Province, Laos". (Feb. 16, 1966, 8 pages): Lao Farmers' experiences with and attitudes toward some USAID-RIG agricultural projects including Rice Multiplication Program.
2. "Relations with the Lao Nationals - Language and Personal Relations; A Recorded Interview with Mr. Richard Thomas Smith, Jr., IVS". (March 16, 1966, 10 Pages): "Chip" Smith, experienced IVS worker discusses techniques for learning the Lao language, points of Lao etiquette and interpersonal relations, and approaches to understanding the Lao people.
3. "Questionnaire for the Lao Household (Experimental Form No. 2)." (April 8, 1966, 14 pages, English and Lao): A standard form for gathering socio-economic data in the Lao household.
4. "Interviews in a Satellite Village near Vientiane, Laos." (April 20, 1966, 13 pages). Taped discussion with the Naibon, Weaver, Chao Attikan (abbot), and Shop Owner gives insights into problems and perspectives of villagers undergoing rapid cultural change.
5. "An Interview with a Chao Muang in Vientiane Province, Laos." (April 27, 1966, 18 pages): A discussion with a progressive Lao administrative official (county governor) on such problems as "self-help", "tractors", "the Nam Ngum Dam" reveals a deep and significant interest in behavioral research in connection with development projects at the village level.
6. "An Interview with a Chao Khouang in Southern Laos." (May 26, 1966, 10 pages): A discussion with a Lao provincial governor who indicates a deep and analytical interest in development problems and who comments significantly on basic approaches to combating communist Pathet Lao influences in the villages of his province.
- *7. "A Behavioral Research Project for the Sedone Valley Program, Southern Laos; Preliminary Presentation of Interviews and Questionnaire Data from Lao Villagers." (June 30, 1966, 207 pages): Village authority and head of household responses to a socio-economic questionnaire and interviewee questions on the subject of the Lao farmers' way of life and problems in 8 villages and 73 households. Data is presented for the delineation of three ecological zones, and three socio-economic classes in the Lao village.

(Orr - Behavioral Research)

- *8. "Previews on the Laotian Credit Systems" (Sept. 19, 1966, 3 pages): A sketch view of the subject as seen by the Laotian people themselves.
- *9. "Codified Law and Customary Useages in the Credit Systems of Laos; a Preview." (Sept. 22, 1966, 10 pages): A description of some of the main features of the Lao credit system as prescribed by law and as practiced in customary useages with the assistance of three Lao interviewees.
- *10. "Research Memorandum: Psychological Characteristics of the Laotian Peoples; a Preliminary Anthropological and Medical Survey." With Dr. J.J. Westermeyer. (Nov. 21, 1966, 8 pages): A dialogue aimed at understanding the mental processes of the peoples of Laos with whom USAID technicians are dealing, Laotian attitudes towards sickness and injury, psycho-physiological disorders in village and urban area and traditional medical system - an introduction.
- 12. "The Lao Astrological Cane; the Artifact and the Institution of Astrology in Laos." (Nov. 21, 1966, 8 pages): The relationship of an artifact of the Lao material culture to the institutions and concepts behind the object, and the possible relevance of such beliefs in increasing the effectiveness of American assistance efforts in Laos.
- 13. "The Lao Farmer and the Proposed Artificial Fertilizer Program in Laos." (Dec. 13, 1966, 30 pages): USAID innovators' plans for introducing artificial fertilizer into Laos is compared against background data of the Lao Farmer's interests, intellectual capacities, and motivations and the implications of these data suggested.
- *14. "Common Errors in Socio-cultural Reports on Laos." (Jan. 9, 1967, 5 pages): the errors revealed in a classified report on sociological aspects of Laos are discussed as a contribution to efforts to improve the quality of reporting and analyzing socio-cultural conditions in a foreign nation. Such errors include: over-classification, paucity of references, incorrect terminology for ethnic groups, simplistic models of the Laotian society, skewed pictures of the individual, and ethnocentric viewpoint.
- 15. "A Working Bibliography of Selected References Sources in Western Languages on the Societies and Cultures of Southeast Asia." (Aug. 9, 1965, 7 pages): Some of the references of importance in understanding Laotian culture and that of related ethnic groups of Southeast Asia listed are in the Research and Evaluation Office, Program Office, Building A, and may be used there.

Artifact Collection: A collection of 74 Laotian artifacts of Lao and Ngeh origin are mounted on boards and the walls of the R and E office with ethnographic descriptions as to their use. This collection is available for study during office hours.

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Norman L. Sweet, Program Officer

March 1, 1967

FROM: K. G. Orr, Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch

SUBJECT: Research Memorandum: Lao Traditional Beliefs and
American Operational Efficiency, March 1, 1967

A research paper, above subject, requested by the Executive Office,
is believed to be of general interest and is submitted for
distribution.

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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

LAO TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND AMERICAN OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

(This is a working paper, and may be expanded, modified, or withdrawn at any time. It is issued to interested USAID and related organizations in the hope that comments may be elicited which may be incorporated into a subsequent revised edition.)

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
Research and Evaluation Branch
Program Office, USAID/Laos
March 8, 1967

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Frontispiece

"The European - and the American - admire individualism, initiative, change, and what he calls progress. His character structure is generally competitive and acquisitive. At home, his class structure is distinguished by upward mobility. The Southeast Asian, in the past at least, prized conformity, quiescence, stability, traditionalism. The European esteems the man who pulls himself up by his own bootstrap (even though he may sometimes offend good taste in the process). The Southeast Asian admires the man of birth and innate breeding. Europeans feel that plain speaking, a touch of iron, and a bit of anger are useful devices in getting your own way. The Southeast Asian prefers and admires the subtle and indirect approach. He prizes equanimity. A loud voice, bluntness, and anger are vulgar. They are the standard characteristics of the buffoons in their traditional drama. Fat bodies and round eyes are gross. Physical exertion and sweat are for the lowest groups. A slim physique, reserve, a low thin voice, oblique eyes, graceful, restrained, flowing gestures - these are the marks of a man worthy of being accorded respect."

Cora Du Bois, Professor of Anthropology, Harvard University, in *Social Forces in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 47)

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Lao Traditional Beliefs and American Operational Efficiency

The Motorpool Ceremony

On the morning of February 19, 1967, an unusual ceremony took place in the Motor Transportation Section of USAID/Laos, Vientiane. Eight ajarn wat (learned men-wat), Lao Buddhist monks clothed in bright orange robes, came into the garage of the motorpool and sat in a row on mats placed between the vehicles. In front of them was an old Lao maw phorn (specialist-wishes) or wishes doctor dressed in sarong and shoulder sash. Behind him, on a large tarpaulin sat the local personnel of the motorpool, the American supervisors and their wives, and myself and my daughter Gail. The senior monk sat in the middle of the row of monks with the wishes doctor directly in front of him. Between them was a mak bing (form-small conical), a richly-engraved silver vase containing intricately-folded banana leaves and flower decorations, and a large copper caldron called bahd (monk's bowl) which was filled with perfumed water. The monks were holding a long white string which joined them together in the ancient ritual called Parita Muongkun (accident prevention-ceremony).

At 10 o'clock the wishes doctor began an incantation in a sing-song voice, while the monks and the audience assumed the wy or prayerful attitude position along with him. He was reciting the kam purn (formula wishes) or magical incantation designed to assure the return of the khuan (soul power) of the drivers and vehicles involved in recent accidents. Some twenty accidents, seven of which were serious, had occurred since the beginning of the year. On this solemn occasion the wishes doctor displayed his masterful powers of wishing to drive out the evil influences which had been causing the accidents and bring back the khuan which had fled as a result of the misfortunes.

The chao khana (ruler-group of monks) or senior monk, then led the monks in a chanted invocation which droned on for about 20 minutes. During this time I alternated between the wy position, taking photographs, and recording the proceedings -- a somewhat ludicrous series of postures for a man of my ample build. The many phi and genii (collectively referred to as phan yah respected-authorities) which people the world of the Lao Buddhists were called upon to come into the water of the bahd rendering it nam mun (water-magic) with power to recall the wandering khuan of man, vehicle, and motorpool in general. During this monotonously pleasant chant the chao khana fed into the magic water a rope-like candle (theean) which burned and sputtered until it was completely burned up - the signal for the end of the invocation.

The senior monk then arose from his sitting pillow and dipping a bunch of leaves in the caldron began to sprinkle the perfumed water on the assembled group. Everyone received a liberal dose of the magic water as the senior monk moved around, followed by the bahd now carried by two of the motorpool workers. When the lot nam mun (throw-water-magic) ritual had been completed, the chao khana,

followed by his group of monks, proceeded to sprinkle each of the vehicles in the motorpool. He was followed by the motorpool drivers who made sure that their particular vehicles received the soul-restoring water.

The monks then resumed their original positions and the white string (fai phuk khen, string-attached-hand) was tied around the wrist of any who wished it by the chao khana, while another incantation was said. The purpose of this final act in the ceremony was to hold in the vital power of the khuan now magically restored to the motorpool workers. Both Gail and I received our fai phuk khen, the knot of which was skillfully rubbed to ensure its efficacy. We must wear the string bracelet for a minimum of 3 days before removing it, unless a Buddha statue is available on which to deposit it. If we wished we might wear the string until it falls off. The soul-stuff having been successfully returned to the group, the religious specialists then partook of some excellent food served on the distinctive cylindrical-woven tables of the Lao (pha kao; tray-rice). Later in the day other baci ceremonies consisting of the incantation of good wishes ("May you have a thousand elephants," "may you have 100 slaves," "may you have good health"), tying of wrist strings, and eating succulent food took place at the homes of the ranking personnel of the motorpool.

American Viewpoints

After the ceremony was over I talked with the American supervisors of the motorpool to get their viewpoints and recorded the interview on tape. It is presented here verbatim:

Orr: This ceremony involved your organization and your people - what do you feel about it - what's your thought in regard to it?

Supervisor A: Well, my first thought when it was brought up to me several weeks ago now -- say maybe four -- we have a safe-driving program, and I was hoping that it would take effect and that we would not have to go into a baci ceremony such as this, and the drivers would realize the safe-driving program we have - had its effect in cutting down on the number of accidents we had. But the accidents continued and I realized that, due to these peoples' religion, they were actually driving scared -- afraid that they were going to have accidents because of the spirits in the vehicles. So I finally consented this week to have this baci ceremony, and I believe the drivers will be much more relieved, and will be able to drive a lot easier and safer.

Orr: Will you be able to test that in any way, do you think?

Supervisor A: I feel we can. And I have a personal feeling that our accidents will reduce. I felt they would reduce anyway. But now I'm sure they will be because I think we have everything going for us now.

Orr: Thank you - sounds like you're covering all bets. ... now I would like to get the impressions of this gentleman who is a supervisor at the motorpool, and have some of his reflections on what is going on today.

Supervisor B: It's an impressive ceremony -- and it will probably do the drivers, the mechanics and others a lot of good for the simple reason that they believe in it. The spirits and so forth that are in our vehicles, I don't know how they got in, and I don't know how they get 'em out, but as long as the mechanics, the drivers, and so forth believe in it we'll certainly improve the driving record - I hope. We've had quite a number of accidents lately both in the shop and out of the shop, on the road, and the drivers thought this would assist them in getting rid of the spirits. The ceremony itself is very impressive, and the monks and so forth are devout in their belief that they can do some good - so are the spirit chasers. This is unusual for me to take part in this - being a Baptist and so forth -- but I certainly don't mind as long as other people believe in it.

Orr: Thank you - we certainly appreciate your good broad-minded attitude -- especially when it comes to USAID efficiency.

The broad-minded attitudes of the American supervisors, neither of whom had more than an average knowledge of Lao cultural beliefs, reflected a typically American value in respecting the religious beliefs and practices of the other person. This feeling, plus the basic American interest in efficiency and progress, decided the supervisors on financing the baci ceremony. Actually, the su-khouan (together-soul power) or baci ceremony was the only way to restore the lost confidence of the Lao and the morale of the organization.

To date, 11 days after the baci, the cost of the ceremony (a nominal sum, primarily for food) has already been amply justified by the saving in non-accidents. In a similar period, 3 to 5 accidents could be expected. However, to the present there has been only one slight one - and the USAID driver wasn't to blame. It seems that a taxi without brakes bumped into his right rear bumper. But no damage was done. More spectacular was the over 1000 mile convoy trip of 5 trucks and a jeep from Vientiane to Pakse and return without a single accident or mishap. The jubilant Lao truck master very proudly credits the su khouan ceremony of February 19th as being directly responsible for this record. The good driving was due, the Lao believe, to the confidence and savoir faire assured by the ceremony.

Lao Attitudes

The following attitudes were recorded in interviews with Lao individuals at the scene of the ceremony:

Lao A: (An employee from the education division, speaking in English)
The ceremony today is for calling the spirits (khuan) that were lost during the past when the driver had an accident or ran over people, or whatever may be involved in the accident. When that bad thing happened, we have to have something to call back the spirit that the driver, or the one who was involved lost. So this is the time we actually try to eliminate the bad thing by having the Phra, phra means monk, pray to call back the lost spirits and maw phorn who is one that gives the luck and best wishes to everybody. Khuan actually means soul, but I think soul and spirit is almost alike.

Most of the drivers are losing khuan but not everybody. The motor pool is the place where the drivers work so this means that it also has lost some khuan. The ceremony actually cannot help prevent accidents except by psychology. When the people think somebody can give them luck that means their spirit or soul will be stronger than before. This is so with everybody in any part of the world, I guess. Most of the drivers here believe in the khuan because, as you know, Dr. Orr, Laos is a Buddhist country, and most Buddhists believe in khuan. Ninety-nine percent of the drivers here are Buddhists, so I think they believe also.

Lao B: (An employee from USIS, speaking in English) It is a Lao custom whenever anybody or a group of people have had luck to invite the monks to make a religious ceremony which may be held in the home or any place. All the monks pray, just like you hear them now, in order to invite the soul of the god or all the spirits to come - to bless them and do a good thing. Something like that. The maw phorn's part in the ceremony is to invite the souls of the people to return. You see, it's like when we are asleep, like when we dream - our soul goes out somewhere and gets lost.

The burning of the candle (rope wick) comes from the phramana (Brahman) religion a very long time before Buddhism. The two religions come together in this ceremony. The Chao khana sprinkled the water to wipe out the bad luck from the people. As to the cost of the ceremony - the monks never claim about the price or money - that is up to the person who gives the baci.

Lao C: (A driver speaking in Lao) I am very pleased and proud that I have come to participate in this su khouan. On the day of the accident I was coming from Pakkading, driving a USAID truck. As I reached Kilometer six I was trying to get ahead of an Army truck when I suddenly lost conscience, the truck went out of control and turned over. Will the ceremony help me to drive better and have better luck? I still do not know about this, however, I am pleased with this ceremony, and - yes, it makes me feel a little stronger than before.

(break-out-cause) or

Lao D: (a driver speaking in Lao) I had an oupatti het/accident with a tractor in which my hand was hurt a little and the car I was driving was smashed. I am very pleased to come to join this su khouan and I think it will clear out or drive away the bad luck from me. I am afraid of many things in the future which we cannot see. So that is why I have come to the ceremony today. When the car turned over because of something (mysterious) our khouan had run away. When we have this ceremony our khouan will get back into our body as usual.

Lao E: (accident investigator of the motorpool) Today I have arranged the baci ceremony for the vehicles of USAID and the people who have soke hai (cause-bad) or bad luck because of an accident. The purpose of having this ceremony is to get rid of the bad spirits in our cars, and in the people so that we will not have accidents again in the future. In the last month and a half there have been 17 or 18 cases of accidents running about 12 a month -- this is the reason we needed the accident-prevention ceremony so badly. From now on there shouldn't be any more accidents.

Lao F: (driver trainer) This baci ceremony is to give strength and incentive to the drivers working in USAID - so that they will have more self-confidence and do the job much better than before. It is also for the security of the drivers themselves. It has the effect of giving all the drivers a will or strong mind so that from now on no more accidents will take place. This kind of ceremony had been carried on since the days of phou nyau nya nyau (grandfather-ancestor, grandmother-ancestor) or our most distant ancestors.

The Lao Philosophy of Life^{1/}

Every culture has its philosophy of life - a set of premises as to the nature of reality which give rise to values, behavior, and institutions comprising the beliefs and customs of the society. This system of thought and the language to express it is ready made for the newborn child who spends much of his life in being educated into the system and in learning how to operate within it. To survive the test of time every philosophical system must present a coherent and consistent system of ideas which explains and hence defines the everyday relationships encountered by man on earth: the relationships between man and nature, the relationships between man and man, the relationships between man and the supernatural. The ethnic Lao cosmology meets these requirements and like most philosophical systems is extremely complex. In this paper we will only be able to touch on the common understandings shared by most of the Phou Lao (people-Lao), and much of the rest of the Southeast Asians, which help to explain the motorpool ceremony and its implications for USAID operations. Most of these ideas are classed as animistic (belief in spirits) and stem from long-forgotten cultures of the past. The basic ideas of animism are blended with those of Brahmanism and finally Buddhism in this chronological order.

The concept of Soul (khouan): Inanimate objects, like trucks, are composed of nam, fi, din, and lum elements (water, fire, earth, and wind). Animate objects, like truck drivers, have a fifth element in addition - akat or ether. Everybody and everything, however, have khouan or soul power. Khouan is, in effect, the action force of persons, animals, plants or things. When a man dies his khouan leaves and does not come back; when a machine is broken its khouan likewise departs. The wandering soul stuff is thought to have sprung away from its owner as if on a string. It can be recalled by skilled professionals such as we saw performing in the motorpool ceremony. The more serious the accident or illness, the more difficult it is to recall the khouan. Where khouan is irretrievably lost the victim becomes hopelessly crazy or dies, and the machine is beyond repair.

Khouan deep (soul-raw), or the soul power of the living man, may not often be seen but when it is - it resembles its owner, but appears in shadowy form and never looks at one. Phi khouan (spirit-soul) or khouan of the dead is often seen as a light glowing in the dark, or may inhabit animals such as dogs, pigs, or cats. Recently I visited the spirit house of a phi ban (spirit-village) or guardian spirit of a village. While I examined the offerings, a dog barked at me constantly - it was, so I was informed, the phi khouan making his presence known.

There are 32 kinds of khouan in the human body. Most of it resides in the head, a sacred area which none may touch (not even a barber) without permission. Among the kinds of khouan are khouan hu (soul-ear), khouan ta (soul-eye), khouan dang (soul-~~nose~~), khouan pak (soul-mouth), khouan meu (soul-hands) and so forth. Anyone of the individual souls may be weakened or depart causing difficulties in the organ

^{1/} The Lao ethnographic data in this section is from original research by the writer conducted with Lao interviewees here. For comparisons with the literature see Lebar, Frank M. et al. Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia. New Haven, Human Relations Area Files, 1964, "Religion", pp. 219-220, and "bibliography" p. 220.

affected ranging from a slight incapacity to loss of function. When the khouan is away, the individual feels weak and his facilities are impaired. Khouan may wander during sleep - in dreams - and it is not unusual for two khouan to have conversations at this time - for one to inform the other of a situation which is perhaps too delicate to speak of in conscious life. Only when the complete khouan is present does the individual feel confident, possess his full abilities and have a zest for living. No wonder he seeks to build up his khouan and to retain it by all means possible!

Origin of the Soul: In accordance with Lao cosmology conception takes place when a paw kau meh lang (father-old-mother-former) or ancient khouan takes up residence in a womb and is reincarnated. At birth the ancient soul is ordinarily disposed of, and sent packing, by the first exhaled breath of the infant. The baby's first inhalation installs the new khouan consisting of 32 individual khouan, 12 of which are from the father, and 20 from the mother (there is some disagreement as to which side provides the larger number). If the new born infant is sickly it is often due to the ancient khouan who hasn't yet departed and is lurking in the vicinity. In this case a ceremony is performed by the meh tao (mother-old) or grandmother 2 or 3 days after the birth. She strikes the floor of the house with the handle of a machete calling out to the ancient soul "if it's your baby come immediately (a trick - not a few moments later) and get it - if not, the baby is mine". The loud noise frightens the child whose crying is interpreted as proof that the rightful khouan is now in control. The first su khouan is held for the infant and mother about a month after birth on completion of her "mother-roasting" ordeal (you kam, stay-action) in which fire has been kept under her for 15 to 30 days so as to strengthen the khouan in her blood, weakened by the birth.

Soul Stealing: One's khouan should be like a good dog who stays by his master and doesn't heed the calling of others. Angry enemies may harm one's khouan by enticing it away through magical means. This is why it is so important not to anger others, and why a pleasant mien is so necessary in everyday contacts. The black magic is accomplished, by a "bad" maw mun (doctor-magic) or maw visa (doctor-science) on payment of a fee. The accoutrement used in the ritual resembles that of the good su khouan except that the black magic ceremony is always performed at night, different kinds of flowers are used, and the sacrificial chicken is never plucked but used with its feathers on. The khouan of the intended victim is invited by magical incantations to come, and will appear over the ritual tray as a shadow. A knife, on which magic has been blown by the maw mun then is used by him to cut the shadow. The victim dies immediately. In diagnosing the cause of death, black or red marks are seen on the body - these are interpreted as being caused by the magical knife.

The khouan of maw mun who become careless in their practice of black magic may become phi pop (spirit-squeeze) one of the most dreaded of a variety of malevolent spirits. Phi pop cannot be distinguished from real persons by outward appearance but they have violent tempers "like a dog with rabies." One of their favorite methods of attack is to reduce a buffalo hide to the size of a pill and feed it to an unsuspecting victim. The hide, like dehydrated tissue suddenly given water, resumes its original size in the stomach of the victim causing violent pain, insanity, and death. The female counterpart of the doctor of magic is the mun nya (magic-very old mother) who can also turn into a phi pop, an irreversible process. Among her peculiarities is the use of her feet to assume the wy or prayerful attitude in front of Buddhas,

rather than the hands.

The herb doctors maw yah (specialist-medicine) often diagnose illness caused by spirit with egg divination. An unfertilized egg, determined by "candling" it, is used and stroked over the affected part of the body. It is then opened, and if the yoke and the white have mixed a phi is involved in the illness. If three eggs show the same result - the person will die. Eggs are used since "the beginning of the khouan is the egg." Divining eggs may also be asked questions, and if true the egg will stand on end, or opened and sprinkled with rice grains will retain a certain number of rice grains.

Protective Magic: Naturally, in such a hazardous world, the khouan needs magical protection if it is to survive. Most Lao have their own khouan - protecting magic called kong haksu (thing-care) which may be a talisman, such as small metal Buddhas, or magical sayings. The saying, which may be several pages long, must be committed to memory. Many start with the phrase om kak kak (take in mouth-move-move), om kam kam (take in mouth-contact-contact). It is generally thought that every kind of magic is good - that is effective - if the rules are followed exactly.

Soul Building: Developing and protecting khouan in persons, things, and organizations is a basic value and life pursuit of the Lao - the success of which brings successful living and happiness. Material and economic progress, a major value of American culture, is dependent upon khouan development. This is a basic fact for understanding the Lao. Khouan can be developed and strengthened by het boun (make-merit) a series of everyday acts and rituals including donating food and other necessities to the monks, attending wat ceremonies, obeying the law of Buddha and the like. These practices result in muan, the satisfactory life, and earn naptuh (respect) from one's fellow men, health, happiness, and an assured and successful reincarnation. Charms and specialists are used to protect the individual from attempts to steal or harm khouan by the multifarious malevolent spirits that people the Lao's world. Peetee su khouan (making ceremony-together-soul), as we have seen, is used to restore the soul stuff once it has departed.

Benevolent Spirits: All spirits are not malevolent. There are a number of guardian spirits who perform warning and protective functions against the bad spirits and influences. They also can be used to forecast the future. Such spirits include phi houan (spirit-house), or household spirit which each house possesses. This is usually the khouan of a family ancestor. Every village has its phi ban (spirit-village) who is usually the spirit of a famous local hero noted for his feats - such as in wars against the Thai. Large towns, such as Vientiane, and other muong ("county" or cluster of related villages) have their phi muong who is usually the khouan of a "volunteer" who was sacrificed at an early point in the history of the muong. The Lao consult powerful phi to gain their support. Recently, a general who had been successful in a series of assaults on the enemy consulted a phi muong to find out the reason why. The answer was given through a nang teeam (respected female-stay with) or medium in whom the phi resided. The reason for the general's lack of success was that he had failed to consult the phi before the battles.

Uses of Su Khouan Ceremony in Royal Lao Government Organizations: Su khouan ceremonies are commonly held for the RLG organizations once a year at the pi mai (year-new) or Lao new year beginning in April. The most important of these ceremonies is the tham rah baci (organize-royal-sukhouan ceremony) at which the Royal Family officiates.

Leaders of government, and a delegate from each RIG organization attend the ceremony held at Luang Prabang, the nation's capitol. Each of the organizations, including the Army and Air Force, usually hold a separate su khouan ceremony at that time to strengthen the Khouan of leaders, personnel and equipment. These organizations also hold special baci to handle problems of maladjusted khouan especially after a series of serious accidents, as in the case of the motorpool ceremony. It was the custom of the government, before the French occupation, to hold su khouan ceremonies on the completion of public works, such as schools, government buildings and the like. However, the occidental viewpoint has discouraged this and it is only rarely that the necessary religious leaders are invited to inauguration ceremonies. This omission is generally regretted by the Lao as it is considered important to the successful use of a government project to have its khouan properly strengthened and in order, as can only be done by a baci.

Analyses

Perseverence of Lao Philosophy through time: In this brief sketch we see that the philosophy of the Lao is an integrated system of thought, a "model of reality" made up of concepts and symbols from different time periods and designed to explain and deal with life's problems. Parts of this model are beginning to change as new concepts from the cultural world of Western Civilization introduce doubts and new faiths. Individuals and groups change their philosophies to fit their life problems - and in the urban areas new problems and conditions have arisen due to foreign culture contacts. The change is therefore greatest in the urban areas. But even in Vientiane, most urbanized of Lao communities, the change is usually in the nature of a replacement rather than a whole new philosophy. Thus we see the Lao at the motorpool ascribing to modern machines the attributes of "thing soul power." The truck is fitted into the Lao philosophy of life rather than vice versa. So it is with most innovations introduced into the Lao or any other culture. The object or idea introduced must fit into the existing structure -- unless, ofcourse, the culture is being "swamped" and its institutions eventually extinguished as in the case of American Indian culture, Australian aborigines culture and the like.

Lao Philosophy and Problems of life: It is also enlightening to see how fellow human beings, such as the Lao, handle common psychological problems as well as the mysteries of life. Man has always been and perhaps always will be faced with the problems of how to build his confidence, achieve success, confound his enemies "real and imaginary", and triumph over disease and death. The devices of the su khouan and het boun ceremonies are used to restore morale in the face of bad luck and disaster, establishing cordial relations with strangers whose khouan is strengthened (the familiar baci which most USAIDers attend), and in general restoring health and happiness. The Lao are generally well-balanced and well-adjusted people even in the face of the present war and rapid cultural change conditions - surely a notable achievement when compared with the disorganization and mental instability among individuals in Western cultures where expensive psychiatrists and mental institutions often fail to restore emotional balance to those who have suffered from harmful influences.

Psychopathology and the Lao Philosophy: However, the picture is not a simple one: Dr. J.J. Westermeyer, Deputy Chief, Public Health Division, USAID/Laos points out - "I think that psycho-physiological disorders and hysterical disorders are quite common (in Laos). (One can hypothecate that this is correlated with the concepts of spirit possession, soul-power behavior such as the Lao have.) He goes on: "Hysteria

disorders are very uncommon in the states -- that is the inability to talk, or the blindness without any physical basis for the disorder. Whereas, here in Laos they are fairly common. In the States you see a great deal of depression and a great deal of anxiety. In Laos I've seen very little of this. I've seen only one really depressed individual and his depression was tantamount to a psychotic depression rather than to the garden variety neurotic depression that we see so commonly back in the States." 2/ The apparent lack of depression and anxiety here may be correlated with the Lao philosophy of life including its concepts and institutions as outlined above.

Lao Public Opinion and the Motorpool Ceremony: Most of the Lao personnel at the motor pool felt enjoyment and pleasure at the ceremony or mee khuam nyndee (have-action-enjo or pleasure) for the (to them) very real reasons as noted above. It was considered as a very good act on the part of USAID and so reported on the Vientiane radio. The radio regularly reports su khuan ceremonies, which take place constantly, and there was nothing unusual about the announcement. The general attitude of the public would be "Lao give baci for Americans and Americans give baci for Lao" - this is natural in accordance with the Lao philosophy of life. The appreciation of a good deed and the concept of gratitude appear to be the same in the Lao mind - khun khuam dee (value-action-good).

It is not known if the motorpool ceremony increased the loyalty or chong hak pakdee (ask to-love-make pure feelings toward) of the local personnel toward USAID. It would certainly increase the nupt^h or respect - and this emotion is a key one in Lao psychology. Perhaps more important is the fact that the ceremony held Feb. 19th was a step in the direction of strengthening the relationship between Americans and Lao and the harmony of the entire organization. By supporting the su khuan, American leadership showed fairness and justice kuam-nyut-tham, (word-high-law) to the Lao cultural viewpoint. ^{and} It is a basic American value, in our polyglot cultural scene, to want to understand/work in terms of other-culture viewpoints - to appreciate their language, customs, and attitudes, and to be fair to all ethnic groups. It is also difficult, calling for detailed studies and perceptions. An equal need to understand American values and behavior also exists on the part of the Lao.

American efforts are gradually coming to be appreciated by the Lao - not so much because material things are provided though this is important, but because we show an interest in the Lao khuan as they visualize it. An old Lao scholar explained it to me this way:- "The Lao people have been losing their khuan (in this case their ethos or cultural soul) to foreign invaders for many years. The French were interested only in building their own khuan when they were administering the country. We believe the Americans are really interested in strengthening our khuan, and the communists in destroying it."

Implications of these Data for USAID Operations

1. A device for Reducing Accident Rates: We don't know how effective the motorpool su khuan will be in preventing accidents in the future. The 11-day period of success

2/ Orr, Kenneth G. and Joseph J. Westermeyer. Psychological Characteristics of the Laotian Peoples; A Preliminary Anthropological and Medical survey. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, Nov. 7, 1967, p. 8.

as mentioned above may be continued or the "law of averages" may take over. However, since the psychological factors of confidence and morale-strengthening seem to have been strengthened in the Lao by the use of this traditional device, we may predict that a significant drop in accident rate -- other factors remaining constant -- will take place. It is suggested that an experimental viewpoint be adopted in regard to the su khouan and if it appears salubrious, as seems indicated, the ceremony should be added as a regular event and utilized much as it is now in the RIG organizations (see above).

2. Extension of the Su Khouan ceremony to other USAID Projects: It is further suggested that the pre-French custom of using the su khouan ceremony with appropriate religious leaders be revived, in conjunction with RIG departments involved, in the ceremonial opening of USAID projects such as new schools, bridges, roads, and other activity projects. It is believed that, psychologically, such ceremonies strengthen the belief of the Lao people concerned in the success of the Project and contribute materially to USAID - RIG effectiveness in their joint development program. Such ceremonies should also be approached with experimental research techniques to measure the effectiveness.

This should be used in connection with astrological dates to assure auspicious timing for the beginning of projects.^{3/} Wherever accidents or sickness are involved the baci should be encouraged -- for example, in hospital sick wards where such ceremonies are greatly appreciated by Laotians who believe in the khouan philosophy.

3. Participation in Baci ceremonies by USAID personnel: USAID personnel are often honored by baci ceremonies when they visit Lao communities in connection with their duties. This should be encouraged and if groups of USAID personnel are involved, such as on survey team efforts and the like, USAID should consider assisting in defraying the incidental costs for meat and drink used. The psychological effect of cooperation gained through the Lao strengthening USAID personnel khouan in this ceremony clearly indicates its direct contribution to USAID effectiveness. For example, on a research trip to Wapikhamthong province with a party of 15 Lao and Americans I found the baci indispensable to achieve rapport necessary to ensure high quality of cooperation in the research effort. In this case involving a series of 73 household visits in 8 villages, the expense (borne by me) and the time and energy consumed was amply repaid by the success of the data-gathering process.

4. The concept of Cultural Adaptation: The motorpool ceremony is a good example of culture adaptation of an American organization to local cultural patterns in the interest of increased efficiency. The su khouan ceremony is both foreign to the American practices and may be, erroneously, judged as "irrelevant superstition" by uninformed Americans. However, the respect for other-culture behavior, especially religious, is an integral part of the American value system. It is believed that USAID efforts here and elsewhere in the world would be greatly enhanced if our effort were adapted to the local cultural realities. Not only would projects be more readily fitted into the existing cultural patterns but the stigma of foreign (American)

^{3/} See Orr, K. G. The Lao Astrological Cane; the Artifact and the Institution of Astrology in Laos. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, Nov. 21, 1966, "Significance of these Data for USAID", Pp. 7-8.

domination of Lao behavior would be avoided. This is not a recommendation to preserve the traditional practices of the past but simply to utilize them as guides for the future of Laos. The suggested path of cultural adaption for USAID methods is not an easy one - and demands, above all, a clear understanding of Lao and American interactions. A little money, time, and talent spent on experimenting with the ways and means of adapting American objectives and methods of Lao requirements might save a great deal in wrecked projects and damaged American prestige.^{4/}

5. Explanation of American Efforts to the Lao: American efforts to help Laos are often explained to the Lao in terms of American values and goals - i.e. to make more money, have more things, live more comfortably and the like. The explanations may be understood but the value placed by the Lao on American concepts of progress and development are often low. Some feel that by development activities we are really developing our own khouan - and the communists encourage this interpretation. Our efforts should rightfully be interpreted as developing the khouan of the Lao individual his cherished institutions, and his country.

Summary

The motorpool su khouan ceremony of February 19th exemplifies the use of Lao traditional beliefs to increase the effectiveness of a USAID organization. The ceremony raised the morale of the Lao personnel. As a result, their performances and hence the efficiency of the motorpool in general may be expected to improve. It is suggested that other USAID organizations can benefit similarly, and that the su khouan and other cultural beliefs should be investigated experimentally with this view in mind. It is believed that USAID efforts should be designed for and explained to the Lao as supporting Laotian cultural goals of which the strengthening of the soul of the individual, the institution, and the nation is paramount. Such an approach is believed to be more realistic and effective than one which calls for a change in the philosophy of the Lao before modern development can take place. Cross-cultural cooperation as seen in the case of the motorpool baci is in the best tradition of both Lao and American philosophies of life.

4/ The idea of experimentation in cultural adaptation is also suggested for the Agriculture Division in Orr, K.G. The Lao Farmer and the Proposed Artificial Fertilizer Program in Laos. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, December 13, 1966, "Implications of these Data for the Proposed Artificial Fertilizer Program" pp. 21-24

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
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USAID/Laos
March 8, 1967

SECURITY IN THE LAO VILLAGE; AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

(This is a working paper and may be expanded modified or withdrawn at any time. It is issued to interested USAID and related organizations in the hope that comments may be elicited which may be incorporated into a subsequent revised edition.)

Kenneth G. Orr
Research and Evaluation Officer
USAID/Laos Vientiane
April 13, 1967

Frontispiece

"What we are interested in here, however, is, first and foremost, that the organization of protection, whether in the form of resistance to natural forces and animals or human beings, is invariably institutionalized. In other words, we would have, in each case, to study the material setting the equipment in artifacts, the system of rules, the organization of the personnel, and the relation of such organized groups to the biological needs of self-preservation and to the economic, legal, educational, and political techniques employed. Here also the reliance on help, as well as the fear of danger, is usually re-interpreted scientific knowledge, partly in terms of belief, mythological and personal, or the sense of responsibility to supernatural commands and persons."

The late Dr. Bronislaw Malinowski, Professor of Anthropology, University of London in "A Scientific Theory of Culture and other Essays", University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1944, pp. 105-106.

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Security in the Lao Village; An Anthropological Introduction

Kenneth G. Orr, Chief
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April 13, 1967

Introduction

I remember the teaching technic of the late anthropologist Dr. Ralph Linton as casual - almost gossipy. At the time I was a serious undergraduate at Columbia looking for the hard gems of knowledge. My jovial professor, however, persisted in yarning about what the Marquesan Islanders said to him or did on such and such an occasion. One listened, spellbound, but forgot to take notes which could be regurgitated on exams to pass that course - "The Peoples of Polynesia". Although I didn't realize it then, he was actually presenting the raw data of cultural analysis:

Culture, in so far as it is anything more than an abstraction made by the investigator, exists only in the minds of the individuals who compose a society. It derives all its qualities from their personalities and the interaction of these personalities.

Coversely, the personality of every individual within the society develops and functions in constant association with its culture. ✓

Today I would recommend to anyone who wishes to understand the Phou Lao (people Lao), those Tai-speaking, glutinous rice-eaters who occupy the valley of the Mekong and its tributaries in Laos and northeastern Thailand, to follow Dr. Linton's methods. I would suggest five pleasant, but time-consuming and often fatiguing methods - inquiring, listening, observing, participating, and reading. Ask questions of their wise men and women, listen to the ordinary people, observe the "acts and artifacts" in the village, participate in their work and play, and read about them in the literature.

I have followed my mentor in this study, which concerns security in the (ethnic) Lao village. Much of what follows is a record of conversation and observations with Lao administrative officials and villagers on this

I/ Linton, Ralph. The Study of Man. New York, Appleton-Century, 1936, p. 461.

subject. I would like to present the "raw data" of some of these encounters so that you can form your own opinions on the nature of the patterns of cultural reality which lie within the kaleidoscope of Lao opinion and attitude.

In regard to a definition of "security": narrowly conceived our subject deals simply with the material safety of the Lao - that is protection for person and property. In its wider aspect the question deals with the totality of threats facing the Lao in keeping their lives on a satisfactory basis in the maelstrom of current events. Our attention is focused on two mutually antagonistic streams of influence impacting on the Lao village - that of the Western World and that of the Communist World. The Lao, however, see these influences as two in a series of factors involved in the stability of the individual and the community - which is viewed as a precarious balance of natural and supernatural forces currently upset by the war conditions and its side-effects.

It may seem odd to some readers that in this study I do not consult Americans. However knowledgeable the American interviewee may be, he is a foreigner. The investigator always gets an ethnic bias in consulting foreigners about the Lao, or any other group not his own. This basic principle is often forgotten when Americans are consulted about Lao ways, Lao consulted about Meo ways, or even Urban Lao consulted about Rural Lao ways. Such data may be important for other types of studies - such as ethnic group relationships - but here we are principally concerned with Lao values and viewpoints. We might well start by asking what the Lao villagers "fear" and what they "hate" for these emotions will give clues as to where, from the Lao standpoint, security is lacking and protection is needed.

Needs for Security Felt by the Lao

The Emotions of Fear and Hatred

Fear (yan)-and hatred (baw mak, no-like or kee kiat, excrement-honor) are important emotions for the Lao as for most of mankind. However, what causes the Lao feelings, how they feel, how they express their feelings, will vary widely from that of culturally distinctive groups. For example, while the Lao ordinarily will try to conceal his fear or anger and express them later, Arabs are ordinarily quick to react, noisy and volatile. Vengeful mobs are common in the Middle East but rare or absent in Laos where the sudden ambush is more the style. The Lao, like other groups, seek to protect (pong-kan, limit-block) themselves from the things which they fear and hate and thus achieve a state of euphoria, mak yu dee kin dee (live-at-good-eat-good), and security, kuam santee suk (word-peace-happy).

You can tell when a Lao is afraid because he becomes pale, speaks incoherently and trembles. If he is sufficiently scared, as by an accident or gunfire

he may become ineffective or neurotic. This was the case for most of the personnel of the USAID/Laos motorpool following a series of accidents recently. The drivers were riding "scared and weak" because khoun (soul-stuff) had been jarred loose from their bodies and from

their vehicles. A ritual su khoun (ceremony-soul stuff) was held by Buddhist monks and a maw phone (specialist-blessings) or wishes-doctor. After the ceremony the morale of the Lao rose and accident rate dropped spectacularly. The ritual based on animistic concepts of souls and spirits is universally practiced by the Lao for numerous purposes. It is a traditional protective device to restore security.

Other manifestations of fear are dizziness, restlessness, and nausea. It is interesting to note on a difficult plane flight that the Lao (and other southeast Asian groups) will ordinarily express their fear by using the familiar paper bags to throw up - while Americans will ordinarily head for the toilet to relieve their distended sigmoids or bladders. When villagers are scared, as in the case of military action, they will try to hide in the deep jungle or a ravine. At these times they are very quiet, and will put cloths in the mouths of crying children to conceal their position. If Lao villagers are afraid of individuals who are visiting them they will try to avoid the intruders, will not extend the traditional baci welcome (incantations and strings tied to wrists to strengthen the khoun of the visitors followed by feasting). If accosted the villager will show exaggerated respect (as in deep bobbing of head, ordinarily a respect gesture), in passing the object of fear, loud talking with incorrect intonations and lying.

The less incapacitating but closely-related emotion of baw mak, hatred, also has its outward signs clearly recognized by the knowledgeable observer. Lao seek to avoid the persons whom they dislike or hate or if necessary make contact with them short and perfunctory. If offense is given in conversation the tendency of the Lao is to try to smooth it over, by apologizing and soothing words. But it is usually remembered and, if the offense is sufficiently severe revenge (keh kan, distort-utmost) is sought later by black magic or ambush. Retorts to abusive conversation are not uncommon - but this is also oblique and round-about using analogies to convey the meaning. An American tells of his surprise when his houseboy left him after he had "bawled out" the dog for coming into the house. The houseboy thought this message was meant for him and took the hint. Sharp and hurting meanings are often gotten across indirectly in settling a score. Direct aggression by fight does take place, and outward argument also but these manifestations are more likely between friends who temporarily disagree rather than true enemies who hate each other. The emotion of hatred evokes the symptoms of anger - eyes and

^{2/} Orr, K.G. Lao Traditional Beliefs and American Operational Efficiency. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, March 1, 1967

face become flushed and the body may tremble. But these are often concealed under a smooth exterior for overt anger is dangerous and besides can earn bab (sin) for the practitioner.

Cause of Lao Fear and Hatred: Human exploitation

I talked with a Lao sage, an old man over 60 years of age, on the subject of what caused fear and hatred in the Lao, and learned some surprising things. We Americans tend to think that all mankind resembles us in basic emotions and believe that fear of hunger, warfare, poverty, and natural catastrophes are also primary fears among the Lao. The Lao, however do not fear hunger since they ordinarily have an abundance of food; warfare as such is a chronic condition which ordinarily exacts small toll of life (however its by-products are feared most of all - see below); there are few poor, and most own their own land; and natural catastrophes, like the recent Mekong flood, are merely temporary inconveniences. For each of these hazards there is a traditional protective device. In rare times of scarcity of food, roots and grasses (in special areas of Laos) provide a meager but possible diet; Katha (talismans) and mon (magical recitations) protect from gunfire and the violence - as well as shifting loyalties (see below); food and equipment are shared in the extended family (kob kua ngai, inform-cook-large) and with the poor who have small families; and flood drought, and pestilence are controlled by magical and religious means. We Americans will say - yes, but these devices are often ineffective and the needs exist. The Lao will agree, but will also insist that they have more basic fears and needs than those conceived of in the Americans' philosophy. Economic necessity as defined by Western economists has a low priority in the Lao way of life. The Old sage elucidates:

"The greatest fear assailing the Lao villager today is fear of exploitation (kam lang, action-strength or force; bang kap, behind-narrow) or command by 'big shots' (cho nyay nai to, ruler-big-mister-body). Such exploiters include civilian authorities, police, and army personnel on both the Lao Government and the Pathat Lao side (country-Lao, communists, PL). The use of force and authority to "break brain, and break heart" include such unpleasant actions as false imprisonment, punishment or execution, confiscation of village products or mere token payment much below market price and insults and offensive behavior. Some villagers jokingly say "we are warned on the radio about robbery by the 'communists' but we never see them - however, we always see the corrupt R.L.G. (Royal Lao Government) officials - perhaps they are the threat of which we are warned". Other villagers who are severely exploited by the PL are told that the PL are only saving them from the "true exploiters" on the government side.

There is a general fear and suspicion of outsiders who come into the village to meddle with local affairs. Since the country is in the

'fashion of development' and there are many different ideas about this subject and many people are involved, the villager tends to be la vang (release-deep part of river) or careful of deception and being misled. The ordinarily simple and honest villagers have found that even among their ranks people will speak for their own advantage and not for the general good of the community. The tendency is not to believe any of the contentions of the "two kingdoms" (FAR and PL) but to retreat into nocommital isolation. The situation is forcing the villagers lower and lower. In the minds of the villagers the P L have a strong argument when they say they are fighting the big shots.

"When FAR (Forces Armee Royale) troops enter an area to "protect" villagers from the P L the effect is often an unpleasant one. The naiban is ordered to provide a certain amount of food everyday. Fish selling for 200 kip a kilo on the market--if paid for at all usually brings the low rate of 100 kip a kilo. Often the soldiers refuse to pay. When the villager respectfully requests payment... 'Sir, how about the money you owe me...?', the soldier may get mad. Because of insults and exploitation there is usually a poor relationship between the FAR and the villagers. They ask: 'How can we stand this treatment?'. This is the big chance for the PL who offer them "protection" from the FAR. Those who don't think about the unpleasant exploitation on the PL side may run to join them and suffer even more. Americans sometimes ask why this civil war never ends. The reason is that there is a "war" of abuse going on against the population of Lao by corrupt authorities and this turns the villagers into PL and communist supporters in self defense.

"Really, this is not a matter of being stingy for the Lao villagers will go hungry to give rice to their monks - achieving boun (merit) thereby- but they hate having to give rice to someone who says 'give it, or else your head will be out of your shoulders'. In the old days the children used to run away when the farang (French) came to the village. Today the villagers try to hide, and not get involved in trouble when their "protectors" arrive from either side. They will say to each 'yes, sir, how can I help you' but in their heart they will hate and fear both. This is truly the most important and vital subject in Laos today. The big shots also have very bad manners - like banging on the tables in cafes when their food is a little late, showing no respect to the local villagers, speaking roughly to them and ordering them about. The joke is told of a Lao mother who asked her daughter to see if a man was coming when the dog barked. 'No' said the daughter on investigating 'it's not a human being--just a tahan (soldier)!'

The story was taken up by a young Lao Man who had worked for some years in village areas next to PL territory:

"I know it for a fact that much of the trouble supposedly caused by PL is caused by the villagers themselves in revenge for oppression by government troops. For example: if a naiban calls his grown sons in and points out that he has been "robbed" by FAR troops it won't be long before the son and his friends get even. They will start with village weapons, a cap and ball shotgun, but will soon have the weapons they need - carbines, mortar rifles (bazookas) and the like by ambushing Government troops. Soldiers may even sell them arms, claiming that they were lost to get new ones. The PL will hear of them and also send support. Young Lao are idealistic, feeling a desire to fight for the "right" - especially to protect their own people from oppression. They also want to get glory and quick power - and these are promised by the PL. I myself would like to be an army officer, FAR (Forces Armee Royale) of course, so that I would have power over my men and could show them the good in me.

"While the FAR soldiers are often impolite and hateful, as the Old Man has said, the PL are usually seen as very polite. Of course they, too, take rice but they ask for it nicely - saying it's like a boun (merit) gift for the good of their country against the oppressors. And the villagers give it, if not willingly, at least they have to agree with the PL and they have no comeback. Also the people see that there is only one story coming from the PL but many from the government side since there is much disagreement among its leaders. I would say that the PL propaganda sounds and looks correct to perhaps 60-70% of the Lao. They seem to be winning the war. This is too bad since the Lao would really hate to give their land to a communistic government. But only a few villagers understand this."

I asked the old man about the phi ban (spirit-village) which supposedly guards the village when alien forces come in:

"When the PL comes into a village the Phi Ban of that village remains silent - that is, unless the villagers or the PL do something wrong, something that doesn't conform with the regulations of the village. Then the Phi get mad and can cause a lot of sickness and disease, cholera for example. War is a "phi" (meaning bad or evil) action in itself. But if a village phi is strong enough he can prevent war from coming into the village - such was the case at That Luang (suburban village of Vientiane) when it was shelled by mortars between the Kong Le coup and the following coup. Most of the shells didn't explode."

The assertions of the old man appear consistent with data and observations from other sources, however it is rare to achieve the degree of rapport necessary to bring out these inner feelings from the careful and circumspect Lao. The main point is that this unflattering picture appears to be the "image" which most of the villagers have of Lao government authorities and forces. The situation brings to mind the old English analogy of Robin Hood and his merry men fighting the injustices of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Like Old England, Laos is fighting to achieve nationhood in the face of localized

loyalties, intense individualism, and a rigidly stratified status system. The Lao as good Buddhists are responsible initially for their own salvation on the Wheel of Life. Secondly, they are responsible for their families---under foreign (largely American) financial encouragement those families who have gotten power have expanded much beyond their local boundaries. Traditionally they have feuded among themselves and this has been sharply increased since 1945. Finally, individuals who get power by being merely associated with the new foreign-introduced power organizations---the army, the police, the government positions---can and do "lord it over" the "ignorant and backward" villagers due to the peculiar psychology of the Lao who will appear submissive out of long-standing habits of politeness and respect.

Threat to a Major Institution: The Lao Household under attack

A second type of disintegrative force at work in the Lao village is seen in strongest form in the urban areas. The young people are being lured away from their traditional life as subsistence farmers and artisans in a folk society into the money economy of the big city. The effect of this on their behavior and morals, and the impact on the basic institution of the Lao---the average family---is told by the Old Man assisted by the Young Lao:

"Until recently our towns and cities were similar to our villages---just larger. There was no trouble before. But now there is constant strife and unhappiness. Shootings are common, violence is commonplace---especially in the family where men now hit their womenfolks, an unheard of thing earlier. Traffic accidents occur almost daily. People are getting scared of the city. We Lao say 'if you make boun (merit) you will receive boun; if you make bab (sin) you will receive bab'. There is too much bab today in the cities and it is spreadin to the villages.

For example, take the problem of the change in morals of the younger people. Not long ago prostitution was unknown in Lao. Now there are a lot of houses of ill repute called hong mae chang (house-female-hire) or hong sopanee (house-beautiful)."

The young man now provided the following details:

"Until recently most of the mae jang (female-hire) ~~are~~ prostitutes came from northeast Thailand. But now increasing numbers come from Lao villages. They are recruited by mae seu (female-intermediary) or procuresses who are dressed in fine clothes with golden earrings and necklaces. The mae seu who speaks very persuasively will talk with the girl's mother saying that she needs good girls who can serve refreshments to important and wealthy gentlemen in her restaurant, indicating that such would be a good opportunity to develop the young lady. The mae seu also buys a fine gold belt, new dress with expensive "lao border", lipstick, perfume and the like for the girl. She soon finds out what is really required on the job. If she is young and attractive, 15-16, she can earn up to 5,000 kip a night at her new profession. Ordinary prostitutes earn 500 kip, while 250 is regarded

as the cheapest. Ofcourse the fee depends on the amount of services required.

Two hundred and fifty kip a day is the standard wage for hired farm help-- the usual occupation for most of the poorer country girls who are attracted to the towns.

The Old Man then picked up the narrative:

"The wayward girl, ofcourse, doesn't like to come back to working on the farm or in becoming a respectable member of the community. They make poor mothers - often falling victim to drunkenness or disease. The story is told of a family who had a good daughter who was turned into a prostitute by her boyfriend. She left the farm for the big city and the life of the 'beautiful house' depriving her parents of much-needed farm labor. She returned one day during the rainy season dressed and painted like a great lady. On seeing some mud on the floor she said 'what a dirty place - there are a lot of germs here'. Thinking that she was taking good care of herself with her red lipstick, long fingernails, and perfume she was actually the morally unclean one in the honest and good village home.

It's the same with the boys and young men who are being spoiled by the bad habits they learn in the towns. These are the new ways of the foreigners which call for a new kind of sociality based on drinking, wearing expensive clothes and jewelry, riding motorcycles and the like. The son of a family will first request a bicycle, then an motorcycle of his parents--while he goes off to town and forgets the farm work. How can the parents afford it? Actually as the farmer gets older he can do less and less work. This tapping off of the younger generation to the corruption of the towns is a step backward seum soun (melt-disappear) and not progress kaw na (step-forward).

"I also note that respect relationships between people are upside-down in the new way of living. This morning I called a taxicab to take me to work and the driver insulted me by the way he answered me, Cab drivers, having the power of the automobile under their control think they are kings. I am an old man, a teacher and scholar, deserving respect, but the young delinquents now feel themselves higher than I. The young people follow the example of their leaders and have as their motto het muon (make-pleasure) instead of the old Buddhist precept of het boun (make-merit). Like the big shots, they learn to look down on ordinary people--they lack respect for their elders and even the monks. They don't have the psychology of dealing with other people or know how to fit into society. They are ouah tow (boast-body) or boasters telling how much they have and not how much merit they have performed. They are also envious of others' wealth and have lost the kaw pen nyung (no-is-why) "it doesn't matter"

relaxed attitude of the past. They are given to corruption and to getting money by whatever means possible. Some of the ill-gained money they will, it is true, give to the monks to help pay for their bab (sin), but these are the actions of thieves.

"The parents feel badly about the younger generation. They feel weak and helpless. The young people are living from hand to mouth--spending all the money they earn and saving up nothing for their old people. When I was a teacher at Ban ____ (near Vientiane) from 1946 to 1951, I had 30 students in the 6th grade and only one turned out bad. Today in a class of 30 students 20 or 25 would turn out bad. I believe the way to protect the young people from delinquency and restore to them the old high morals of the Lao people is to improve the curriculum of the school. At present, the Lao school follows the same old ways given to us by the French. Times have changed but the curriculum has not. When the disease changes we need a different kind of medicine. Above all, the teachers should know the Lao way of proper acting and thinking and should be highly trained. At present, students are asking questions of the teacher--something they did not dare do in the old days out of respect--and the teachers don't know the answers.

"I think also the influence of the wat should be strengthened by bringing the monks up-to-date in their thinking and teaching. The wat influence is there but the people have changed away from it. The wat should always be above the village--but today it's the other way around (i.e. secular life above the sacred).

"What happened to the kip is also happening to people. In the old days (before 1950's) kip was very valuable; you could live for a week on just one. Today, thanks to inflation, kip are worth very little and a lot may buy practically nothing (500 to the dollar). It's the same with people: in the old days they were good, honest and valuable - now they have lost their quality and are becoming poor in spirit and worthless.

"As far as improving the lot of the youths in towns and cities. The Lao people like sama kom (together - relation or sharp), or associations, very much and they work well together under good direction. Now their 'associations' are the bad companions of bars, cafes and pool halls. Of course the leaders are all important. First and foremost, they should know how to improve the natural economy. Most of them don't know the roots of the Lao economy. They just think they should spend a great deal of money. They think the economy is set up to spend money and not to create it. We need a good training program for our leaders in all areas. In the old days, the main problem calling for security measures were the robber gangs (who still operate and blame it on the PL) and they used the patoi (patrol see below) to take care of that; today the major problem is exploitation by corrupt elements in ineffective "Big Government" and there is no

protection against this except to have wise and effective leaders. When their attitudes and actions are good and correct, the others will follow and the PL will not have a case."

With this widespread attitude of the Lao people in mind, let us turn to an examination of data from other interviews and observations.

Attitudes of a Provincial Governor toward the PL Threat

In April 1966 I had a discussion with a Chao Khoueng (ruler--province) or provincial governor on the occasion of carrying out a village survey with a team of twelve Lao research trainees. Following a discussion of research methods and approaches the Chao Khoueng said he wanted to talk with the trainees about problems of dealing with the villagers. His advice given verbatim below from a tape recording reveals attitudes of a high government official (Lao) toward basic security problems.³

"To all personnel who came with Dr. Orr today: before you go to work with the villagers in the villages, I would like to give you all advice to use as guidelines in your working. Please understand that the province has been peaceful for only one year now. Formerly, if we went out only 5 km. away from this capitol, we would see a lot of PL, robbers, and thieves around. At present, we can travel any time, day or night, without any trouble in the area of 20 km. from the town. The prime Minister had promised to build up this province to be a pilot province. This is so because the situation became peaceful rapidly. In the former days, many nations tried to offer aid by giving some money and materials to develop this province, but it was impossible because of the trouble situation. Now, instead of this muong (indicating which one) being the only development area, the whole province is involved - unlike the Phone Hong and Ban Keun development areas (restricted areas). The reason why this province became peaceful very rapidly is because of a good understanding of the people (on the part of the RIG). They used to have hard lives and bitterness when they were under the administration of the PL. Then they changed their minds, stood up with guns in hands and volunteered to become tahan ban (soldier-village) to fight against the PL. The administration always keeps the eyes on their welfare and a lot of development projects were given to the villages in this province by Americans more than any other province. Besides this, whatever materials were provided by the AID agency to the people, everything will reach the hands of the people, even a piece of needle. There are no exploiters in the government office now, unlike in the old time, when the government would send 100 pcs. of iron sheet and only 20 pieces would reach the hand of the villager. That is why when the high American officials come to visit Laos, they always come down to visit our province and see with their own eyes. They also talk much about me in other countries. We can do much work because of the peacefulness of our province. Therefore, every plan that we will undertake with the villagers we must do carefully and courteously.

"The people in this province have been very afraid of the authorities for a long time, ever since the French period. Therefore, it is a problem for you when you go to meet the tasseng, nai ban, the head of the village soldiers, or the old men. You must talk and introduce yourselves in a nice way. Tell them that: 'I am a government official and the government has asked me to come to make a survey in your village because they want to know the standard of your living and what things you need so that they might plan the help project for you in the future. All of this will be for your own good.'

"All of you must behave properly. Don't eat anything without paying them the money. Don't do any bad thing to their daughters, because they will claim that we are nak seub (specialist - find out; spy). There are also a lot of PL spies around. They are trying to get at the weakest points for use as their propaganda. Please bear in mind that you are researchers to study about the problems, need, and way of lives of the people. You must be very careful when talking with them. You must talk with them nicely. People in these villages are not the same as in others because in some villages we have just taken them back from the other side recently. That is why I don't want you to do anything to disturb them.

When our policemen and soldiers here go to the village, they do not arrest anyone, they do not say bad words, they do not get any of their property without paying. When they have some business to talk, they talk in a nice way. We can conclude that we must use psychology (jitta vitthava: mental-science) with them to overcome kwam thaloun (word-ferocity) of the PL. This is my advice for you. If you have some problems or any difficulty in working, please contact Chao moun tasseng, or nai ban to help you, but if it still cannot be solved, you may come to me. I am willing to assist your work always. I am not against your plan; on the contrary, I support you.

"Remember, to win against the cruelty and wildness of PL we must use psychology, by acting to the villagers nicely and courteously like the soldier, police, and USAID personnel do. Don't promise to give anything to them unless you are sure that you can do it, or else they will claim that you are the slave of somebody (meaning "slaves of Americans", a favorite PL propaganda theme). This will be the point for the PL to attack us by propaganda and the people will believe them. If so, our started projects which cost big money will be wasted like throwing it into water. You must try in every way to win and understand their minds. Try to study their attitudes and behaviors because they are different from the people of Vientiane or Luang Prabang. The people here are very afraid of the authority; sometimes, they even run away and don't mind about your eating (giving you hospitality).

3/ Orr, K.G. an Interview with a Chao Khoueng in Southern Laos. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, May 23, 1966, pp 8-10.

"Therefore, when you see them you must greet them with nice words like 'oh, father' (paw euee!), 'oh, mother' or 'oh, uncle!' Formerly, the villages at the right side of the tributary river were PL. Village A was number one in the PL group. If we disagree with them in some matter they will not talk with you at all. A lot of development projects were given to this village. We gave them a big school with six rooms and so many extension agents (fundamental educators, home economists, medical workers, etc.) to work with them closely. Now the village is very peaceful. You may go there any time - even stay overnight - without worrying."

The Chao Khoueng touched on several significant areas affecting USAID work at the village level:

The problem of how to increase the effectiveness of Lao leadership at the provincial level directly involves the image of that leadership in the minds of the villagers. Our Chao Khoueng is sensitized to this problem and is doing his best to communicate the idea that he, at least, is a sagacious, gracious and generous administrator. This picture recalls the "golden age" of pre-colonial Laos when the rulers were visualized as noblemen who were hab phit sob (to receive-mistakes-goodness: i.e., to be responsible for everything, good or bad); a sort of senior kinsman who loved his people and was perpetually interested in their welfare. This fatherly figure is still preserved in the concept of the headman "father of the village" (paw ban). It is generally conceded that the elite and noble leaders retained close touch with the villagers in a feudal sense, and that the leadership from the Chao Muong level reflects this traditional structure (see Halpern, J.M., the Lao Elite; a study of Tradition and Innovation, Rand Corporation Research Memorandum RM-2634-RC, Nov. 15, 1960).

The Chao Khoueng's interpretation of the communist Pathet Lao as the main protagonist in village development work emphasizes the necessity of understanding the PL approach. While communist tactics are more complex than his comments indicate, the need for a "psychological" approach to win the villagers' minds deserves attention. In general, he feels that the USAID-RLG approach for winning their loyalty is beginning to take hold, but that the issue is far from decided. He points out the two major themes of PL propaganda: (1) class struggle - "why are you so poor, while the nai too (master-money; capitalists) are so rich?" and (2) ethnic group dominance - "you are slaves of the Americans." The active role of the entrenched PL spy or phou bang khop (person-command; commander) is touched on - knowledge of his insidious operations and how to combat them is vital.

The workings of the villagers' minds in regard to "promises" and keeping of word, as well as their hands-off lack of cooperation when their suspicions are aroused, provide an introduction to this

important area. Their response to kindly interest in their welfare and to courteous behavior emphasizes basic Lao value systems which have wide application. His advice on how to carry out a survey provides some basic points in a grammar on interpersonal relations with the Lao - of inestimable value for the foreigner (Americans included) whose blunders often place them in the suspect category which the PL can readily exploit.

Lao Villagers Attitudes towards the Pathet Lao

The following are field notes which shed further light on the attitude of Lao villagers towards the Pathet Lao. Because of the difficulties of identifying P.L. allegiance in interviewees, the data is given by "observers" rather than recognized advocates themselves.

In October 1965 I visited a cluster in northern Laos which was supposedly secure from PL attention. I was therefore surprised to learn that several PL soldiers had entered the town, a muong center, two nights before my arrival. The story was that a small detachment of PL troops had camped in the mountains a few miles outside of town and sent in some guerrillas to get needed supplies. The towns people are reported to have shut their doors and windows tightly when the rumor of the troops' appearance spread. The intruders seem to have secured what they wanted for there was no disturbance. On inquiring further, it appeared that several persons in the town were suspected PL sympathizers who had relatives with the guerrilla forces. The feeling among the AID personnel at the cluster was that one couldn't tell who were actually PL soldiers when they came to town during the day, since they were dressed like everyone else and mingled freely with the populace.

Other data from the same cluster told of a patrol of heavily-armed (rifles and machine guns) PL guerrillas who came into a small village and imperiously demanded food from the people. They got what they wanted and on departing the commander threatened death to anyone who reported the visit to the Government authorities. Such patrols periodically cross the roads in or near the cluster area but invariably retreat to the PL territory in the mountains to the east.

In December, 1965, following a research trip in southern Laos, I questioned my Lao guide, a man of about 33 years of age who had worked in the village (which we visited) for the past year in the fundamental education program:

Q. How do you think the trip went, as far as the villagers were concerned? What suggestions do you have to make?

A. The trip went O.K. and the people were well impressed. Personally, however, I think there should be much more talk about how the Government is bringing a "better way of life" to the villagers. The people need to know more about the Government.

Q. Do the villagers have any idea that the Government is doing thing for them?

A. Yes they see that the Government has done something for them. Roads have been built, wells dug, schools built for them, and, ofcourse, they contact Government officers constantly. But the good deeds of the RIG have to be said and repeated. You see, these villages until a few years ago had lost contact with the Government and the PL was much closer to them at that time. They were under PL control and the Government was "the enemy".

Q. At that time did the PL have a development program?

A. No there was no development idea then. But the PL lied to the people about the Government, about it being "bad", and forced them to work for their government interests. Actually the people learned to be afraid of the PL who used them roughly and so are timid about the present government too.

Q. Were the Pathet Lao mainly Lao or other kinds of people?

A. I have never seen them personally, but I heard from the villagers that they were mixed Lao and Kha (Mon Khmer-speaking tribes in the mountains) The percentages of each group depended on the area. In some areas the Lao would comprise, say 90%, in other areas 50% of the PL group.

Q. Are there Lao PL in this area - that is across the river from the villages we visited?

A. Yes- there are some.

Q. Were there PL in the villages we visited today?

A. Yes.

In the same area and during the same research trip I talked with a Director of Muong schools, a member of a well-to-do family in one of the villages which had been earlier dominated by the PL but was now under government control. His reply shows trepidation about the PL both on account of their characteristics and the Governments' antagonism toward them:

Q. I would like to know about the Pathet Lao. According to their system do they want to build schools in the area controlled by them?

A. This I do not know, because I have never seen the PL. only stay in the quiet place. I know only the activities in my area but not other places.

Q. You do not see and know about this, of course - but what do you hear from the people?

A. I don't know anything from the people either (the old men who are listening laugh)

Q. Are you afraid of the PL?

A. Oh, I am afraid of PL very much (he laughs). Nobody dares to go to the PL territory.

Q. What kind of people are they? Why do we fear them so much? Are they kha?

A. They are Lao people like us, but they are against the law and policy of the National Government so the people do not dare to associate with them.

The tasseng of Village #1, commander of the village soldiers, whose conversations with me in December 1965 on village security are recorded below, rode with me from his village to the capital town one dark night in May 1966. He was speaking of the improvements in the village given by the Government and USAID (school, well, dam) and how this support made the villagers strong for the Government and against the PL. I was especially interested in his comments since his town was designated by the Chao Khoueng earlier in conversation with me as the "No. 1 PL town" up until a few years ago. One reason for the PL allegiance apparently was the village's location near a major PL trail connecting the mountain passes in this area. Today this village is still on the edge of PL territory but has a force of 26 thahan ban, (soldiers-village) to protect it (see table 1): The Tasseng was speaking:

About 2 years ago, 10 persons from my village went to join the PL. Two have since returned - wives of the men. They reported having a very hard life indeed - having to constantly live in the forest, and always move about from one place to another with poor shelter and often little food. These ten people went because of PL propaganda. Uneducated men believe what the PL say to them. In this case the PL said 'if you join us then you will be given high positions of importance in our community'. When there were no village soldiers, at that time, the P.L. marched through our village to the Bolovens plateau, the best trail to take. At this time PL were everywhere. Some of the villagers went out to talk with the PL and liked the idea of joining them. The PL actually had no development program, they just talked about 'making Lao free' and how everyone would have big positions and no longer be 'slaves'. Then they took buffalos, rice, coffee and other supplies from the village to support the Pathet Lao movement.

"Just two days ago I caught two men in my village trying to send some supplies to the PL. They had coffee and clothing (uniforms) which they had bought in the capital town. I arrested them and sent them to

jail. While the Pathet Lao government can't pay its soldiers, they will pay for supplies they need, such as coffee or rice which they can't get in any other way - earlier they just took them. I suppose the two men would have been paid well for their trouble.

"For one year now we have had the home guard. This is the way we can keep the peace and security in the area; and it's a very inexpensive way of defending the village. Before we had village soldiers, the PL could come in anytime they wished, but they are very afraid of the home soldiers. The reason is that they will fight to protect their loved ones and property. As for me I would gladly sacrifice my life for my country. I do not like the PL and work hard all the time to keep them away."

In speaking with my interpreter on the occasion of the night ride with the tasseng, I learned that the PL propaganda reaches the villagers still through the medium of their station "Voice of Laos". Lao broadcasts also come from Hanoi and Peking. "Ofcourse", he said, "no one dares to say that he listens to their propaganda, but they do." Their programs are made attractive for the villagers with the mohlam (singing news and propaganda, jokes, etc. to accompaniment of the traditional musical instrument the Kene, a reed organ). One gets the idea that for the average Lao villager there is no hatred against the PL but often fear, and resentment against having to share their food and cloth (sharing with the needy however is a Lao trait, see below), and a dislike and fear of RLG repercussions for being associated with outlaws. The villagers don't really consider them a threat but wish they would go away or give over their hard-headed political ideas for the sake of peace and harmony. The Lao sayings, "When the buffalo fight, it is the grass that suffers", "Elephant's foot closes the bird's beak", and "The voice of the poor has no carrying power seem to sum up their attitudes. They do like to run their own affairs--as is seen in the enthusiasm of the tasseng for his village soldiers whose presence can keep out the PL intruders, and make the unpleasant interference of FAR or police unnecessary. The principle of self-determination seems to be a basic one in this analysis. Following is an account of a visit to a former Pathet Lao village in the company of the Tasseng of Village #1 introduced above:

A Visit in a Former Pathet Lao Village

In December 1965 I visited a Lao village which according to the Chao Khoueng (above), was the most active of the Pathet Lao villages until a couple of years ago. My wife Alice and I stayed overnight in the honored guests' accommodation on a raised plate form bed at one end of the Naiban's great hall. We had been royally entertained by the entire village with a kin lieng (eat-feed) or banquet. The next day we toured the village and talked with the village* we visited the tahan ban, village soldiers, who are part of the Auto Defense Corps (ADC) which now protected the village from its former allies. The Tasseng and Naiban who were commander and captain of

* council in a meeting. In the course of the trip around the village

the village soldiers, respectively, were my hosts.⁴

The Naiban steered us to the Tasseng's house outside of which were three small wall tents on raised bamboo floors. In one of the tents two soldiers in army green fatigue clothes were winding a generator to power a radio set. The tasseng greeted us cordially and explained that he was the commander (nai muot; leader-group) of the village soldiers. The Naiban, he explained, was second in command, and the other ranks, included a sergeant and corporal whose position reflected the local standing of the young men for all came from this village. There were 19 soldiers now, but there had been 27 earlier. Some had been sent to train in Thailand. I asked the Tasseng the following:

Q. Please tell me about the history of the village soldiers' organization.

A. The tahan ban as such was started here in 1959. They are supplied with arms and equipment by the FAR army and are called ADC (Auto Defense Corps). They receive pay on the following scale: privates get 1000 kip per month (\$2), squadron leaders get 5000 kip per month. The soldiers are chosen by the Tasseng from among the strong and good boys of the village who can be counted on to defend the village in time of trouble. They were taught to shoot at Khong Sedone (provincial capital) by regular soldiers.

Q. What about earlier - were there any village defenders?

A. Before, there were the mahatlik (palace soldiers, retainers, and sub-officials) in the palace of the Prince of Champassak; later, pulit (police) who were trained by the French as a special force for work in the villages.

Q. What about in ancient times before the French?

A. Everyman was a defender of his village in olden times. One always had weapons in hand, and the Tassengs and Naibans were the leaders just as now. The old weapons were the nyaw (sword), the h-rox (spear), the nah (cross-bow), and the peun (Lao gun; a musket). But they had no shields since the real warriors were considered to be invulnerable. Magical devices which are still used for this purpose included tatooing of magical inscriptions and the wearing of buddha charms, the most powerful of which is the lek lai (iron flowing), a natural iron pellet in the shape of the buddha. It was also important to avoid boastfulness. We will show you some of the traditional weapons which are still in use to protect the individual households.

⁴ Orr, K.G. A Behavioral Research Project for the Sedone Valley Program, Southern Laos; Preliminary Presentation of Interviews and Questionnaire Data from Lao Villagers. Vientiane, USAID/Laos, June 30, 1966, pp. 17, 19, 20.

Some of the soldiers and the officers kindly posed for photos. One followed us around as a guard of honor. When I first noticed this young lad I thought he had brought an ancient Lao gun for me to see. It was a Lao gun, but not a relic at all. The peun was part of the soldier's regular equipment. It was a muzzle-loading, cap-and-ball gun complete with powder horn containing black gun powder and small lead pellets. This weapon was not to be despised, however, since it was apparently lethal up to a few hundred feet, as the soldier had kindly demonstrated for me later by shooting down a coconut from a nearby tree.

We then proceeded to wander around town looking at the houses, granaries, and the fields which surround the village. I incessantly asked questions as we walked--questions which the Tasseng and the group of farmers who tagged along with us never seemed to tire of answering. It was all in a day's work to me, (getting at "common understandings", the basic ingredients of culture and society) but I was pleased to note that the villagers relished the interest which was shown in them. Encouraged by the warmth of response, I fired off the following questions:

Q. How many families are there in the village?

A. There are 147 families in all.

Q. How would you describe their economic standing?

A. A big farm is about 10 or 11 hectares (one hectare is 100 meters on a side--the French measurement); a medium-sized is about 6 hectares; small farms are 4 or 5 hectares. The poor people have no farms but work for others usually getting 50 muen of rice for the whole season at the end of the harvest (12 kilograms in one muen).

Q. What crops are sold - how about tobacco?

A. Tobacco is grown only for family use. We sell a lot of rice. Merchants, who are mainly Chinese, come from Khong Sedone and Pakse. Previously they have asked Lao people to come with them to assist in the buying. The intermediary is usually one of the merchant's neighbors who is paid to help in this way. One muen of rice ordinarily costs 200 kip, but the merchant will charge 220 kip and the 20 kip then goes (as commission) to the Lao intermediary.

At this point in the discussions there was a commotion nearby and everyone in our group rushed up to two men who arrived carrying several small partridge-like birds. The birds known as nak pao (bird lump) were quickly bought (for 50 kip a piece). The incident suggested an avid interest in wild game to supplement the farmers' diet - and this turned out to be the case, as these birds are relished for their flavor, I soon resumed my questioning.

Q. About how much rice was raised in the village last year and how much sold?

A. About 40,000 muen was raised, and about 10,000 muen sold.

Q. Do you sell much livestock?

A. Only a little and these mainly chickens.

Q. I wonder if you would be so kind as to give an estimate of the economic resources of the rich, average, and poor families of the village?

A. Gladly. In regard to rice: A rich family will raise 700 to 1000 muen a year, an average family 300 to 400 muen, and a poor family will receive 50 or 60 muen as wages. Only the rich families own cows, and herds of up to 50 are common. The rich will own from 7 to 10 buffalo also. While the average family has no cows they will have about 3 buffalo used to cultivate the paddy rice. The poor own no buffalo since they have no land. The houses of the rich are large to accommodate a family of 10 to 15 with walls usually made of board though sometimes of leaf. (Some of the wealthy are not ostentacious about their houses - see below). The average house has board or leaf walls and is made to accommodate an average size family of from 5 to 10 persons. Poor families, such as the widow's house which you see there, are small and poorly constructed..such families have few if any able-bodied men. A certain amount of cash is kept in the family. Rich families may have as much as 120,000 to 150,000 kip, average families, 40,000 to 50,000 and poor families 1,000 or 2,000 kip.

Q. Would the Tasseng rather live in a leaf-walled house or a board-walled one?

A. (Laughter) Board, of course. But some rich men would rather have the money and live in a inexpensive house.

Q. How much would a board house like this one here (pointing to an average size house) cost?

A. About 60,000 kip.

Q. How much would the poor widow's house cost?

A. Two thousand kip.

Q. Where do the families keep their money?

- A. In the house. This is in case someone wants to sell something for example, they use the money to buy buffalo. The money is passed down to the children at the death of the parents.
- Q. Yes, but where in the house would such large sums of money be kept?
- A. It is covered with a cloth and sometimes put under the mattress, or in a bamboo section or in the ceiling.
- Q. Are there many cases of stealing?
- A. Sometimes. Also sometimes the termites get the money.
(Much laughter.)
- Q. That reminds me of the "tightwads" in the states whose billfolds exude moths when they are infrequently referred to.
(Laughter) Suppose someone stole money from a home in the village. What would happen?
- A. Well the suspect would be brought before the Tasseng who would try to get at the truth of the matter and then send the man to court.
- Q. How do you get at the truth in a case like this?
- A. You get some of the answers by observation. For example, how much money the suspect has recently spent in contrast to how much he is known to have.
- Q. Is there a police force in this town?
- A. No, everything is "on" the Tasseng and Naiban.
- Q. Is there a need for a police force in the village?
- A. The village doesn't need a police force; we can keep the place secure ourselves. When the police stay here they stop everyone for small inconsequential mistakes which they may make. This causes a lot of trouble and unhappiness. Ordinarily we just overlook such mistakes, excuse the culprit and it usually doesn't happen again.
- Q. Where do the police come from?
- A. They come from Mueng Khong Sedone for observation from time to time and usually want to stay. But the police are not welcome. Another reason is that the village soldiers

(thakan ban) and the police don't understand each other. Also the soldiers can do everything like the police if necessary."

the above interview left no doubt about the interest of these villagers in their own defense system, and their distrust of outside authorities. In speaking of this situation I have been informed that the distrust is often mutual - that is, fear that the village soldiers will decamp to the PL side once the government has given them training and weapons. A short survey of the security forces in Lao villages is next attempted to acquaint us with the bare outlines of the present defense system.

Traditional Lao Concepts of Village Security

Ordinary Crime in the Lao Village

There are two kinds of crime in the village: ordinary thot rnuthot (crime: small) and capital crime. The following is about ordinary crime and especially that of stealing lak, followed by a discussion of capital crime. Men who commit crime, are phu lay (man-not true), or the more specific term kamoy (robber).

Robbers will steal animals such as buffalo, cattle, ducks, chickens, food, such as vegetables, property left around and "not kept well," or will break into houses and steal money and jewels. The Old Man continues:

"You must realize that in most villages some families are just not good. These are people who live in the dark way. Sometimes they are smokers of opium, drinkers, and gamblers. They do no work, and apparently don't care to keep-up their families who usually have a very sad living. Their houses are usually quite small (those of the poor). I would judge that about 5 families in 100 are of this type. Such people make a habit of stealing small things about their own village--things that are carelessly left around, usually. But they take big things from the nearby villages. Such thefts occur many times in a month. But strangely enough the villagers don't speak out about this. They think, 'oh! the people who pilfer in this way are poor and have nothing to eat;... We really don't care about such small losses.' Also the average villager doesn't like to be called stingy -- so usually he doesn't report his loss. However, the careful householder will keep his property in an orderly manner and would-be robbers won't have the chance to pilfer.

"Really poor people who are needy are ashamed to ask or beg to meet their needs. Some will ask for alms 'three times,' and after that they more or less feel justified to help themselves. Robbers always steal at night. In order to handle the problem of the watch dog which most houses have, the robber will carry with him poisoned rice. When the dog barks he throws him the poison, and the dog dies after a few hours.

The best protection against robbers is to be a 'good' man -- for the robbers seldom will bother such a person. In the first place, the generous (not stingy) person already distributes food and other things

Pages 22, 23, and 24 deleted

to the poor people which may include potential robbers. Actually ostentatiously wealthy people make good targets for the petty thief who usually becomes a robber accidentally (note: Robin Hood idea to steal from the rich for the needy) The behavior characteristics of all people are known in the village. One who does good deeds has boun wasana (power or merit - spiritual) and this is an actual force which resists evil and protects the person who has it (along with charms, talismen Buddhas etc.)

"We have been taking about petty thieves. There are also bad robbers who are much more dangerous, and are consequently taken seriously. Actually all the villagers know him - and he doesn't try much stealing in his own village, but will arrange for comparable bad men from other villages to do the crime in his home territory. Such a person is naturally unpopular and often has "bad luck". For example: When the bad man is attacked by other men, the villagers will not spring to his assistance as they do for their good neighbors. If he is killed in a fight, as often happens, no one seems to know anything about it, and will not give revealing information to the police. In this way all villagers are actually policemen - although they don't ordinarily speak out -- and they judge the action of the bad men (phu hai phu kat; man-angry-man-absolute), giving them eventually their just deserts.

"A common and serious problem of theft is stealing of water buffalo or cattle which takes place at night, ofcourse. After the crime is discovered by the owner of the cattle next day he 'fears' to reveal the loss at first. He will attempt to follow the tracks of the beasts noting the direction they go in. This is often to another village where he will ask friends if they have seen the cattle, and to help him apprehend the robber. Often the criminal is caught this way and the cattle returned.

"Each village has its own law and its own means of dealing with crimes of this type. In some villages the robber is killed if he steals repeatedly. The farmers form a sort of vigilante committee to 'take care of' a man of crime - that is, one who is an incorrigible repeater. They hold a secret assembly pa soum lap (meeting secret) attended by the naiban, tasseng and others. At such a meeting the older men will counsel "be patient", but many will get the hate feeling kan khuan (choking-feeling). If the majority gets angry enough, the decision to kill the robber will be taken, and he will be dispatched with knife or gun. Everybody in the village is really a "judge" in these matters and their opinions of great importance in maintaining law and order. Why do people who have not lost anything get so angry at a bad man? If the victim is a "good" man (phu chop phu dee; man-complete-man-good) he has many friends - they love him and are duty bound to help him. But the man who robs is the enemy of all. Sometimes the Pathet Lao are said to use secret assemblies to

denounce the government as a "robber" and to put them in the wrong, bringing out their propaganda at that time.

"In regard to continual problems of robberies: the villagers now report to the police who will show them how to get the robber. If there are no police available, as often happens, the owner of the lost property tries to get cooperation of the village housing the suspected thief to recover his property and punish the thief. Yes - they do have watchmen khon nyam (man-time for acting). There will be a dozen men-of-action forming a patroi (french word la patrouille; patrol) in a village of 100 or 200 houses. But (amusement) robbers sometime disguise themselves and join the patroi.

"Even though the French word is used, this patroi is a Lao idea and very old. The present thahan ban (soldiers-village) or ADO village soldiers is based on this idea, and works very well. All of the patroi, or thahan ban for that matter, are volunteers.

"Each Lao household has weapons to defend itself - such as hunting weapons, knives, swords, crossbows and spears. In time of troubled circumstances the Lao villagers organize themselves into thahan hak sa ban (soldiers-serving-village). All males of 14 years of age are liable for this service. Sometimes the French would organize these thahan into an interior defense organization subject to the Residence de France through the Chao Khoueng, Chao Muong, Tasseng and Naiban. Such groups were not volunteer. They were provided with arms and uniforms and given the protection of regular post militaires nearby.

I remember back in 1942 being part of a volunteers' patroi in Ban T about 100 kilometers east of Vientiane. This was about the beginning of the French-Thai conflict. The Naiban and Tasseng had alerted the strong men of the village who chose a leader from among their group. I was schoolmaster (Naiku; leader-teacher) and had the position of "chief scout" in advising them, and in consulting with the naiban and other village leaders. I would lecture to the group on morals advising them to help each other in case of trouble. Ofcourse, I didn't talk directly about fighting or violence...this is against the good Laos code of ethics. I used to talk on other subjects, telling stories from Lao history, philosophical stories, and even humorous ones - always looking for the best ways of getting the message across by analogy. Such information is easily understood by the villagers and the teller doesn't run the risk of acquiring sin by bad talking. During such times of trouble the monks are actually silent. But even their silence is working, too, for the protection of the village. They don't want trouble, but in their lectures they stress the Buddhist morals. He may not advise the villagers to fight but just about how to avoid danger and trouble. When there are bad men in the village no one likes to speak out against them.

Fascinated by this testimony of indirection in the Lao villagers approach

to security problems, I asked the Old Man how the village would protect itself from a group of communists who were deliberately trying to take over control of the village. He said:

"You must realize that although Lao villagers may be narrow in their viewpoint they are quick and usually right in their judgement of each other - because they go right to the root of the matter. If there are PL men in the village the rest of the villagers will know this and will have observed their actions. Whether such men are PL or not the villagers don't care. We don't know the PL as to whether they are good or bad. In fact some villagers even joke saying to each other "you are a communist". The important point is whether or not the men in question are good men in the Lao sense. One can always challenge such a person with "what are you doing that is good?" - that is, by way of good works (merit building) and good speaking. A PL man may say "I do the good" and he might fool the villagers, but only for a short time. Villagers will believe the good man but will have nothing to do with the bad. Usually the PL are always talking about the good, but these are soon seen to be nothing but words of propaganda.

I asked if such men would ever be killed by the villagers if they became angry enough, and the Old Man replied:

"Oh! but the bad men always kill themselves. Hate, which they earn by their actions, will kill them. A good Lao will never do anything to help such a persons since he would suffer ostracism if he did - just like the guilty one. The Lao are not an emotional people but they slowly over time achieve their good ends and defeat the bad. The basis of the Lao mind are the five precepts of living: 1. Do not drink, 2. Do not steal, 3. Do not lie, 4. Do not abuse the wife of another, 5. Do not kill. If the bad men were habitual robbers (as discussed above) the villagers may not kill them. This depends on the naiban and the tasseng. Ofcourse, in a verdict to execute a bad man, the Naiban would not come out and say 'we will kill' .no, he would rather tell how truly bad the men in question were and the people would understand the unspoken verdict. Most naibans are old men in whom the villagers have implicit trust, respected by everyone in the village and a man of confidence.

When I pointed out that many of the naibans I had met were young, the Old Man conceded that times were indeed changing in this respect, and that although the present village leaders might not automatically get respect and obedience as in the past, this pattern of behavior was still unbroken. I asked the Old Man for a modern story of ordinary crime that would point up his analysis.

The Case of the Stolen Goods

The following story was overheard in a Chinese Lao restaurant in Vientiane about June, 1965. The Old Man who relates the tale eats his breakfast here and uses the restaurant (han ahan), as a sort of private club along with other Lao of all walks of life. Stories such as the one given here are commonly related for the edification of the patrons along with the common news of the day.

"There was a man "A" from an unknown village who went to another village to sell paddy rice (unhusked) which was loaded on a cart drawn by two oxen. He went straight to the house of a lady "B". He asked her if she wanted to buy paddy for a good price - 800 kip for a sen (120 kilograms). The standard ox cart will hold three sen baskets. The market price at that time for a sen was approximately 1200 kip (500 kip to the dollar on the open market). The lady, surprised by the low price, bought it without more ado. But A since it was late in the day did not terminate his dealings with B until nightfall at which time he asked her for a night's hospitality. (veh saww; go in-restore). This is a commonplace request of a stranger and is usually honored. It consists of letting the visitor sleep, on his own bed (mat or pad) and provide his own food within the house. If not, he can sleep with his cart underneath the house. Usually in such cases the man would be invited in.

"The following morning the man asked the lady again for more hospitality and so it went for five days in all. She, again following customary usages, did not object but welcomed the visitor. A then went through the village seeking to sell the two oxen and the cart. He felt 'too lazy to take them back' to his village. B having heard that the man was selling the oxen and cart asked him for the exact price. "Thirty thousand kip" said the man. The usual price is 40,000 for each ox and 30,000 for the cart. "A surprising price" she thought. As the man insisted that B take the rig she took it - not solely for the cheaper price, a real bargain, but also to oblige A in his desire to free himself of the equipment.

"After the deal was concluded the man disappeared with the money. Three days later another man "C" came to B's house in order to inquire about a cart and oxen which he had lost. He showed the lady two oxen identification cards. These cards issued by the tasseng or chao muong give a description of the ox's natural markings. Such identification cards have been in use in Vientiane Province, along with a lot of other French administrative devices, for some time, but are relatively unknown outside the capitol city area. With much anger C said 'You see? the oxen really belong to me. I will drive them away now. Otherwise I will lodge a complaint against you at the tribunal (law courts).'

"The lady felt afraid. But a moment later she hastened to the paw ban's home and revealed to him the startling information. The paw ban went to the place of the incident for questioning. However, he found no way in which to arrest C in his action of carrying off the rig because of his formal papers. Then C rode off on the cart crying to the stunned lady and to the helpless paw ban 'take care of yourselves'...and disappeared.

"In conclusion: The story shows the real meaning of wrong beliefs and actions. This should not have happened following our traditional behavior for the Lao are accustomed to living with each other with the expectation of good, well being, and peace. Such actions pose a great danger for our peoples' daily lives...for crimes continue to enlarge and spread out from one man to another and from village to the other. What dire things can we expect in the near future?

"On the other hand in order to weaken that sorrowful line of thought I firmly believe it is necessary to understand thoroughly the real meaning of the five buddhist precepts and their applications do not drink, steal, lie, commit adultery, or kill. Whatever a man's interest in life, it should be better through such knowledge with hopes of a good and long life."

Capital Crime in the Lao Village

Traditional law and order in the Lao village (got labieb, code of regulations) has been modified through French influence and present circumstances. However an understanding of the old system is imperative to understand the basic values and value premises underlying the institutions of law and order in operation today. I asked the Old Man how the problem of murder was handled in the old village system and currently. These are his replies.

"In the old days every paw ban (father-village; headman) had his group of brave men or heroes (khan han; man-brave). In a village of a 100 houses or so a paw ban would have 7 or 8 heroes attached to him to assist in carrying out his duties and to support his authority. The paw ban was usually an older man but also a strong man himself. His heroes were invariably very strong and characteristically angry men (khon haii; man angry); that is, quick to anger and not afraid of fighting. Such men were athletically active in games as well as good fighters, they were also men of loyalty (sat seu to; steadfastness-toward). We say that such a man walks straight (khouam-sat-seu; word noun-correct-straight), has a steady gait and doesn't rock or deviate in his loyalty to his chief, the paw ban. Other important traits of character of the heroes were frankness and honor (the French word droiture, straightforwardness, was used)."

The Lao is often devious in his personal loyalties, feeling that self-loyalty is first and foremost. But simple active men who, like the heroes were steadfast, were recognized as necessary personality types even though not "ideal" as they are in American society, for example.

"Traditionally, the Paw Ban was a politically very powerful man in the village especially with the help of his loyal brave men. Under the French this was much modified since the paw ban had to tell everything to the French controlled security forces, but earlier and traditionally the village leaders were autonomous, in their control of law and order. Of course from time to time there had been Thai domination in the last century. Now I suppose most of the khan han are in the army, but the idea is still alive in people's thoughts."

Having established the traditional model of the village leader and his strong men, I asked the Old Man to consider what would have happened in a village in the event of a murder. We sketched a hypothetical murder of a farmer by his neighbor due to sudden uncontrollable hatred. "The body is found - then what happens?" I asked. The Old Man played this analytical game of pretend to perfection.

"When the paw ban is informed he secretly calls the heroes together, telling them to "assemble" by word of mouth. They come together silently and with sadness. When the murder has been explained to them they say 'oh! terrible!' - indicating that they are all of one mind. The paw ban asks, "What have you seen, what happened?" Then the reports and opinions of each are heard.

"No, they will not act at once. They will wait 2 or 3 months to find out the murderer's background. Perhaps they will find out that the murderer is a young man who ill-treats his wife, and sometimes beats his son - in other words, with a bad reputation. The silent approach is used in this investigation and no word is said. If the murderer feels guilty about his deed he will run away. He wouldn't disappear entirely if he had a family - but would hide somewhere during the day and return to his home at night. This period is very bad for the murderer who lives in constant fear. There is no vendetta from the dead man's family, but the whole village is "silently detesting" him (khilat keen). The murderer feels he has no friends. He can't even take refuge in the monastery. Usually there is no revenge - if revenge is taken there are two murders committed and the persons concerned will accumulate bab kam (sin-act; demerit). The murderer may have accumulated a lot of boun (merit) through righteous deeds in his lifetime, but murder is very serious and in the village cannot be counterbalanced by previous good works.

"Actually the real punishment of the murderer is circumstantial: before the deed he would be with his family - now he cannot. Before, he has friends; now he has only enemies. He is finished - he cannot improve himself, and there is always trouble for him wherever he goes. His punishment on earth is banishment from his home village. He may go to the capital city or to Thailand where he may fall into a life of crime, and kill again out of suspicion of his fellow men.

"If the deceased gave provocation for the deed and the homicide is

justified, the murderer will attempt to get reinstated into his village. He will flee to the capitol city and have others arrange for a reconciliation (ob lom; surround-sentiment). He will apply to a professional wise man or advocate called tha naii khouam (master-of-words). The monks of the village are not concerned with murder, but the chao attikan (ruler-of place; abbot of wat) may advise the murderer if so requested. Not infrequently the murderer may take refuge in the wat - temporarily and usually before fleeing from the village. The Chao Attikan will advise him to seek and advocate and later return to the civil authorities of the village (paw ban and heroes).

"In the capitol city the advocate takes the murderer into custody for his security, and keeps him in the advocate's home. The murderer confesses the motive for the murder. (ro ca na; cry out-word-behavior). When this is understood the two send an intermediary (pha sen khao; man-report-news) back to the village with the news of the confession, the fact that the murderer will pay damages to the family of the victim, and will ask pardon (kho nyok tod; ask-apart-crime) of the paw ban, heroes, and the family of the murdered man. This must be done correctly as follows:

"Firstly, the intermediary approaches the victim's family to find out what they want in compensation. Actually the old men of both the murderer and the murdered's families get together to explore reconciliation possibilities (thone hom khan; assemble-together-between-reconciliation). The two groups meet in a neutral area and line up facing each other with the intermediary between them. It is customary for the intermediary to shift the blame from the murderer by the simple device of claiming that he blamed the deed on strong liquor (lach lao; whiskey-lao, rice brandy). 'I was drunk' he is reported to have said. 'I now belong to you - if you will kill me, you can; I will do everything; all I have belongs to the victim's family'. The murderer is quoted as saying that the intermediary must do the right thing for him, pay for the funeral (kha tham khouane) pay the cost to repair the scared souls (khouane) of the family, plus whatever else the victim's family want. The murderer asks only for his life. In the old days, the costs would be like this: One year's wages compensation...40 piastres; Presents to make ban for murderer...30 piastres, and other sundry costs,

"If the murderer is a rich man - all is well. If he is a good man, he can borrow the necessary sum. He may borrow from money lenders for about 35% interest. Some relatives would give the money free. When the arrangements have been accepted there is a big meeting between the headmen and heroes, the two families, the advocate and murderer and the hard-working intermediary. Later the murderer returns periodically to see how the villagers 'take him', finally returning for good. After reconciliation, the villagers forgive the culprit and the murder is gradually forgotten."

The Young Lao interpreter responded to the last idea with "I would never forget"., which may sum up the attitude of the villagers. But, at least the formalities of the case are closed, family feuding and competition might continue, but without social sanction. The conversation then shifted to the modern day handling of the same situation.

"Today the paw ban is still supported by relatives and friends although there are not strong men gangs (heroes) as such. The paw ban and paw huan (father-house; head of household) meet in the wat on village matters. Then there are the thahan ban (soldiers-village) who are controlled by the tasseng and who support the paw ban in the village. Guns are distributed through the village leaders to the village soldiers. Often these are locally made, cap and ball muskets using gunpowder (Peun peung; gun-fire) made of charcoal, sulphur and bat dung (potassium). The urine of buffalo is also used (salt-peter). Rockets for ceremonial purposes are made in the same way.

"Murders happen not infrequently today; adultery is a killing cause, as is ridicule, or theft. When the body of the victim is discovered, the village is notified often by the crying of the women. The men are quieter but all are agitated. The commander of the troops (hua na monad; head-fact-troop) is now the person to investigate. He goes after the murderer with soldiers. When the murderer is caught they ask him why he committed the murder. There is no jail in the village although they may tie him up. The murderer is then sent to the Chao Muong who in turn sends him to jail (khuk) in the capitol city. Actually the paw ban gives the command to take the murderer for he is still responsible (lap phut sop; accept-mistake-correct), but the commander is responsible for security (khoulam sugnob; word noun-peace). They work together as equals. The murderer is then tried by a government judge, trained in law school Vientiane or even France and England (huana sa santone; chief judge), pled with the help of an advocate (Tha naii khoulam), and sentence passed.

"The murderer may escape and hide. Some run away and join the Pathet Lao forces. Others seek out an advocate who will, in the traditional way, insure the safety of the murderer while assuming responsibility for him. The advocate will then go to court to file suit against the problem (accusation). The tha naii khoulam will not always win, because it depends on how serious that problem is. But if he can't do anything much, at least he can try to phone pan tod (tolerate) the punishment. Suppose the court decides that the murderer has to be in jail at least 20 years or maybe his whole life. The tha naii khoulam will ask that the sentence be reduced to 5 or 10 years. But the murderer will have to do what the court decides. Relatives often arrange for the advocate who is a professional man in private practice. The case is decided in the court by the executive members called kha na kam ma kan san (staff-committee-court)"

In continuing our hypothetical discussion of the "murder case" the problem of sin bon (value-above) or bribery came up. Some of the members of the court were known to take sin bon in the process of rendering a decision. The process was described subtle, where the corrupt judge asked questions of both the accusers and the accused, but in which the answers had been provided beforehand to the accused - so that he could make a good showing in the cross-examination. The accusers on the other hand were given hard questions which they were unable to answer. I asked the Old Man if this process was also true in the "old days". He replied:

"In the old days, the head judges were honest people who had spent years in the Buddhist temple learning right (boun) from wrong (bab). The judges today are trained in law schools where they learn a lot about the new Western philosophy, but they know little about oriental philosophy. Most don't know the doctrine of Buddha or the old Lao ways, which are still the forces of right and wrong in Laos. Also, men trained in the old moral discipline have laai chai (shame-hear) or a sense of guilt within them if they do something wrong even when no one is around to watch them or to know about their bab. The new men have shame only when caught at their wrongful pursuits."

The next question was inevitable: what would the old man suggest to produce better leaders:

"There must be a new school of tama sath (law-science and philosophy) which teaches the Lao their own culture. Professors in this school should be important peoples with no black spots (phou mee chitchai peu peuan; person-have-heart-dirty) and who know the traditional Lao codes of morals and behavior, and yet are also able to meet new situations with adequate laws adapted to the Laotian people. The government employees themselves should be the students. When the students believe in such professors and attend to their lessons they will be very good leaders on graduation. Then our leaders will be truly those who think first of the public interest, of other people, and will have rid themselves of the black spots."

The great importance of the leader to the Lao heritage lies in his traditional background coming out of the Brahmanistic civilization centered in Angkor Thom in Cambodia. The king (Chao Maha Sivit; ruler-big-life, from Siva) was visualized as divine and his leaders partook of his supernatural power. Today the King is still considered as a sacred person and Lao villagers will hang his picture in their houses to keep away bad phi (spirits). The nature of the power of the leaders is therefore an subject for inquiry if we would understand the Lao attitude toward their leaders.

⁷ A discussion of the present day survivals of ancient ideas of political power is found in Heine-Geldern, Robert, Concepts of State and Kinship in Southeast Asia, Ithaca, Cornell University Department of Asian Studies, April, 1956.

Personal Power in Lao Leaders

Lao people are firm believers in boun wadsana (spiritual power). Such power is manifested in the individual by his deeds especially ceremonial accomplishment. Even in the family this power is great. An important attribute of boun wadsana is to avoid the kha-lam (forbidden) or that which is not traditional and "loyal" (i.e. to the Lao culture). The Lao people respect many gods or "genii", and for that power they construct ho (shrine), as well as temples and wat in order to pay respect to the power. The Old Man continued:

"Some people have power within them. This is called somphan. It is the power that monks nobles and kings have, and it comes directly from the Sasana (Buddhist Teachings) and from doing good deeds as prescribed by Buddhism and Lao custom. This is power from the inside of the individual and is the mark of all truly superior people. The word "his excellency" is phanatan, the syllable phan meaning superior because of inner power. Such power is not conferred on one, like political power, but arises and develops as one's character. By special inner discipline such as I practice one can achieve the power -- as I have. However, there are two kinds of power -- that achieved by doing the good and that achieved by doing bad.

"The Lao people also believe there is power in things. There is virtuous power in Buddha statues and like objects of value. The sky, earth, sun, water also have natural power. It is kha-lam (forbidden) to "insult" power of any kind. That is to say -- such and such is bad or not effective.

"In regard to power conferred on one -- or political power -- people do not worry so much about it. They say "earth does not worry about sky". They do know that a man with somphan is capable of doing everything good -- even for their own happiness and prosperity. Yet true men of power are few. When people quarrel among themselves and one does something unreasonable, the other always insults him with mung-pen anya sit baw? "Are you a power?" (anya means a man who can do everything he likes).

"Richness, prosperity, happiness, success as marks of somphan, inner power and its influence can be 'felt' like the rays of an invisible light. One must show nupthuh (respect) to such a person. One of the ways of showing respect is by the nupwy or wy -- prayerful attitudes of hands (see discussion of this with Chao Muong on village #4). It is not strictly speaking the power that one wys to but rather the person's khun sonbat (virtue -- goodness) which, of course, is invisible. Everyone knows that the present political leaders of Lao also have somphan. People believe that the king himself is a living god (chao si vit) -- the king is power. The Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma has somphan. He is a cultivated (cultured) man in the true sense, friendly, loyal, and good thinking. H.H. Prince Boun Oum of Champassak also has it. A picture of him freeing caged birds (pigeons) at the occasion

of the New Year ceremonies⁸ is typical of the somphan in him. Such leaders are, usually seen performing some meritorious deed at the wat or elsewhere which enhances their boun (merit - or power).....and demonstrates it to the public.

"Yes, the Pathet Lao leader Prince Soupanouvong and General Kong Le (a Kha tribesman, but a Buddhist), the Neutralist leader, both have somphan. Such leaders are important beyond themselves because others, by association with them, get some of this power. The communists count on such persons to support them in the eyes of the public. These persons all have itiphon (power strong) or 'political power'. There is something spiritual about this also. It is gotten by force and intrigue and is not durable - lasting usually only a few years. Spiritual power, however, (boun wadsana including somphan) is immortal and eternal.

"When respect is shown to a person, as to a simple soldier, the motives may be other than that of respect entirely. Here the emotion of yan-- fear-- comes into play for the soldier can always beat you and command respect anyway. The feeling of respecting for virtue or goodness is referred to as theiem. Sometimes both emotions are present in the villagers breast."

A number of questions arose as I talked with the old man about Lao concepts of personal power. Do communists try to undermine the somphan of the top Lao leaders and thus reduce their naphuh and influence? How do they operate in reference to the village leaders? A short discussion which follows throws light on this subject.

8/ Berval, Rene de. Kingdom of Lao. Saigon, France-Asie, 1959, plate XXII

- 35 -

of the Lao community is typical of the people in this. Both leaders are, usually seen performing some religious duty at the end of a ceremony which involves their being (or power)..... and demonstrated to the public.

"Yes, the Lao leader, Prince Bounnawong and General Long is (a Lao traditional, but a Buddhist), the Buddhist leader, both have religious. Both leaders are important beyond themselves because others by association with them, get some of this power. The community stand on such persons to support them in the eyes of the public. These persons all have religious (power strong) or 'political power'. There is something spiritual about this also. It is given by force and religious and is not transferable - lasting usually only a few years. Spiritual power, however, (from various including sorcery) is transferable and eternal.

"When respect is shown to a person, as to a simple soldier, the motives may be other than that of respect entirely. Here the emotion of fear - comes into play for the soldier can always beat you and demand respect anyway. The feeling of respecting for virtue or goodness is referred to as phien. Sometimes both emotions are present in the village leader."

A number of questions arose as I talked with the old man about the concepts of personal power. He comments try to understand the position of the top Lao leaders and then reduce their position and influence? How do they operate in reference to the village leaders? A short discussion which follows throws light on this subject.

8) Phien, Phien de. Phien of Lao. Phien, Phien de, 1959, Plate XIII

An Henristic Paradigm: the Aching-Tooth Model

The Lao way of life may be visualized for purposes of analysis as a tooth (Fig.1). The "roots" are the basic perspectives of the Lao on the nature of reality including what is construed to be the "true" relationship of man to nature, to other men, and to the supernatural or universe at large. These ideas or concepts, based on a core of minimal physical needs including hunger, thirst, sex appetite and the like, interpret the world for the Lao and motivate them. Such fixed focuses define what is of value and should be pursued as well as what should be avoided, and gives rise to a series of "institutions" such as the Lao family, the Buddhist organization, the economic and the political structures. These in turn encourage or require behavior and emotional states both overt and covert. Like a tooth, the definitive part of what the Lao do and why is "under the gum", out of awareness of the average Lao. But the roots of the Lao culture are "in his heart" and he is quick to know if his basic perspectives and values are crossed or in jeopardy. Much of the interviewing in this paper was conducted with the view of discovering these roots.

The culture of any ethnic community can be similarly analysed and compared. Take, for example, the American culture, a very complicated society with many ramifications due to the pooling of the ethnic traditions of the world within our borders. At the root of our way of life is the belief that the world is mechanistic, composed of molecules, that man is it's master although we are here only once. The Lao on the other hand believes the world to be full of supernatural spirits and forces, and that man must follow his fate on the "wheel of life" in a series of reincarnations. Because of his basic perspectives, the American feels that man is perfectable and the constant betterment of one's self is man's duty. As a consequence basic American values state that "personal effort-optimism," gives progress. Our everyday life is geared to this proposition in our business and government organizations. In our behavior we are ~~constantly~~ busy, rushing around, and trying to achieve and "succeed" - the sign of which is the accumulation of money and property.

The Lao, conversely, values het boun (make-merit) a series of never-ending alms-giving, temple-worshipping activities which gain immediate and next reincarnation advantages through the institution of the Buddhist wat. The two individuals from each society are quite different in drives, emotions, and perspectives although each is trying to succeed in his own way. When the Lao learns some Western ideas he seldom gives up his perspectives - so the urban Lao and the Western educated ones are carriers of a hybrid culture - a mixture of the two.

LAO CULTURE AND SOCIETY
(Universals, Alternatives, Specialties)

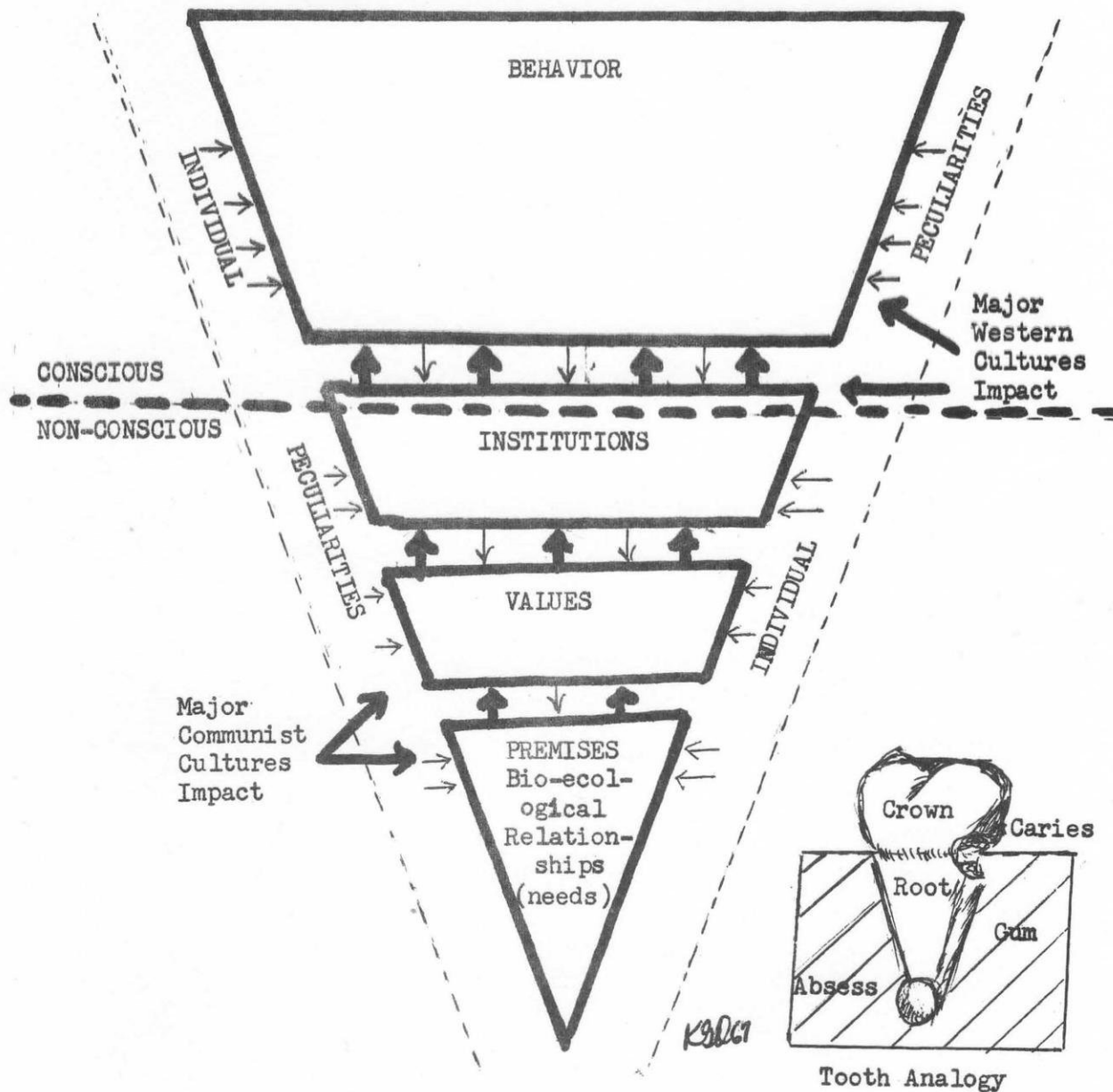


Figure 1: An heuristic paradigm for analysing Lao Culture and Society: The Tooth Model.

The data of this paper adds up to the uncomfortable fact that while the Western culture "development" efforts may be opening up the country (mining, forestry, soils, etc) they are for the most part extremely corrosive on the crown of the Lao tooth. Changing the behavior of the Lao with innovations from the economic, educational, political, military and other sectors of Western cultures is seriously weakening traditional institutions. The young people and the Lao family are cited, but many other examples could be given. The hiatuses or "caries" created by such actions in the Lao community produce a serious effect on the individual deprived of the services of the moral-giving institutions. The controls of the old culture can no longer guide the action of the individuals, and they become "corrupt". The situation is reminiscent of what happened to the West African tribesman when he came to town - or the effect of the money economy on his family unit and the rural community.⁹ The individual Lao who has learned the joys of the capitalist system thinks of aggrandizing himself first, and seldom about the obligations of the citizen in a free enterprise community. Exploitation of Lao by Lao is a natural result of this situation; it resembles some of the abuses of earlier forms of capitalism in the United States and during the Industrial Revolution.

The Lao are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by their supposed betters since theirs is a society based on respect for the superior - that superiority traditionally being based on good deeds. Exploitation by corrupt government officials and others is regarded almost as heinous by the Lao - although they must subject themselves to it. It is as if bab (sin) makes boun (merit) and the figure of the villain triumphs at the individuals' expense. The communists know this and utilize the situation merciless whether justification exists or not. The Pathet Lao are unloosening the glue of human relations by encouraging suspicion of the Lao leaders. This serious attack on the basic relationship of man to man is in effect an abcess at the root of Lao culture-society.

9/ Orr, K.G. Development Needs in a Changing Liberia. Monrovia, USAID/ Liberia, 1964, p. 12. The tribesman who comes to town is an "in-between" p who follows the new "high-life" culture which is notoriously lax in morals. Formerly he was well-behaved under the training and controls of the traditional village life.

Implications of these Data for USAID

A recent quotation from the Congressional Record on USAID in Latin America comes to mind in attempting to assess the implication of the data in this paper for USAID/Laos:

"The AID program has been the almost exclusive domain of economists and technicians. It appears to me that we have misunderstood the Latin American priority systems, and we have accepted the idea that Latin American countries are primarily concerned with increasing the rate of economic growth, when, in fact, they may well be more interested in developing a sense of nationalism.... in short we must learn how to combine economic and non-economic factors in a program of socio-economic welfare." ¹⁰

Laos' number one priority on which both her security and economic development depends is a successful development of leadership - or adequate and acceptable government. This is a basic aspect of nation building which has been largely neglected to date along with concern for the other primary institutions of Lao culture - the family, the wat and the school as values and moral building organizations. This is not a plea to preserve the past but rather to build the future on the foundations of ingrained values and institutions of the ethnic groups of Laos. When we ask seriously what makes the Lao do what he is doing, then we are "barking up the right tree". There is no short cut to continued research and analysis on this subject - the facts of which must be laboriously ferreted out, as in this paper. I know of no push-button quickies to success in nation-building, such as promised by some economists, nor any way of saving the administrators and supervisors of USAID from deep involvement in cultural analysis. The following points are put forth as suggestions for policy makers in USAID and related organizations:

1. The PL should be revealed to the villagers as threatening their deeply held values (farm, family, wat, individual respect, etc.). Eye-witness accounts of trusted villagers - like the wives who returned from the PL (above) - are more effective than stranger's accounts or molam (singing team) "robbers" theme although these have their place.

2. The PL devices for influencing villagers should be further studied and measures taken to block them, for they are indeed effective. Village-level behavioral research observers and influencers are needed on a full time basis both to secure necessary data on what is taking place, and to counteract it. Such persons should be trusted associates of the villagers. If Hanoi can offer "scholarship for development training" to the promising young men of the village - should Vientiane.

^{10/} Representative Edith Green (D-Ore.) in Congressional Record PP A1522-23

3. The bad image of RLG and FAR behavior created by some personnel should be corrected by whatever steps necessary. Knowing how to behave in the growing complexity of Lao society is not easy for the average Lao country boy and he must be taught new ethics and behavior patterns. These should be based on the old, with strong support for the traditional moral system which is essentially well constructed for harmonious interpersonal relations. These suggest special courses on ethics and morals - preferably with the assistance of the honored sages (monks and others) of the communities involved. Naiban - Tassengs schools now in operation seem designed to teach them mainly business office procedures - a much deeper approach is needed.

4. The United States should be indentified with the support of the good and respected ways of life as seen by the Lao. Ofcourse, a knowledge of what these are is needed - and these may not be assumed to be indentical with American values. One way of achieving this is to be identified with popular movements with deep roots - such as the current interest in preserving Laotian art which are the symbols of the culture's value system.¹¹ Americans must be seen as not trying to obliterate the cherished institutions and values but in assisting the Lao to improve their art of living (sila pah kan u kin; action-general-noun-stay-eating or living). The bringing together the Lao sages and scholars and Americans on the problems of bringing the Lao people into the modern world, now a peripheral interest of the United States (as seen in activity of the Asia Foundation for example), should be recognized as central to planning and implementing development programs in any field. A Behavioral Research Institute centering around the Laotian arts-of-living is suggested.

5. USAID/Laos should bring together knowledgeable Lao personnel and American supervisors in USAID also on problems of increasing the effectiveness of USAID Projects where Laotian behavioral factors are involved.¹²

6. Increased attention to behavioral research is de rigor for USAID progress in the future. Foremost among studies needed are those concerned with leadership patterns touched on here. Increasing attention should also be given to problems of urbanization - such as the delinquency noted in this paper as part of the overall interest in Lao institutional development (by the term is usually meant erroneously "the development of American institution in Laos"). The area of associations informal and formal should be studied and recommendations made.

^{11/} Lao Presse Du 7/4/67, page D1,D2 on "Education for life" by the Vice-President of the Council, Ministry of Education; "Problems of the Protection of Lao Art", Lao Presse 15,16,18/3/67.

^{12/} This was suggested in Orr to Mendenhall memorandum: "Methods for Increasing Awareness and Utilization of Laotian Socio-cultural Factors in Problems of Organizational Efficiency," dated March 29, 1967.

7. It is realized that even under the most euphoric of conditions in the Lao society, the communists could still take over - by force. Military security is therefore a vital factor - but only one of several. It is imperative to realize the impact of the military sector on the civilian sector of the nation. The influences mentioned in this paper are far-reaching and many represent threats to the stability of the society. A research project (as distinct from a "survey") is needed to analyze these influences.

8. One thing is sure - the USAID/RIG development effort needs to take stock of what its innovations are doing to the Lao villagers and for the enemy. Interest in increasing the rate of economic production is not a basic current concern of the Lao although it may be important for them in the future. The priority list for development varies from country to country and also from area area and may not be assumed to be standard. Steam-roller development programs based on the above fallacy cannot succeed, and the USAID administrators and activity chiefs must take the time to understand the effect of their programs on the economy and society as a whole. I remember the earnest plea of a Lebanese on this point "send us men that understand us - please." An experimental approach to understanding these factors (not now in textbooks for Laos) will take time and will slow up the flow of cement and other commodities. An analogy comes to mind: Henry Ford, faced with the obsolescence of his Model T Ford automobile, took the effective way of closing his factories temporarily until his tested Model A was developed and ready for market. The RIG and USAID needs a new model of a development program embodying the best achieved to date - one that will gain the approval of the average Lao because it is what he wants and will fight for. This calls for a joint effort of the best brains on each side.

Summary

An analysis of Lao attitudes on the broad problems of security in the Lao village reveals a priority of needs which differs from the usual military force-economic needs interpretation. Behind the fears expressed is the reality of a threat of disintegration of Lao society and culture and resultant chaos. Both Western Cultures influences and those of the Communist Cultures are contributing to this attrition. The communists take advantage of dislocations caused by Western Culture innovations as a major point of their propaganda with the Lao people. Increased behavioral research attention, involving the cooperation of knowledgeable Lao and Americans, is needed to meet this pressing problem with realistic action. A few suggestions in the direction of this goal are made here, and an experimental approach is called for in the largely unknown area of culture change in Laos.

UNCLASSIFIED

ON UNDERSTANDING LAOTIAN SOCIETY

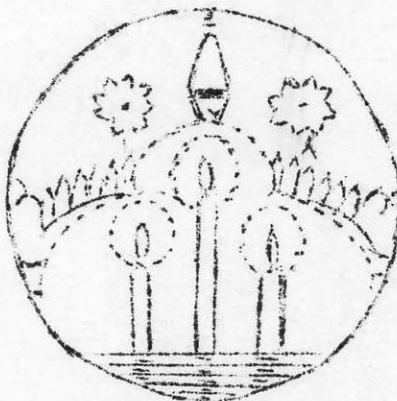
Drawings Illustrating Barious Aspects of

Laotian Society and Culture

Drawings: Thao Kène

Text of Drawings: Dr. K. Orr

Introduction and Vocabulary: IVS/ED



ON UNDERSTANDING LAOTIAN SOCIETY

Drawings Illustrating Various Aspects of Laotian Society and Culture

Introduction

This booklet consists of 47 drawings illustrating different aspects of Laotian culture and society, followed by alphabetized vocabulary of the terms describing the pictures.

These pictures were prepared by the well-known Laotian artist Thao Kène. They were originally issued as part of a booklet entitled "Introducing the Lao: Toward an Understanding of the Lowland Farmer of Laos". This booklet and the descriptions accompanying the pictures were written by Dr. K. Orr, former chief of the Research and Evaluation Branch, USAID-Laos. The date of publication was June 20, 1967.

Besides wishing to share these attractive and striking drawings with as many interested people as possible, we have three major purposes in mind in preparing this booklet:

The first is to provide an introduction and orientation to Laotian society and traditions. Laotian culture is a vast and complex subject of which most of us get only superficial, though fascinating, glimpses during our stay here. To get a fuller understanding, thorough reading and an active curiosity are essential. The reader is referred to The Kingdom of Laos by René Breval as an essential supplement to the careful observation and extensive question-asking which would form the core of learning about Laotian culture.

The second is to emphasize the importance of learning the exact terms for the artifacts and concepts of Laotian culture. Many of the words used to describe these drawings do not appear in available dictionaries. Yet in order to communicate with the majority of Laotians in a way that is important and meaningful to them, to begin to understand the way Laotians think and feel, it may well be absolutely necessary to begin by learning the specific labels of ideas and objects.

Normal, everyday words - even though they may accurately convey the meaning - will simply not do. This is probably especially true when talking with villagers who have not had very much formal schooling. In general we have found that they do not at all conceptualize as formally educated people do. For example, they are much less likely to make the transfer between two different concepts by using words. Villagers may not even understand at all what idea or object one is talking about, although one has explained it quite "accurately" using other words.

The term "sia khouane" has connotations and implications that the general words which mean roughly the same thing, "yan" (to fear), or "ouk chai" (to worry), do not carry. Similarly, the reward for services rendered to the "no phon" (blessings doctor), "khane khai" is quite different from the general word for reward, "rang van". After talking with people and getting a feeling for the connotations of such terms as "sia khouane" or "khan khai", new depths of understanding and communication can open up between outsiders and Laotians.

The third purpose in preparing this booklet is our hope that it will serve as a nucleus for a much larger "dictionary" of Laotian culture. We have left spaces in between the terms in the vocabulary in the back in the hope that readers of this booklet will fill them in with terms they pick up. We hope to contact you after some four to six months and collect the terms you've compiled.

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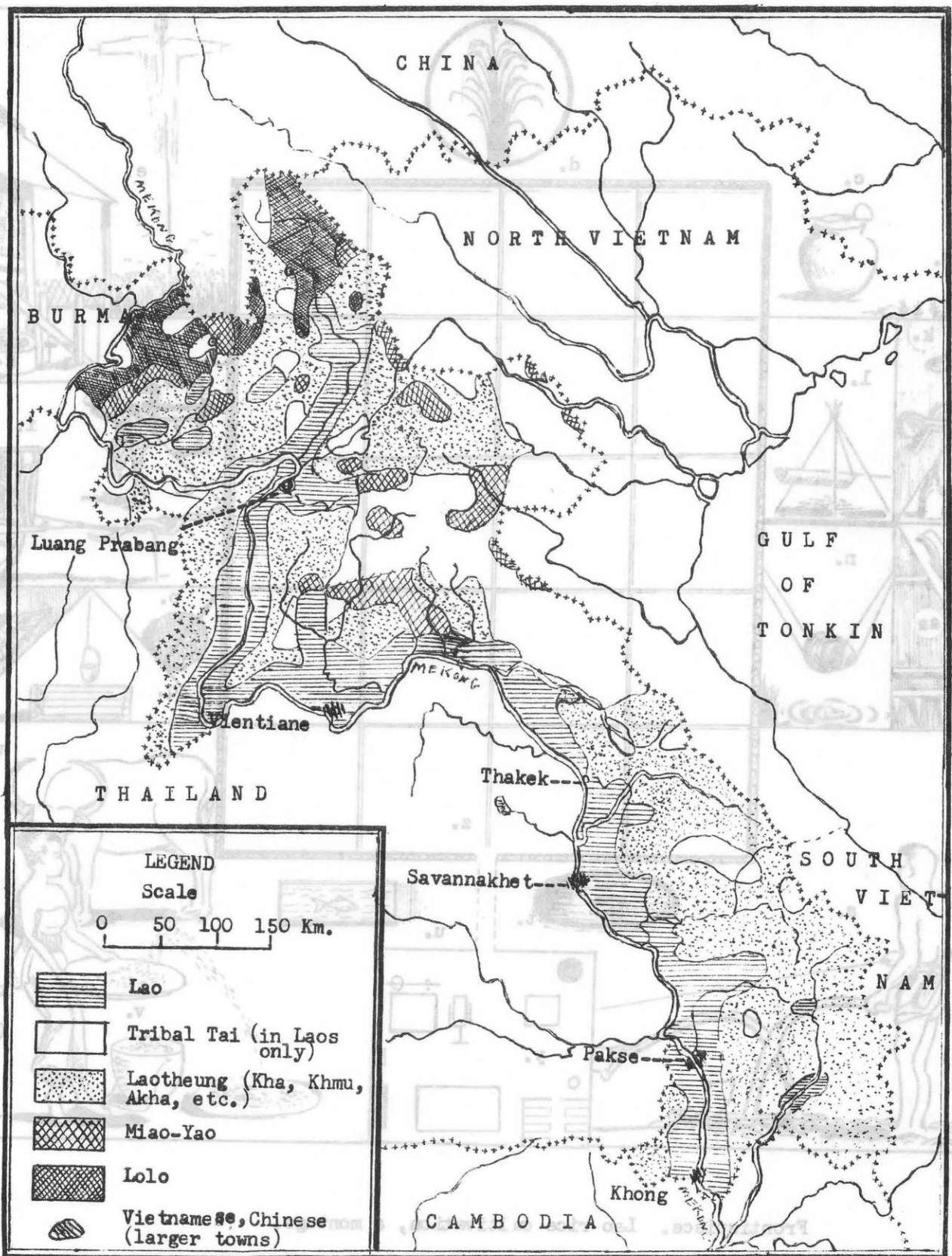


Figure 1. An Ethnological map of Laos; showing distribution of the Ethnic Lao, who also occupy the greater part of Northeast Thailand.

Frontispiece

The mainstay of the Lao, kan pouk khao (work-grow-rice) or rice cultivation, is portrayed as a montage by Thao Kene, a Lao villager. The major artifacts and symbols of the Lao farmers' culture are depicted surrounding the life-giving rice field (na - paddy fields). The familiar and beloved objects portrayed are as follows: a. thoung yon (flag-pendant) pendentive flag for phi (spirit) worship; b. ho ta heik (shrine-eye-start) seed bed shrine for phi; c. ou nam (pot-water) water pot; d. ton khao (tree-rice) rice plant; e. hun (fictitious) scarecrow; f. Lao khao (barn-rice) rice barn; g. Khok mong (mortar-tail) foot-mortar; h. hong see khao (box-rub-rice) rice mill; i. kawien (a turn round) ox-cart; j. chock; siam (break-sharp) pickaxe; spade; k. kiew (concern) sickle; l. ka so (a basket-irrigation) irrigating-basket; m. pha-phakho (big-knife - knife curve) knives; n. ka so sai (basket-irrigation-string) balancing irrigating basket; o. ton kouai (tree-banana) banana-tree; p. vee khao (ventilate-rice) fan-rice; q. nam sang (water-construction) well; r. kup (protect-head) palm-leaf hat; s. khon thai na (man-draw-field) labourer; t. sa boua (pool-lotus) lotus pool; u. sa pa (pond-fish) fish pond; v. nying fat khao (woman-sift-rice) woman sifting rice; w. khouai (slow) buffalo; x. mu (animal) pig; y. ban pho na (village-father-rice) farmer ownership; z. thi din (land-field) rice-field domain; aa. khat (scratch) harrow.

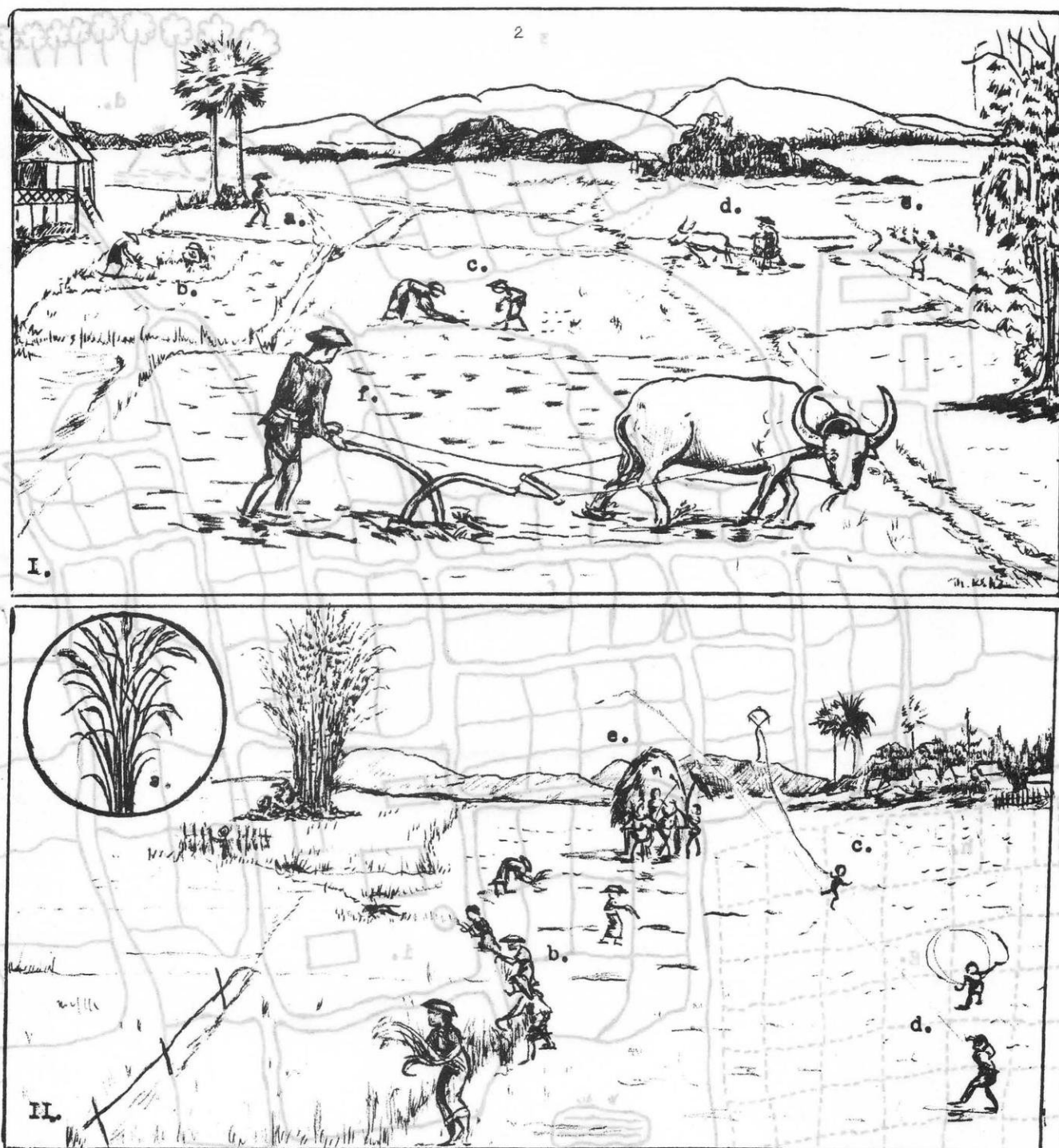


Figure 2. I - Kan het na sao Lao (act-make-field-Lao) Lao farmings; a. van ka (stetch-strong) seeding rice; b. lock ka (pull out-plant) transplanting; c. dam na (dive-field) replanting; d. khad na (scratch-field) harrowing; e. hap ka (carry shoulder-strong) bearing rice plants; f. thai na (draw field) plowing. II - Kan kip kiew (act-picup-enroll) harvesting; a. houang khao souk (ear-rice-ripe) golden rice; b. kiew khao (cut-rice) reaping; c. deck noi poi wao (boy-little-release-kit) kit playing; d. deck noi sat wod (little boy-launch-howl) playing wod; a bull-roarer; e. kwien fuang (vehicle-hay) hay cart.

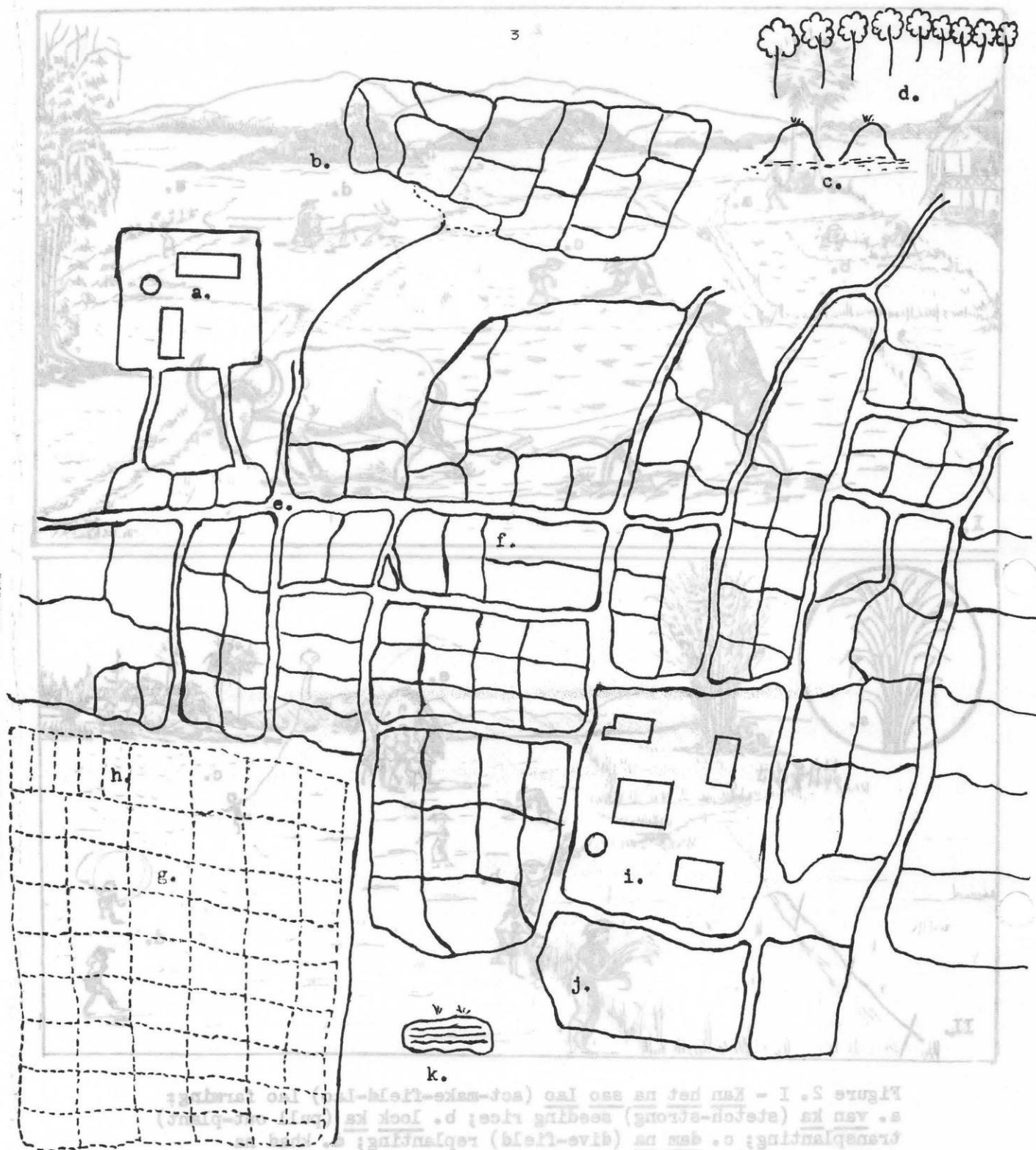


Figure 3. A typical Lao mu ban (group-home) village: a. hong hian (building-study) school; b. hai khao (land-rice) upland rice; c. tao than (furnace-coal) charcoal pit; d. pa mai (dense-wood); e. hon thang (direction-way) road; f. khop khoua (relation-keeping) household; g. din na (land-field) rice field; h. ta ka (eyes-germinate) seed bed; i. wat (religious-domain) wat; j. souan phack (garden-vegetable) vegetables garden; k. sa pa (basin-fish) fish pond.

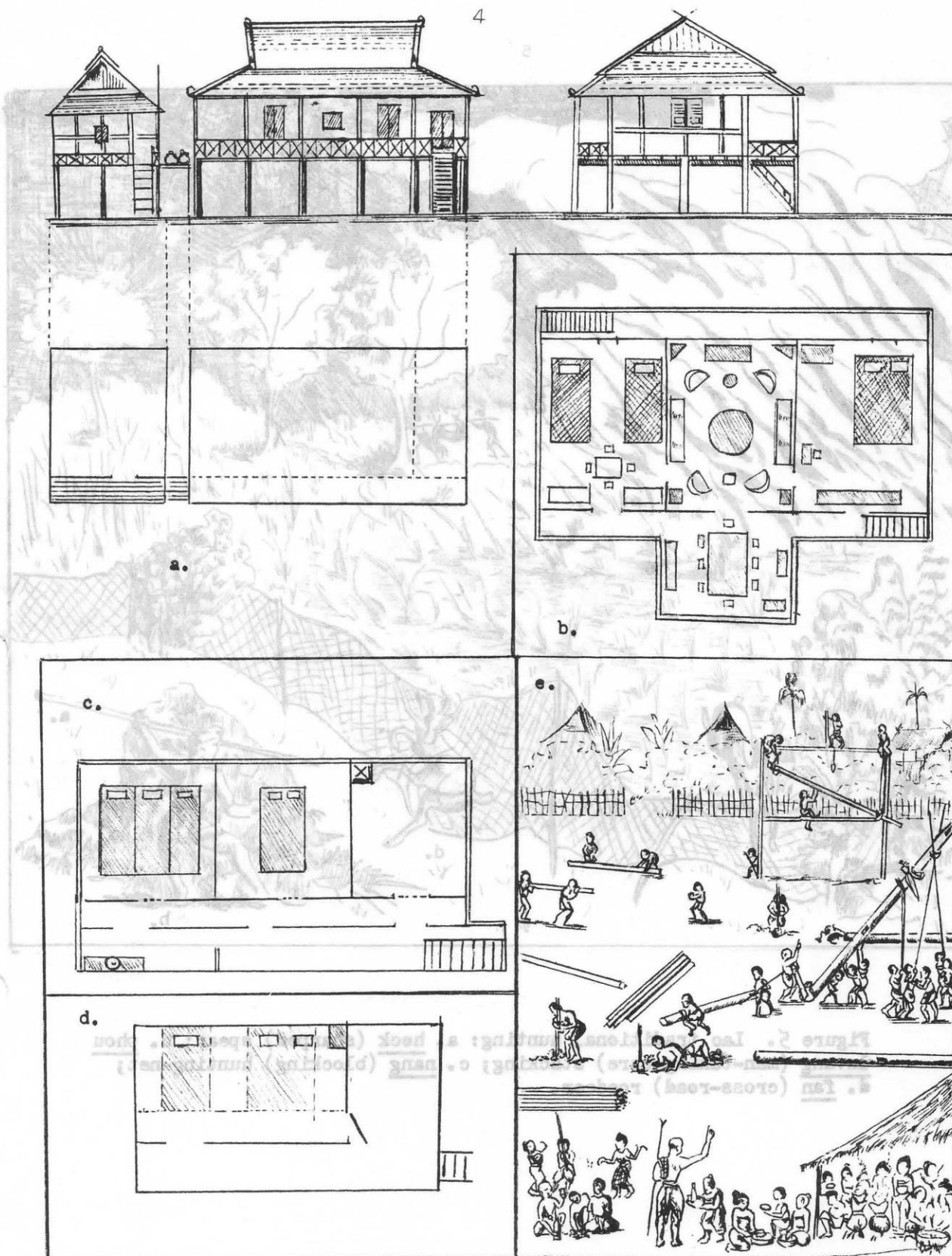


Figure 4. types of huan lao (house-lao) Lao houses: a. phein huan thammada (plan-house-ordinary) the usually plan; b. thang nai huan samai (side-inner-house modern-rich house) the interior of a modern house - rich house which is Westernized; c. thang nai huan thammada (side-inner-house ordinary-average house) the interior of an average house; d. thang nai huan thook nyak (side-inner-house difficult-poor house) the interior of an average house; e. souei kan pouk huan (act-help one-another-build-house) Lao villagers helping each other to build a new house, also called van (ask).

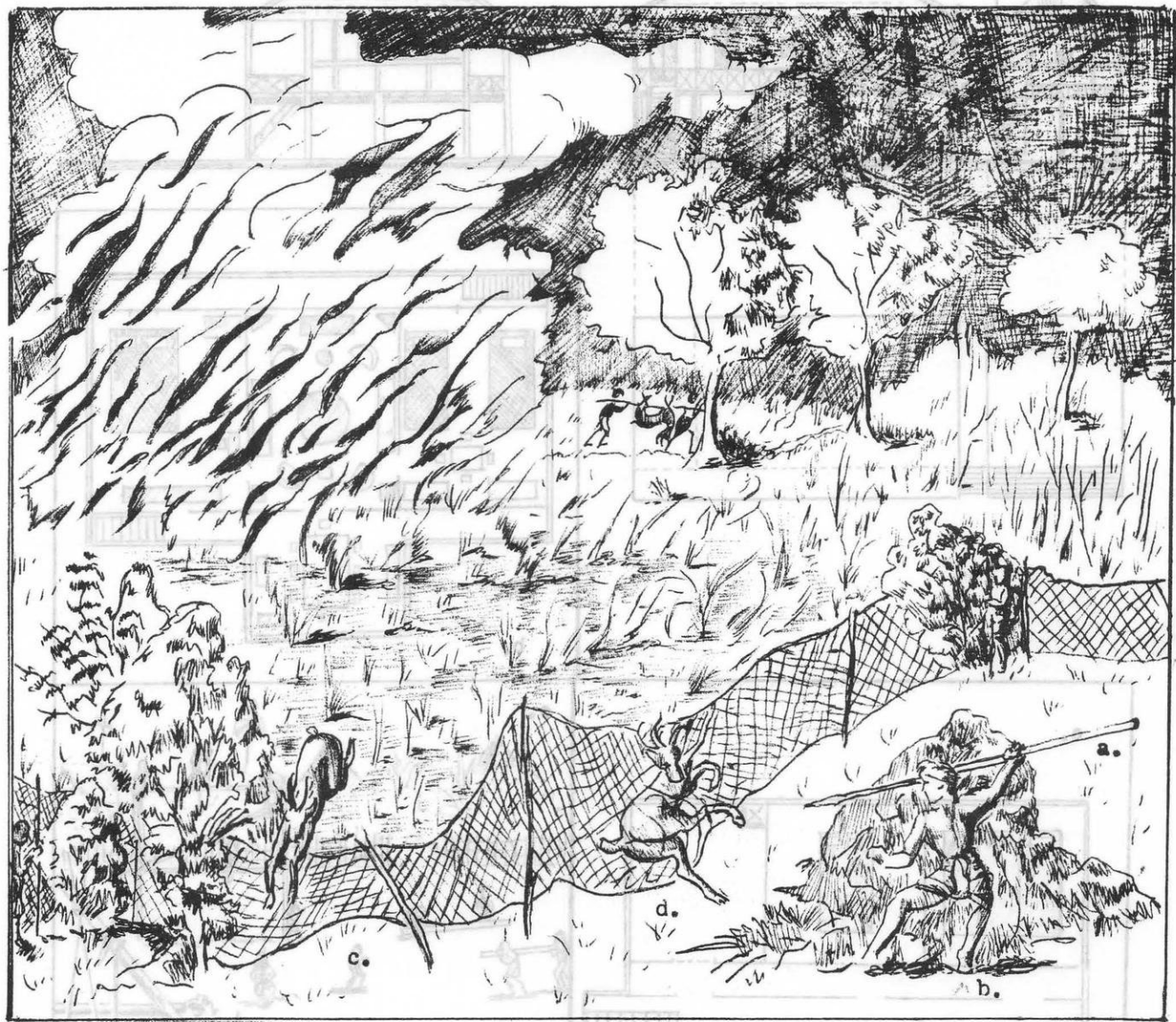


Figure 5. Lao traditional hunting: a. heck (sharped) spear; b. phou lavang (man-taking care) stacking; c. nang (blocking) hunting-net; d. fan (cross-road) roedeer.

Figure 5. Types of Lao houses: a. phou lavang (man-taking care) stacking; b. heck (sharped) spear; c. nang (blocking) hunting-net; d. fan (cross-road) roedeer.



Figure 6. Lao status symbols in roofing materials: a. tup tong (hut-leaf) leaf roof (poor families); b. huan mung nya (house-roof-grass) grass roof (poor families); c. huan mung sangkasi (house-roof-tin) tin roof (rich families); d. huan mung fah (house-roof-bamboo-tile) reed roof (average families); e. huan mung din (house-roof-earth-tile) clay tile roof (rich families) f. huan mung pein (house-roof-wooden-tile) wooden tile roof (average and rich families).

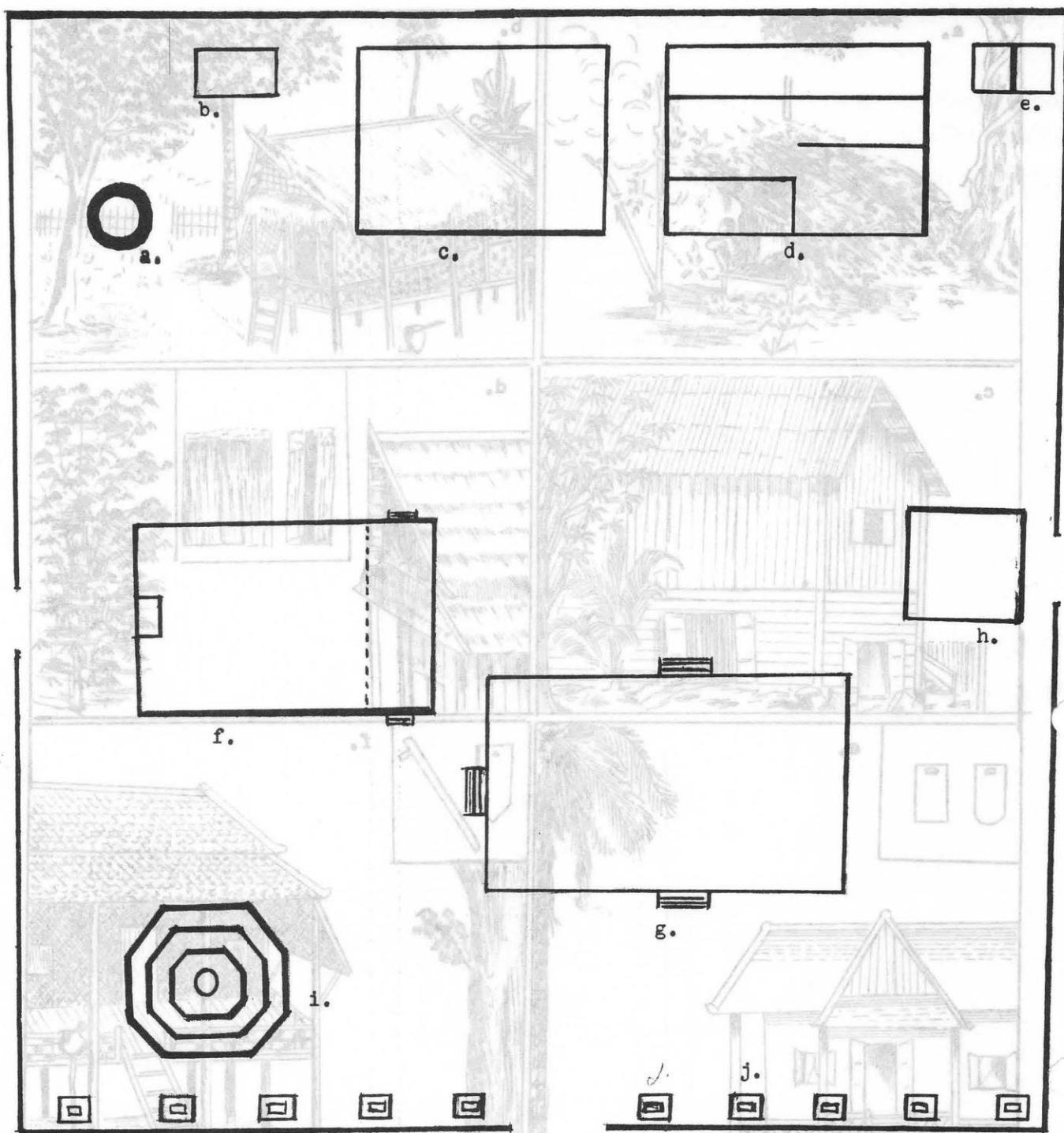


Figure 7. A typical wat (buddhist space) or buddhist monastery: a. nam sang (water-construction) well; b. souam ap (room-bath) bathroom; c. kou dee (building-good) monks' dormitory; d. kou tee (building-critic) senior dormitory; e. souam thay (room-change) water closet; f. bod (buddha-shrine) monastery; g. ho cheik (building-distribution) meeting house; h. ho lakhang (tower-bell) bell tower; i. pha that (relic-temple) pagoda; j. that douk (shrine-bone) burial shrines.

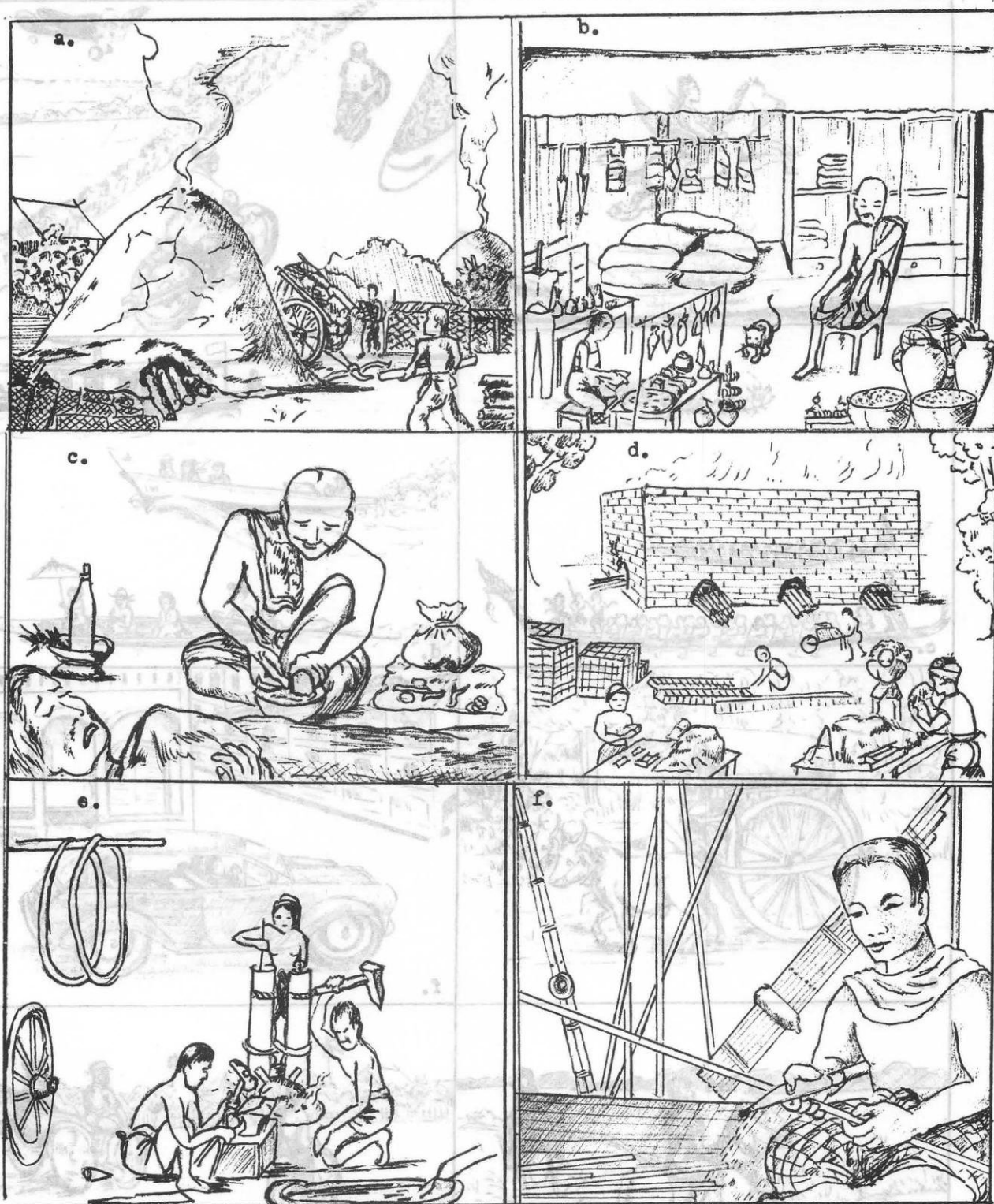


Figure 8. Lao farmers- craftsmen phouak saang (men-worker, maker):
a. khon phaou than (man-burn-coal) charcoal producer; b. pho khah
(fater-seller) shopkeeper; c. mo ya hak mai (expert-medicine-root-
wood) herb doctor; d. khon phao din (man-burn-earth) tile maker;
e. saang tee leck (craftsman-beat-iron) black smith; f. saang het
khein (craftsman-make-khein) khein maker;

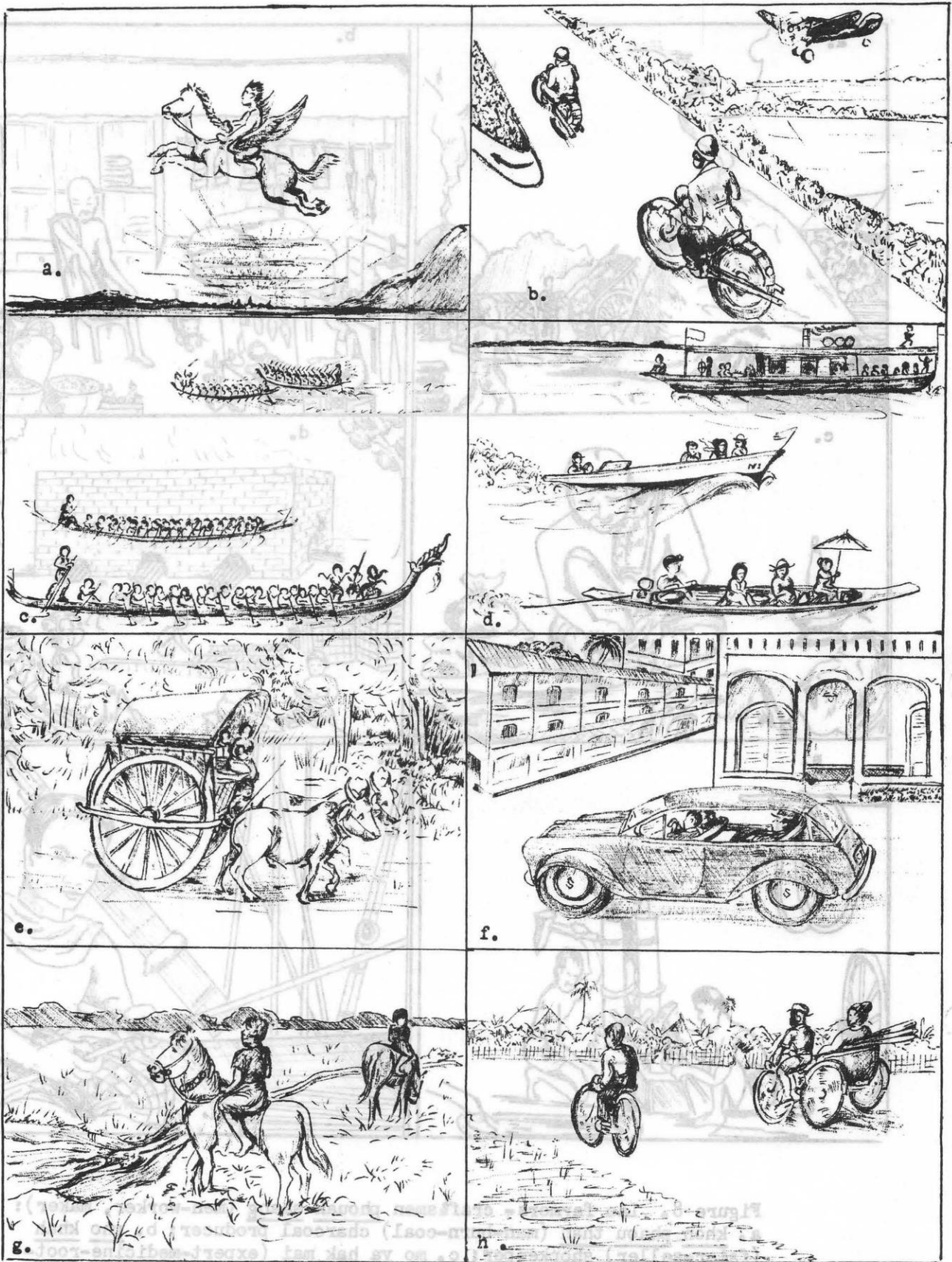


Figure 9. Lao progress in the modern world as realizations of traditional dreams and values -I. Left column - Traditional Lao; right column - Modern Lao urban.

- - -

Figure 9

One day I was talking with Thao Kene about progress in Laos and something I said didn't set right with him. I was emphasizing the spread or diffusion of modern inventions such as the automobile, airplane, motorboats and so forth from foreign cultures to Laos. His habitually smiling face clouded over momentarily as he said seriously - "But this progress is only the realization of traditional Lao dreams and values". I realized that he was right, and that foreign objects or ideas would not and could not find fertile soil in which to develop in Laos unless they were in the hopes and aspirations of the Lao. I asked Thao Kene to make sketches of this important idea and figures 9, 11, and resulted: a. the Pegasus from the traditional Lao poem Bin Mah Mani Kap (fly-horse-diamond-poem) is realized in b. the modern motor scooters and airplanes referred to as heua bin (boat-fly); c. the power and excitement of the nam souang heua (water-racing-boat) is realized in d. the motorboats, launches, and outboard skiffs or heua chack kam pan (pirogue-machine-acting spiral); e. the pomp and majesty of an ox cart (kyan ngua) trip is realized in f. the lot nyon (vehicle-machine) or car; and g. the super-ordination and convenience of a mah (horse) is achieved in the lot thip (machine-foot) or bicycle and the sam law (three-wheels).

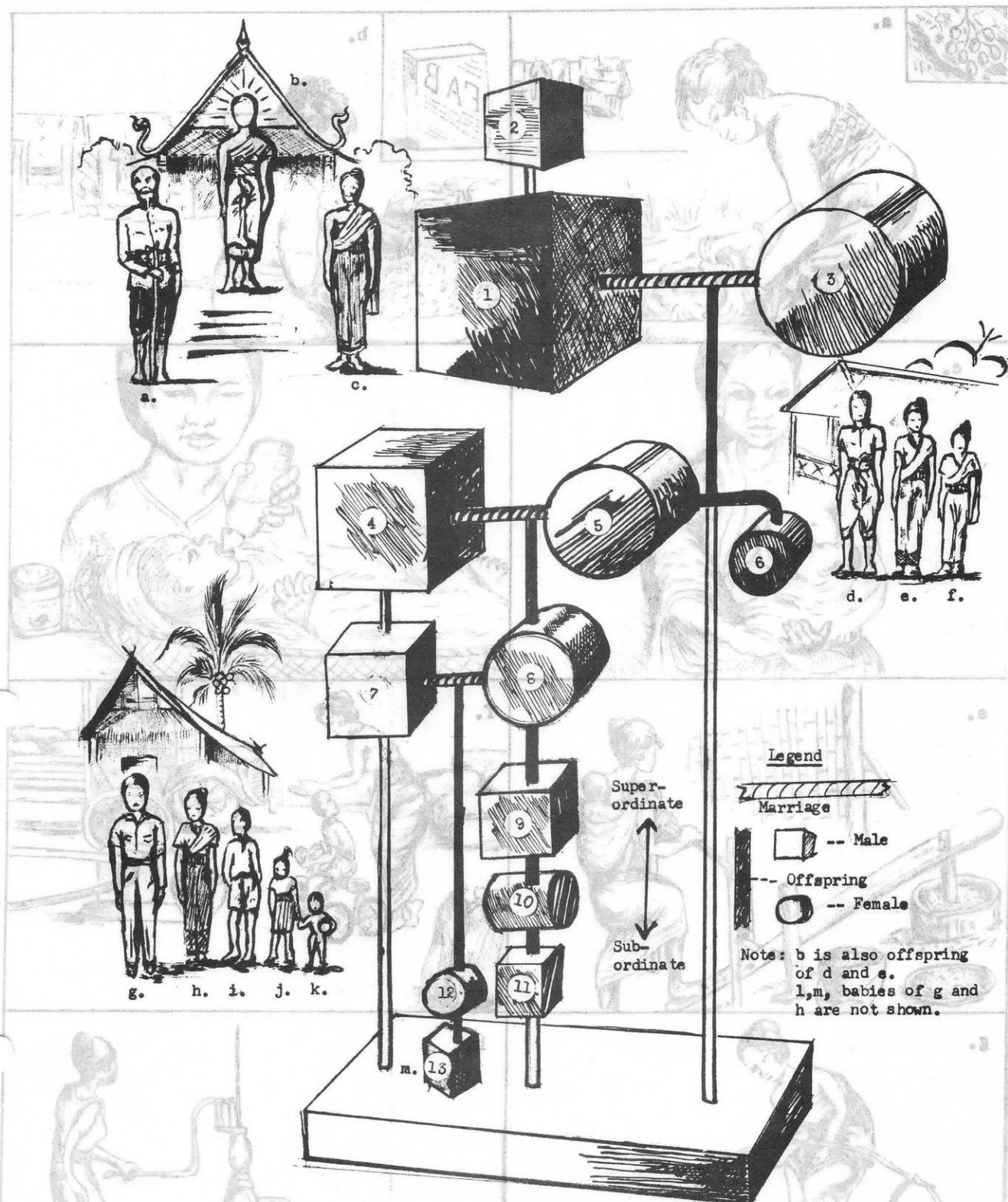


Figure 10. A block and wire model of a typical large Lao khop khoua (together-cooking) or household: 1. pho thao (father-old) grand father; 2. nack bouat (love-convert) novice who lives in the wat; 3. meh thao (mother-old) grand mother; 4. pho huan (father-house) (father-house) Head of family; 5. meh huan (mother-house) housewife; 6. nong sao mia (young-sister-wife) housewife's sister; 7. louk sai (child-male) son; 8. louk sao (child-female) daughter; 9. lan sai (small-child male) grand-son; 10. lan sao (small-child female) grand daughter; 11-13. lan la (child-smaller) baby.

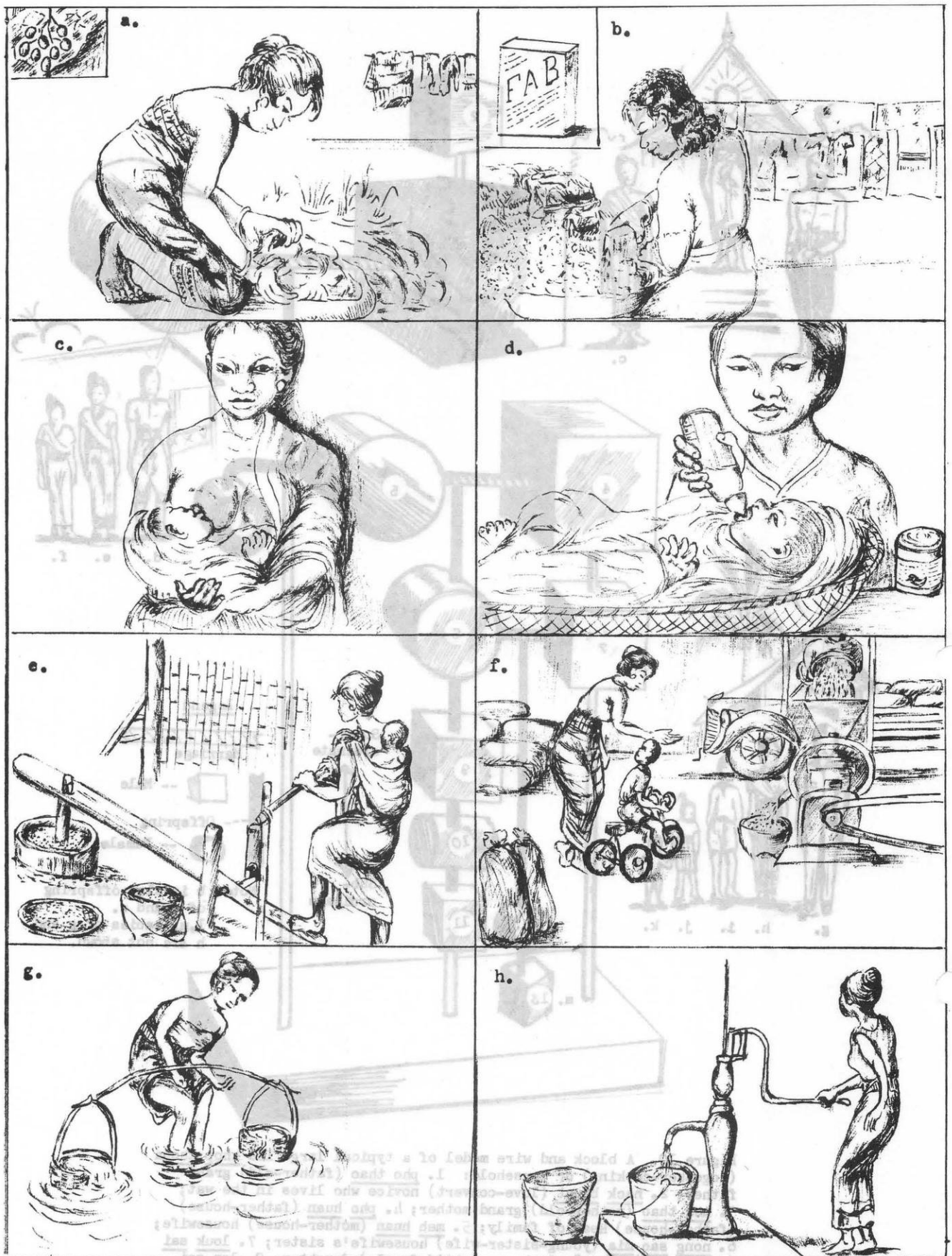


Figure 11. Lao progress as realization of traditional dreams and values - II (traditional column left - modern column right): Labor saving devices for the Lao housewife in washing clothes (a-b), feeding baby (c-d), husking rice (e-f), drawing water (g-h).

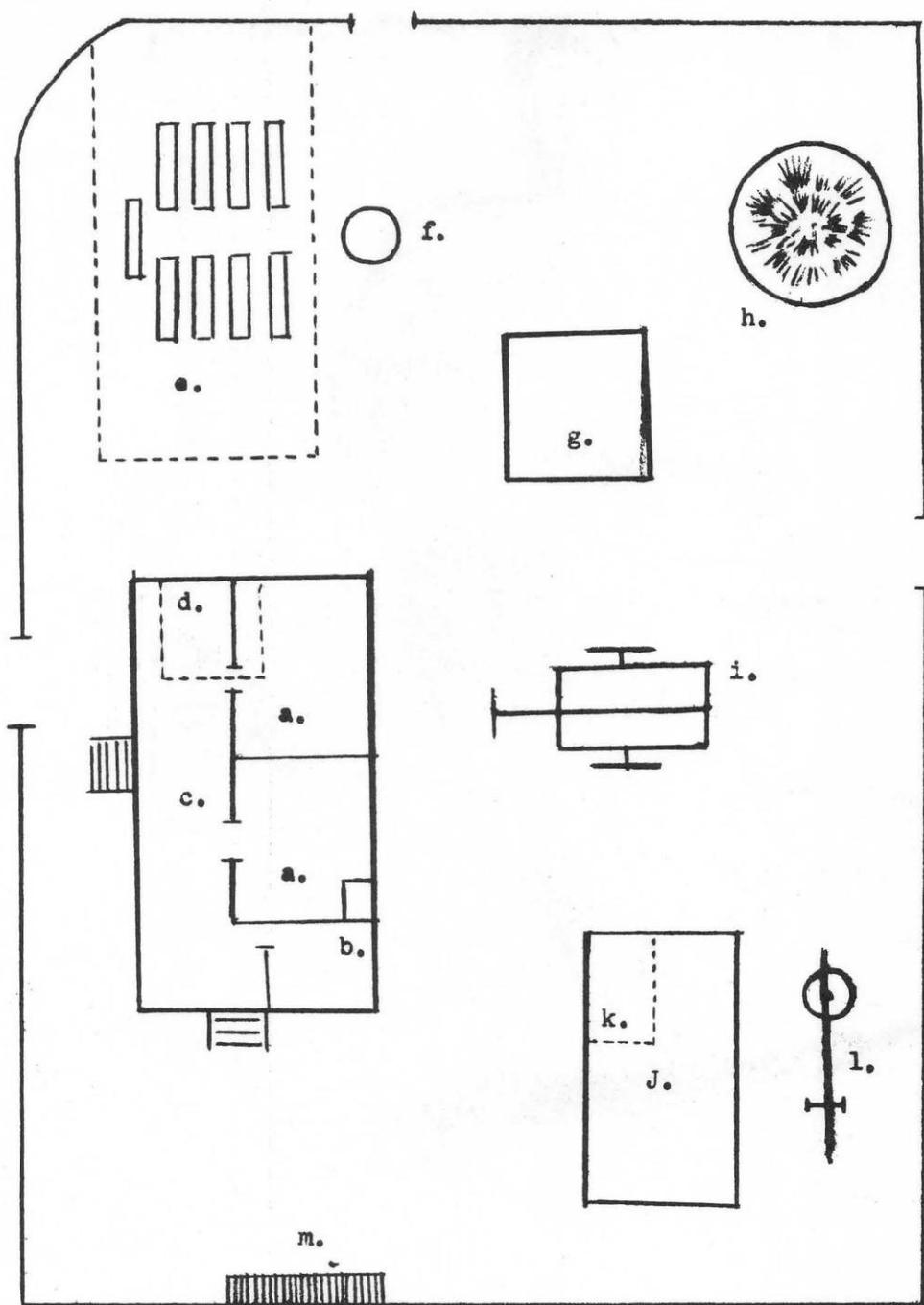


Figure 12. The Lao ban heuan (village-house) home: a. hong non (room-slip) bed room; b. khi fai (check-fire) kitchen; c. keui (piling) balcony; d. khok mu (enclosure-pige) pig-pen; e. souan phack (garden-vegetable) vegetable garden; f. nam sang (water-construction) well; g. thup kan (hut-work) work shed; h. kong fuang (heap-hay) hay stack; i. kuien ngoua (sleigh-ox) ox-cart; j. laoh khao (barn-rice) rice barn; k. khok kai (enclosure-chicken) fowlry house; l. khok khao (mortar-rice) rice mortar; m. fun (drywood) firewood.

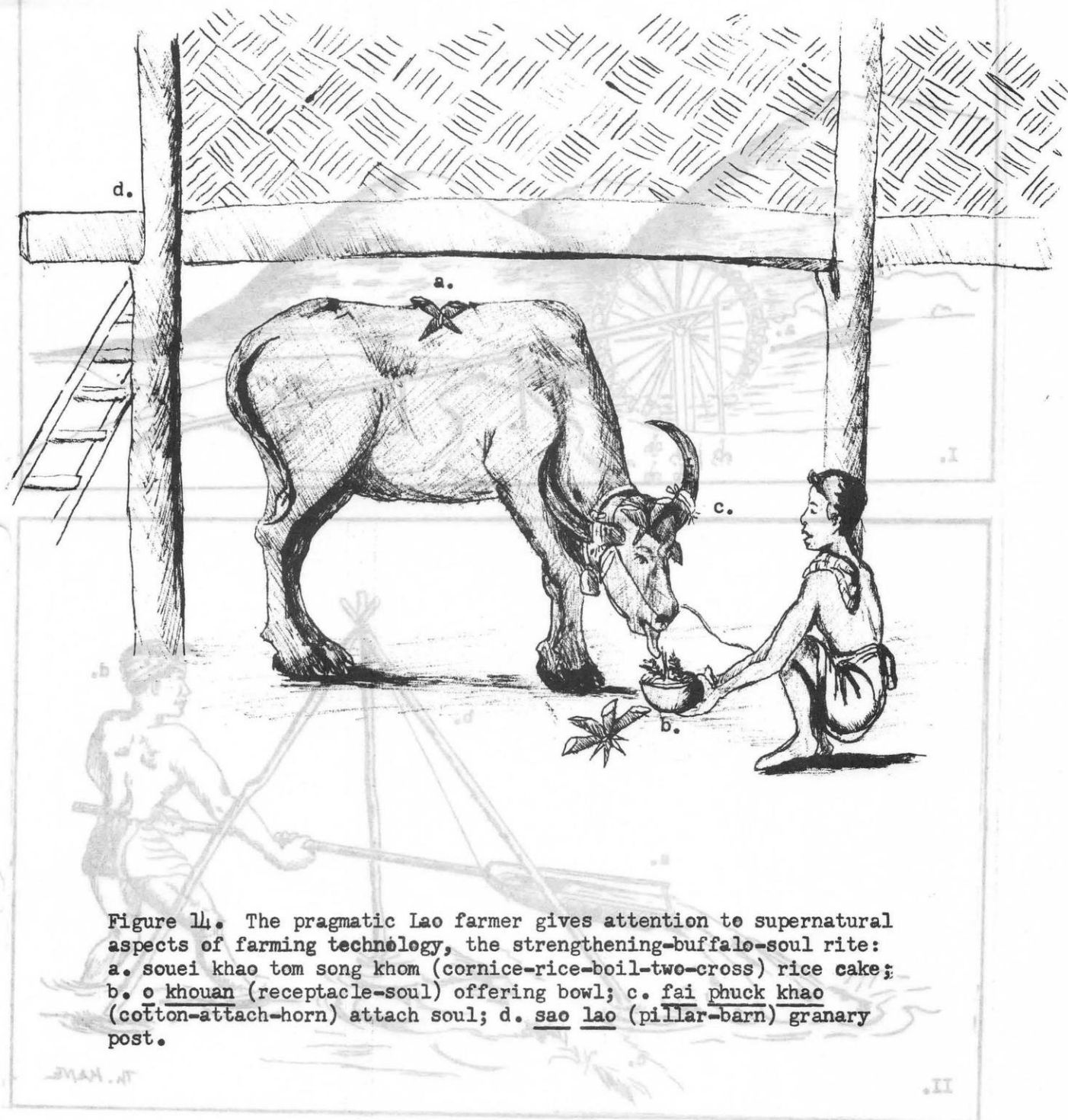


Figure 15. Irrigating Devices of the Lao: I. phat nam (turning-water) water wheel; a. khang phat (wheel-turning); b. bang jin (drainer) II. aa nam sai na (throw-water-to field) - a. ka so (flow-basket) irrigating basket; b. kha ka so (legs-flow-water) irrigating leg-basket; c. kham na (scraper-field) rice field dikes; d. pha khian (cloth-band-head) head scarf.

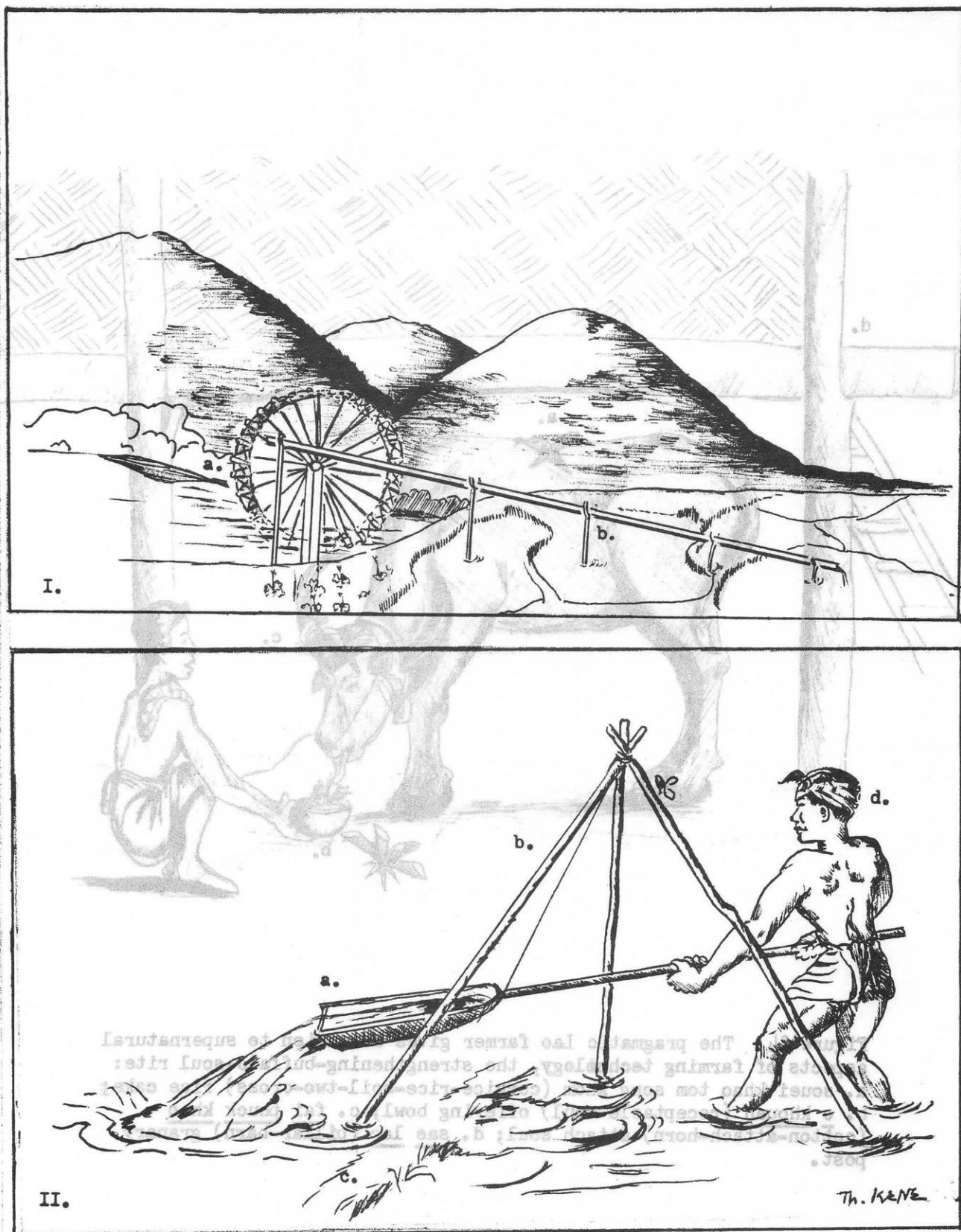


Figure 15. Irrigating Devices of the Lao: I. phat nam (turning-water) water wheel; a. kong phat (wheel-turning); b. hang lin (drainer) II. sa nam sai na (throw-water-to field) - a. ka so (flow-basket) irrigating basket; b. kha ka so (legs-flow-water) irrigating leg-basket; c. khan na (scratch-field) rice field dike; d. pha khian houa (cloth-band-head) head scarf.

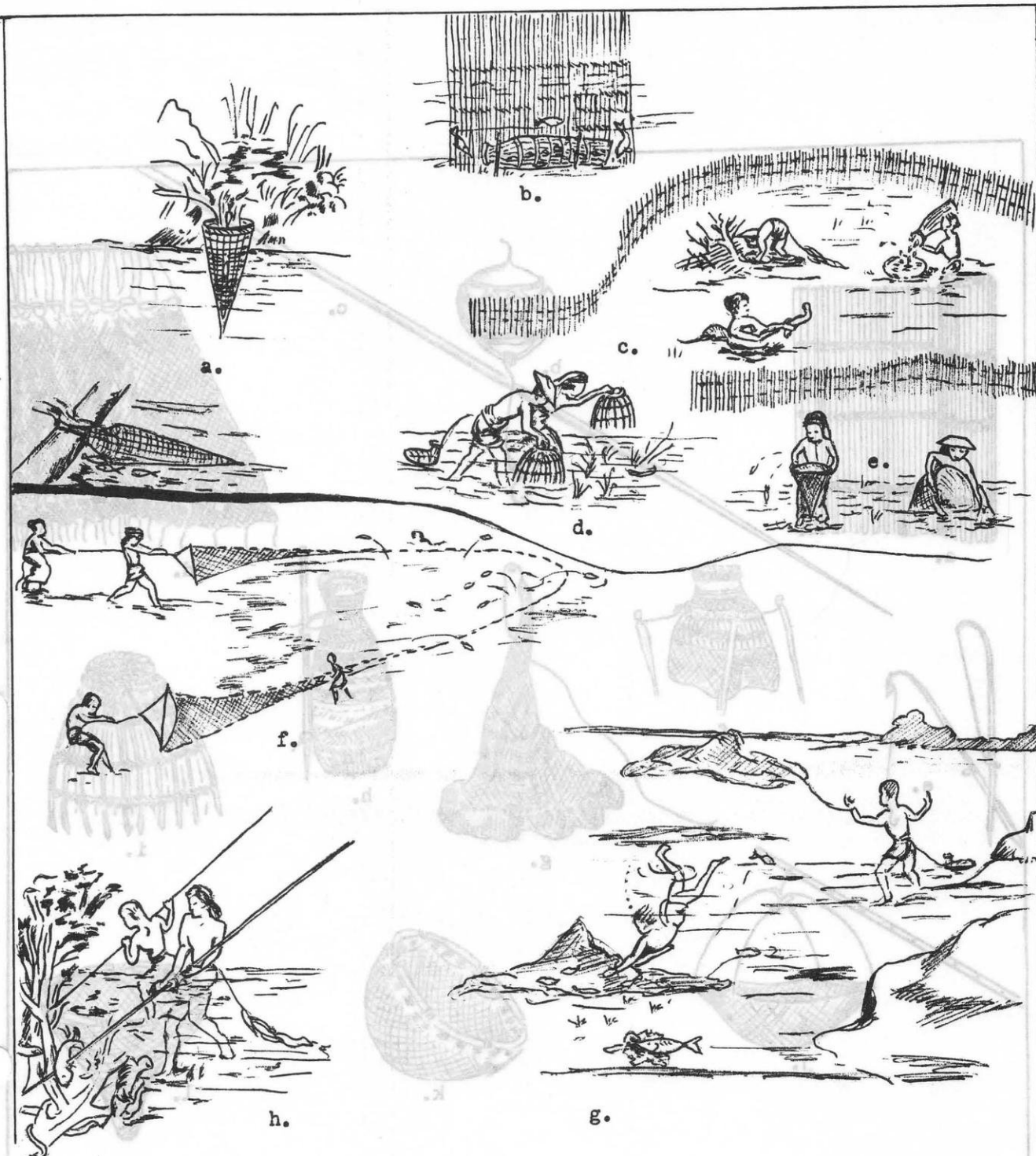


Figure 16. Kan ha pa (act-search-fish) fishing activities of the Lao in paddy fields and streams: a. sai son (set-receptacle) receptacle fishing basket; b. sai xai (set-vitality) vitality basket fishing; c. sai lop (set-discret) discret basket fishing; d. sack sum (set-humid) hand basket fishing; e. son pa (recept-fish) receptacle basket fishing; f. kouad mong (strech-net) net fishing; g. wan hei (release-ardour) sweep-net fishing; h. theing leim (check tip) javelin fishing.

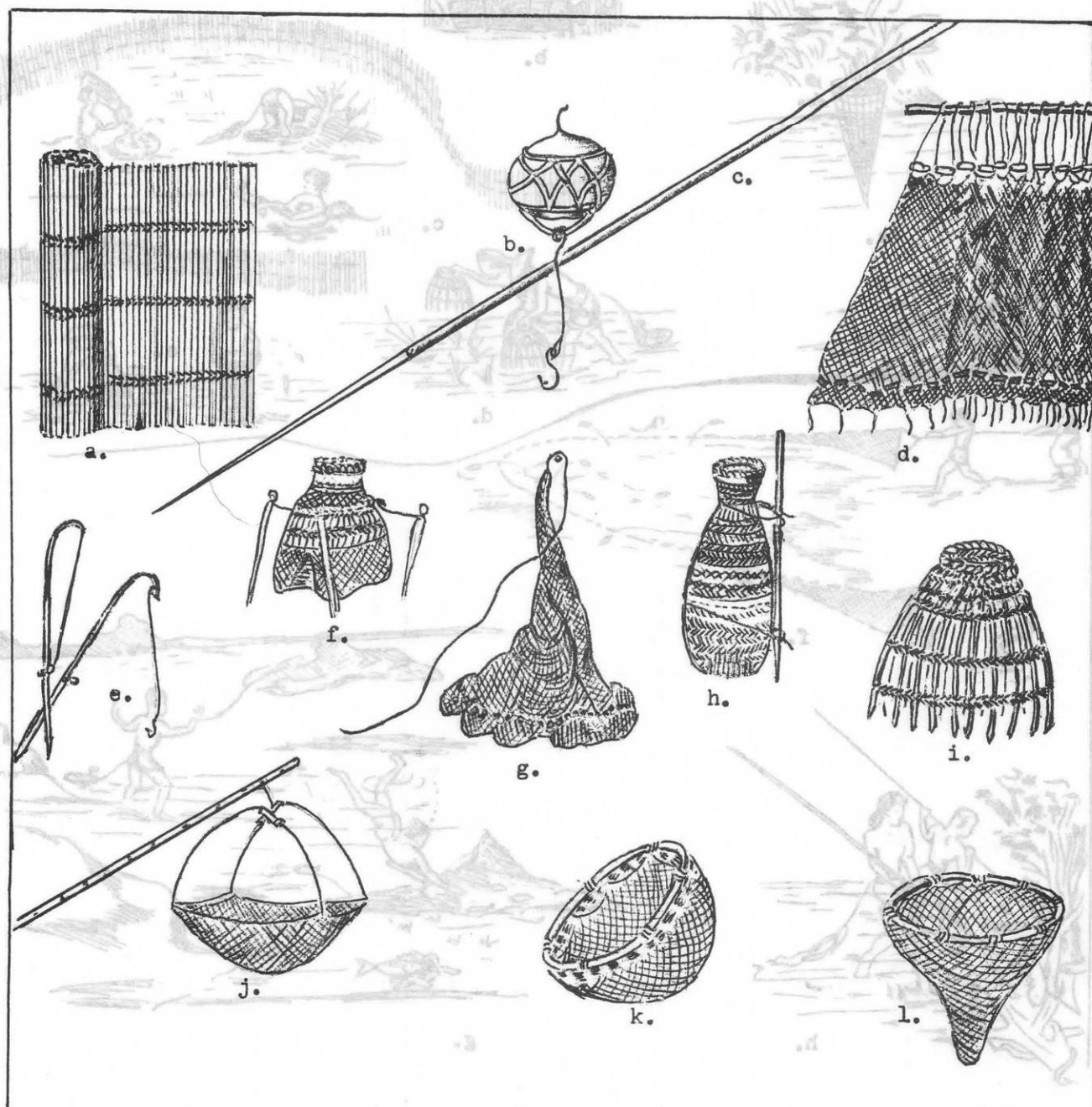


Figure 17. Lao fishing tools: a. phuak (restrictive-white) bamboo fishing net; b. tao beit (pot-hook) gourd fishing hook; c. leim (sharp-pointed) fishing javelin; d. mong (watch through) fishing-net; e. beit pack (hook-tick-off) planting fishing-hook; f. toum lan (muster-area) sand-bank fishing hook; g. hei (ardour) sweep-net; h. toum pa (muster-fish) deep water fishing basket; i. soum (humid) hand fishing basket; j. kadoung (convex) plaice; k. kheung son pa (basket-recept-fish) hand fishing basket; l. sawing (receptable) swing-net.

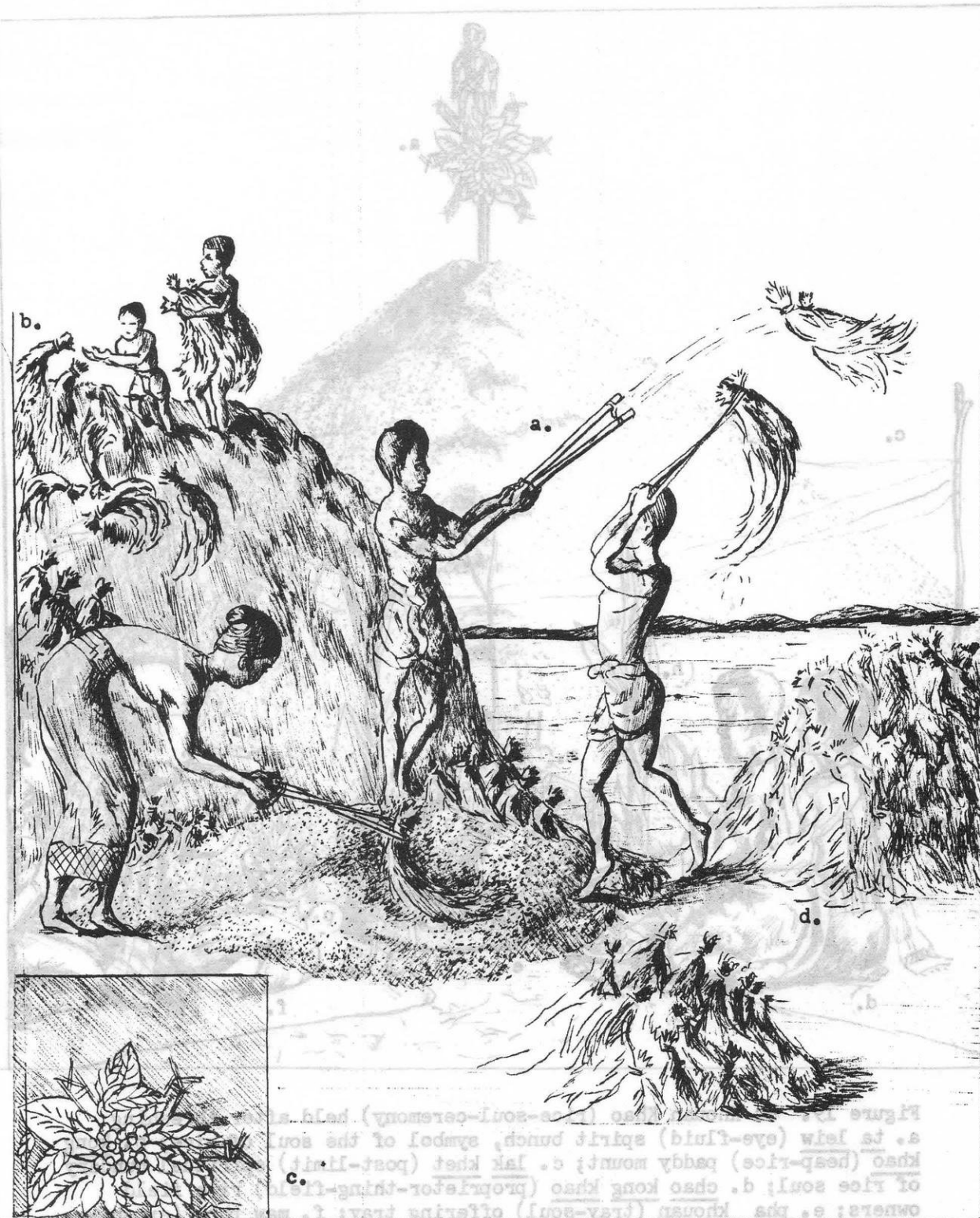


Figure 18. Fat Khao (beating-rice) Lao threshing: a. mai kang (wood-stretch) beating staff; b. mat khao (tie-rice) rice-sheaf; c. ta leiw (eye-fluid), symbol of the soul or essence, of rice placed under rice in ceremony before threshing starts; d. kong fuang (heap-hay) haystack.



Figure 19. Su Khouan Khao (rice-soul-ceremony) held after threshing: a. ta leiw (eye-fluid) spirit bunch, symbol of the soul of rice; b. kong khao (heap-rice) paddy mount; c. lak khet (post-limit) spiritual boundary of rice soul; d. chao kong khao (proprietor-thing-field) rice field owners; e. pha khouan (tray-soul) offering tray; f. maw phon (expert-blessing) blessings doctor; g. ton oy (tree-sugar) sugar cane; h. ton kouei (tree-banana) banana tree; i. tam la su khouan khao (formula-assemble-soul-rice) palm leaf text for rice soul ceremony; j. thien pheung (wax-candle) candles for offering; k. houa phuak (head-white) taro; l. kai tom (chicken-boil) boiled chicken; m. dock mai (flower-tree) flowers; n. kachock (instrument-clear) mirror; o. wee (scratch) comb; p. khan khap (cup-submit) reward for maw phorn (cloth); r. song (figure-out) knot of hair; q. khan khai (cup-submit) reward for Maw phon (cloth).

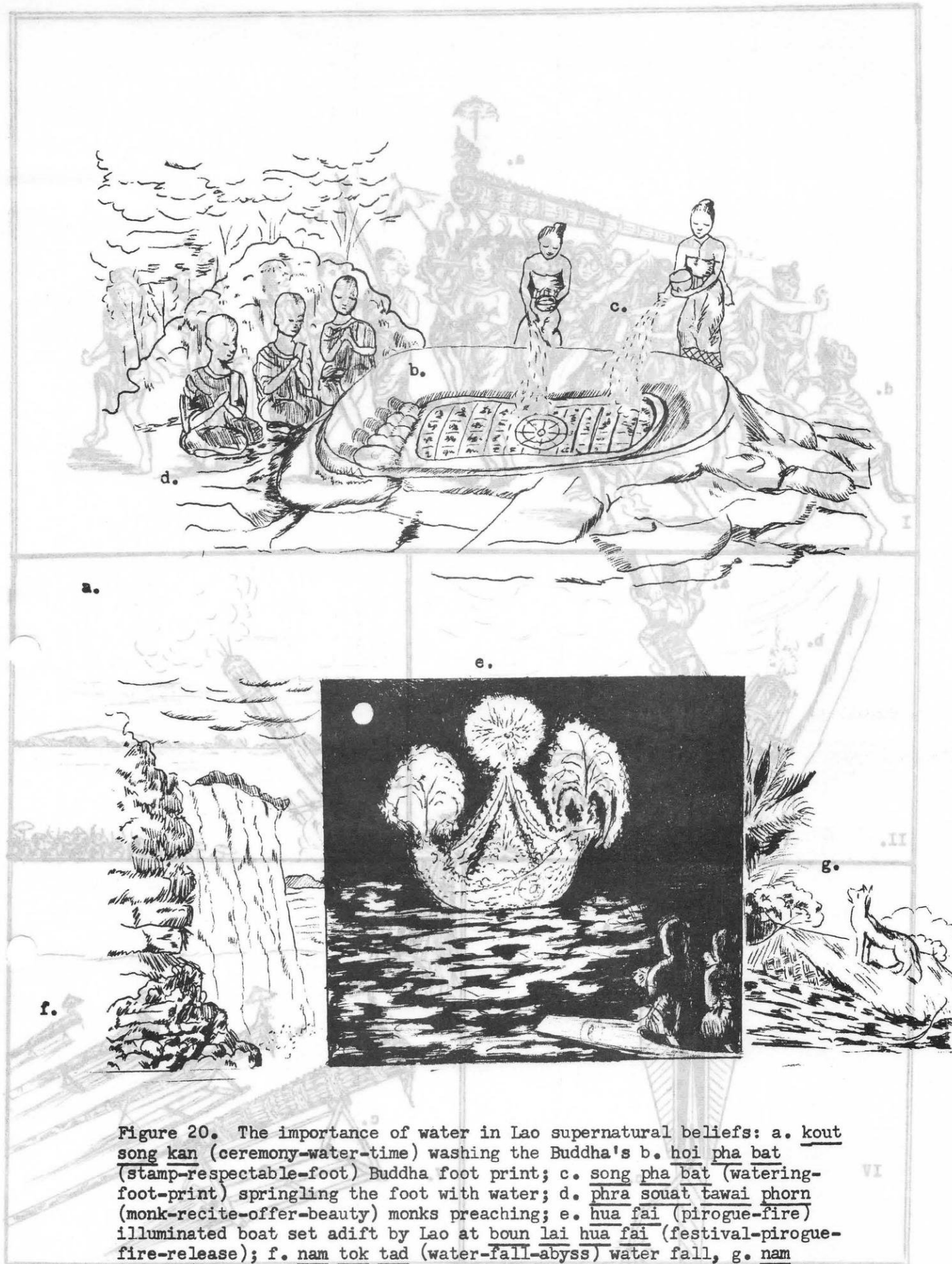


Figure 20. The importance of water in Lao supernatural beliefs: a. kout song kan (ceremony-water-time) washing the Buddha's b. hoi pha bat (stamp-respectable-foot) Buddha foot print; c. song pha bat (watering-foot-print) springling the foot with water; d. phra souat tawai phorn (monk-recite-offer-beauty) monks preaching; e. hua fai (pirogue-fire) illuminated boat set adrift by Lao at boun lai hua fai (festival-pirogue-fire-release); f. nam tok tad (water-fall-abyss) water fall, g. nam thouam (water-rising) flood, sign of supernatural disapproval of man's conduct.

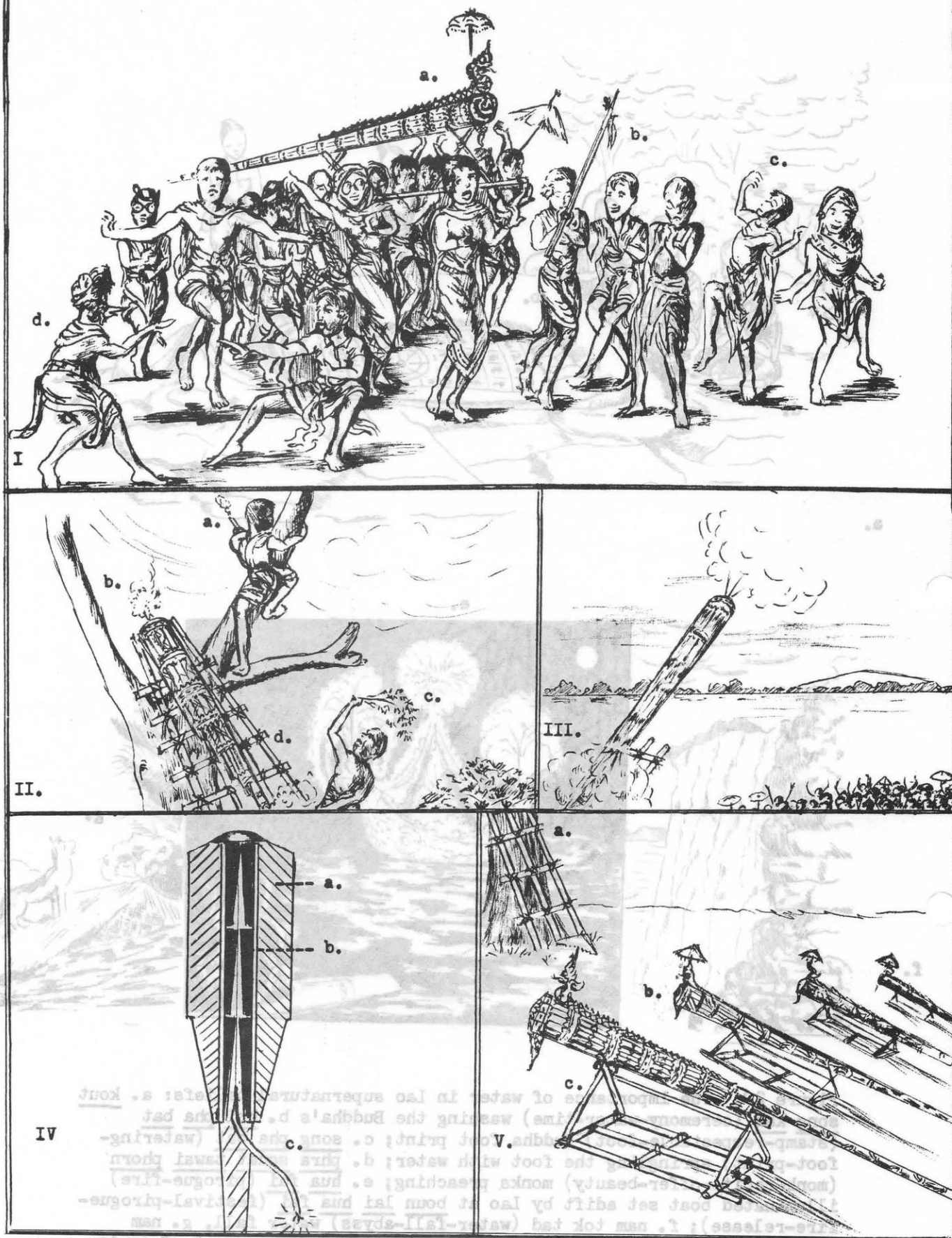


Figure 21. Boun Bang Fai (merit-tube-fire) The rocket festival.

Figure 21

Boun Bang Fai (merit-tube-fire) the rocket festival:

1. Bringing the rocket to the contest. a. bang fai (tube-fire) rocket
- b. Khene (well-being) lao musical instrument; c. nack fon (love-dancing)
- d. Fon hulaman (dance-monkey) hulaman dancer;
11. The launching site, a, ka-bong (instrument-light) torch to light rocket; b. nga mai (branch-wood) supporting branch of tree; c. fot mai (bough-wood) twig of tree waved to hasten rocket on its way; d. khang bang fai (fix-rocket) rocket ladder;
111. bang fai khun (rocket-ascent) rocket starts across the mekong.
- 1v. a. to bang fai (body-rocket) bamboo casing of the rocket; b. muh bang fai (powder-tube-fire) rocket power; c. ka nouan (thing-sweet) fuse;
- v. a. khanh hang (climbing-story) bamboo ladder to launching site in tree; b. bang fai kheing kham (rocket-strong-tied) competitive rockets; c. hang-bang-fai (stage-rocket) rocket stage.



Figure 22. Fon Papheny (dance-tradition) traditional Lao dances: a. teuy kiew (fret-enrol) love dance; b. lao kasei (Lao-disease) love sickness dance; c. seung kin laoh (pleasure-drink-wine) asking for drink dance; d. tiah saravan (slowdown-saravan) southern city dance; e. fon phi thaih (dance-spirit-great) spirit dance.

Following is a statement on the emotions of the artist when he watched these dancers".

"When I have seen a group of old ladies that were dancing at the Village Rocket Festival or (Boon-bang-fai-Merit-tube-fire) I was feeling very proud and happy with them. However, this made me feel so good until I could not stop my tears from coming out of my eyes. Even though they are very old like that they still pay very good attention to dance nicely for the eyes of the audiences which included monks, youths and all the people that were watching admiring and judging. And they were hoping to get a very good mark from it, from the judging committees.

"One of the things that caused me to have the tears dropping back down inside of myself is because those old ladies were dancing actively and attentively which is over their strength in order to show that they were happy and joyful. But alas that kind of dancing and enjoyment was just to make the people say or think that they were really happy. It is only a kind of thing to cover the outside.

"Really, the very basic idea of that is to show a good example to the young ones. That these dances are one of the Lao traditions which they do not want to neglect at all. They always want to maintain or preserve them as long as this world would appear or as long as it can be."



Figure 23. The phi ban (village-spirit) shrine on ceremony day: a. ho ban (shrine-village) village shrine; b. keo lao (bottle-wine) wine bottles offering c. souei dock mai (cornice-flower-tree) flower offering d. kathong khao kon (leaf-basket-rice piece) rice offering; e. ma sok kin (dog-search-eat) dog looking for food left (this dog was later identified as the phi ban himself - Orr)

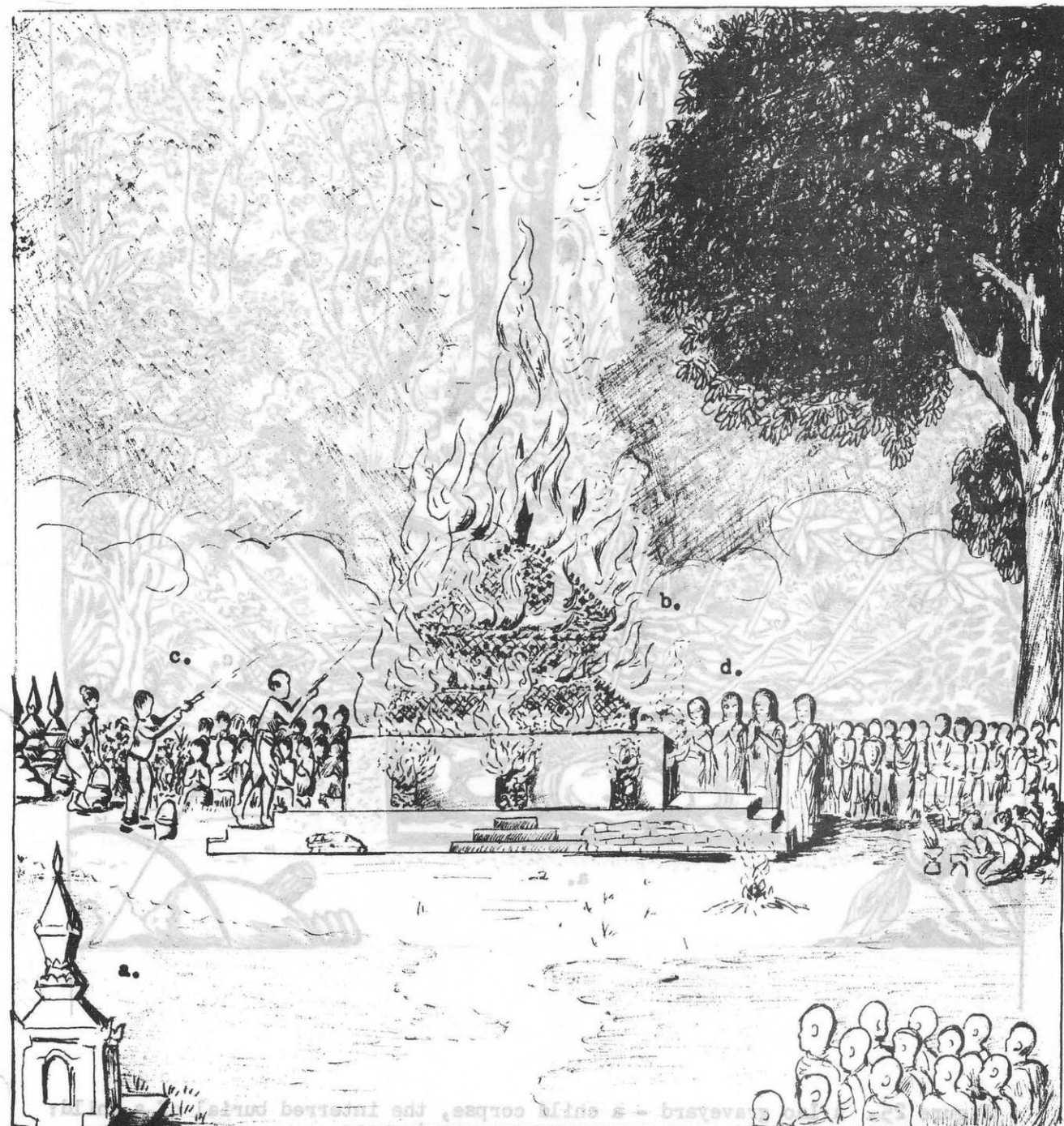


Figure 24. Song sakan (destine person-dead) Lao funeral: a. that douk (shrine-bone) bone-shrine; b. long phi (chest-spirit) coffin; c. sid nam (throw-water) water casting to slow the burning of the coffin; d. nang khao (women-white) nuns.

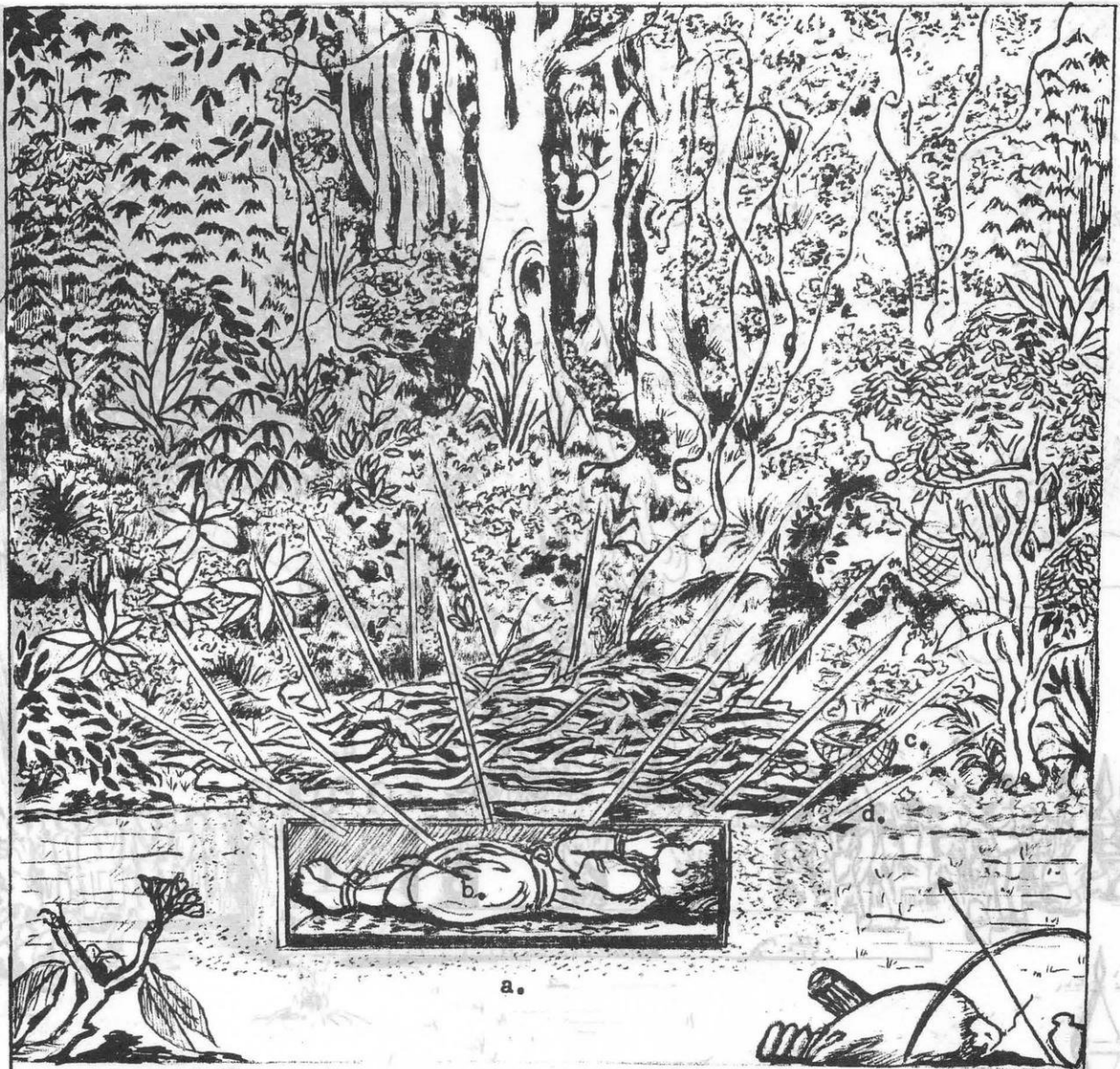


Figure 25. A Lao graveyard - a child corpse, the interred burial of a child:
a. sak sop deck noi (remained-body-little-boy) child-corpse; b. pha-nung
(cloth loin-wear) loin cloth; c. khuang lin deck noi (thing-play-child)
child toys d. khouak (bamboo sharpened) thorn hedge.

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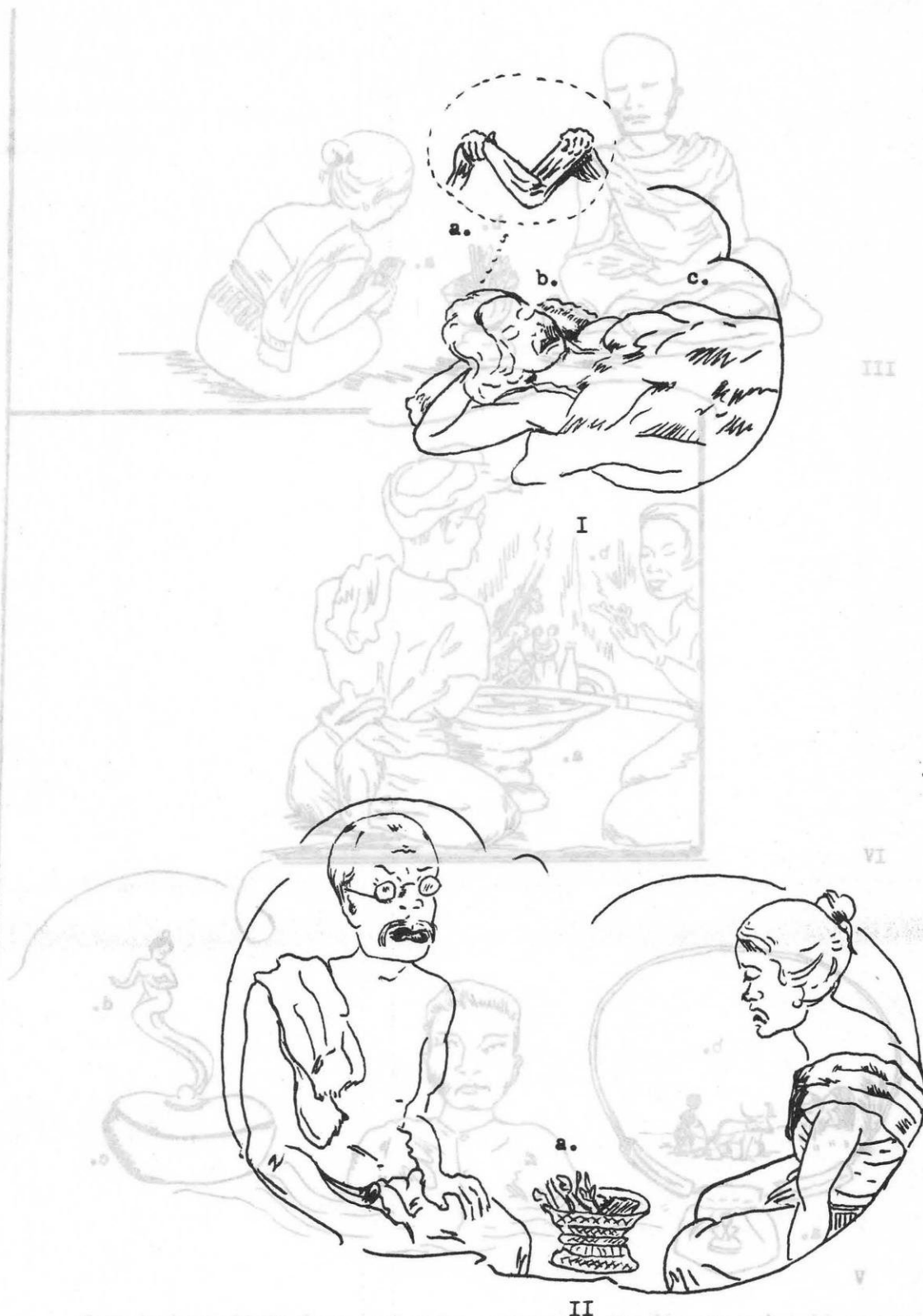


Figure 26. A case of sia khouane (lost-soul stuff), a Lao housewife (meh huan) loses her mind in jealousy over her husband's miah noi (wife-little) or second wife:

I. A nightmare alerts the housewife to a problem situation - a. khouam fan haih (word-dream-wicked) a nightmare of torn scarf, b. mon mun houa (cushion-chock-head) pillow, c. pha hom (cloth-cover) blanket;

II. The housewife confesses her dream to a maw thuay (expert-predict) or soothsayer who analyses the problem - the second wife has stolen her soul stuff -, a. khan dock mai (cup-flower-tree) offering;

III



IV



V



Figure 26. (continued) III. To restore her lost soul stuff the housewife gets a powerful talisman from acharn wat (senior teacher-wat) at the village wat - a. khong dee (object-good) kha tha (hanged-position) talisman, b. khan somma (cup-respect) an offering for the acharn;
IV. The second wife gets a charm from the maw mun (expert-magic) to steal the husband's love - a. khan khay (cup-scratching) magical tray, b. nuat saney (wax-charm) charm box;
V. The husband's khouane (emotions) are caught between the influence of the khatha and the saney - a. housewife's khatha is a necklace of rolled copper tubes the insides of which are inscribed with magical formulae, b. the good, responsible life, c. eip (box) nuat saney or charm box of the second wife with d. khouam hak (word-passionate) or passionate love influence.

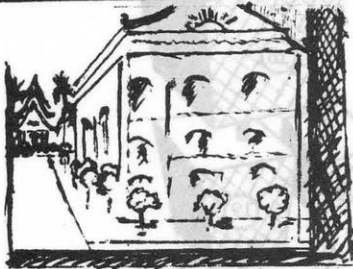
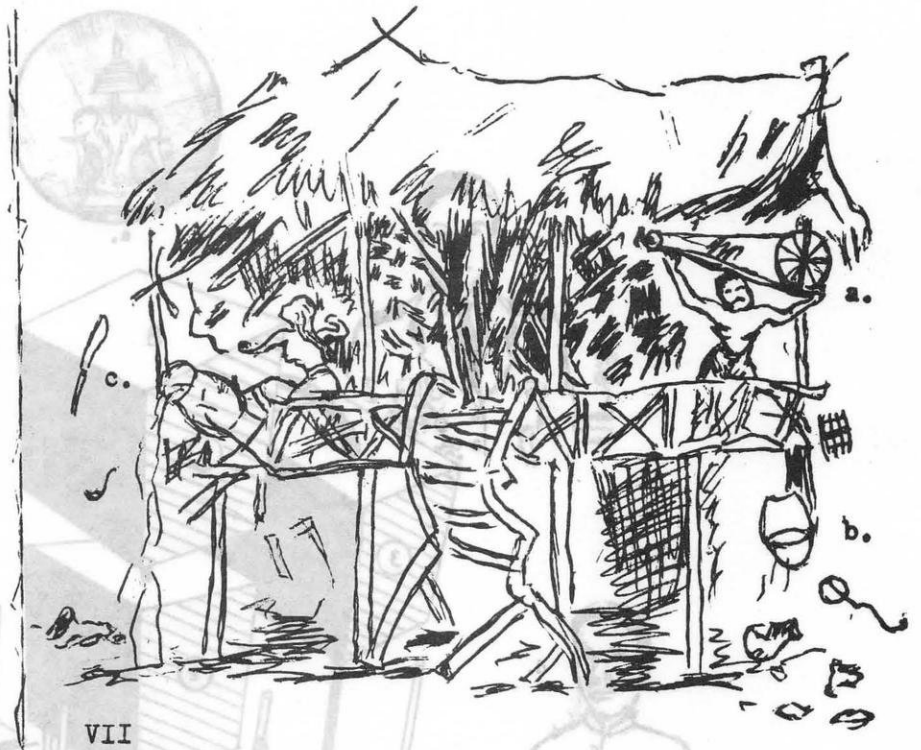


Figure 26. (continued). See opposite page.

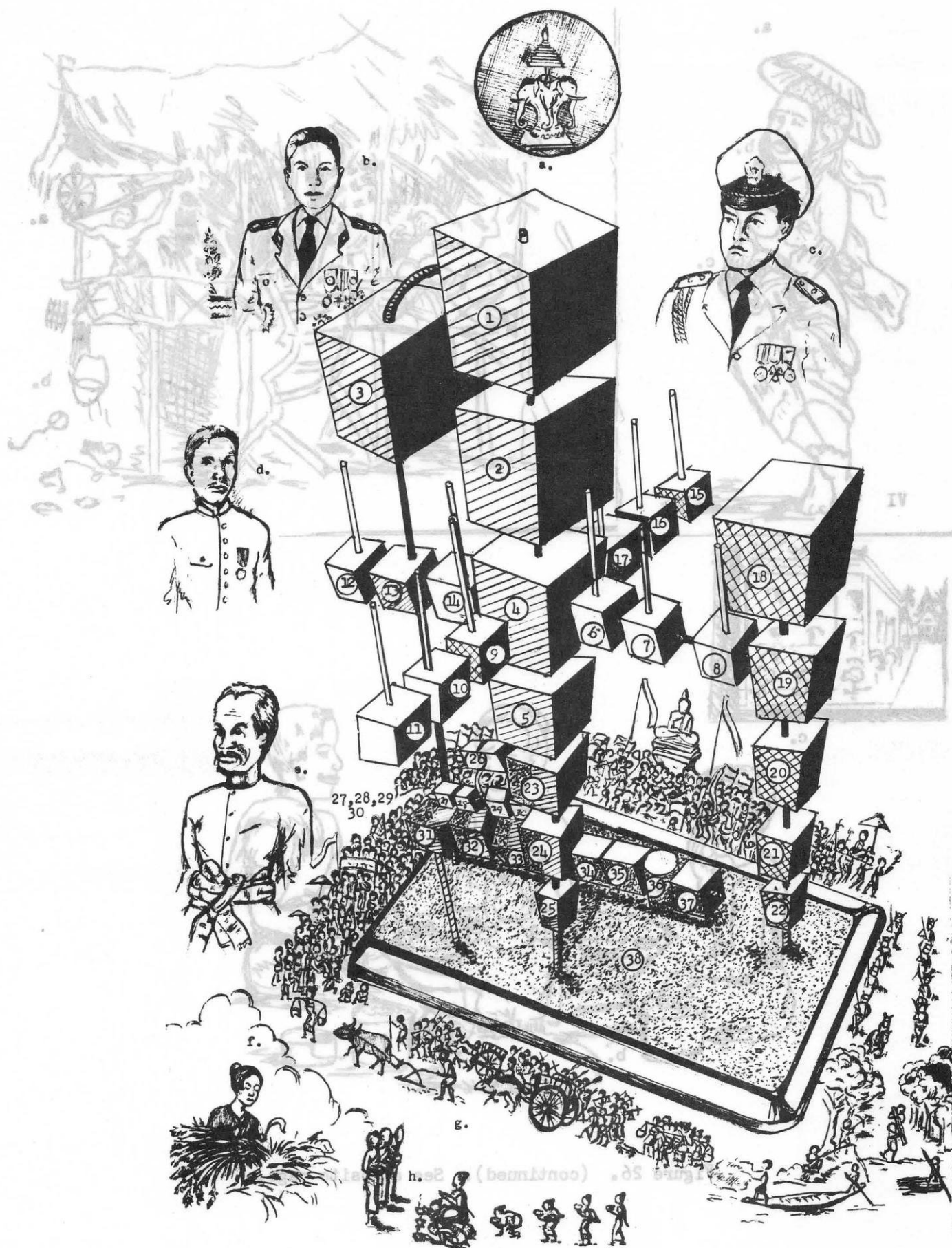


Figure 27. Lao Khoueng (province) administration model, (see opposite page)

- 2 -

VI. The now demented wife roams the village streets incoherent and with her clothes falling off - a. kup (protect head) palm leaf hat, b. phei thu (sash-carry) shoulder sash for ceremonial wear, c. sinh (women wear) skrit; VII. The husband, at his wits-end because of his wife's behavior in desperation begins to throw out of the house all of the housewife's equipment, and the housewife, now angry at him begins to tear down the rest of the house - a. la khein fay (wheel-spinning-cotton) spinning wheel, b. khu nam (bucket-water) plaited bamboo bucket, c. ou nam (pot-water) drinking water jar of the house; VIII. The happy ending - the horrendous experience of breaking up their own home along with the power of the khatha talisman brings the housewife to her senses and a reconciliation is effected. The most important element in this happy situation is the contrite attitude of the second wife who finally admits her subservient position (shown by discrete gesture of hand) and gives proper respect to the first wife - a. pha khao (tray-rice) dining tray, b. eip khao (box-rice) sticky rice container; c. huan pouk mai (house-built-new) the fine new house which rises on the ruins of the old.

This "story" made up with the help of Lao villagers is commonplace in its essential elements in Lao villages today. It reflects the competition between the first and second wife, its psychological effects and manner of treating and resolving the conflict. The contrast between the American way of handling a similar problem of the "other woman" is striking and indicates different perspectives and value premises. The Lao problem doesn't revolve around jealousy for spurned monogamous love but less of status position as first wife. The mental illness is conceived of animistically as flight of one of the 32 khouane which control the body. The aid of the specialists and use of the khatha is indispensable and deeply rooted. The restoration of equilibrium of status position and prerogatives brings everyone back to normality, sanity, and happiness. The story points up the necessity of approaching Lao problems from their own perspectives and utilizing to the extent possible traditional solution.

Figure 27. Lao Khoueng (province) administration model: a. Lan Sang Hom Khao (million-elephant-shadow-white) Lao Kingdom symbol; b. chao khueng (owner-province) governor; c. chao nathi tamrouat (chief duty police) police officer; d. ta seing (eye-bright) township chief; e. pho ban (father-village) village chief; f. kan kep kiew (act-pick-sickle) Harvesting; g. kan ngan sao na (work-struggle-farmer) farmers on works; h. kan hai sin kin than (act-do-value-eat-give) women villagers are giving rice respectfully to the monks. 1. Rattha montree mahad tai (country-minister-great-person) minister of interior; 2. ek athibodee (first-director), director general; 3. athibodee tamrouat (director-police) director of police; 4. Chao khueng (chief-province) governor; 5. chao muong (chief district) district chief; 6. phou bansa kan phak (who-command-affair) Regional; commander; 7. phou thabian thidin (who-register-land) registrar of deeds; 8. houa na satharanasouk (head-public-health) medical officer; 9. houa na san santan (head-tribunal-first-instance) chief of judge; 10. houa na pamai (head forest) chief of forestry; 11. houa na satta-vapheid (head-veterinary) chief of veterinarian; 12. houa na paisanee (head-post office) chief post office; 13. phou kamkap tamrouat (who super ise-police) chief of police; 14. houa na nyotha (head-public works) chief public works; 15. houa na soueisa akone (head-tax-duty) revenue officer; 16. houa na kasikam (head-planting-work) chief of agriculture; 17. houa na pathom suksa (head-primary-study) inspector of schools; 18. chao khana khueng (chief-monkcommunity-province) khueng abbot; 19. chao khana muong (chief-monkcommunity-muong) district abbot; 20. chao khana tasseng (chief-monkcommunity-cumscription) tasseng abbot; 21. chao athikan (chief-pagoda) abbot; 22. phra (respectable) monk; 23. tasseng (eye-bright) township supervisor; 24. nai ban (chief-village) headman of village; 25. samien (scribe) secretary of naiban; 26. nai sip ek (chief-ten-first) sargeant; 27-30. tha han ban (men-bold-village) village soldiers; 31-33. kammakan ban (agent-commission-village) village council; 34-37. khop khoua mee su sieng (families-have-name-sound) prominent families; 38. sao ban (people-village) villagers;

Note: The Chao Muong's staff, extensions of the department services, shown at the Chao Khoueng level are not shown on the model due to difficulty in depicting them. These include: hua nah tam ruad pacam muong (head-face-police-permanent-county) head of police in the country; hua nah san (head-face-county) chief of court in county; hua nah sattawapet (head-face-veterinary) chief of veterinary service in county; hua nah kasiham (head-face-agriculture) chief of agricultural service; hua nah thaharn (head-face-soldier) chief of military in the country; hua nah mouad honghian (head-face-group-school) director of group scolaire.

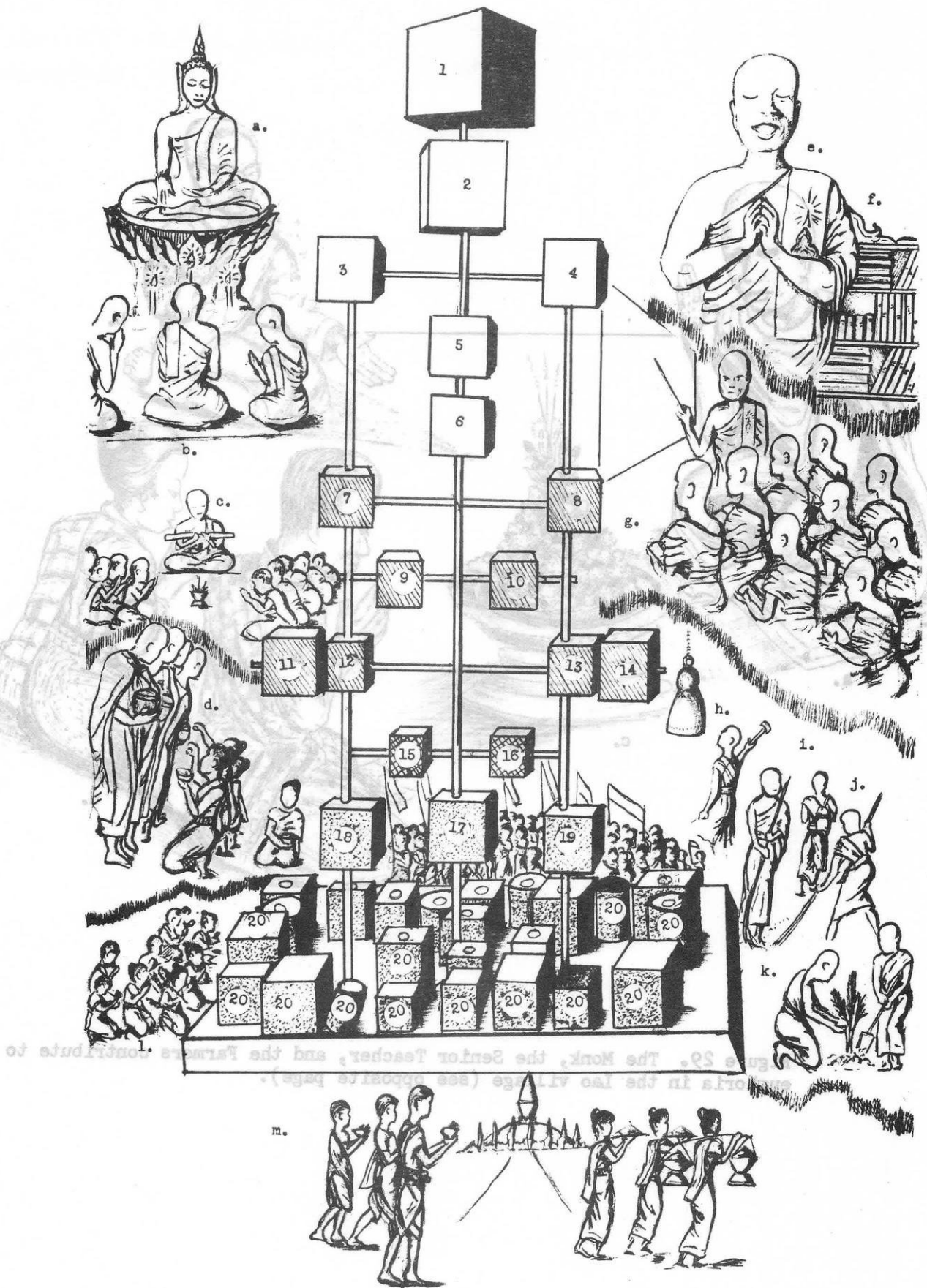


Figure 28. Village Wat organization model, (see opposite page)

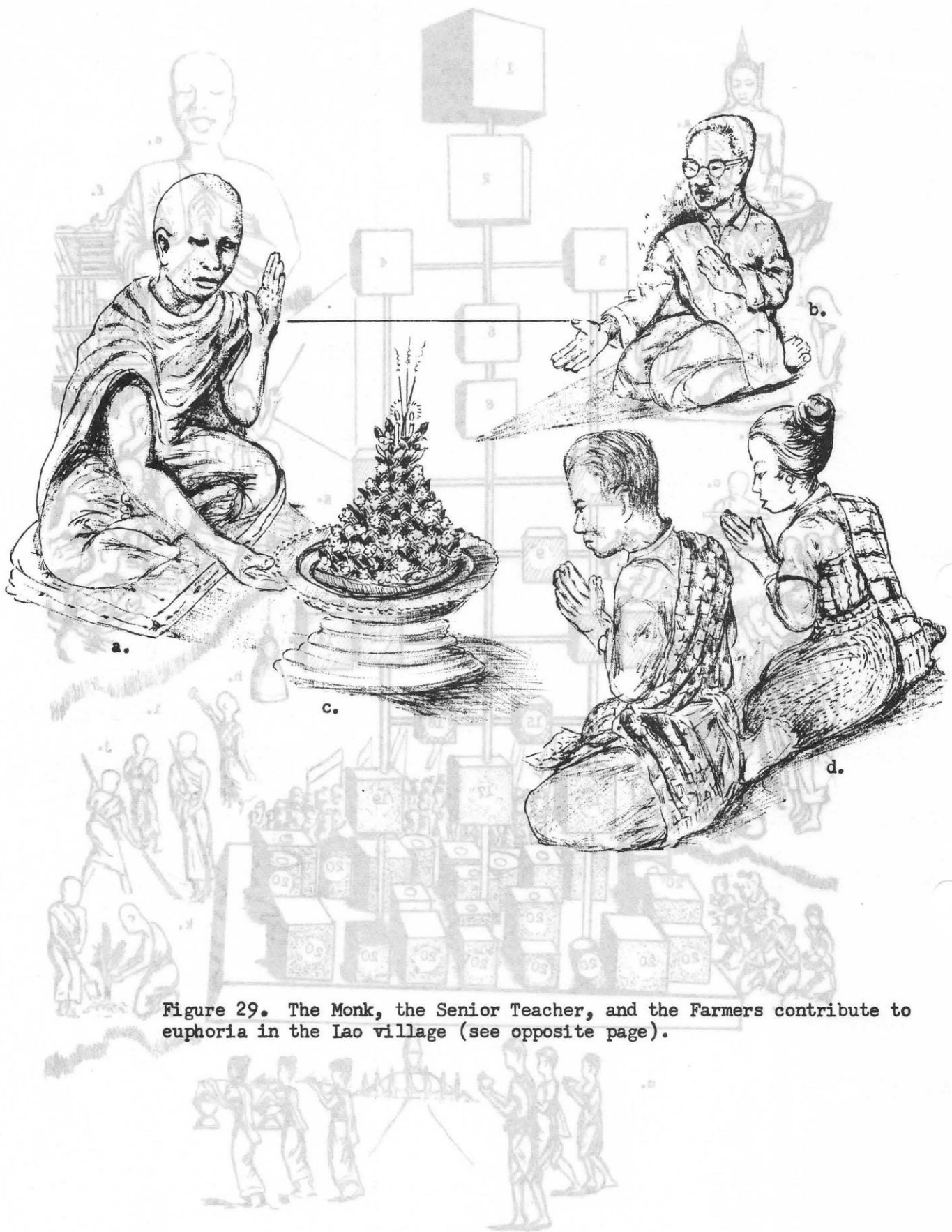


Figure 29. The Monk, the Senior Teacher, and the Farmers contribute to euphoria in the Lao village (see opposite page).

Figure 28. Village Wat organization model (see opposite page)

Figure 28

Village Wat organization model: a. phutha hup (god-form) Buddha statue b. kan wai phra (act-paying-respect (the)-superior) c. thei sana (religious-teaching) preaching; d. tak bat (draw-bowl) monks begging for alms; e. pha sangkha (cloth-community) noble scarf; f. tu nangsu (cup-board-letters) library; g. son pali (teach-pali) learning law and discipline; h. la khang (instrument-spirit) bell; i. tee lakhang (beat-bell-announce) religious time; j. tham khouam sa-at (make-cleanness) clearing the wat; k. pouk phao (planting-coconut tree) conservation of nature; l. kan naphuh ca-sama (act-respect-religion) worshiping; m. kan het boun hai tan (act-make-merit-giving) villagers bringing foods to the Wat.

1. chao attikan (head-great affair) abbot; 2. hong attikan (sub-head-great-affair); 3-6. phra (respectable) monks; 7-14. nene (little monk) novices; 15-16. sangka lee (monk-community-servant); 17. sara wat (keeper of affairs - wat) wat superintendent (villager); 18-19. hong sarwat (sub-sarawat), assistant superintendent (villager); 20. sao ban (people-village) villagers. The model is designed to show power structure among the monks indicated by size and superordination of blocks. The sarawat and his assistants appointed by the elders and the monks organize the villagers for the maintenance and development of the wat. Cubes indicate males, cylinders indicate females.

- 3 -

Figure 29

The monk, the Senior Teacher, and the Farmers contribute to Euphoria in the Lao village: a. Phra (respectable) Monk; b. Acharn (men-moral) senior teacher; c. khan somma (cup-pay respect) offering cup; d. sao na (people-paddy field) village farmers. The artist Thao Kene shown as b. above explains his picture:

"A monk is now receiving a bowl with some flowers and candles in it from the two villagers or phaw houan and meh houan who have been supporting the Wat or Buddhist Religion for long time. This is to show the gratefulness, worshipness of them toward the Wat. Formerly, they were so poor and sad but now they are rich and happy by following the rule of the lay people taught to them by the monk. At the same time a monk is wishing and blessing them to have good luck and prosperity and so forth. They have been in a good shape like this also because of the suggestions from the older people (Acharn) who have had the experiences before them both Buddhist religion and the subjects of the world. Because the monk and the old people have had the good relationship with one another from the distant past".

The social status and influence of an individual in the village depends on his earlier experience in the wat: Acharn (senior teachers or monks) are most influential, next come tit (former junior monks) and then siang (former novices). The farmers use these titles all their lives calling each other tit Noi, Acharn Ma, Siang Cham or whatever their names maybe. The line connecting the palm of the monk and the acharn symbolize the mutual strong-soul influence being exchanged by the two and in which the farmers share. The khan somma (c.) is a "witness" of this euphoric relationship.

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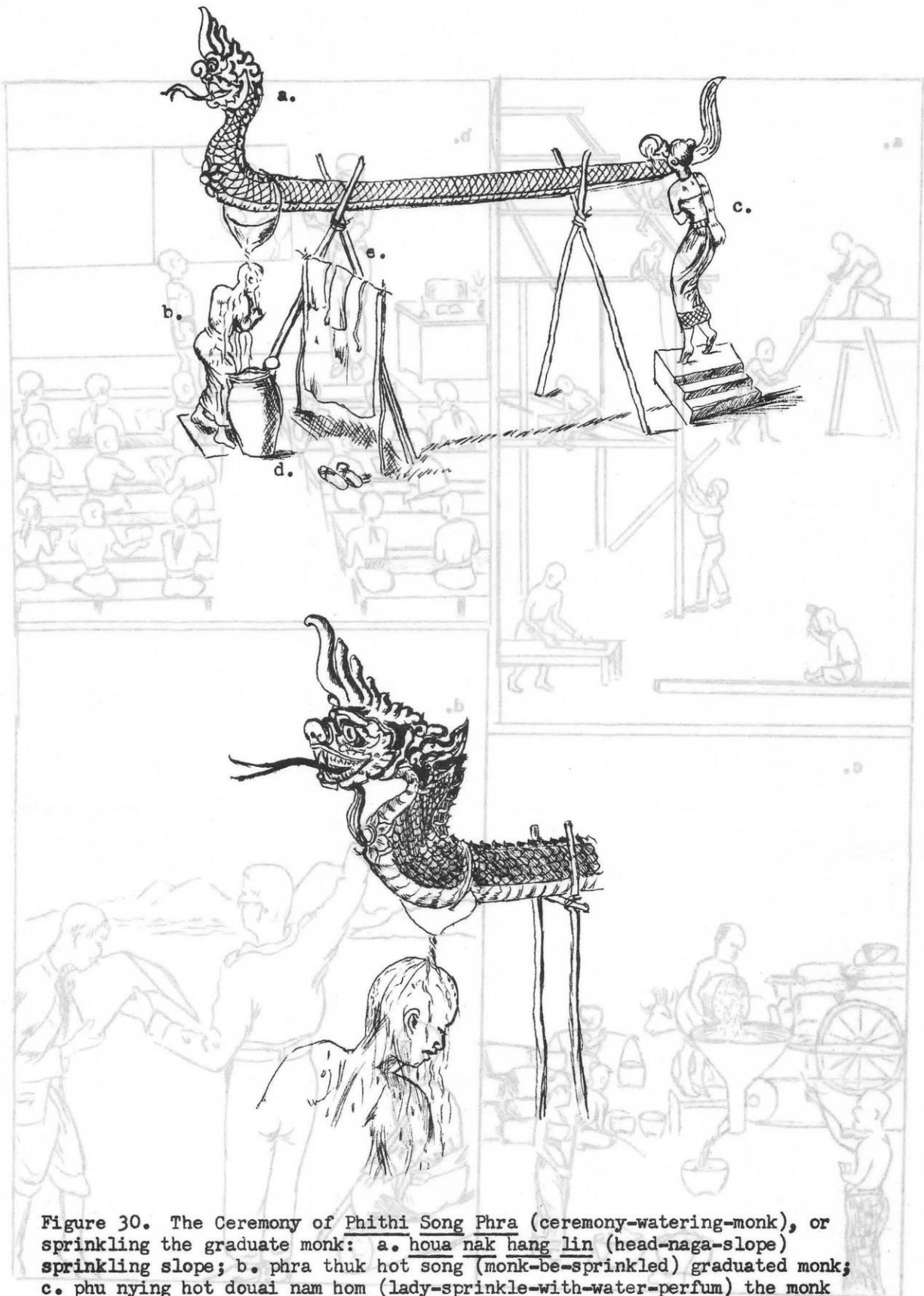


Figure 30. The Ceremony of Phithi Song Phra (ceremony-watering-monk), or sprinkling the graduate monk: a. houa nak hang lin (head-naga-slope) sprinkling slope; b. phra thuk hot song (monk-be-sprinkled) graduated monk; c. phu nying hot douai nam hom (lady-sprinkle-with-water-perfum) the monk is being sprinkled with holy water; d. hai nam tha (jar-water-bank) ordinary water jar; e. pha thay (cloth-change) clothes for change;

This is one of the countless opportunities given villagers to show their respect for the Phra and gain boun (merit) by showering blessings on their priesthood - a symbiosis completed with the instructions and guidance of the villagers by the monks.

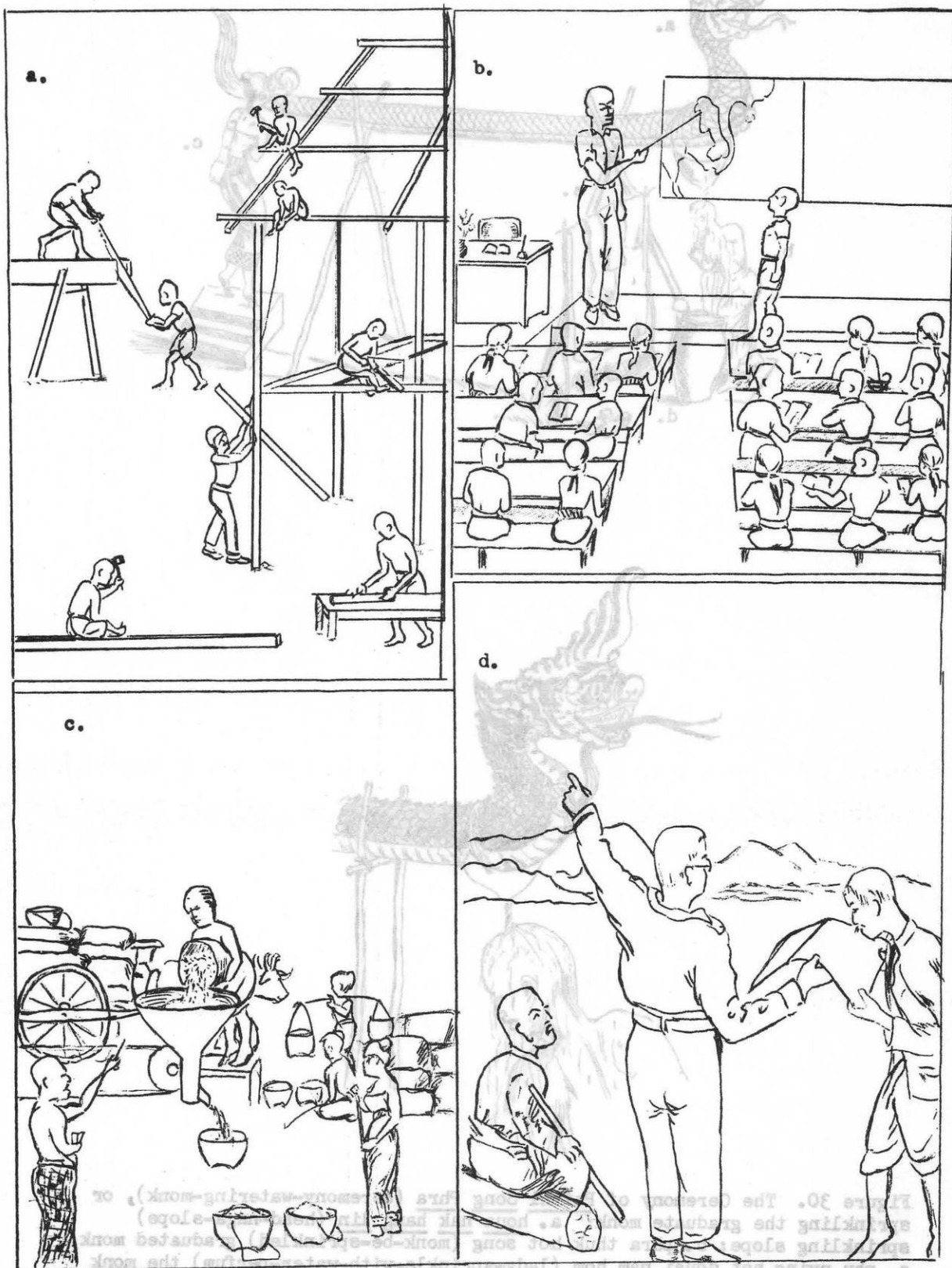


Figure 31. Modern Lao ideas on Khouam Chaleun Kao Na (word-develop-step-forward) development progress: a. kan pouk huan mai (act-build-house-new) house construction; b. kan ham hian (act-frequency-learn) education; c. kan see khao (act-rub-rice) rice milling; d. phein kan sang sa (plan-act-construction-general) constructive-planning.

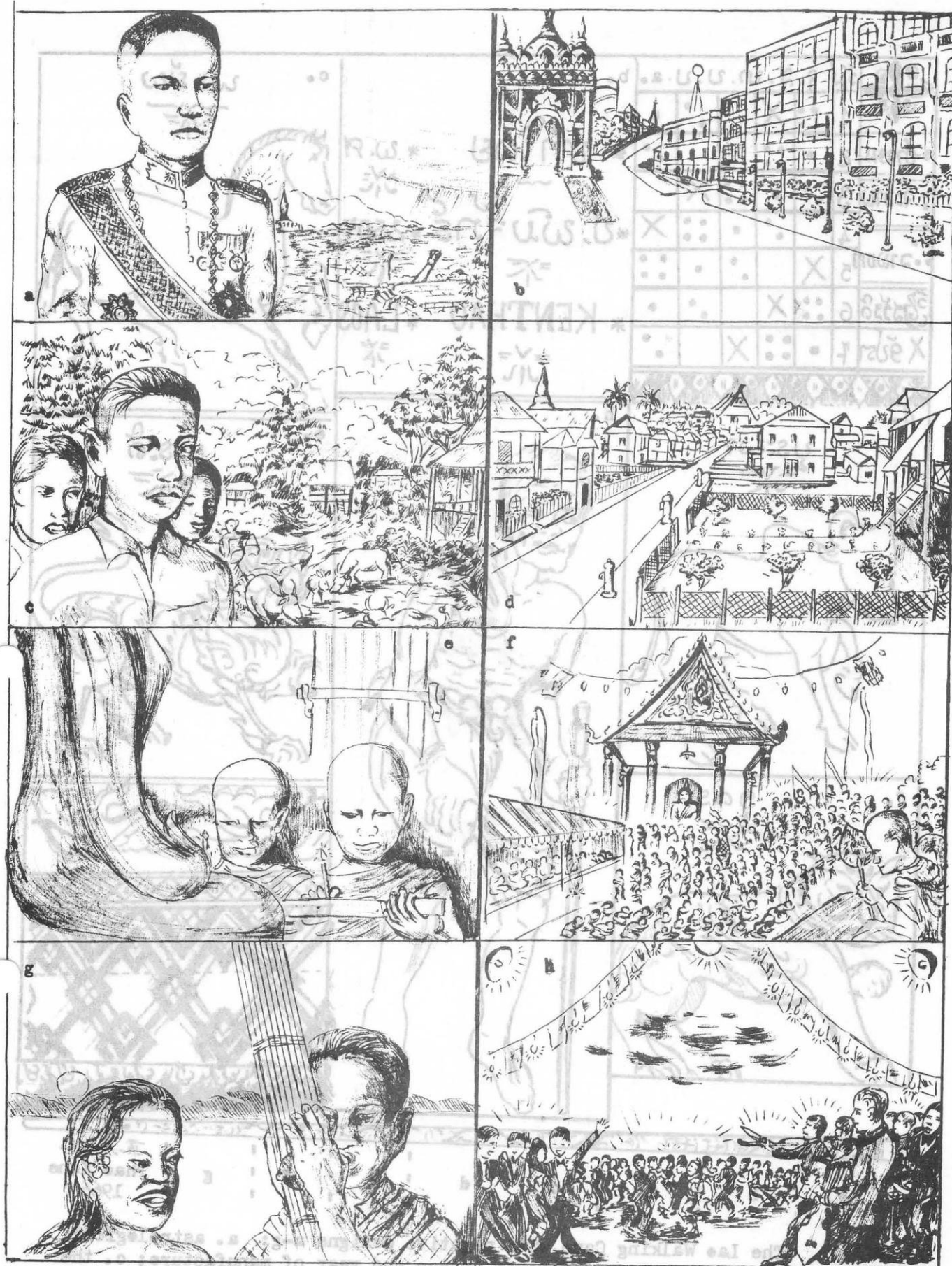
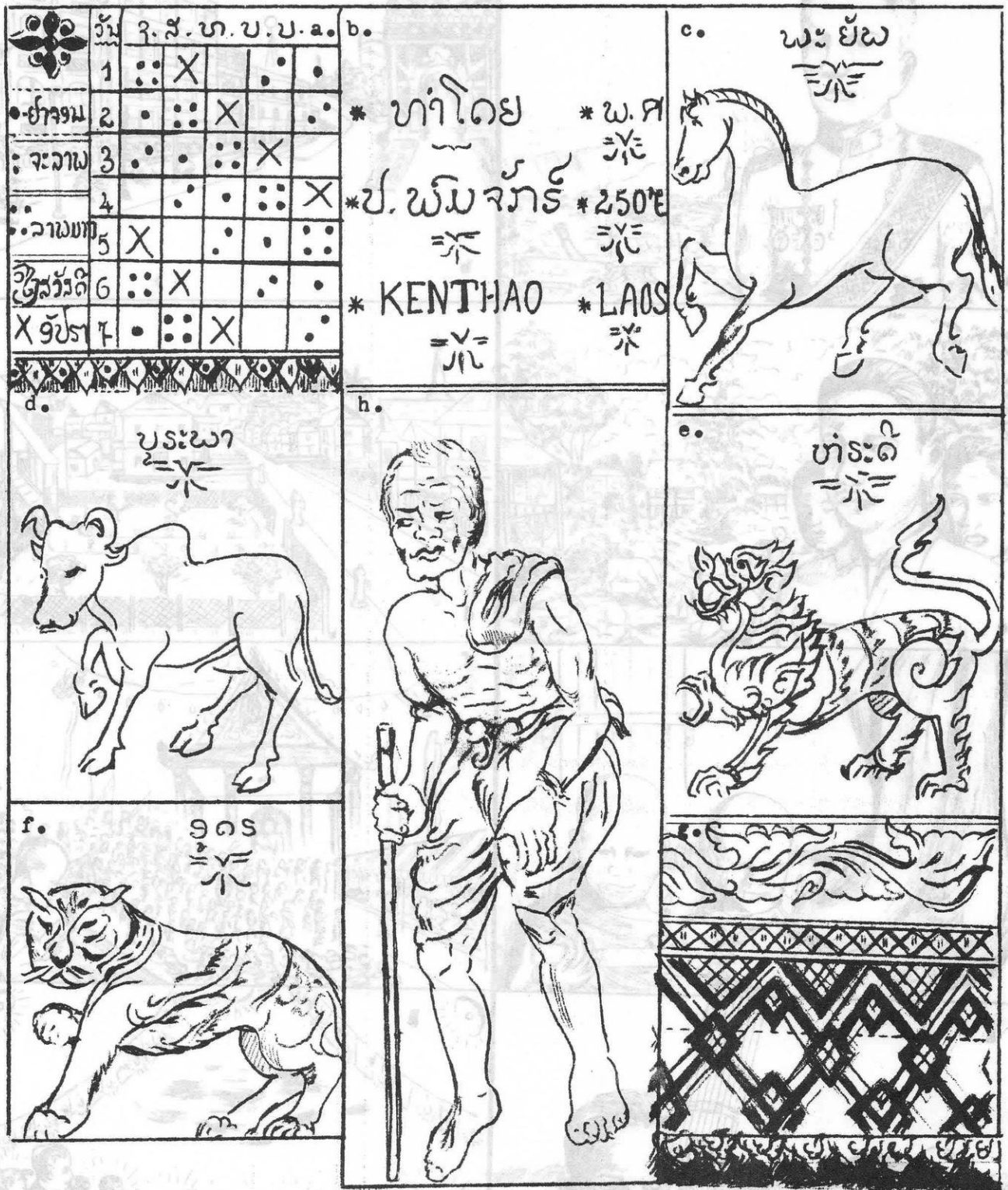


Figure 32. Lao progress in the modern world as realizations of traditional dreams and values - III, (opposite page).

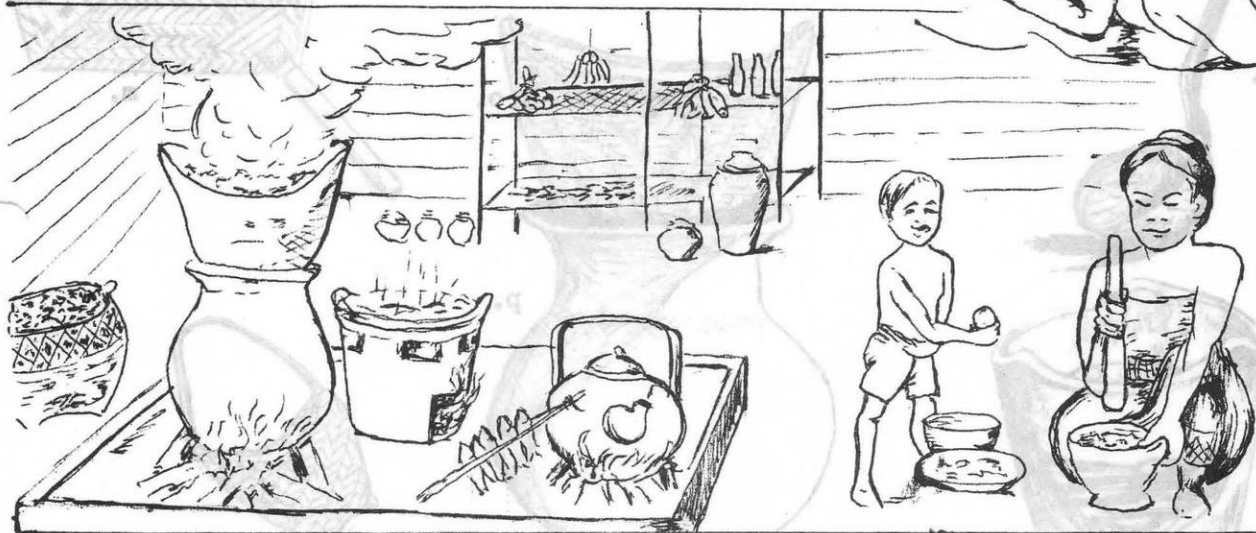


g b a c d e f g Th. Kene
Thao Kene
1966

33- The Lao Walking Cane with negative designs a-g: a. astrological table for walking; b. name of maker, place and year of manufacture; c. the Horse (Northwest); d. the Cow (East); e. the Lion (Southwest); f. the Tiger (North); g. designs; h. Old Lao man using cane; i. the Cane showing areas of motifs a-g. Scale: a-g, full scale; i. 1/6 scale.

Figure 32

Lao progress in the modern world as realizations of traditional dreams and values - III. Left column - traditional values; right column - modern realizations. The following captions are in the words of the artist, Thao Kene, who selected the themes for this figure and for the preceeding figures on this subject (Figure 9, 11). "a. The King deeply hoped the Kingdom must rebuilt from damage caused by the process of time, long ago ---; b. Actually the Capital is built in unforeseen aspect, modern in form and structure; c. Village Leader much hoped that villagers are able to live in close community; d. The new village is formed and so villagers are happy to live all together peacefully; e. Monks unceasingly hoped to extend out the Lao ancient civilization thay themselves illuminated; f. Religious Ceremony is crowded of worshipers and believers; g. At the old time rejoicing usually past under the moonlight night with the tuneful sound of the khene; h. The gladness of today freed from any internal austerity delighted in moving society of love."

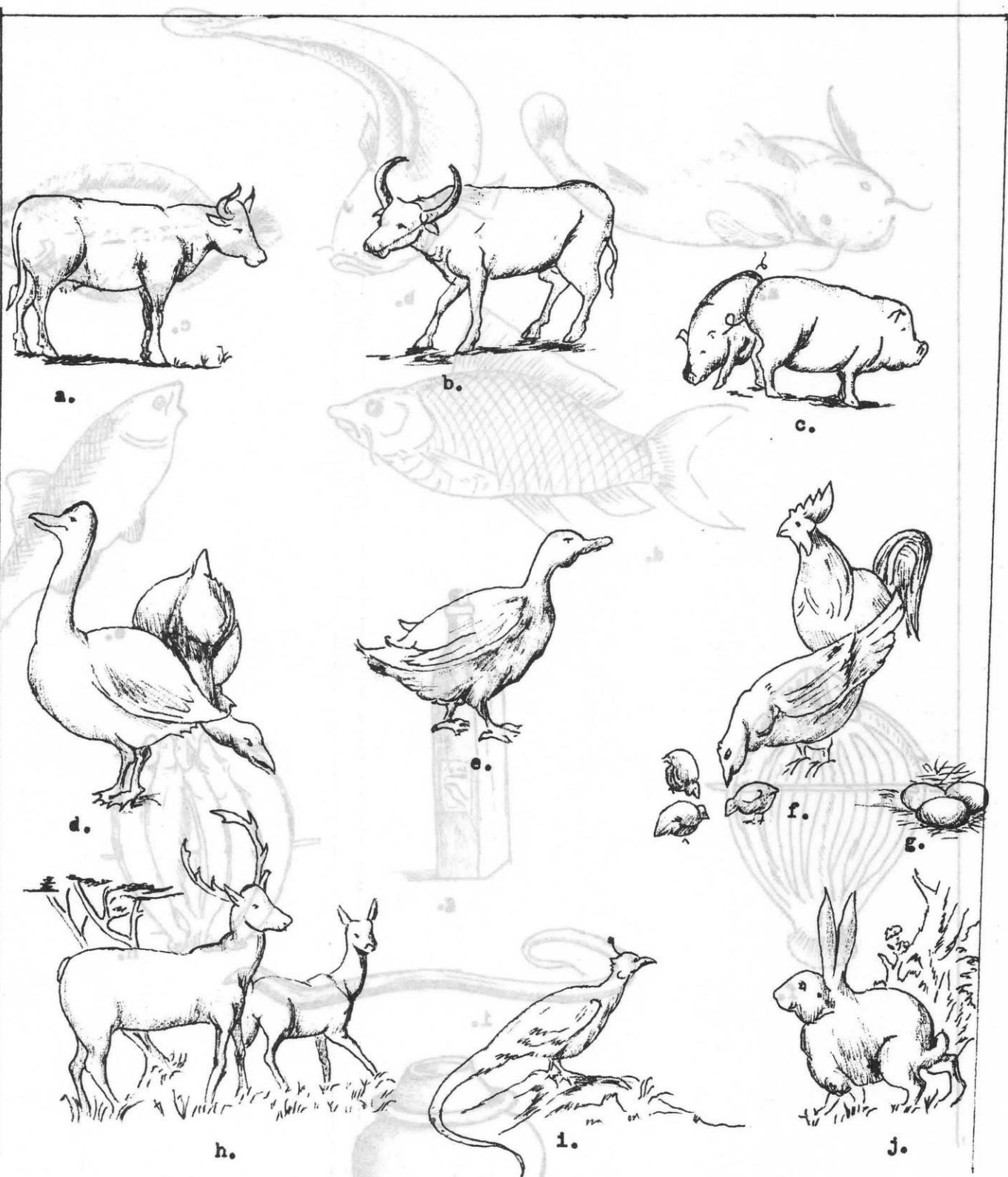


34 The Lao commissariat. a. kan kin (act-eat) eating; b. kan khoua kin (act-cook-eat) cooking.

(bowl-soup) soup bowl; e. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; f. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; g. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; h. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; i. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; j. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; k. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; l. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; m. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; n. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; o. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; p. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; q. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; r. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; s. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; t. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; u. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; v. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; w. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; x. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; y. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking; z. thouat (act-cook-eat) cooking.

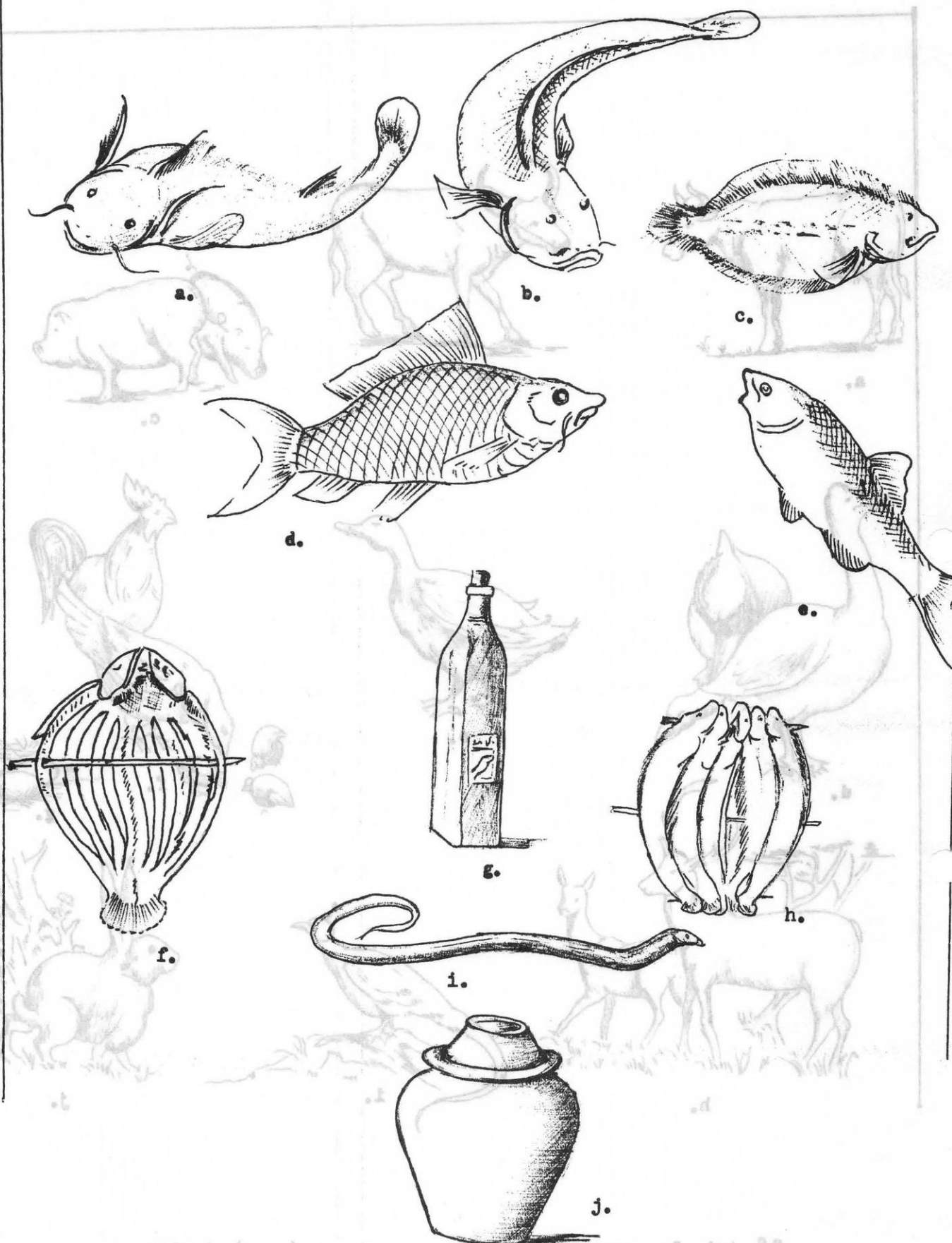


35 Basic cooking and eating equipment of the Lao. a. khok and sark (mortar, pounder) mortar and pestle; b. pha set meu (cloth-wipe-hand) napkin; c. tang wai (chair-rattan) rattan chair; d. thouai keing (bowl-soup) soup bowl; e. thouai cheiw (bowl-sauce) sauce bowl; f. uang (cupped) spoon; g. chok kin nam (container-eat-water) drinking glass of bamboo; h. tao nam (pot-water) water jug, red slipped; i. pha khao (tray-rice), eating table; j. eip khao (box-rice) rice basket; k. meed (sharp) knife; l. khiang (plug) chopping log; m. vee (ventilating) fire fan; n. chong (reserve for self) cooking spoon; o. houat (basket) steamer; p. mo nung khao (pot-steaming-rice) rice steaming earthenware-pot; q. tao loh (pot-hole, inside); cooking furnace; r. tong pa dek (filter-fish-pound) strainer basket.

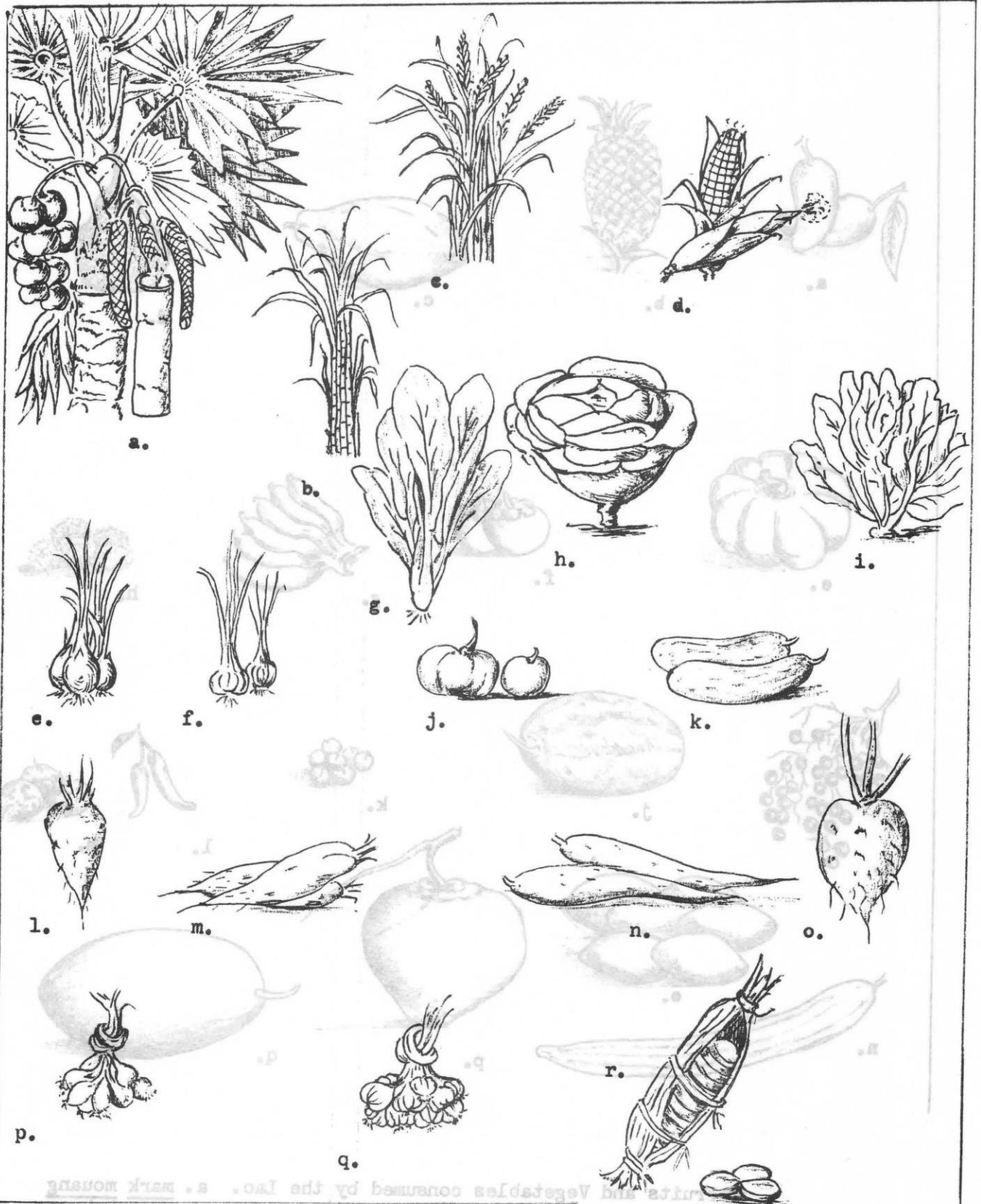


36 Animals consumed by the Lao. a. ngoua (oxen); b. khouai (buffalo); c. mou (pig); d. han (goose); e. pet (duck); f. kaih (chicken); g. khai (increase) eggs; h. kuang (wide) stag; i. nok (beak) bird; j. ka tai (rabbit)

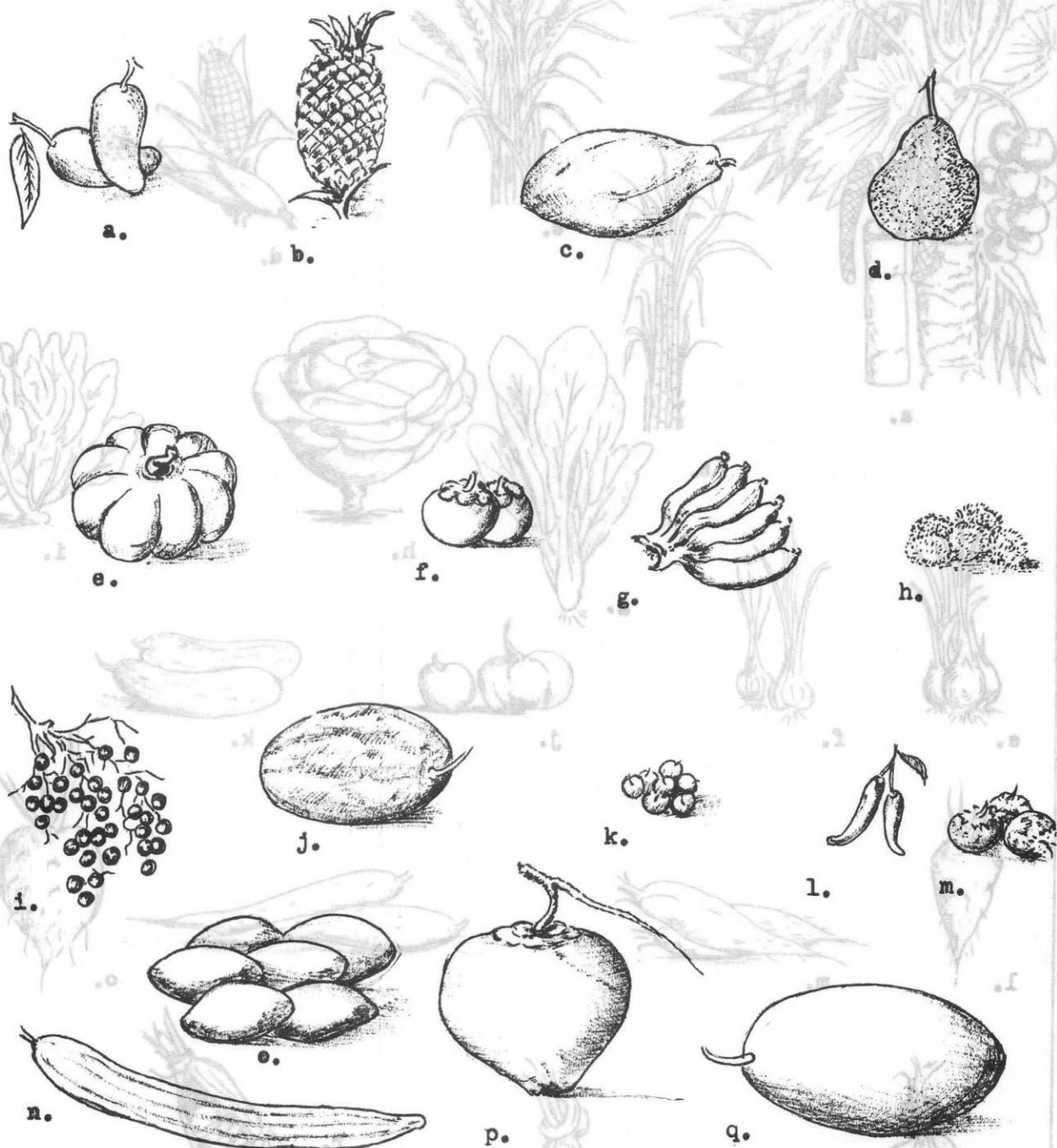
Use of fish by the Lao. a. pa bok (fish-slow moving) muddy fish; b. pa kho (fish-wrist) snake head fish; c. pa kheng (fish-thorax) carp scale fish; d. pa pak (fish-mouth) carp; e. pa khon (fish-beauty); f. pa kho nang (fish-wrist-dried) dried snake head fish; g. keo nam pa (bottle-water-fish) bottle of fish sauce; h. pa sam nang (fish-greasy-dried) dried greasy fish; i. pa dek (jar-fish-preserved) jar-fish jar.



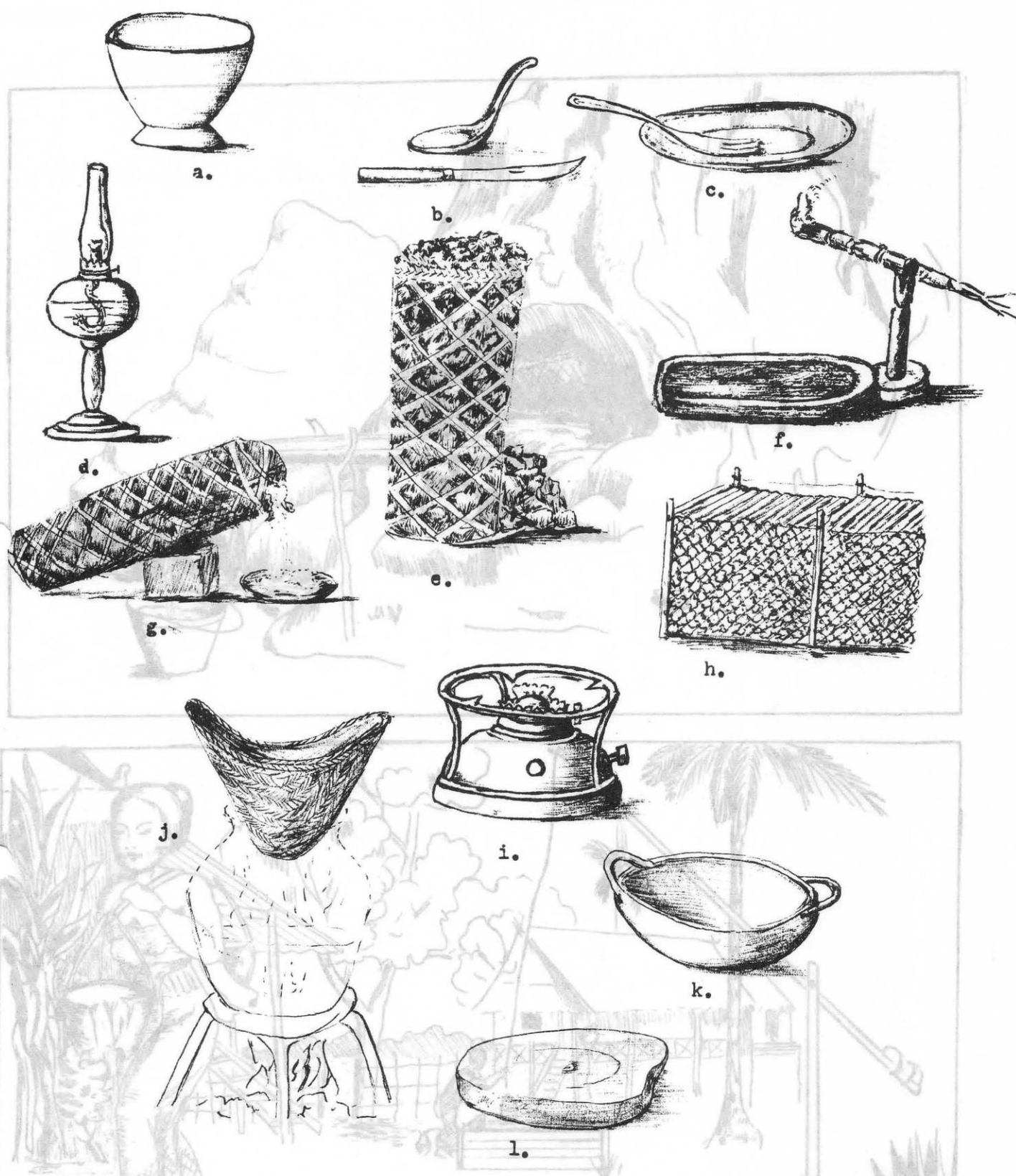
37 Use of fish by the Lao. a. pa dook (fish-slow moving) muddy fish; b. pa kho (fish-wrist) snake head fish; c. pa kheng (fish-thorny) carp scale fish; d. pa pak (fish-mouth) carp; e. pa phon (fish-beauty); f. pa kho hang (fish-wrist-dried) dried snake head fish; g. keo nam pa (bottle-water-fish) bottle of fish sauce; h. pa suam hang (fish-greasy-dried) dried greasy fish; i. ian (slippery) eel; j. hai pa dek (jar-fish-pressed) salt fish jar.



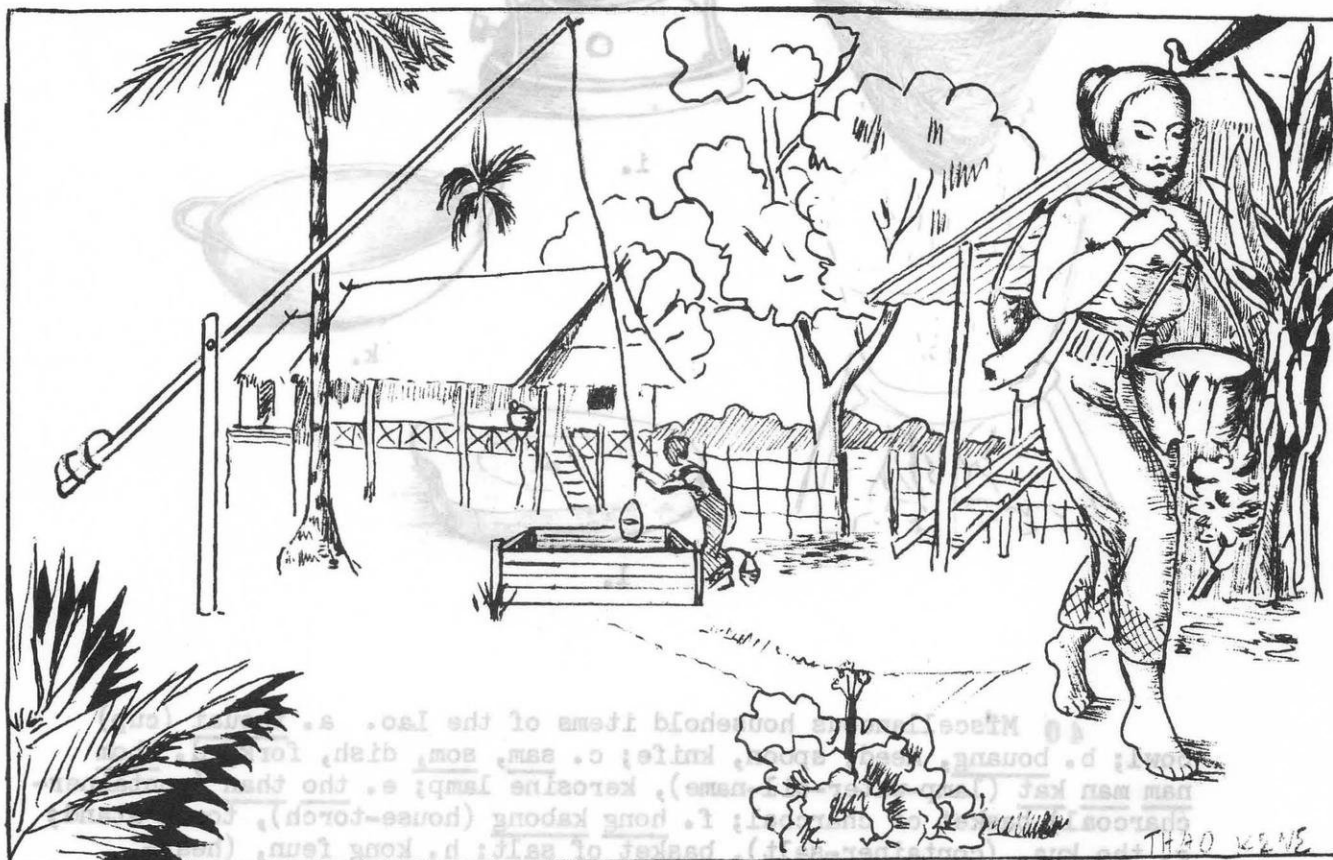
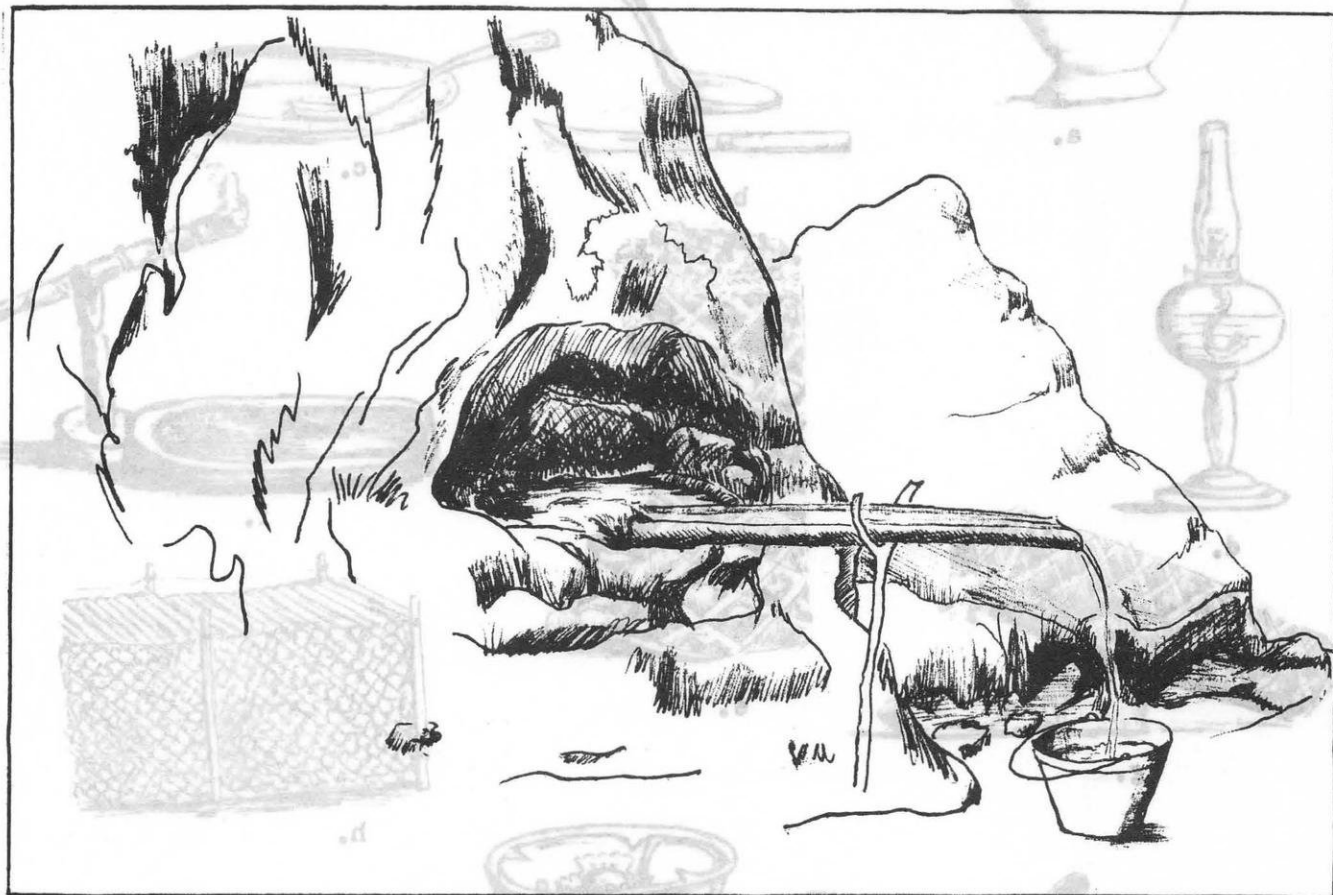
38 Grain, vegetables and condiments consumed by the Lao.
a. nam tan (water-palm) palm sugar; b. kok oi (trunk-sweet) sugar cane; c. kok khao (trunk-rice) rice plant; d. khao salee (rice-vegetable) corn; e. pak boua (vegetable-bow) onion; f. pak thiam (vegetable-unreal) garlic; g. pak khat (vegetable-air) Chinese lettuce; h. kalampee (banana trunk-flower) cabbage; i. pak khat khao (vegetable-air-white) white lettuce; j. mark len (fruit-ripe) tomato; k. mark tang (fruit-tender) cucumber; l. hua pak khat (head-vegetable-air) carrot; m. hua pak khat khao (head-vegetable-air-white) horse radish; n. hua pak khat deing (head-vegetable-air-red) radish; o. hua phuak (head-white); p. pak bua hang (vegetable-name-dried) dried onion; q. pak thiam hang (vegetable-unreal-dried) dried garlic; r. nam oi (water-sweet) sugar cane seeds.



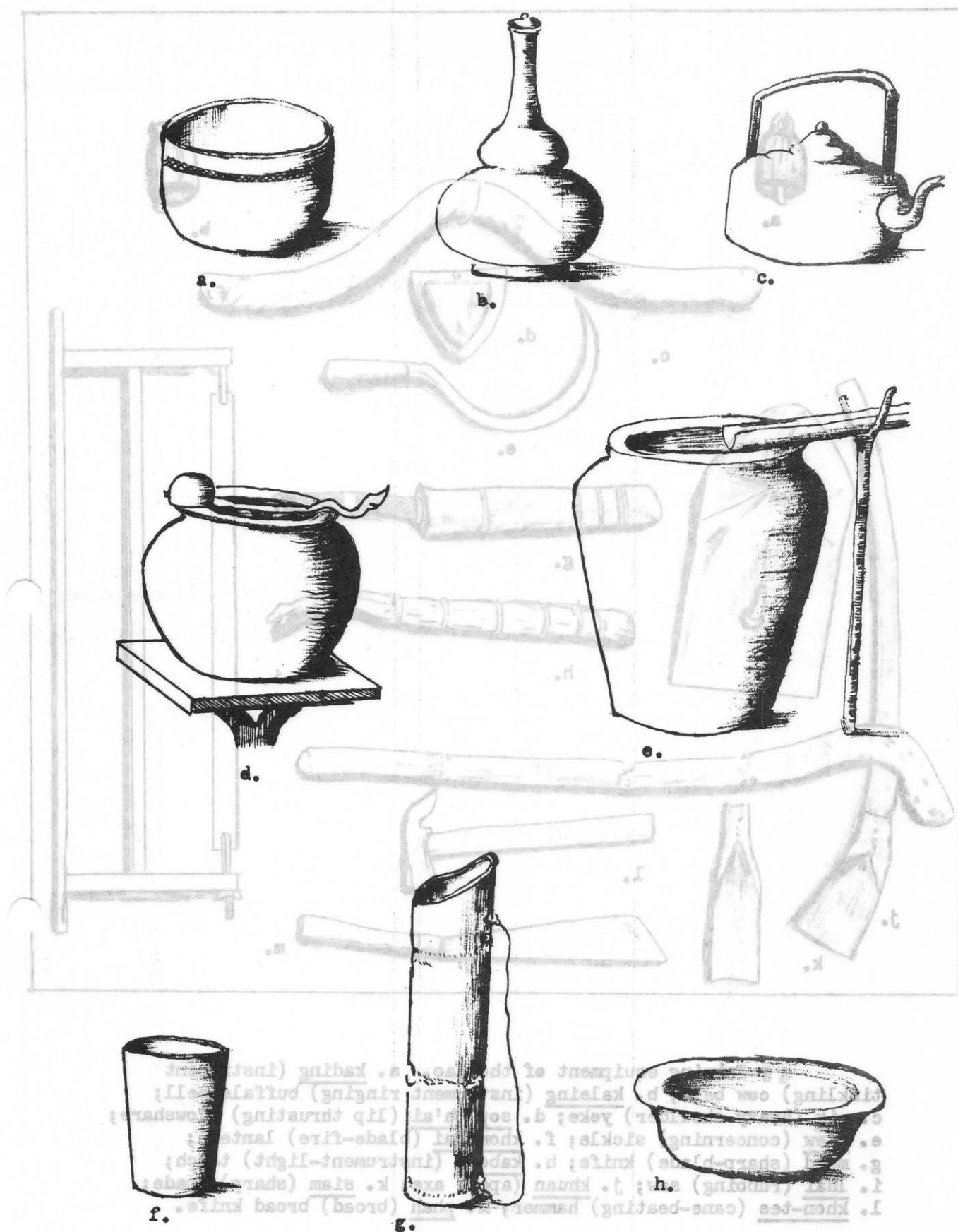
39 Fruits and Vegetables consumed by the Lao. a. mark mouang (fruit-green) mango; b. mark nat (fruit-tell) pineapple; c. mark houng (fruit-name) papaya; d. mark klang (fruit-smooth) pomelo; e. mark eu (fruit-name) squash; f. mark mang khut (fruit-name) mangosteen; g. mark kuai (fruit-name) banana; h. mark ngo (fruit-name) leech; i. mark lam yai (fruit-name) logan; j. mark mo (fruit-name) watermelon; k. mark than (fruit-name) ju-jubee; l. mark pet (fruit-hot) pepper; m. mark keua (fruit-name) egg plant; n. mark bouab (fruit-swell); o. mark pou mark pang (fruit-sweet-fruit-sour) sweet and sour fruit; p. mark pao (fruit-name) coconut; q. mark fuck (fruit-chop).
 k. mark tang (fruit-tender) cucumber; l. mark pak khat (head-vegetable-sit-white) horse radish; m. mark pak khat (head-vegetable-sit-red) radish; n. mark pak khat (head-vegetable-name-dried) dried radish; o. mark pak khat (head-vegetable-name-dried) dried radish; p. mark pak khat (head-vegetable-name-dried) dried radish; q. mark pak khat (head-vegetable-name-dried) dried radish.



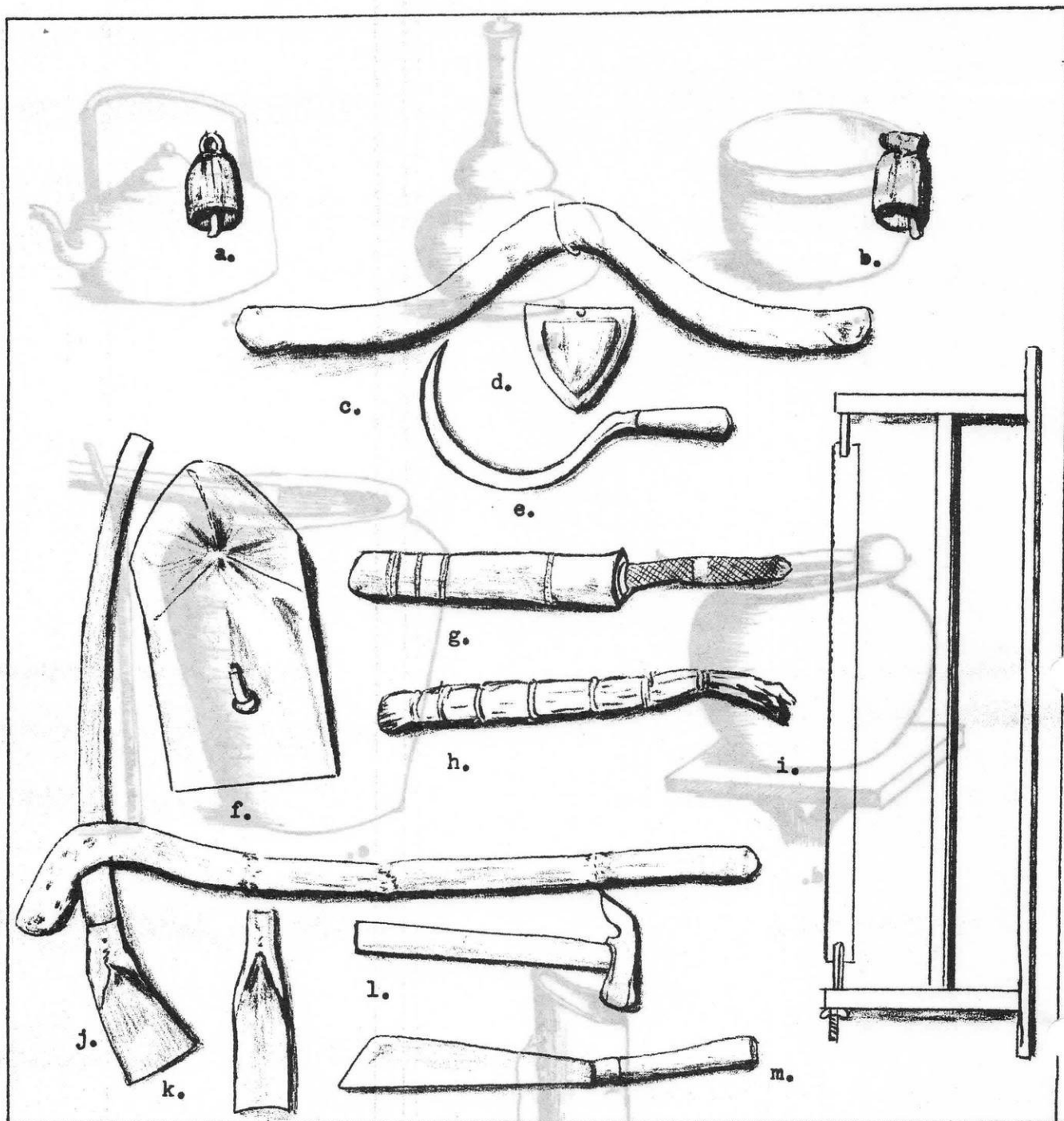
40 Miscellaneous household items of the Lao. a. thouai (cup) bowl; b. bouang, meed, spoon, knife; c. sam, som, dish, fork, d. khom nam man kat (lamp-water-oil-name), kerosine lamp; e. tho than (container-charcoal) basket of charcoal; f. hong kabong (house-torch), torch stand; g. tho kua, (container-salt), basket of salt; h. kong feun, (heat-firewood); i. tao fai (container-fire), kerosine pressure stove; j. houat, steaming basket shown steaming rice on pot top; k. mo keing (pot-curry) cooking pot of pottery in old days, now mainly of iron; l. khiang (chopping block).



41 Sources of water for the Lao. a. nam leen (water-pouring) water from a spring; b. hap nam (carry-water) carrying water in a jarb from a well.

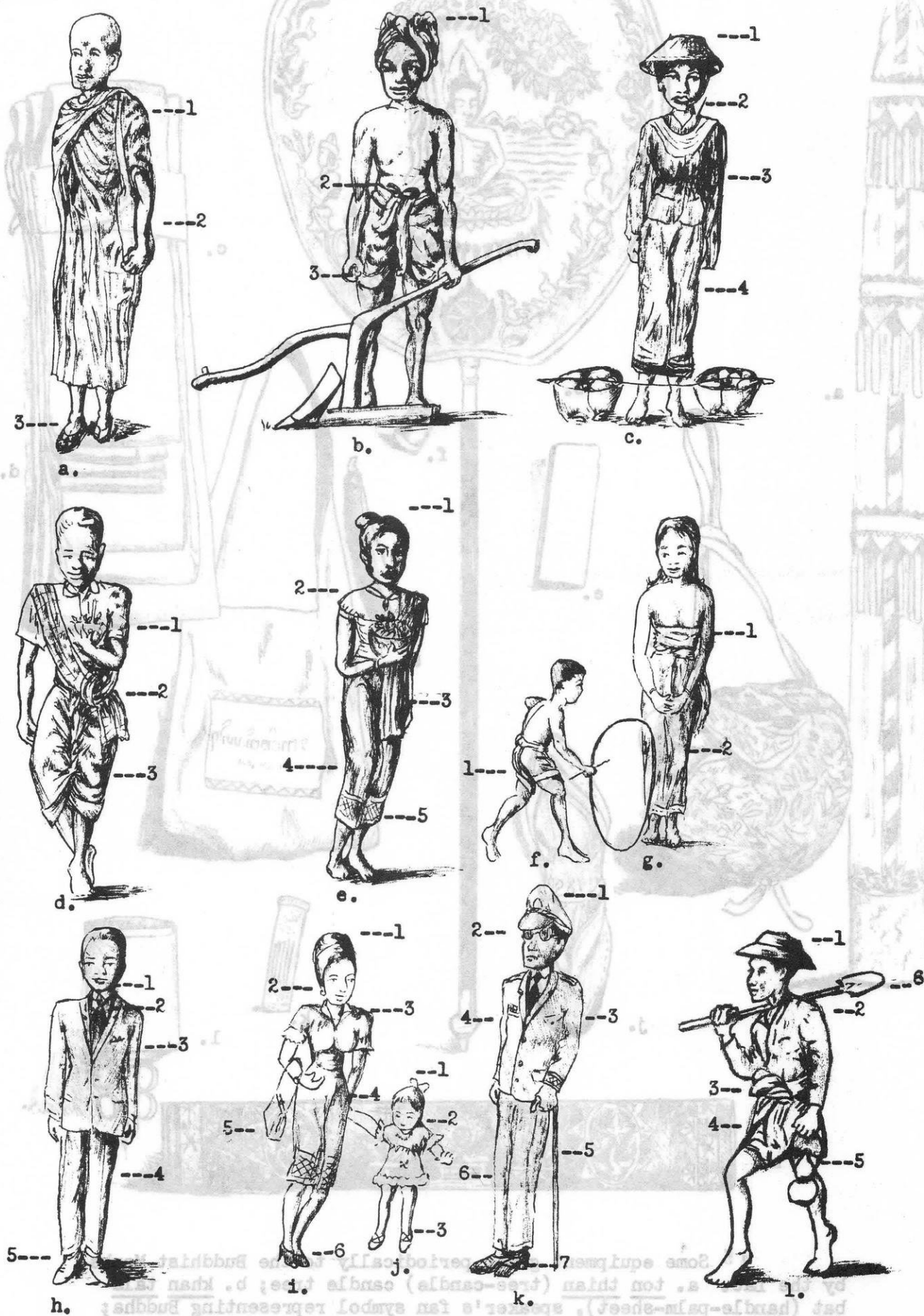


42 Water containers used by the Lao. a. o nam (receptacle-water) water bowl; b. tao nam (pot-water) water bottle; c. ka nam (crow-water) metal kettle; d. u nam (container-water) water jar on stand at head of house ladder. e. hai nam (container-water) Large water jar, for storage and collecting water from eaves of house; f. chock nam (container-water) drinking container made of bamboo, glass, or pottery, also used is half a coconut shell; g. bang nam (container-water) bamboo water container can be used instead of cuc basket; h. saam nam (vase-water) water bowl.



43 Farming equipment of the Lao. a. kading (instrument tinkling) cow bell; b. kaleing (instrument ringing) buffalo bell; c. eik (heavy shoulder) yoke; d. sop th'ai (lip thrusting) plowshare; e. kiew (concerning) sickle; f. khom fai (blade-fire) lantern; g. meed (sharp-blade) knife; h. kabong (instrument-light) torch; i. luai (rubbing) saw; j. khuan (apex) axe; k. siam (sharp) spade; l. khon-tee (cane-beating) hammer; m. phah (broad) broad knife.

Water containers used by the Lao. a. o nam (receptacle-water) water bowl; b. so nam (pot-water) water bottle; c. ka nam (crow-water) metal kettle; d. u nam (container-water) water jar on stand at head of house ladder; e. hai nam (container-water) large water jar, for storage and collecting water from eaves of house; f. chock nam (container-water) drinking container made of bamboo, glass, or pottery, also used as half a coconut shell; g. bang nam (container-water) bamboo water container can be used instead of one basket; h. saam nam (vase-water) water bowl.



44 Clothing used by the Lao. a. Monk, b. Farmer, c. Tradesman, d. Head of Household in ceremonial garb, e. Housewife in ceremonial garb, f. boy, g. young lady, h. Government official, i. Westernized Lao housewife, j. Westernized girl, k. Officer, l. Working Man. (See footnote following page for details)



45 Some equipment given periodically to the Buddhist Monks by the Lao. a. ton thian (tree-candle) candle tree; b. khan tala bat (handle-palm-sheet), speaker's fan symbol representing Buddha; c. pha sum (clothes-unit) orange cloth clothing equipment; d. khon thao (staff-leaning) walking cane; e. hin fon meed (stone-file-knife), grindstone; f. mai nyep (silk-sewing) thread; g. meed thei (knife-shave) razor; h. baat (wound) monk's bowl; i. thong nyam (bag-hanging) monk's bag; j. keup (protect feet) monk's shoes; k. lot kheim (tube needle) needle tube; l. tong nam (filter-water) filter; m. pok kham phee (cover-gold-big) cover bible containing palm leaf script.

Vocabulary

The following vocabulary consists of terms taken from the pictures. They are arranged in alphabetical order following the French transliteration system. We have chosen that system because it is the most standardized one for writing Laotian in Roman characters.

A guide to the French transliteration appears below. An aspirated sound is one that is made expelling air through one's mouth. An unaspirated sound is "hard", and air is not expelled.

<u>French</u> <u>Transliteration</u>		<u>Sound in</u> <u>English</u>
a	=	<u>car</u>
ai	=	<u>sigh</u>
ao	=	<u>how</u>
ay	=	<u>sigh</u>
b	=	<u>bat</u>
d	=	<u>dip</u>
ê	=	<u>egg</u>
ê	=	<u>ate</u>
eu	=	euh (ask Laotian speaker)
f	=	<u>fat</u>
gn	=	(<u>nying</u>)
h	=	<u>hat</u>
i	=	<u>eat</u>
k	= unasp.	k
kh	= asp.	k
l	=	<u>lip</u>
m	=	<u>make</u>
n	=	<u>nip</u>
ng	=	<u>singing</u>
o	=	<u>saw</u>
ô	=	<u>soap</u>
ou	=	<u>boo</u>
p	= unasp.	p
ph	= asp.	p
r	=	<u>rip</u>
s	=	<u>sip</u>
t	= unasp.	t
th	= asp.	t
v	=	<u>very</u>
y	=	<u>yes</u>

<u>A</u>	26b, 29 achan vat	ອາຈານວັດ	head monk in wat
	27. athibodi tamrouat	ອະທິບໍດີ ຕຳຮວດ	director of police
<u>B</u>	12. ban heuan	ບ້ານເຮືອນ	home
F	ban pho na	ບ້ານຟ້າ	a farming household
	21. bang fai	ບັງໄຟ	rocket
	21. bang fai khèng khan	ບັງໄຟແຂ່ງຂັນ	rocket contest
	42. bang nam	ບັງນ້ຳ	bamboo water container
	45. bat	ບາດ	monk's bowl
	17. bét pak	ເບັດປັກ	sticking in fishing hook
	44. bô	ໂບ	hair ribbon
	7. bôt	ໂບດ	monastery, Buddhist temple wat
	35. bouang	ບວງ	spoon
	30. boun	ບຸນ	merit, credit for acting piously
	21. boun bang fai	ບຸນບັງໄຟ	the rocket festival
	21. boun lai heua fai	ບຸນໄຫຼເຮືອໄຟ	illuminated boat festival
<u>C</u>	27, 28 chao athikan	ເຈົ້າອະທິການ	abbot
	27. chao khana khouéng	ເຈົ້າຄນະແຂວງ	province abbot
	27. chao khana meung	ເຈົ້າຄນະເມືອງ	district abbot
	27. chao khana tasèng	ເຈົ້າຄນະຕາແສງ	county abbot
	19. chao khong khao	ເຈົ້າຂອງນາ	rice field owner
	21. chao khouéng	ເຈົ້າແຂວງ	province governor
	21. chao meuang	ເຈົ້າເມືອງ	district chief
	21. chao na thi tamrouat	ເຈົ້າພາບຕຳຮວດ	police officer

F . chōk	ຈົກ	pickaxe
35, 42 chok kin nam	ຈອກກິນນ້ຳ	drinking container made from glass, bamboo, half coconut shell, etc.
35. chong	ຈອງ	cooking spoon
$\frac{D}{2}$. dam na	ດຳນາ	transplanting
19. dok mai	ດອກໄມ້	flowers
$\frac{E}{43}$. èk	ແອກ	yoke
27. èk athibodi	ແອກອະທິບໍດີ	director general
35, 26c, èp khao	ແອບເຂົ້າ	sticky rice container
$\frac{H}{3}$. hai khao	ໄຮ່ເຂົ້າ	upland rice
30. hai nam tha	ໄຫນ້າທ່າ	ordinary water jar
37. hai pa dèk	ໄຫປາແດກ	salt fish jar
36. han	ຫ້ານ	goose
15. hang lin	ຮ່າງລິນ	drainer
2. hap ka	ຫາບກ້າ	bearing rice plants
41. hap nam	ຫາບນ້ຳ	carrying water
17. hè	ແຫ	sweep net
9. heua bin	ເຮືອບິນ	airplane
9. heua chak, kam pan	ເຮືອຈັກ, ກຳປັມ	boats propelled by a motor
20. heua fai	ເຮືອໄຟ	illuminated boats seen at boun lai heua fai
4. heuan lao	ເຮືອນລາວ	Lao house
6. heuan mounḡ din chi	ເຮືອນມຸງດິນຈີ	clay tile roof
6. heuan mounḡ fak	ເຮືອນມຸງຟາກ	reed roof
6. heuan mounḡ gna	ເຮືອນມຸງຫຍ້າ	grass roof

6.	heuan moun ^g phèn	ເຮືອນມຸງແປ້ນ	wooden tile roof
6.	heuan moun ^g sang kasi	ເຮືອນມຸງສັງກະສີ	tin roof
26c	heuan pouk mai	ເຮືອນປຸກໄໝ້	new house
4.	heuan thammada	ເຮືອນທັມມະດາ	typical house
45.	hin fôn mit	ຫິນຝົນມິດ	grindstone
23.	ho ban	ຫໍບ້ານ	village shrine
23.	ho chèk	ຫໍແຈກ	meeting house
7.	ho la khang	ຫໍລະຄັງ	bell-tower
F, 13	ho na ta hèk	ຫໍນາຕາແຮກ	seedbed shrine for phi
20.	hoi phra bat	ຮອຍພຣະບາດ	Buddha's footprint
5.	hok	ຫອກ	spear
3.	hôn thang	ຫົນທາງ	road
28.	hong chao athikan	ຮອງເຈົ້າອະທິການ	assistant abbot
3.	hông hien	ໂຮງຮຽນ	school
40.	hông kabong	ໂຮງກະບອງ	torch-stand
12.	hong non	ຫ້ອງນອນ	bedroom
F	hông si khao	ໂຮງສີເຂົ້າ	rice mill
27.	houa na fay gno tha	ຫົວໜ້າໂຍທາ	chief of public works
27.	houa na kasikam	ຫົວໜ້າກະສິກຳ	chief of agriculture service
27.	houa na kôm pa mai	ຫົວໜ້າກົມປ່າໄມ້	chief of forestry
27.	houa na mouat hông hien	ຫົວໜ້າໝວດມົຮງຮຽນ	director of Groupe Scolaire
27.	houa na pai sani	ຫົວໜ້າໄປສະນີ	chief of post office
27.	houa na pathan souk sa	ຫົວໜ້າປະຖົມສຶກສາ	inspector of schools
27.	houa na sane	ຫົວໜ້າສານ	county judge

27. houa na sanesanh tôn	ຫົວໜ້າສານຂຶ້ນຕົ້ນ	chief of judges
27. houa na satharana souk	ຫົວໜ້າສາທາຣະນະສຸກ	medical officer
27. houa na sattavaphèt	ຫົວໜ້າສັຕະວາແພດ	veterinary chief
27. houa na souai sa ha kone	ຫົວໜ້າຊ່ວຍສາອາກອນ	revenue officer
27. houa na tamrouat pacham neuang	ຫົວໜ້າຕຳຮອດ ປະຈຳເມືອງ	county head of police
27. houa na thahan	ຫົວໜ້າທະຫານ	chief of military
38. houa pak kat	ຫົວຜັກກາດ	carrot
38. houa pak kat khao	ຫົວຜັກກາດຂາວ	horse radish
38. houa pak kat deng	ຫົວຜັກກາດແດງ	radish
38. houa pheuak	ຫົວເຜືອກ	taro
35,40 houat	ຫວດ	steamer
F houn	ຫຸ່ນ	scarecrow
<u>I</u> 37. ian	ອຸ້ມ	eel
<u>K</u> 43,21 kabong	ກະບອງ	torch
19. ka chōk	ກະຈັກ	mirror
43. kading	ກະດິງ	cowbell
17. ka doung	ກະດູງ	plaice
36. kai	ໄກ່	chicken
19. kai tōm	ໄກ່ຕົ້ມ	boiled chicken
38. kalampi	ກະລຳປີ	cabbage
43. kalèng	ກະແລງ	buffalo bell
27. kammakan ban	ກັມະການບ້ານ	village bell
42. ka nam	ການ້າ	water kettle
16. kane ha pa	ການຫາປາ	fishing

27. kane hai sinh kine thane	ການໃຫ້ສິນກິນທານ	giving food to monks
28. kane het boun hai than	ການເຮັດບຸນໃຫ້ທານ	helping the wat
2. kane het na sao Lao	ການເຮັດນາຊາວລາວ	Lao farming
31. kane ham hian	ການຮຳຮຽນ	education
2,27 kane kēp kio	ການເກັບກຽວ	harvesting
34. kane khoua kin	ການຄົວກິນ	cooking
27. kane ngane sao na	ການວານຊາວນາ	work of the farmer
26b,29 kane som ma	ການສສົມມາ	offering for the achan
28. hane theu sathsana	ການຖືສາສນາ	worshipping
31. kane pouk heuan mai	ການປຸກເຮືອນໃໝ່	house construction
28. kane vai phra	ການໂທວຣະ	paying respects to the monk
44. kao phôm	ເກົ້າຜົມ	hair knot
44. kapao ngcun	ກະເປົາເງິນ	purse
F,15 ka sô	ກະໂຊ່	irrigating basket
36. katai	ກະຕ້າຍ	rabbit
13. kata khao ka	ກະຕ້າເຂົ້າກາ	seed basket
23. ka thong khao kon	ກະໂທງເຂົ້າກອນ	rice offering
23. kèo lao	ແກວເຫຼົ້າ	wine bottle offering
37. kèo nam pa	ແກວນ້ຳປາ	bottle of fish sauce
12. keugn	ເກີຍ	balcony
44,45 keup	ເກີບ	shoes
44. keup yong	ເກີບຢ່າງ	high-heeled shoes
15. kha ka sô	ຂາກະໂຊ່	leg irrigating basket
21. khao nouan	ຂະນວນ	fuse
26a kha tha	ຄາຖາ	talisman

36.	khai	ໄຂ້	egg
26a	khane dok mai	ຂັນດອກໄມ້	flower offering
19,26b	khane khai	ຂັນຄາຍ	payment for ceremonial service
15.	khane na	ຄັນນາ	rice field dike
45.	khane talabat	ຄັນຕະລະບັດ	speaker's fan symbol representing the Buddha
21.	khang bang fai	ຄ້າງບັງໄຟ	rocket ladder
F,4	khat na	ຄາດນາ	harrowing
21.	khène	ແຄນ	Laotian musical instrument
25.	kheung lin deik noi	ເຂັງລິນເດັກນ້ອຍ	children's toys
17.	kheung son pa	ເຂັງສອນປາ	hand fishing basket
^K 35,40	khiang	ຂັງ	chopping log block
12.	khi fai	ຄີໄຟ	kitchen
12.	khōk khao	ຄົກເຂົ້າ	rice mortar
F	khōk mong	ຄົກມອງ	foot mortar
12.	khok mou	ຄອກໝູ	pigpen
35.	khōk lè sak	ຄົກ ແລະ ສາກ	mortar and pestle
43.	khôm fai	ໂຄມໄຟ	lantern
40.	khôm nam man kat	ໂຄມນ້ຳມັນກາດ	kerosene lamp
8.	khôn fao din	ຄົນເຜົາດິນ	tilemaker
8.	khôn fao than	ຄົນເຜົາຖານ	charcoal producer
F	khôn thai na	ຄົນໄຖນາ	farm laborer
40.	khon thao	ຄອນເທົ້າ	walking cane
43.	khon ti	ຄອນຕິ	hammer
3,10	khop khoua	ຄອບຄົວ	family, household

27. khop khoua mi seu siang	ຄອບຄົວມີຊື່ສຽງ	prominent families
26b khou nam	ຝ້າ	plaited bamboo bucket
36 F, khouai	ຄວາຍ	buffalo
25. khouak	ຂວາກໝາມ	thorn hedge
31. khouam chareun kao na	ຄວາມຈະເລີນກ້າວໜ້າ	development progress
26a khouam fan hai	ຄວາມຝັນຮ້າຍ	nightmare
26b khouam hak	ຄວາມຮັກ	love influence
43. khouane	ຂວາມ	axe
26b khouane	ຂ້ວມ	soul, emotions
27. khouèng	ແຂວງ	province
43. kio	ກົວ	sickle
2. kio khao	ກົວເຂົ້າ	reap rice
38. kôk khao	ກົກເຂົ້າ	rice plant
38. kôk oi	ກົກອ່ອຍ	sugar cane
12,18 kong feuang	ກອງເຟືອງ	haystack
40. kong feun	ກອງຟືນ	firewood stack
19. kong khao	ກອງເຂົ້າ	paddy mount
15. kông phat	ກົງພັດ	wheel
7. kou di	ກູດີ	monks' dormitory
7. kou ti	ກູຕີ	senior dormitory
36. kouang	ກວາງ	stag
16. kouat mong	ກວາດມອງ	fishing net
2. kouien feuang	ກວຽນເຟືອງ	hay cart
9. kouien ngoua	ກວຽນງົວ	ox cart

44.	koup	ກູບ	palm leaf hat
20.	kout sǒng kane	ກູດສົງການ	washing the Buddha
<u>L</u>			
26c	la khéne fai	ຫຼາເຂັ້ມຝ້າຍ	spinning wheel
19.	lak khét	ທັກເຂດ	spiritual boundary of the rice soul
10.	lane la	ຫຼານຫຼ້າ	baby
27.	lane sang hóm khao	ລ້ານຊ້າງຮົມຂາວ	Lao kingdom symbol
28.	lang khang	ລັງຄັງ	bell
22.	lao kasè	ລາວກະແຊ	love sickness dance
F, 12	lao khao	ເລົ້າເຂົ້າ	rice barn
17.	lèm	ແລ່ມ	fishing javelin
2.	lók ká	ຫຼົກກ້າ	transplanting
24.	lông phi	ໂລງຟີ	coffin
28.	long saravat	ລອງສາຣະວັດ	assistant superintendent
45.	lot khém	ຫຼອດເຂັ້ມ	needle tube
43.	loun	ເລື້ອຍ	saw
<u>M</u>			
9.	ma mani kap bin	ມ້າມະນີກາບບິນ	a traditional Lao poem
18.	mai khane	ໄມ່ການ	beating staff
45.	mai nyip	ໄໝຫຍິບ	thread
39.	mak bouab	ໝາກບວບ	a kind of cucumber
39.	mak eu	ໝາກອຶ	squash
39.	mak fak	ໝາກຝັກ	a kind of melon
39.	mak houng	ໝາກຫຸ່ງ	papaya

39. mak keua	ໝາກເຂົ້ອ	egg plant
29. mak kiang	ໝາກກຽງ	pomelo
39. mak kouai	ໝາກກວຍ	banana
39. mak lam gnai	ໝາກລຳໄຍ	logan
38. mak lén	ໝາກເລ່ນ	tomato
39. mak mang kheut	ໝາກມັງຄຸດ	mangostine
39. mak mo	ໝາກໂມ	watermelon
39. mak mouang	ໝາກມ່ວງ	mango
39. mak nat	ໝາກນັດ	pineapple
39. mak ngo	ໝາກເງາະ	leechee
39. mak phao	ໝາກຟ້າວ	coconut
39. mak phét	ໝາກເຜັດ	pepper
39. mak phou mak phang	ໝາກຜູ້ ແລະ ໝາກຝາງ	sweet and sour fruit
38. mak tèng	ໝາກແຕງ	cucumber
39. mak than	ໝາກທັນ	jujube
18. mat khao	ນັດເຂົ້າ	sheaf
10. mè heuan	ແມ່ເຮືອນ	housewife
21. meu bang fai	ຟ້າຍື່ງໄຟ	rocket powder
26a mia noi	ເມັງນ້ອຍ	second wife
35. mit	ມືດ	knife
45. mit thè	ມືດແຄ	razor
40. mo kèng	ໝໍແກງ	iron cooking pot
26b mo môn	ໝໍມົນ	witchdoctor
35. mo neung knao	ໝໍເຂົ້າ	rice steaming earthenware pot

19. mo phon	ໝູ່ພອນ	blessings doctor
26a mo thouai	ໝູ່ທວາຍ	soothsayer
8. mo ya hak mai	ໝູ່ຢາຮາກໄມ້	herb doctor
17. mong	ມອງ	fishing net
36. mou	ໝູ່	pig
44. mouai phôm	ມວຍຜົມ	coil of hair
44. mouak kep	ໝວກແກຍ	cap
<u>N.</u>		
27. nai ban	ນາຍບ້ານ	head man of village
27. nai sip	ນາຍສິບ	sergeant
10. nak bouat	ນັກບວດ	novice who lives in wat
30. nak hang linh	ນາກຮາງລິນ	dragon which serves as conduit for water during <u>song nam</u> (watersprinkling) ceremony
41. nam lin	ນ້ຳລິນ	water from spring
38. nam oi	ນ້ຳອີ	sugar cane seeds
F,7,12 nam sang	ນ້ຳສ້າງ	well
38. nam tan	ນ້ຳຕານ	sugar palm
20. nam tók tat	ນ້ຳຕົກຕາດ	waterfall
20. nam touam	ນ້ຳທວ່ມ	flood
5. nang	ໜ້າງ	hunting net
28. nǎn	ເນນ	novice
21. nga mai	ງ່າໄມ້	tree branch
36. ngoua	ງົວ	cow, oxen
36. nǎk	ນົກ	bird
26b. nouath sné	ນວດສເນ	charm box

O

14. o khouane	ໂອຂ້ວນ	offering bowl
42. o nam	ໂອນ້ຳ	water bowl
42.F,26c, ou nam	ອຸນ້ຳ	water jar on stand at end of house ladder

P

37. pa douk	ປາດຸກ	muddy fish
37. pa kheng	ປາເຂັງ	carp scale fish
37. pa kho	ປາຄໍ້	snakehead fish
37. pa kho heng	ປາຄໍ້ແຫ້ງ	dried snakehead fish
37. pa pak	ປາປາກ	carp
37. pa phon	ປາຟອນ	beauty fish
37. pa seuam heng	ປາເຊືອມແຫ້ງ	dried greasy fish
38. pak boua	ຝັກບົວ	onion
38. pak kat	ຝັກກາດ	chinese lettuce
38. pak kat khao	ຝັກກາດຂາວ	white lettuce
38. pak thiam heng	ຝັກທຽມແຫ້ງ	dried garlic
36. pet	ເປັດ	duck
43. pha	ຟາ	broad knife
26a pha hom	ຟາຫມ	blanket
33,26 pha khao	ຟາເຂົ້າ	dining tray
44,10 pha khao ma	ຟາຂາວມາ	loin cloth
44,15 pha khian houa	ຟາຄຽນຫົວ	head scarf
44. pha khoun	ຟາຄຸນ	monk's cloth
19. pha kouane	ຟາຂ້ວນ	offering tray

44. pha mat èo	ຜ້າມາແອວ	cloth "belt"
44,25 pha noung	ຜ້ານຸ່ງ	loin cloth
F pha, phakho	ຟາ,ຟາຂ	knives
28. pha sang kha	ຜ້າສັງຄາ	scarf of the clergy
35. pha sét meu	ຜ້າເຊັດມີ	napkin
45. pha soum	ຜ້າຊຸມ	orange cloth of monks
7. pha that	ພະທາດ	monument containing a part of Buddha
15. phat nam	ພັດນ້ຳ	water wheel
44. phè biang	ແພບັງ	men's sash
44,26c phè theu	ແພຖີ	shoulder sash for ceremonial wear
17. pheuak	ເຟືອກ	bamboo fishing device
F. phi	ຟີ	evil spirits
23. phi ban	ຟີບ້ານ	village shrine for the phi
30. phi thi sông phra	ຟີທິສົງພຣະ	sprinkling the graduate monk
27. pho ban	ຟ່າບ້ານ	village chief
10. pho heuan	ຟ່າເຮືອນ	head of family
8. pho kha	ຟ່າຄາ	shopkeeper
27. phou ban sa kane pak	ຟຸ້ນບ້ານສາການພາກ	regional commander
27. phou kam kap kane tamrouat	ຟຸ້ນກຳກັບການຕຳຣວດ	chief of police
27. phou tha biane thi dine	ຟຸ້ນທະບຽນທິດິນ	registrar of deeds
28. phout tha houp	ພຸດທະຮູບ	Buddha statue
8. phouak sang	ພວກຊ່າງ	craftsmen
44,27,28 phra	ພຣະ	monk
20. phra hai phon	ພຣະໃຫ້ພຣາມ	monks preaching

30.	phra thouk hôt sông	ພຣະຖືກທົດສົງ	graduated monk
2.	poi vao	ປອຍວາວ	kite playing
45.	pôk kham phi	ປົກຄຳຟີ	cover bible containing palm leaf script
28.	pouk phao	ປູກພາວ	planting coconut trees
<u>R</u>			
5.	rattha môn tri mahat thai	ຣັດຖະມົນຕີຣມະຫາດໄທ	Minister of the interior
<u>S</u>			
F.	sa dok boua	ສະດອກບົວ	lotus pool
15.	sa nam sai na	ສະນ້ຳໄສນາ	to irrigate
F,3.	sa pa	ສະປາ	fish pond
16.	sai lop	ໄສລອບ	fishing by means of a large net encircling a rather large area
16.	sai sai	ໄສໄຊ	fishing by means of a basket called a <u>sai</u>
16.	sai son	ໄສສອນ	fishing by means of a basket called a <u>son</u>
16.	sak soum	ສັກສຸ່ມ	fishing by means of a hand basket
40,42	sam	ຊາມ	dish
7.	sang hét khène	ຊາງເຮັດແຄນ	khène maker
28.	sang kaly vat	ສັງກາລິວັດ	someone who helps the monks (usually a young boy)
8.	sang ti lék	ຊາງຕີເຫຼັກ	blacksmith
19.	sou khouane khao	ສຸ່ວນເຂົ້າ	"rice soul ceremony" held after thrashing
14.	sao lao	ເສົາເລົ່າ	granary post
29.	saravat	ສາຣະວັດ	wat superintendant (a villager)
2.	sat vôt	ຊັດໂຫວດ	playing vôt (bull-roarer)
44.	seua dok mai	ເສື້ອດອກໄມ້	woman's blouse

44. sua hat euk	ເສື້ອຮັດເອິກ	woman's jacket
44. sua gnai	ເສື້ອໄຫຼ່	coat
44. sua khèn gnao	ເສື້ອແຂນຍາວ	woman's shirt
44. sua khèn san	ເສື້ອແຂນສັ້ນ	men's shirt
43,F siam	ສົງມ	spade
29. siang	ຊຶງ	former novice monk
44,26c sin	ສິນ	Laotian skirt
44. sin smai	ສິນສໄມ	modern skirt
27. smien	ສມຽນ	secretary, clerk
40. som	ສອມ	fork
16. son pa	ສອນປາ	receptacle for basket fishing
28. son pali	ສອນປາລີ	teaching Buddhist law and discipline
19. sōng	ສົງ	knot of hair
44. sōng kha gnao	ສົງຂາຍາວ	trousers
44. sōng kha san	ສົງຂາສັ້ນ	short pants
20. sōng phra bat	ສົງພຣະບາດ	sprinkling the Buddha footprint with water
24. sōng sa kane	ສົງສະການ	Laotian funeral
43. sōp thai	ສົບໄຖ	ploughshare
23. souai dok mai	ຊວຍດອກໄມ້	flower offering
7. souam ap nam	ສວມອາບນ້ຳ	bathing room
7. souam thai	ສວມຖ້າຍ	outhouse
2,3,12 souane phak	ສວນຜັກ	vegetable garden
17. souang	ຊວງ	swing net for fishing

9.	souang houa	ຊ່ວງເຮືອ	boat racing
14.	sougn khao tòm	ຊ່ວຍເຂົ້າຕົມ	rice cake
17.	soun	ຊຸ່ມ	hand fishing basket
11.	soup nam	ສູບນ້ຳ	drawing water
<u>T</u>			
3,13	ta ka	ຕາກາ	seedbed
44.	ta kham sop	ຕາຄຳຊ່ອຍ	medal
18,19	ta lèo	ຕາເຊື້ອ	symbol of the soul or essence of rice
28.	tak bat	ຕັກບາດ	monks begging for alms
11.	tam khao, si khao	ຕຳເຂົ້າ, ສີເຂົ້າ	dehusking rice
19.	tam la sout khouan khao	ຕຳລາສູດຂ້ວນເຂົ້າ	palm leaf text for rice soul ceremony
35.	tang vai	ຕັງຫວາຍ	rattan chair
17.	tao bét	ເຕົ້າເບັດ	fishing hook
40.	tao fai	ເຕົ້າໄຟ	stove
35,43	tao nam	ເຕົ້ານ້ຳ	water jug
3.	tao than	ເຕົ້າຖ້ານ	charcoal pit
27.	tasèng	ຕາເສັງ	division chief
22.	teugn kio	ເຕັຍກຽວ	love dance
27.	tha han ban	ທະຫານບ້ານ	village soldiers
2.	thai na	ໄຖນາ	ploughing
28.	tham khouam saat	ທຳຄວາມສະອາດ	cleaning the wat
7.	that douk	ທາດດູກ	shrines for the bones of dead people
16.	thèng lèm	ແທງເຫຼ່ນ	javelin fishing
28.	thót sa na	ເທດສນາ	preaching

29.	thit	ທິດ	former junior monks
F	thi din	ທິດິນ	rice field domain
19.	thiane pheuang	ທຽນເຜິ້ງ	candles for offering
21.	tho bang fai	ທ້ອງໄຟ	bamboo casing of the rocket
40.	tho keua	ທ່າເກືອ	basket of salt
40.	tho than	ທ່າຖານ	basket of charcoal
45.	thông gnam	ຖົງຍ້ານ	monk's bag
40.	thouai	ຖວຍ	bowl
35.	thouai chèo	ຖວຍແຈວ	saucebowl
35.	thouai kèng	ຖວຍແກງ	soup bowl
F	thoung yon	ທຸງຢ່ອນ	pendentive flag for <u>phi</u> worship
12.	thoup kane	ທູບການ	work shed
28.	ti la khang	ຕີລະຄັງ	religious time
44.	tin sin	ຕີນສິນ	skirt border
F	tôn khao	ຕ້ນຂາ	rice plant
19.	tôn kouai	ຕ້ນກວຍ	banana tree
19.	tôn oi	ຕ້ນອຍ	sugar cane
45.	tôn thian	ຕ້ນທຽນ	candle tree
45.	tong nam	ຕອງນ້ຳ	filter
35.	tong pa dèk	ຕອງປາແດກ	strainer basket
44.	toum hou	ຕຸມຫຼັກ	earring
17.	toum lane	ຕຸມລານ	sand bank fishing basket
17.	toum pa	ຕຸປາ	deep water fishing basket
6.	toup tong	ຕູບຕອງ	leaf roof

V

16.	van hè	ວ້າມເຜີ້	sweep net fishing
2.	van ka	ວ້າມກຳ	seeding rice
3.	vat	ວັດ	Buddhist temple
35.	vi	ວີ	fire fan
F.	vi khao	ວີເຂົ້າ	rice fan