Southeast Asian Borders

Report of a seminar held at The Australian National University, 28-30 October 1993

Gehan Wijeyewardene

The three-day seminar on Southeast Asian borders held at The Australian National University in October 1993 was by all accounts a noteworthy contribution to the subject. Constraints of time and availability of resources meant that discussions could not cover all aspects of the topic, nor even all major issues. Perhaps the greatest gap was in the coverage of Indonesia and maritime boundaries. This was partly compensated for by the concluding comments of Carl Thayer, Janell Mills and Harold Crouch. Perhaps this lack of coverage was to be expected in that the Thai-Yunnan Project, whose focus has been the northern boundaries of mainland Southeast Asia, was the sponsor of the seminar.

If we were to try to identify the most important trends of the seminar we may perhaps choose the discussions of the emerging economic geometry - the quadrangle of northern Southeast Asia and the Si Jo Ri triangle; these discussions set within the context of the larger region - the Tumen Triangle in China's northeast and the Timor Gap Treaty between Australia and Indonesia.

This does not mean that the seminar was exclusively concerned with questions of economy and trade - even the economic geometry was subject to social and political scrutiny. This report sets out to give some idea of the range of topics covered. It has to be admitted, however, that, due to a couple of last-minute cancellations, there was a shortage of papers on social issues. We had tried to organize a session on the problem of HIV infection across Southeast Asian borders, but it only proved possible to recruit a single paper by Greg Cruey, who in masterly fashion summarized the movement of the infection in Southeast Asia.

One other gap in coverage that should be mentioned was the western border of the region - specifically Burma's borders with India and Bangladesh. I draw attention, therefore, to the proceedings of the seminar held in November 1992 on 'Contemporary developments on Burma’s borders' and specifically the paper by George Lombard on 'The Burmese refugees in Bangladesh' (Newsletter Number 19, December 1992: 19-22).

Ron May presented a very welcome view of the eastern borders of Southeast Asia, the border of Indonesia with
Papua-New Guinea (reference is made to the Indonesia-Australia border in section 2) and brought out the interesting fact that Papua-New Guinea's experience with Indonesia, for instance in the way in which Indonesia deals with OPM rebels, is very similar to the manner in which The Solomons have been treated with respect to the rebels on Bougainville.

There were seventeen formal papers presented plus the concluding sets of comments referred to above. The full program follows this report for anyone wishing to pursue any particular topic with an author. It is hoped that a volume including most of the papers will appear in the first half of next year.

This report will be presented in four parts - national questions, growth areas, the history of borders and social questions.

Malaysia should be the country in Southeast Asia most beset by border problems - having common frontiers of one kind or another with Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam and China. The seminar did not deal with the Sabah-Philippine question (except a brief comment by Harold Crouch) and only in fairly general terms (Carl Thayer) with the Spratleys. Wan Kadir bin Che Man, however, looked in some detail at the problems of the four southern provinces of Thailand. As Wan Kadir represents Malaysia's problem - 'the Patani-Muslims expect their kin across the border, who share a common culture, religion and history, to come to their rescue. In other words, ethnic conflict tends to seek external support based on ethnic or religious affinity'. Despite this expectation of support, 'the Kuala Lumpur Government has in many ways co-operated with Bangkok to suppress it'. The Malaysian government maintains that it gives no support to the separatists, but Thailand remains somewhat suspicious. Though Wan Kadir did not deal with the complementary problem of the Malaysian Communists, until the signing of the 1989 Hat Yai agreement, the Malaysians were equally suspicious of the Thai attitude to the ethnic Chinese insurgents.

This paper very neatly encapsulates one of the major border questions of this and other regions - ethnic groups divided between nation states, specifically when the group concerned is dominant in one state and a minority in the other. As Wan Kadir points out the 1949 border agreement and the declaration of Malayan independence was made without reference to Patani, Thai-Patani Muslim 'expectation was shattered'. It also set the pattern of regional relations in ASEAN pattern of refusing to interfere in cross-border ethnic relations.

In his comments during the concluding discussions, Harold Crouch pointed out that both Malaysia and Indonesia had numerous border problems - in Malaysia's case there are disputes with Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia. Nevertheless, Crouch made the general point that border conflicts roughly divide into three types - where the border actually is, ethnic groups across borders, and most important the situation in which the border conflict is the symptom of a deeper hostility between neighbours. Crouch argued that both Malaysia and Indonesia have managed their border problem largely because there has been no deep-seated hostility. The one exception he pointed to was the Malaysian support given during the 1970s to the Moro rebels in the Philippines - largely as a counter to claims against Sabah.

In Thailand this policy reveals itself in the government's unwillingness to get involved in questions relating to ethnic Tai outside national borders. Though many papers dealt with ethnic minorities including Tai and Zhuang speakers, it is significant that the question of the inclusion of Tai speakers in Thailand does not emerge as a topic needing discussion. Two topics emerged in relation to Thailand's national interest. On the one hand was the clear attempt to create economically advantageous relations with the immediate neighbours Burma and Laos and the regional super-power China. I will pay more attention to this in section two. The other problem is the containment of Vietnam through the agency of Cambodian policy.

Two papers by Puangthong Rungswadisab and Julaporn Euarukskul looked at these questions first in historical perspective and the second at the crucial change in Chinese policy with support from the Communist Party of Thailand to the Thai government in return for support of the Khmer Rouge as a means of curtailing Vietnamese policy and power. Puangthong looked closely at 18th and 19th Century policy, drawing attention to the economic basis of Thai policy. Among other things the Burmese victories in the west and Thailand's loss of territory and resources compelled King Taksin to move westwards into Cambodia to satisfy Siamese manpower requirements, to provide rice for the
population and forest products for trade. Though conflict with Vietnam for resources and control of trade was important, Siamese motivation was not merely the political intention of containing Vietnamese expansion. Julaporn detailed the reasons for and the process by which contemporary Sino-Thai policy was developed and the Cambodian crisis was fostered. Julaporn argues that largely responsible were military fears about the security threat from Vietnam after the invasion of Cambodia. The Thai military saw its capability far outweighed by the Vietnamese. They also claimed that among the major aims of Vietnamese policy was the creation of an Indochinese federation which would include northeast provinces of Thailand. These, it was claimed, the Vietnamese communists saw as belonging to Laos in the past. The bargaining counter in Thai-Chinese detente was the Communist Party of Thailand. In 1977-78 the Party was at its peak of success. In previous years China, Vietnam and Laos and the Khmer Rouge had competed in giving aid to the party, but competition had reached a stage when some drastic choices had to be made. The Chinese had to give up on a plan to 'liberate' parts of north Thailand using bases in Laos and the Lao were putting pressure on the CPT to support Vietnam in the conflict with China. When Vietnam invaded Cambodia the Chinese persuaded the Thai to switch their anti-Chinese, anti-Khmer Rouge position in return for the withdrawal of Chinese support for the CPT.

For contemporary Cambodia, Michael Vickery examined very carefully Cambodia's borders, their recent historical development and likely future conflicts. He particularly drew attention to the new Cambodian constitution, adopted on 21 September, the provisions of which may have been intended 'to permit rejection of the 1985 treaty' with Vietnam. This may have grave consequences as this treaty tried to rectify a situation described by Serge Thion in 1982 'the basic legal fact is that Cambodia has no border freely agreed upon with its neighbours' (cited by Vickery).

Carl Thayer, in his comments during the concluding session clearly brought out the difference between the current Cambodian attitude and that of the Lao. He suggested that whereas the former were attempting to reopen border issues, the Lao were concerned with concluding them. He referred to the pride with which Lao officials point to agreements concluded with Vietnam and China, and, most recently, with Burma. Thayer also briefly referred to the fact that where land borders were concerned China and Vietnam appear to have agreed on the principles which would govern their border discussions, though these have not been made public.

As the seminar progressed over the three days it became quite clear that China was the major preoccupation - both in the impact the PRC is having on the countries of Southeast Asia, but also in its internal affairs in so far as they affected her neighbours and the world. There are roughly three aspects in which the Chinese situation bears on the main interest of this seminar. First, the border situation itself and its relation to Chinese domestic and foreign policy; second, the specific importance of economic relations and trade; and third, the presence of minorities and their relation to Southeast Asia.

Ian Wilson went briefly through the unresolved Chinese border claims, which apart from Vietnam and the Spratleys do not much involve what is usually defined as Southeast Asia. He did point out that the language of earlier claims of the consequences of imperialism have been much toned down so as not to inordinately concern China's neighbours. Wilson drew attention to the internal problems of China - specifically the question of succession, which prevents the central government from dealing with the serious consequences of social and economic change and resulting disorder. He drew attention to the conflict between the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Army and its allies. He pointed out that the latter has a much stronger line on foreign and border relations, that Foreign Affairs is much more concerned about Chinese international image, her role in the United Nations and the relationship with the USA.

The Army policy is particularly relevant in the context of the South China Sea - the Paracels and the Spratleys. Army policy now appears to be that control of the South China Sea is necessary for China's economic future and is not negotiable. Thayer expanded on this and pointed out that Chinese legislation has now made the Spratleys Chinese territory and outside any negotiation. On the Spratleys, where there are some fifteen conflicting claims, six of which involve Malaysia, there seems to be some flexibility - though not much. Thayer pointed out that the Chinese have given an oil exploration concession on the Vietnamese continental shelf to a little-known American company.

I will comment on Chinese concerns with economic relations and trade in the next section of this report.
Southeast Asia. William Newell drew attention to China's nationality policy, raising the question in his title 'Chinese Minzu autonomy: who gains?'. A major point made by Newell was that by defining speakers of 'dialects' of Chinese, as Han, minority minzu are kept localized and without real power against the 'National Language'-speaking centre. D.L. Holm presented an account of the Zhuang, speakers of Tai-like languages, mainly in Guangxi. Of much fascinating material in this paper there is time here only to draw attention to the fact that there has been ethnic resurgence among the Zhuang, centred on increasing importance given to the ritual use of the language and with scholarly interest from Thailand, a greater awareness of a common Tai (Thai) heritage. Douglas Miles examined the recent Chinese fostering of an international Yao association centred on a myth of origin and 'homeland'. The political implications of such a movement for Yao minorities throughout Southeast Asia could be worrying.

Sao Hso Hom presented a paper on 'The Shans 1947-1967' which drew attention to the fact that it was not only the People's Republic of China that had frontier-minority problems. The Union of Burma has been beset by such problems involving insurrection, unlike the PRC. Sao Hso Hom detailed the process which led to the Shan insurrections. Readers are reminded of last year's seminar and the report in Newsletter No. 19 for a discussion of Burma's border problems looked at from a variety of points of view. Unfortunately we are not in a position to say anything particularly useful about the situation at the end of 1993.

The seminar heard specifically of four cross-border programs of economic co-operation - one of them, the Tumen River Project not within our geographical area, proved to be of great comparative interest. The other programs discussed were the Economic Quadrangle based on the 'four chiang' of Chiangrai, Chiangtung (Kengtung, now barbarously written 'Kyange Toung' by SLORC), Chianghung (Jinghong) and Chiangthong (Luang Phrabang); the Si Jo Ri triangle based on Singapore, Johore and Riau; and the Timor Gap Treaty.

Mya Than's paper 'Swing-doors on the Burma Road: an overview of Sino-Myanmar cross-border trade' dealt with both formal and informal trade - but did not deal with what he felicitously characterized as 'bads' rather than 'goods'. The paper looks at trade both historically and in terms of its modern development. The trade agreement of 1988 is a crucial factor in the contemporary situation as is the movement away from 'command economies' in both countries. One of the crucial points of the paper is the fact that this border trade represents a third to a half of Burma's total foreign trade.

Tanet Charoenmuang's paper raised a number of issues specifically with regard to the Sino-Thai relationship, but he also pointed out that both Laos and Burma may not be as enthusiastic about the quadrangle as the other two participants. Burma could see itself moved from a major participant into a way-station for Sino-Thai trade, as could Laos. Tanet pointed out that the Sino-Thai connection is a very specific one between the radical activists of the 1970s - mostly graduates of Chulalongkorn and now operating out of the Chiangrai Chamber of Commerce, and their Chinese colleagues and interpreters in Kunming during the former's years of exile. The latter are now senior officials of the Chinese Communist Party.

Janell Mills looked at the Singapore-Johore-Riau southern growth triangle and pointed out that this 'triangle' reflects the area of control of the pre-colonial Johore Sultanate. The power of the Sultanate was broken by the Dutch at the end of the 18th Century and was largely replaced by the dominance of Singapore and Chinese traders. The concept of the growth triangle was largely pushed by Singapore and with less enthusiasm by the Malaysians and Indonesians. The economic downturn of 1988, the realization by the Indonesians that their dependence on petroleum had to be diversified and the drift of Chinese capital away from Indonesia made that government much more enthusiastic about the idea. Nevertheless, Mills points out that Singapore's attitudes and actions reflect a much older model of economic power wielded by the entrepot states of the past where power radiated out from a centre in concentric circles - the mandala rather than the triangle.

Henry Burmester, who was a member of the Australian team negotiating the Timor Gap Treaty with Indonesia, spoke about the treaty and the history of negotiation. The treaty which was signed in 1989 does not resolve the seabed boundary, it is an interim agreement directed towards a specific end - oil exploration. Burmester said the hardest issue to resolve was where the boundaries of the joint zone were to fall. Once that was agreed on it took only twelve months
to resolve complex questions of production sharing, tax and legal responsibility. The zone has a true joint administration. The political implications of the treaty were referred to by the speaker and were taken up in discussion. The treaty is being challenged in the World Court, whose jurisdiction Indonesia does not recognize, and in the Australian High Court.

Godfrey Linge reported on his recent research on the Tumen River Project. The Tumen river forms part of the boundary between China and North Korea and in the final stretch leading to its mouth, between Russia and North Korea. The proposal to develop an international economic zone in this region involves setting up an international corporation with its headquarters in Singapore, Hong Kong or the Bahamas to raise a sum of US$30 billion. It involves the ceding of thousand square kilometres of territory each by China and Russia and initially one hundred by North Korea. One of the most ambitious parts of the plan is the creation of a fast rail link between the new port at the mouth of the Tumen and western Europe. There is also the vast population of northeast China with no direct link to the sea and the military industrial complex of far east Russia contemplating a switch to civilian production. The stakes are pretty high and there are two major points of crucial interest to our region. First, the lessons to be learnt from the pattern of economic development relating to the problems of borders - China has in this region a million citizens of Korean descent; and, second, necessity for this US$ 30 billion venture to compete against other large-scale projects on an increasingly tight international capital market.

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My specific interest in the subject relates to a theoretical concern with the nature of Southeast Asian borders and is largely reactive to views which construct modern political phenomena such as nationalism and nation-state, borders and ethnicity as the product of colonialism.

The simplest reference I can give is to cite the, dare I say, slightly wordy comment made by Benedict Anderson in his preface to the second edition of Imagined Communities in relation to the new chapter in the book entitled 'Census, Map, Museum'. 'Census, Map, Museum' therefore analyses the way in which, quite unconsciously, the nineteenth-century colonial state (and policies that its mindset encouraged) dialectically engendered the grammar of the nationalisms that eventually arose to combat it. Indeed, one might go so far as to say the state imagined its local adversaries, as in an ominous prophetic dream, well before they came into historical existence. To the forming of this imagining, the census's abstract quantification/serialization of persons, the map's eventual logoization of political space, and the museum's 'ecumenical,' profane genealogizing made interlinked contributions (1991: xiv). In my brief introduction I used the two accompanying photographs to illustrate borders ancient and modern. The first photograph is of the road being upgraded between Mae Sai- Takilek and Kengtung. This work is being done by a Thai contractor with aid funds given to Burma by the Thai government. The point at which the photograph was taken is about the watershed between Takilek and Mng Hpayak. Modern technology of road construction is now trying to override the topographical logic which determined traditional boundaries in the region.

The second photograph is of the border crossing at Mae Sai/Takilek, taken from the Thai side. There is much that is fascinating in this photograph, but there is just one set of features to which I would like to draw attention. At this point of the border colonial treaties established the line as the thalweg of the Mae Sai river. Some enterprising person, one must suppose a Burmese public official, has 'reclaimed' land and built on this land from bank to thalweg. Does this move the boundary to the new thalweg? And where might such enterprise end? Under traditional practice whoever occupied this valley would have established his capital by the river and laid claim to both banks - the border would have been pushed to the watershed.

The seminar was most instructive on the theory of Southeast Asian borders and in this section I would like to set out briefly some points which bear on this topic.

Michael Vickery's account of Cambodia's borders seemed to translate the topography-based ideology of the mang to the level of the nation-state. The paradigmatic description of the traditional political structure of the units that made up the northern Southeast Asian region was a river valley, bounded by mountain ranges ruled by a single chief. The states such as Lan Chang, Lanna, Sipsongpanna and Sibsongchutai were agglomerations of such chiefdoms. In Cambodia the nation itself has the basic characteristics of the mang - with the exception of the western borders with Thailand where
the river valley 'intrudes' from Thai territory into Cambodian. It was with the 19th Century history of this region that Puangthong Rungswasdisab dealt. These issues need to be dealt with at greater length - but here I merely wish to draw attention to the fact that Southeast Asian principles may apply in topographically and politically different settings.

One might here refer to the work of Gullick1 who some fifty years ago drew attention to the organization of the traditional Malay states, also based on river valleys, but superficially very different from the northern Southeast Asian ones. Janell Mills drew attention to the traditional structure of the entrepot states of maritime Southeast Asia, which have affinities with the Malay states described by Gullick. Mills' characterization of the structure of entrepot power as being mandala-like is of course applicable to the northern states as well - except that watersheds placed natural boundaries on the mandala. One question we should ask, 'is there a formal symmetry between the mang and the entrepot states in that boundaries between them were dangerous, hostile territory - ocean corresponding to watershed?'. If there were no such boundary what arrangements were made between states?

BORDERS - ANCIENT AND MODERN

On the road to Kengtung. Over the watershed to Mng Hpayak
The Thai-Burma border at Mae Sai-Takilek

In the northern states, I think, we may say that the mang principle was displaced by the Western preference for the thalweg - which was then often overridden by colonial power as in the border between Thailand and Laos and in the cordon sanitaire of 25 kilometres established by the French on the right bank of the Mekhong in 1896 which kept the Siamese away from its city of Chiangsaen. Generally speaking, waterways which were traditionally the core of a political unit were seen in Western practice as convenient dividers. Not only the northern states, but the maritime ones saw the control of waterways as the basis of territorial power.

One might put forward the view that the straight lines, triangles and quadrangles which are now being contemplated by contemporary states arises out of an ideological shift in the nature of boundaries and also burgeoning population and technology which no longer lets it be possible for states to separate themselves with the inaccessible and the dangerous. Of course there are other motivations involved - provision of benefit for hitherto neglected populations and the exploitation of resources; but these things in themselves are forcing a reconsideration of border issues. To summarize the history of the last two centuries one might say that borders have moved, or are moving, from remote watersheds to contested waterways to regions of economic cooperation. This last stage is still in its infancy.

It is appropriate to move from the notion of borders as regions of economic cooperation to some social issues. One may decide that the seminar had too much emphasis on the political and the economic. One may have wished for more papers on social and sociological issues. It was unfortunate that two papers, one on kinship across borders by Pang Keng-Fong and another on languages in Shan state had to be withdrawn just prior to the seminar. I would like to comment briefly on three relevant topics.

I have referred above to the paper on the spread of HIV in the region. Cruey's paper was a level-headed assessment of the problem. Answers, as we know, are far from easy and probably not in sight. The effort now being expended is thought by many to be insufficient. It is of some interest that at the recent International Thai Studies Conference in London, the panel on HIV/AIDS seems to have been the most popular. As Scott Bamber reported in the last issue, some of our fundamental assumptions may have to be rethought. Kengtung is becoming one of the sources for prostitutes in Thailand and in reply to the question 'Do they not realize the risk?', the answer was 'Yes they do, but the girls are willing to face death to help their parents out of the trap of poverty'. This may be an accurate statement of attitudes; it may also be the rationalization of those who benefit most from the trade.

Ethnicity was not neglected as an issue. Many of the papers on China (Holm, Miles and Newell) dealt with the issue and comments on the issue have been made in section 2. I would however, like to take up briefly comments made by Harold Crouch as to one of the sources of border conflict - ethnic groups who have been stranded on two sides of a border as an inheritance of colonialism. It is quite true that colonial boundaries have had this effect. But it would be wrong to suppose that ethnic groups did not form minorities in pre-colonial states. It may have been the case that minorities were assimilated much quicker than they can be in modern, post-colonial states. These are questions that
need investigation and I may mention some very important work currently being done by a historian, Kumiko Kato and an anthropologist, Yuji Baba, on Tai L in north Thailand.

Finally I would like to draw attention to an issue in Tanet Charoenmuang's paper which was not taken up in the comments in section 2. Tanet drew attention to one of the motivations behind the 'Quadrangle'. He suggested that for many years Chiangmai was the place where 'traditional Thai' was preserved. Today it is a jungle of traffic jams and high-rise condominiums. Kengtung has now become the place of pilgrimage as has Jinghong. Tanet does not see this process as one to be welcomed. He laments the demise of traditional northern Thai culture and language. The issue has many important aspects. The conference on 'Tai' organized by the Office of the National Culture Commission in Bangkok (reported on elsewhere in this issue) attracted a registration of seven hundred and fifty. The effects of this interest need to be studied and anticipated. Quite apart from the political aspects, do we take the view that Tanet is a traditional romantic, or do we see the tourism and the scholarly interest as ultimately destroying the object of attention? Levi-Strauss once suggested that 'anthropology' might be better called 'entropology' - it destroys what it studies.

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Program

Thursday, 28 October

Introduction
  Gehan Wijeyewardene, Anthropology, ANU
Burma-Yunnan Trade
  Mya Than, ISEAS, Singapore
The Shans 1947-67
  Sao Hso Hom, 3/38 Meeks Street, Kingsford, NSW 2032
Problems and prospects of economic and cultural cooperation within the Economic Quadrangle
  Tanet Charoenmuang,
Political Science, Chiang Mai University The borders of Papua-New Guinea
  Ron May, Political and Social Change, ANU
The spread of HIV in Southeast Asia
  Greg Cruey, P.O. Box 61, Watson, ACT 2602

Friday, 29 October

China's relations with its neighbours under the New World Order
  Ian Wilson, Political Science, ANU
Tumen River in Northeast China at the crossroads
  Godfrey Linge, Human Geography, ANU
Chinese Minzu autonomy: who gains?
  William H. Newell Fort Street, Petersham, NSW 2049
Southeast Asia in China: the borderlands of Highland Guangxi
  D.L. Holm, School of Modern Languages, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109
Rebooted Canophilia and the courtship of dog lovers: the Yao diaspora and super-powered ethnology in Beijing's Southeast Asian strategies
  Douglas Miles, Anthropology, James Cook University, Townsville, Q4811
The Thai-Malaysian border
  Wan Kadir bin Che Man, History, Universiti Brunei Darussalam

The Timor Gap
  Henry Burmester, Attorney General's Department, Canberra
Historical Relations Si Jo Ri - the Southern Growth Triangle of Singapore, Johor and Riau.
  Janell Mills, P.O. Box 38, St Ives, NSW 2075

Saturday, 30 October
Northwestern Cambodia under Thai rule, 1767-1850
Puangthong Rungwasdisab, Wollongong University (mail c/o Niti Pawakapan, Anthropology, ANU)
The Sino-Thai alignment and Cambodia
Julaporn Euarukskul, International Relations, ANU
Cambodia's borders
Michael Vickery, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang
Concluding discussions led by Carl Thayer, Harold Crouch and Janell Mills

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**BAN KRHRUA: THE ORIGIN OF 'THAI SILK'**

Cholthira Satyawadhna Rangsit University

Rapid social and economic change in Thailand has brought a long-surviving community of Bangkok, Ban Khrua, to an impasse.

The Muslim community of Ban Khrua is composed of more than two thousand families, most of whom are descendants of Cham, an ancient Malayo-Polynesian-speaking ethnic group of the old Khmer Kingdom. The residents of Ban Khrua were resettled in Bangkok when it was founded two hundred years ago. They first came as captives and refugees and were among the earliest settlers of Bangkok. True Bangkokians through their history of settlement, they now face a traumatic dispute which has dragged on for more than five years. They are struggling to preserve their community rights against plans to construct a new expressway which will cut through their settlement now over two hundred years old.

The controversy has led to a call for a public hearing held at the Ministry of the Interior - the first such hearing ever held in Thailand. The Cham residents of Ban Khrua argued strongly against the building of a small branch of the expressway to reach the World Trade Centre which would cut across their community. Anyone who was present at the six public hearings on the issue would have sympathy for and give strong support to the residents of Ban Khrua.

These original Bangkokians, the community of Ban Khrua have contributed to Thai society in many ways. The original settlers brought with them skills of navigation which were used by the Siamese Navy in many conflicts and crises. The women of Ban Khrua brought to both urban and rural societies in many provinces their skill in the production of silk. Jim Thompson was a pioneer in the production and promotion of what is now known as 'Thai silk'. This silk originated in the community of Ban Khrua. Skilled Cham weavers of Ban Khrua produced silk for Jim Thompson's export business since the end of World War II.

Not only do the residents of Ban Khrua have well-justified claims to community rights, these claims are crucial to Bangkok's cultural heritage. The cultural ties that bind them are ethnic and religious - they are still today a tightly-knit Muslim community. They conduct their lives on the basis of extended families which give symbolic expression to their relations within the community in mutual help at life-cycle rituals, particularly at weddings and funerals.
Their strong attachment to their community and the territory of Ban Khrua sometimes seems inexplicable to outsiders. Perhaps they need to become aware of some facts about the community that are revealed by investigations in the field. It has become clear that the Cham of Ban Khrua have buried their dead, parents and ancestors, according to Muslim rites in the Ban Khrua cemetery for over two hundred years. These ancestors are buried one on top of another forging inseparable ties between the living and this particular place.

The unique nature of the community has preserved its culture, a living culture in which each resident of Ban Khrua has a very specific sense of belonging to the land together with the sense of belonging to the community with whom they share social, economic and cultural relations.

The women of Ban Khrua, daughters of the first weavers of 'Thai silk' declared, We are waiting to see if we are given justice.

We will resist if it is unfair because we have all the evidence in our favour. If they want our land, they must first take our lives.

(Bangkok Post 25 July 1993)

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BURMAH REPORTS: 2 ON THE RELATION OF BURMAH TO CHINA2

No. 98

Mr. Godley to Sir J. Pauncefote.(Received November 24)

THE Under-Secretary of State for India presents his compliments to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, by direction of Lord Randolph Churchill, forwards herewith, for the information of the Marquis of Salisbury, copy of a note by Colonel Henry Yule, C.B., on the relation of Burmah to China.

India Office, November 24, 1885.

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Inclosure in No. 98

Note on the Relations of Burmah to China

I DOUBT if I can add anything of importance to the facts of which the Office seems to be cognizant.

The only detailed authority on the subject that I know is a series of papers by Major Henry Burney in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. vi.

In the Middle Ages the Chinese, on the ground of a precedent said to have been set by Anra-th, one of the greatest of the Burmese Kings, who reigned A.D. 101759, repeatedly claimed from Burmah a tribute of certain gold and silver vessels, the refusal of which led to several invasions of Burmah by the Chinese. The most important of these was that of 1284, which overran Burmah, and broke up for a time the Burmese Monarchy (see Marco Polo, 2nd edition). Other invasions on the same pretext took place in 1443, 1445, and 1477. The last invasion or rather series of invasions arose out of a frontier dispute, and occurred in 1765 and several succeeding years. These ended in the complete failure of the Chinese, and, in fact, in a series of defeats from the Burmese. The Chinese Generals opened negotiations for peace (see the volume Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal quoted, p.143). In December 1769 fourteen Burmese and thirteen Chinese officers met in Kaungtoun, a little below Bham, and settled a Treaty (see pp.146, 147). In this there is no allusion to tribute and no indication of inequality. "Peace and friendship being established between the two great
countries, they shall become one, like two pieces of gold united into one; and suitably to the establishment of the gold and silver road (i.e., of commercial intercourse), as well as agreeably to former custom, the Princes and officers of each country shall move their respective Sovereigns to transmit and exchange affectionate letters on gold once every ten years" (p. 147).

There seems, however, to be no record of intercourse of the kind in question till 1787, when an Embassy from China came to Ava, bringing "a letter of gold, and with presents from the emperor of China, for the purpose of establishing peace and friendship between the two countries" (p. 408).

A translation into Burmese of the Emperor's letter, which Burney extracted from the Ava chronicles, is given in English at pp. 409, 410. This should be read. It is as between two independent Sovereigns, though the Emperor styles himself "Elder Brother," and styles the King of Burmah "Younger Brother." It invites the younger brother, without delay, to send a reciprocal Embassy of Friendship (p. 411). This he did, with a letter given at p. 412. The Ambassadors were presented to the old Emperor (Kien-lung), and given a Report of the Mission (pp. 415-19).

In 1790 came another professed Embassy from the Emperor, but it seems to have come in reality from the Ynnan Viceroy only.

In 1792 the King of Burmah sent an Embassy. The chief Envoy, who was the Tsobw of Bham, brought, apparently, on this occasion "a large Chinese 'chop' or seal, purporting to confer on the King of Ava the same power and authority as the Emperor himself possessed over every part of the Chinese Empire. ['']This seal,'" says Burney (183536), "is still at Ava, and is said to be of pure gold ...... and of the form of a camel, with some Chinese characters at bottom. At the time it was brought to Ava a question arose as to the propriety of retaining such a gift, as its acceptance might afterwards be construed as an admission that the King of Ava derived his power from the Emperor of China, or that the latter confirmed the previous title to the Throne of Ava. The value of the gold .... is said to have decided the Burmese Court in favour of keeping it. I can find no notice of this remarkable circumstance in the history of the late King's reign, but the details I have now given were communicated to me by good authority" (p. 434, note).

I shall come back upon this.

In 1796 another Embassy came from China with a letter, in which the aged Emperor announces his intention to abdicate in favour of his son. He desires the King of Murmah to consider this new Emperor as his (the King's) own younger brother, and as his own son (p. 435).

No further Missions were found noticed by Burney till 1823 and 1833, in both of which years the King of Burmah sent Embassies to China, both accompanying Chinese Embassies returning from Ava.

The Chinese letters will be found at pp. 436 and 542 respectively.

As on all the former occasions, these letters contain nothing implying dependence or tribute due from Ava. They contain the assumed designations of elder and younger brother. This fraternity is not acknowledged in the Burmese answers; the Emperor is simply styled "Royal Friend" (p. 438).

We notice that on almost every occasion the prior Embassy is dispatched from China, and then reciprocated by the King of Ava.

I extract the following from my narrative of Major Phayre's Mission to Ava in 1855 (published edition, p. 265):

"A good deal of jealousy was excited among the Chinese authorities by Captain Hannay's visit to the Upper Irrawaddy (1835 36), and it was made the subject of remonstrance at the end of a letter received in 1836 from the Royal elder brother Tau-Kwang, Emperor of China .... The letter concludes thus:

"'Everything that occurs in elder brother's Empire shall be made known to younger brother. With respect to younger brother's Empire, it is not proper to all the English, after they have made war and peace has been settled, to remain in the city. They are accustomed to act like the peepul tree [i.e., to spread and take such hold that they can't be
eradicated]. Let not younger brother, therefore, allow the English to remain in his country, and if anything happens, elder brother will attack, take, and give.'

"Colonel Burney concluded that this paragraph was undoubtedly an interpolation by the authorities in Ynnan."

(I extracted this from a letter of Burney's in the Foreign Office at Calcutta, dated the 16th September, 1836.)

Turning to Bowring's "Siam," we shall find that the Emperor of China claims rights of sovereignty over the throne and country of Siam, which seems to have begun in the fourteenth century, and to have been due triennially, and apparently continued to be paid at the time of Bowring's Mission (see Bowring, I, 71-73, and 420). The King of Siam is registered in the Chinese official books as a "Wang" or dependent King.

I cannot tell how the King of Ava is styled by the Chinese, but it is quite evident that the ten years' Missions are not Missions of tribute, and that the King of Ava has not recognized the suzerainty in any way of China, whatever he might do now when in a difficulty.

Nor is the case at all parallel to that of Nepaul, which also sends a periodical Mission probably with tribute to China. That dispatch was established when a Chinese army was in possession or quasi-possession of Nepaul. The Burmese interchange of Missions was established when the Chinese army was on the point of capitulation. The old claims of gold and silver vessels must then have lapsed. But it is possible that the camel seal of which Burney speaks may have beena snare for the Burmese. For we read in Bowring:

"In 1402, the first year of Yung Loh, that Emperor conferred on Siam a silver-gilt seal, with a handle shaped like a camel. (I, 74.)"

"Again, 1673 the King of Siam sent tribute .... and prayed that an officer be sent to invest him, also that he should be supplied with a new seal. A silver-gilt seal, with a camel handle, was accordingly bestowed on him" (p. 77).

A notice from Chinese records, also in Bowring (p. 79), notices the disposal of the tribute of outer foreigners in 1790. That of Corea, of Annam, and of Siam is mentioned. Nothing about tribute of Burmah. H. Y. November 23, 1885.

No. 99
Sir R. Hart to Mr. Campbell. (Communicated to the Foreign Office, November 24.)

(Telegraphic.) Peking, November 24, 1885, 1210 P.M.

NEWSPAPER recommendation to extend frontier to Bhamo. Avoid this snare! Idea necessarily distasteful here, because partition of friendly State implied. Moreover, such arrangement would interpose a quasi-China, but not real Chinese, belt between you and China, separating you from real China for ever, and thwarting development of south-west intercourse, &c. Never encourage it!

Read this with No. 298:

Present Government exercise foresight, and accepting the inevitable, desire peaceful and mutually profitable future; but it is positive fact recorded, and beyond question, that tribute arrived about every ten years for over a century, and Government cannot escape certain responsibility entailed as seen through Chinese eyes.

No. 100
Memorandum by Sir E. Hertslet.
WE have no records so early as 1769 which would throw light on the Treaty between Burmah and China of that date.

But, in addition to the extracts from printed works which I made on Saturday last, I find that in "A Description of the Burmese Empire, compiled chiefly from Native Documents by the Rev. Father Sangermano," and translated by Dr. Tandy in 1833, the following passage at p. 49 of the English translation:

"Zempiuscien had twice to oppose the Chinese, who from Zunan had poured down upon his territories, with the design of subjecting them to a tribute."

Father Sangermano was a missionary in Ava from 1782 till about 1808.

I also find that Abb Grosier, in his "General Description of Chinba," gives an account of the "States tributary to China," but Ava (or Burmah) is not included among them. This book was published in 1788 (8vo., 2369). E.H.

Foreign Office, November 24, 1885.

No. 129

Supplementary Note by Colonel Yule on the Relations between Burmah and China. (Communicated to the Foreign Office by the India Office, December 2.)

I FIND that (as might, perhaps, be expected) the Chinese account of the negotiations with Burmah in 1769 represent the Burmese as consenting (or desiring even) to send tribute to China. In other respects the Chinese account agrees pretty well with Colonel Burney's from the Burmese annals. The Chinese account is contained in a work called "History of the Holy Wars of the Present Dynasty," which Professor Douglas, who kindly looked up the matter at my request (without allusion to any public motive), says is "a standard work on the subject, and entitled to the confidence usually given to Chinese records." He adds: "My impression of the Burmese and Chinese negotiations is this that the Chinese Generals, in their time of difficulty, made a Treaty in which they agreed to a friendly interchange of presents on terms of equality; that, probably, when they got to Peking, they suppressed all mention of their undertaking to send presents, and represented the Burmese as desirous of sending tribute.

"The mentions which I find in Chinese books of Missions to Burmah always describe them as having been sent to install a new King. I suspect that both the Chinese and Burmese Courts are deceived as to the political relations implied by the presents interchanged the Chinese believing that the presents they receive from Burmah are tribute, and that those which they send are given as a token of patronage; and the Burmese believing that the exchange is such as should pass between equals .......

"It certainly was the case that until lately our presents were regarded (at the Court of China) as tribute."

(Signed) H. YULE.

November 30, 1885.

* * *

The State of Tai Studies

Report of a seminar held by the Office of the National Culture Commission at The Emerald Hotel, Bangkok, 10-13 September 1993

Gehan Wijeyewardene
This seminar, officially titled 'The state and direction of the study of the culture of the Tai people' (sathanaphab lae naewtharng karnksa wathanatham charncharttai) was organized by the ONCC (sannakngarn khanakammakarn wathanatham haengchart) at the new hotel, The Emerald. It was a spectacular occasion, not only opened by but presided over in its entirety by HRH The Princess Galyani Vadhana. The organizers themselves were astounded by the response - seven hundred and fifty registrations - and had to hurriedly shift the venue from their own offices to the hotel ballroom. The main organizers were Savitri Suwannasathit and Kulwadee Charoensri who should be congratulated on a most complex job very well done and thanked for the charm and hospitality with which participants were treated.

The form of the seminar was essentially a division into three kinds of papers - first, a series of statements by Thai scholars on the state of Thai research into Tai groups outside Thailand, second, accounts of Tai groups by scholars themselves members of those groups, and third, statements of research on Tai from Japan, China, USA, Europe and Australia. As it turned out no paper was presented on British research. The organizers had invited the relevant countries to send representatives and Tai scholars attended from Laos, Vietnam and India, but the Burmese government appears not to have responded. There appears also to have been no representative of the Tai L, though a Dehong Tai studying in Bangkok was present.

It is not possible to comment on all presentations, but I would like to mention a few to give the reader some idea as to the nature of this seminar.

Anan Ganjanapan gave a position paper on the Tai Jai, surveying the literature and raising many of the issues which have engaged academic writing. He clearly has sympathy for a view which is associated with the name of Edmund Leach, the view that not language, but social identity is the major determinant of ethnicity. He sets out the various arguments as they apply to the Tai Jai (referred to as Shan in Leach's writing). These include the fact that Buddhism and wet-rice cultivation are important determinants of being 'Shan', the relationship with the Kachin and the existence of such groups known as Tai Loi - 'hill' Tai who are not Tai-speakers at all and not wet-rice agriculturalists. Among many of the interesting issues raised in this paper is the late conversion of the northern Tai Jai to Buddhism. He asks the question as to whether these people had religious practices similar to those of the Tai Dam of Vietnam and China. He also raises the question of the separation of the Tai Jai language from L, Khoen and Mang (which he prefers to call 'Yuan') and suggests it may be the influence of other languages, Mon-Khmer languages on the latter and Burmese on the former.

Related to the Tai Jai are the Tai Ahom and papers by Renu Wichasin, Charthip Nartsupha, Nomal Gogoi and Puspa Gogoi (the last two themselves Ahom) looked at the complex state of modern Ahom society, Ahom history and the study of the Ahom. It is interesting to learn that there is a revival of Tai language in northern Assam, with two hundred teachers appointed by the government. The problem that most knowledge of Tai history was mediated through Assamese is now being corrected by the use of Ahom texts and making them available in Thai script. One interesting point made by these papers is the claim that Ahom was an 'Asiatic feudal state' (it is not clear to me whether 'Asiatic mode of production' is meant) before Ayudhya and that it was Tai, not borrowed from the Khmer.

Ruchaya Aphakorn and Xie Yuanzhang discussed research on the Tai L in both Sipsongpanna and Thailand. There were important papers on the Tai related group in China, the Zhuang, but the absence of papers in my possession prevents any comment on them.

This paper was part of a session on Lao, Black and White Thai. A paper by Sumit Pitipatana points out that Black Tai in Thailand have been mistaken for Lao and are sometimes referred to as Lao Song Dam. Papers by Cam Trong (Institute of Ethnology, Hanoi) and Hoang Luong (Hanoi University) represented indigenous Black and White Tai scholarship. Cam Trong pointed out that the eight Tai- speaking groups in Vietnam numbered three million persons altogether.

Finally, I should mention that Prakhong Nimmanaheminda discussed the general study of Thai folklore (khatichon). Papers on the state of Tai studies in overseas countries, reports were given by B.J. Terwiel on Germany, Georges Condominas on France, Charles F. Keyes on the United States of America, Shigeharu Tanabe on Japan and Anthony...
For non-speakers of Thai there are two terminological points that came up at the seminar which I found of interest. 'Thai' as in Thailand is written [xy. It is usual to write 'Tai' [x without the final letter known in Thai as 'yor yak'. This is phonetically not quite accurate as x is an aspirate, whereas it is usual that these languages pronounce 'Tai' without aspiration. It has now become popular to make the distinction between 'Thai' and 'Tai' as being with or without 'yor yak'.

The other point is the introduction of the word chatiphan to translate what is often referred to as 'ethnic' in English. It was apparently thought that the word chonchat had too much of an implication of 'race'.

A meeting of participants with the ONCC after the seminar decided that the seminar should become a regular event. The Newsletter will keep readers informed.

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SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF WATER SUPPLY & ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION IN NINE VILLAGES IN THE LAO PDR

Kevin Hewison1 and Nongluk Tunyavanich2

Abstract The article reports the first village-level survey of water user and sanitation behaviour, practices and beliefs conducted in Laos since the late 1960s. It was found that villagers continued to use unimproved traditional sources (dugwells, rivers), although some recent technologies (spring developments, lined dugwells, rainwater collection jars) were becoming more common. Latrines were not seen at any location. Villagers have limited water storage capacity, and use greater quantities as access is made more convenient. Water collection was a task for women and children, and often required several hours of hard work a day. Waste water and solid waste disposal was seen to be an increasing problem. Some recommendations regarding water and sanitation development are made.

Background

Following a destructive period of war and struggle associated with decolonisation and then US intervention in Indochina, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) was officially established in 1975. Still commonly referred to as Laos, the country is landlocked, and borders Thailand, Burma, China, Cambodia and Vietnam. It is the least densely populated and the poorest country of Southeast Asia when conventional economic measures are used (Stuart-Fox, 1986: 1).

Laos is a country of rich ethnic and cultural diversity. Officially there are 38 ethnic groups, although other classifications list up to 68 groups. The government divides these ethnic groups into three broad categories, Lao Loum, Lao Theung and Lao Soung. These categories are essentially a classification of these groups by the preferred residence environment of the groups and, hence, general cultural patterns: lowland, mid-level, and highland respectively (Ireson and Ireson, 1991: 920-921). It is usually said that 60 percent of the population may be considered Lao Loum, 30 percent Lao Theung and 10 percent Lao Soung (e.g. UNICEF, 1991: Ch. 1).

Recent estimates, based on the 1985 census, put the population at about 4.2 million persons, with 44 percent of the population being under 15 years of age. Population growth is about three percent per annum, and an infant mortality rate of 118 is reported, although this already high figure is considered an underestimate by some informed observers. Life expectancy, at less than 50, is correspondingly low (Stuart-Fox, 1986: 149-151; UNICEF, 1991: Ch. 1).

With the notable exception of Dennis (1989), very little data or information are available concerning village life in contemporary Laos. When water supply, environmental sanitation, and user behaviour are considered, even less is known. The purpose of this study was to assess village aspects of water and sanitation behaviour, preferences, and
beliefs. It was completed as a part of a comprehensive assessment of water and environmental sanitation (WES) in attempting to produce a framework for WES development in the Lao PDR over the next decade.

The field research included in this study was completed in the provinces of Khammouane, Xieng Khouang and Luang Prabang over 16 days during March and April 1991. Four Lao Loum (Phutai, Lao, Taisum, Yoan), three Lao Theung (So, Khmu) and two Lao Soung (Hmong) villages were visited, and a full day or a day and a night was spent in each, accompanied by members of the Lao Women's Union (LWU).

The qualitative part of data collection consisted of explaining the objectives of the field visit, discussions with various villagers, observation of behaviours and a survey of all water sources used for drinking and domestic purposes. The elders of the village, the village head, village committee members, village-level LWU, and village men and women were engaged in informal discussions to obtain general village information, including population data, work patterns, sources of income, marketing, facilities available, water sources and sanitation facilities and usage, health problems and the care of these problems.

This was followed by a walk around the village, including stops at all the water sources and facilities used for drinking and domestic purposes, and discussions. Discussions were usually continued over lunch with about a dozen villagers, after which visits were made to homes in various parts of the village. Formal interviews were conducted with women in their houses. Where possible, a night was spent in each village.

A total of 40 women were formally interviewed using a questionnaire. This interview usually took about 25 minutes, but 45 minutes to an hour was spent with each woman to allow for introductory statements and general social interaction. This interviewing was completed by one of the authors and by trained LWU members. Translators were used when interviewing in villages where Khmu and Hmong were the languages spoken. All answers were recorded on the questionnaire. Before leaving the village a meeting was again held with the head, and any other men and women who were available, to confirm the data from the interview or to seek further explanation for some responses.

The results and analysis of this study are presented in the following sections, with most attention being given to water supply and user behaviour.

Socio-Economic Conditions of the Villages

(i) Ethnic Identification

In this article the standard designation Lao Loum, Lao Theung and Lao Soung will be used. The Lao Loum group in this study comprised people who identified themselves as lowland and riverine Lao, Phutai, Taisum and Yoan, while the Lao Theung were Khmu and So. The Lao Soung groups visited were all Hmong. All the Lao Loum spoke Lao, the Lao Theung group spoke Khmu and So, but many were also able to speak Lao. The Hmong speak the Hmong language, and very few people, mostly men, can easily speak Lao with any degree of fluency.

(ii) Household Composition

The Lao Loum villages in this study had between 51 and 180 households. The average number of people in a household was between five and eight. This is within the range found by Dennis (1989) in his study in Xieng Khouang, where the typical household size for Lao Loum was five to nine. For rural Lao communities in Thailand, a range of 4.8 to 5.8 persons per family has been found (Tunyavanich, 1984; 1987a,b; 1988).

Lao Theung villages comprised between 45 and 60 households. The two Khmu villages had 47 and 60 households, somewhat larger than those studied by Dennis (1989). However, it is true, as Dennis noted, that Khmu villages tend to be smaller than those of the Lao Loum. The household size of Lao Theung villages in this study was between five and six, in the same range of five to nine found by Dennis in Xieng Khouang.

For the Hmong, the two villages studied had 40 and 53 households, at the mid-range of household size noted by Dennis (1989) for established Hmong villages. It may be noted, however, that 8-40 households was the range noted in Xieng Khouang in the late sixties (Whitaker, et. al., 1971: 56), suggesting that population growth in Hmong villages
has been high in recent years. The average household sizes noted in the villages reported here was 5.7 and seven, while Dennis (1989) showed that Hmong households in the province were often large and 20 members was not uncommon, although 8-15 was more usual. This difference may, however, reflect the varying definitions for household and family used in the two studies. The study by Dennis (1989) emphasised lineage as the primary organising group in Hmong villages, probably a more appropriate definition.

(iii) Economic Activity

The main economic activity for all the groups visited was rice farming, and indeed, the terms Lao Loum, Lao Theung and Lao Soung refer to preferred sites for farming. The Lao Loum and Lao Theung eat glutinous rice while the Hmong consume the non-glutinous variety. Secondary activities reported by Lao Loum included raising animals and weaving. For the Lao Theung group, the secondary activities varied according to the circumstances of the three villages visited: animal raising, selling food to local tourists, growing opium, corn, sesame and cabbages as second occupation. The Hmong concentrated on raising animals and growing opium.

Cash income for the Lao Loum villages was reported to be irregular because they only sell their produce or animals when cash is needed. In some Lao Theung villages the average household gets about 3,000 to 4,000 kip (US$1=about 720 kip) per month from selling their produce. The Hmong group reported that their animals are raised for consumption and that their cash income is from selling opium. Each household harvests about 1-5 kilograms of opium per year, with a local market price of about 80,000 kip per kilogram. Dennis's (1989) study, on the other hand, indicated that Hmong regularly engage in the trade of cattle and opium to purchase rice, foods and household consumption items.

(iv) Household Resources

Lao Loum family houses are raised about 1.5 to two metres off the ground so as to provide a shady workplace or an area to escape the heat under the house, as well as to pen animals. Many homes are made of wooden boards, and roofing was of either wooden shingles, galvanised metal, grass thatch or leaves. A poorer family was usually identifiable by the fact that virtually the whole of their house was made of bamboo. A number of families had bicycles and radios, while a few of the more prosperous households had a television powered by wet-cell batteries, and usually tuned to Thai channels.

Lao Theung family houses are raised from the ground but to a level lower than that of the Lao Loum, and usually lower than a person's height. Most Khmu houses are made of bamboo with grass thatch roofing. Few bicycles and radios were seen in the villages.

Hmong houses are built on the ground with dirt floors, wooden walls and usually with a grass thatch roof. Animal pens are often located around the house compound. A number of bicycles were observed in these villages as they were close to the road. In addition, a few households had acquired radios.

Only one of the villages had electricity. All had a primary school, although some do not operate regularly due to difficulties in finding teachers and lack of interest in education. A health centre was available in only two of the villages.

(v) Village Development Activities

Three of the nine villages had existing, externally-directed or funded development activities (including water projects), and another was about to begin a water supply programme. Existing developed water facilities had been in service for periods ranging from a number of months to a year. The remaining five villages had no development activities conducted by outside agencies. Three of these were assessed as being in need of more water supply facilities and improved convenience. In fact, one group of villagers had demonstrated a considerable willingness to help themselves and to keep water sources clean, suggesting that with some support the well-being and self-reliance of these people could be enhanced.

It was clearly demonstrated that there was a difference between those villages with outside support and those without
in terms of access to water, amount of water available, and practices such as boiling drinking water.

Village Drinking and Domestic Water

(i) Water Sources

The water sources available in the Lao Loum villages were predominantly dugwells (usually a wide diameter hand constructed earthen walled well) and shallow wells (as for dugwells, but improved with the addition of wooden or concrete lining), with one village having cement rainwater collection jars of about 2,000 litre capacity, and a tubewell (a drilled, narrow diameter well). Lao Theung villages had shallow wells, developed gravity feed systems (GFS) which bring water via pipes from a spring or stream to the village, and springs. In Hmong villages springs and springs constructed into dugwells were noted. Cement rainwater jars and GFS are reasonably recent innovations, and were not mentioned in the Breakey and Voulgaropoulos (1976) report for data from 1968-69, although USAID is reported to have introduced them in the North in the 1960s.

The study found that in all but one village little distinction was made between water used for drinking and that used for domestic purposes in terms of source. In the exceptional case, drinking water was only from dugwells while domestic use water was from both dugwells and shallow wells. Also, in one village with a GFS, because of a shortage of water, the GFS was only used for drinking, but both the GFS and a stream were used for domestic purposes. This pattern is at variance with that found among Lao communities in Northeastern Thailand.

In Thailand, a wider range of facilities and sources are available to most villagers (dugwell, shallow well, handpumped tubewells, and rainwater in cement jars) for their water. However, only dugwells, shallow wells and rainwater are commonly used for drinking water. Handpumped tubewells are not generally used for drinking because of the poor chemical quality and, hence, unacceptable taste, of the water (Thai-Australia Village Water Supply Project, 1985). It was also common for villagers in Northeastern Thailand to report travelling considerable distances to obtain preferred drinking water. In Laos, as was noted in the late sixties, the availability of water in Lao villages does not mean it will be consumed as taste preference is an important factor (Breakey and Voulgaropoulos, 1976: 30). However, these authors also noted that distance to source was important. This situation does not appear to have changed over the past two decades, especially as roads are not as common in Laos as Thailand.

Observation and experience suggests that most of the water consumed by villagers in Laos would not meet World Health Organisation (WHO) drinking water guidelines for bacteriological quality (Tunyavanich, 1984; 1987a; 1988). Dennis (1989) reported that village water supplies for Lao Loum villages may be dugwells, streams, rivers, or springs and that no supply was likely to be sanitary. For the late sixties, Breakey and Voulgaropoulos (1976: 27) had made the same point. Our observations suggest that this situation is not much altered.

(ii) Preferred Sources of Water

When asked about the water they preferred, with only two exceptions, all villagers listed the sources they were familiar with and have access to as their preferred source for drinking and domestic purposes. This is similar to Northeastern Thailand where women chose the kind of drinking and domestic water sources they were most familiar with (Tunyavanich, 1987b). The two exceptions, both on or near hills, named a GFS as a preferred source of water in addition to the dugwell and shallow well they have. It was obvious that in both cases they had already seen GFS being used in other places and so wanted a similar system for themselves; the demonstration of convenience has been a powerful stimulus. However, there was no suitable source for a GFS near these villages.

(iii) Storage Capacity and Quantities Used at Home

In the WHO Minimum Evaluation Procedure for water supply and sanitation projects, it is stated that the quantity of water used by people in a day varies according to the convenience of the source. If people need to travel to fetch water then only 20-40 litres per capita per day (l/c/d) is used, but if a standpost in front of the house is used then consumption will increase to 40-80 l/c/d. Where water is piped into the house, 50-150 l/c/d is likely to be consumed (World Health Organisation, 1983).
Closer to Laos, a study of daily water consumption in Northeast Thailand indicated that the amount of water used in the house each day was (obviously) related to the number of people in the house (for drinking but not for domestic use because some individual activities, such as bathing and washing, take place at the source); training experience (households in which a member had the experience of attending a training course about water and sanitation); and the availability of latrines (Panvisavas and Tunyavanich, 1988). If only drinking, cooking and general cleaning are completed, then the quantity of water used within the house will not be great. For example, a study of university students living in Bangkok indicated that only 14 percent of the total amount of water used in one day was for such purposes (Sivabovorn, 1981).

This study indicated that the storage capacity of water, in the house, for all villages, was limited. In fact, storage capacity was far less than would reasonably be required for all purposes by all household members in any one day. The storage capacity for drinking water ranged from ten to 40 litres per household and for domestic water between 20 and 75 litres per household. The exception was where rainwater jars were used, although most jars were empty at the time of the study. The limited storage capacity meant that villagers had to fetch water daily. This was also the case for Lao villagers in Northeast Thailand. However, the latter group had a greater overall storage capacity because larger storage containers (ceramic and cement jars) were more common, so the frequency of collection was probably lower. A study in Northeastern Thailand demonstrated that in general more water is transported home by villagers as push carts, taking up to 200 litres of water, are used (when roads and good tracks made this option possible). In addition, water-seal latrines (with bathrooms) are being increasingly used by villagers in Thailand and hence, the requirements for water at home are significantly increased (Panvisavas and Tunyavanich, 1988). In Surin and Srisaket provinces of Thailand, the average storage capacity was 344 litres per household for drinking water and 295 litres for domestic water (Tunyavanich, 1984; 1987a,b; 1988). The low storage capacity maintained by villagers in Laos can be explained by the shortage and expense of storage vessels and the practice of bathing and washing clothes at the water source.

Water consumption quantities in the surveyed households ranged from as little as ten l/c/d in villages where the availability of water was limited and collection difficult, to 45 l/c/d where access was more convenient. This study clearly indicated that where a water source is convenient and acceptable, people will use more water. In one village, after a more convenient supply by GFS was installed, water use increased to 76 l/c/d.

It is thus a simple fact that if there is more water supplied or the supply is more convenient, then people are likely to use more water, especially if water quality is acceptable. This is crucial, for as recent studies have shown, the quantity of water available may well be more important than water quality in providing a health impact (Esrey and Habicht, 1986: 125). Community preparation is also required to assist villagers understand how much more water is available and the alternative methods for abstracting and utilising extra water. In addition, greater quantities can create environmental sanitation problems, and information on this must be supplied.

(iv) Collection and Transport of Water

Women were the principal collectors of water in all study villages. This was also true for Lao villages in Northeast Thailand (Tunyavanich, 1984; 1987a,b; 1988), and true for all rural communities studied in Xieng Khouang (Dennis, 1989). Women and young girls regularly made three or five trips a day to collect water, and each trip required up to 40 minutes (or as little as five, depending on access). Therefore, the time women spent in the collection and transport of water could be as much as two or three hours a day. This pattern has not altered a great deal over the past two decades (Breakey and Voulgaropoulos, 1976: 31, 44). In Northeast Thailand, during the dry season, some villagers wait more than an hour to get water and then may expend a further hour transporting it home (Tunyavanich, 1984; 1987a). In Xieng Khouang, Dennis (1989) found that the transportation of water from source to home may occupy several hours of each day for Hmong women.

In transporting water, apparently traditional practices remain largely unaltered, with women carrying water home on their shoulders using buckets and a bamboo stick (Lao Loum and some Lao Theung), or on their backs using either bamboo tubes and forehead strap (Lao Theung and Hmong) or on the back using a wooden container and shoulder strap encountered particularly amongst the Hmong (Halpern, 1958: 102). This is very heavy work since women are travelling as far as one kilometre or up often very steep hills. In one village, closer to town and with a road, push carts were used to transport water, or if electricity was available and affordable, then motorised pumps could be used. When
this happened more water was consumed. Therefore, water supply planners need to take these factors into account.

(v) Boiling Water

Since 1975, building on a traditional Lao Loum practice of boiling water for women in advanced pregnancy and after giving birth (Halpern (1958: 100), the Government has promoted the boiling of water. This was seen as one way of ensuring that drinking water was bacteriologically clean. A well-known effort to promote this, and other elements of environmental sanitation, was the 'Three Cleans Campaign' (Stuart-Fox, 1986: 149-150). The health message has been reinforced by officials who have urged villagers to boil drinking water in order to combat a range of diseases (including, for no apparent reason, malaria).

In all the villages studied, with but one exception, it was found that many people boiled drinking water even though they did not necessarily do this regularly. In addition, boiled water was not always consumed by every member of the household. It should be noted, however, that even in the sixties, the boiling of drinking water was common. Breakey and Voulgaropoulos (1976: 28-29) reported that six to 50 percent of rural Lao villagers boiled water, while for minorities, the figure was higher, at 43 to 96 percent. But even at this time it was noted that boiling was an intermittent practice, and most likely when officials were in villages.

Hmong people routinely drink hot, boiled, water (Breakey and Voulgaropoulos, 1976: 31) and invariably have a kettle or pot bubbling on the fire and tea cooling. And, as noted, other groups also partially accept the practice. The question is what will happen to this practice of boiling water if firewood becomes scarce? In Surin and Srisaket provinces of Thailand, villagers did not boil drinking water, and after two years of promotion, still only 13 percent had reported boiling water. This poor success rate was due to the difficulty of getting firewood. In Yasothon, only two percent of villagers boiled water for drinking, for the same reason (Tunyavanich, 1984; 1988). A question must be raised: is it necessary for people to drink boiled water and is it appropriate to promote the boiling of water under circumstances of dwindling wood supplies? And, more importantly, how can it be ensured that boiled water is still clean when it reaches the mouth? Pathbreaking work in Northeastern Thailand has clearly shown that even where source water is bacteriologically clean, handling practices soon re-contaminate the water prior to consumption (Underwood, 1989).

If the boiling of water is to be officially promoted, this study reveals that villagers face some significant obstacles in conforming. Many people said that they had few problems getting firewood to boil water but did not have enough pots or kettles in which to boil their drinking water. In addition, hygienic handling of boiled water should be promoted.

(vi) Rainwater as Drinking Water

The collection of rainwater as high bacteriological and chemical quality drinking water has recently been advanced in a number of developing countries. In Thailand, the promotion of rainwater collection in large- capacity cement jars has been remarkably successful. However it is clear that these jars initially were most acceptable where villagers had some experience with consuming rainwater as its taste was different from traditional sources (Hewison, 1987; Hewison and Nongluk, 1990).

This study found that most villagers in Laos do not regularly consume rainwater. This conflicts with the report by Breakey and Voulgaropoulos (1976:31) where it was noted that rainwater was an important source in the wet season. The most common reasons provided for not drinking rainwater were that roofing materials (mainly thatching or wooden tiles) discoulour the water and give it an odour, and that using rainwater for drinking is not a traditional practice. However, a few houses, in areas where metal roofing was more common, did collect rainwater. Rainwater may become a source of drinking water if other sources are lacking.

If rainwater is to be encouraged for drinking then appropriate technical assistance and advice should be provided regarding the replacement of a portion of roofing with acceptable material for rainwater catchment. In addition to the roofing problem, storage containers must also be promoted because most villagers do not have large capacity receptacles. Apart from this, there seem few objections to the taste of rainwater stored in cement jars. This was not the case in Thailand at the beginning of the jar promotion programme there (Tunyavanich, et al, 1985). However, it may be that because of other problems, such as the smell and colour from wooden and thatched roofing, attention has been drawn away from the cement 'taste'.

19
Sanitation

Very few of the households studied had sanitary latrines. Again, this situation does not appear very different from that of twenty or even thirty years ago, as reported by Breakey and Voulgaropoulos (1976: 27-28) and Halpern (1958: 101). However, in this study a few villagers were identified as having attempted to construct simple pit latrines with the idea of keeping faeces in one place, far enough away from houses to prevent odours, but close enough to be convenient. This was performed by the villagers themselves and should be actively promoted by agencies in the absence of a fuller sanitary latrine programme.

In addition, any promotion of water-seal latrines must obviously proceed in tandem with the development of a plentiful and reliable water supply. This seemingly simple observation has been ignored in many programmes in Laos and elsewhere, resulting in the installation of water-seal latrines which become monuments to government inattention to local conditions and inadequate social assessment and planning.

Other Aspects of Environmental Sanitation

In the late sixties, Breakey and Voulgaropoulos (1976: 26-37) noted that refuse disposal was usually anywhere that was convenient, and that animal excreta was common in villages and around houses. Today, the situation is much the same, but refuse disposal is an increasing problem as plastic bags become more common, replacing paper and more traditional wrappings for food.

Efforts to improve environmental sanitation may be linked to water supply. For example, new water supplies should have adequate drainage to avoid creating mosquito breeding areas. In addition, efforts should be made to further promote existing appropriate behaviours by villagers.

Personal Hygiene

Bathing and handwashing appears to vary according to the convenience of access and quantities of water available. For example, villagers reported bathing more often in the lowland areas, where water is generally more readily available and access is easier.

Handwashing was reportedly common, but sporadic, usually when the hands were visibly dirty. Dishwashing was with water, and was not always completed after each meal. Again, this confirms the observations of Breakey and Voulgaropoulos (1976: 36), twenty years ago, and matches observations from Northeastern Thailand (Pinfold, 1990; Hewison, 1989).

Disease

More than thirty years ago, Halpern (1958: 99, 103) noted that malaria was a major health concern, and this still applies as the disease mentioned most often by villagers was malaria. In addition, diarrhoeal diseases were mentioned in a number of villages, and Halpern also noted these as a common health problem. This also concurs with Westermeyer (1988), who reported that Lao adults usually can name a few dozen illnesses or folk syndromes. These categories reflect the local prevalence of diseases: fever, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, etc. and virtually everyone can describe a folk syndrome for malaria. However, few people related water supply and sanitation to diseases, as was also noted by Breakey and Voulgaropoulos (1976: 40-41). Thus the idea of improving water supply and sanitation by suggesting to villagers that their health will be improved may not be the most appropriate strategy at present. Quantity and easy access are the main concerns of villagers for water supply and convenience, with no nuisance from foul odours emanating from latrines.

Recommendations for WES Development

Based on the results and observations made during the study period, the following recommendations are considered relevant:

Appropriate Technology
Seek low or intermediate technology options which are within the capabilities of villagers to implement. For example, improving and upgrading dugwells to shallow wells; constructing more shallow wells where feasible; improving the surrounds of dugwells and shallow wells so that they remain as clean as possible; dry pit latrines around the edge of villages, at the edge of forest areas; and burying children's faeces when they defecate around the house.

**Water Supply Options**

The focus of WES programmes should not be on any one type of water supply. For example, agencies should not endeavour to put a GFS in every village where they are possible because this is expensive, takes more time to complete, requires technical assistance, higher level maintenance, and spare parts. Often, a simpler, medium-term, supply may be more beneficial to greater numbers of villagers than a fewer but more expensive supplies.

**Operation and Maintenance**

Simple and appropriate maintenance information should be provided to villagers: how to change a tap, where to buy parts and how much they cost, what tools are needed; what is needed to maintain shallow wells, handpumps, and cement jars.

**Community Management**

Adequate social preparation and community preparation is required. Technically sound and socially acceptable facilities should be installed, but their capacities and limitations must be known to the people who will use them.

**Development Springboard**

Seek 'springboards' for building water and sanitation projects, especially by supporting and enhancing existing practices considered appropriate. Promote latrines where there is an expressed need for them when a road is built through the middle of a village (thus reducing privacy) and an adequate water supply is in place. Promote the hygienic handling of boiled water for those who are boiling water regularly. Support villagers to improve dugwells where they declare a need for shallow wells.

**Health Education**

Institute appropriate health education programmes according to the needs and circumstances of each village as well as supporting them in performing the desired behaviours. For example, many will boil water, but not always, because they have neither pots to boil water nor places to store boiled water. In addition, development and government workers who go into villages should themselves practice hygienic behaviours, and should not 'preach' to villagers; rather, they should demonstrate by example.

**Community Institutions**

Support community institutions (schools, health centres, etc.) in having adequate water supplies and sanitation facilities, and promote hygienic behaviours as an example.

**Programme Linkages**

Link other programmes together with WES as appropriate, especially as WES may be considered as much a development activity as a health activity.

**Further Research**

Clearly, a study of a few villages is not easily extrapolated to a whole country, so further research will be necessary. Some areas of research are:

a) The criteria to be used in setting WES priorities should be based on need, so measures and perceptions of need will have to be determined.
b) Varying water needs and user behaviour in different areas need to be established. These patterns should also be assessed for changes as further development occurs. This might include comparisons of water user behaviour including quantities of water consumed as the community develops.

c) In Laos, where communications are not easy, some study of how spares could be made available for village maintenance and repair of facilities.

d) How and how much villages with potential can do things themselves, if necessary technical knowledge and parts are available.

e) Varieties of effective communication techniques for disseminating socio-cultural information to planners and implementing agencies.

Endnotes

1. The data used in this paper was collected in 1991 as part of a UNICEF-funded and directed consultancy conducted by a team which included the authors. Kevin Hewison was the leader of the UNICEF consultancy team, and Nongluk Tunyavanich was the team’s social scientist.

The opinions, assessments and interpretations expressed in this article are entirely those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of UNICEF, or any other organisation which assisted in the study.

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the staff of the UNICEF office in Vientiane, Lao PDR, who provided excellent support for an innovative planning consultancy. A special word of thanks is also due to the Lao Women's Union which facilitated the village studies, and the villagers who participated.

2. For more detailed discussion of the various ethnic groups see Kunstadter (1967: Part V).

3. It should be noted that bacteriological testing has not been conducted for rural water in Laos and that this comment does not imply that WHO guidelines for drinking water quality should be applied or that water quality testing is considered necessary or feasible at this stage of water facilities development.

4. The majority of jars were newly constructed and so had not yet been filled by rainfall.

References


Esrey, S. and Habicht, J-P. (1986), 'Epidemiologic Evidence for Health Benefits from Improved Water and Sanitation in Developing Countries', Epidemiologic Reviews, 8.


Thai-Australia Village Water Supply Project. (1985), Mid-Term Report, Khon Kaen, MPW Australia.


UNICEF. (1991), Draft Situation Analysis of the Children and Women in the Lao PDR, Vientiane, UNICEF.


LONDON (UPI) - The British government released a batch of previously confidential documents to the public Thursday detailing its undercover operations in Asia during World War II. The records relate to activities of the Special Operations Executive, a covert branch that operated under the Foreign Office. The SOE, which was disbanded in 1945 at the end of the war, carried out acts of sabotage using specialist agents and local resistance movements. According to a government spokeswoman at the Public Records Office in Kew, southwest of London, many of the documents generated by the SOE have either been destroyed for security reasons or lost. The spokeswoman said the destruction of the files was so widespread that up to 87 percent of the documents had disappeared. A background brochure given to journalists detailing the organizations work said records were never kept in an orderly manner in Britain because of the need for 'absolute secrecy.' Many documents held abroad were destroyed to save them falling into enemy hands. The files released Thursday include secret information on the SOE’s role as an intelligence gathering organization in China, a role that began in 1940. Most of the records for China consist of covert reports from numerous sources both in and outside the region. Some of the documents made public available (sic) include details about an operation that manipulated China's black market in a bid to ensure the best currency exchanges for several organizations, including both British and international aid agencies and companies. The documents also cover Japanese occupied territory, economic, military and political conditions and information relating to SOE operations in Burma, Siam, India, and Malaysia.

*from Nikkei Weekly 18 October 1993, p. 20.

by Kenichiro Hirano

MANILA - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) plans to integrate its individual economic projects in the six countries through which the Mekong River flows - Vitenam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and China - to foster comprehensive regional development. The Manila-based bank is ready to implement its program as soon as the ban on loans by international organizations to Vietnam is lifted. That is expected to happen by the end of the year. The program addresses development of roads, water channels, railways, power generation and transmission, environmental protection, human resources, medical care and tourism. According to ADB Planning Director Noritada Morita, the program will initially propose projects that can be implemented at minimal cost by making better use of existing assets. Then, broader projects promising mutual benefits will be implemented jointly in the six countries. The six nations sent cabinet-level representatives to Manila for a meeting at the end of August that reached some basic agreements. One was that any project can be carried out with the consent of the nations concerned, and does not require the approval of all six. Also, ADB will formulate the overall program, but will actively seek assistance from countries both within and outside the region as well as from other international development organizations. Plans that have been finalized so far include construction of a new port in Vietnam and a road linking Ho Chi Minh City to Bangkok via Phnom Penh; paving of three existing roads between Thailand and Vietnam; building another from the Vietnamese port of Danang to northern Thailand and Laos; and building a road to connect the capital of China's Yunnan Province with Bangkok via Myanmar and Laos. The idea is to activate trade between these areas, which have thus far had little economic interaction due to differing political systems and poor to non-existing infrastructure, among other factors. * The Ban Ok Pup Lik Mioung Tai (Eastern Tai Literary Association) will hold its 11th Conference at Namrup Dibrugarh, Assam in February/March 1994, the exact dates still to be decided. Interested scholars should write to:

Chow Nagen Hazarika
Mula Gabharu Path
Hatigaon Road, Dispur,
Guwahati - 781006
Assam, India.
The Asian Studies Association of Australia Biennial Conference will be hosted by the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, 13-16 July 1994.

The keynote speakers will be

Vandana Shiva, Director of the Research Foundation for Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy, Dehradun.


Dai Qing who recently received the 1993 Conde NastTraveler Magazine and the 1993 Goldman Environmental Prize for her coverage of the Three Gorges Dam Project on the Yangtze River.


Those interested please contact the Southeast Asian Session Convenor, James Warren, Humanities, Murdoch University, Murdoch, WA 6150. Tel. + 619 351 3166; Fax + 619 310 4997.

BOOKS

Review

Kin Oung Who killed Aung San? Bangkok: White Lotus 1993. xiv, 101pp., bibliography, glossary, index, map. Foreword by Malcolm Booker. This highly readable little book is an insider's account of the history of modern Burma. As Kin Oung sets out in his preface, he is the son of Major-General Tun Hla Oung, Inspector-General of Police and responsible for the initial investigation and security after arrest of U Saw, who was hanged for master-minding the assassination of Aung San. Kin Oung is also the son-in law of Justice Thaung Sein, who was jointly responsible for U Saw's security and among his other high positions was Inspector-General of Prisons. An uncle, U Shwe Baw was Secretary of the Executive Council, and was seated next to Aung San at the meeting at which the assassination took place, but escaped without injury. Kin Oung himself was with the British Burmese Navy during World War II and then became a shipping executive. He now lives in Canberra and has been very active in Australian-Burmese affairs and is Patron of the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma.

The question of the title is the focus of the book, but in setting out the events and attempting to answer the question, the author introduces us to the history of modern Burma and the events and issues that have beset that strife torn country. One of the themes Kin Oung returns to throughout the book is the expression thoke-thin-ye - the policy of removing rivals by complete annihilation.

U Saw was some fifteen or sixteen years older than Aung San and about the time the latter made his now famous escape from Rangoon, ending up with the Japanese, U Saw was Prime Minister under the British and left Rangoon for London to discuss political change after the war in exchange for helping the British. In the meantime the Japanese and the Burmese Independence Army marched into Burma and U Saw trying to switch sides, found himself arrested by the British and sent to exile in Uganda.

Recent writing such as Kin Oung and Bertil Lintner have suggested that the 'Thirty Comrades' of Aung San were divided from the start with hostility between Aung San and Ne Win. To the outsider it seems much closer critical research is needed before we can be convinced. I shall return to this in a moment.

Again, as is well-known, Aung San switched support away from the Japanese at the end of the war and was invited to London by Attlee to discuss Burma's independence. U Saw also went to London as 'the opposition' and refused to sign the final agreement. The assassination occurred a few months before independence.

The 'mystery' relates to sets of questions. First, what was the British involvement? Second was Ne Win involved? There was a definite suggestion that there was a conservative conspiracy involving Indian businessmen, U Saw and
some young British officers. A critical figure was the British Council representative John Stewart Bingley, to whom U Saw wrote from gaol asking for money. Bingley was not prosecuted and was allowed to leave Burma and then 'vanishes from history'. The three officers appear to have been engaged in gun-running, perhaps with more than the hope of financial gain. One of them, Captain David Vivian, was released by Karen in the initial insurgency and spent many years with them. He died in the 1980s, in Wales. There seems to be no evidence of high-level British involvement.

The Ne Win theory seems to have first surfaced in a Karen National Union publication in 1986, which suggested that U Saw was framed for a conspiracy hatched by U Nu and Ne Win. Kin Oung dismisses the charges against U Nu. The charge against Ne Win resurfaces in a publication in California last year by a Burmese doctor, Kyin Ho. As far as can be made out of Kin Oung's brief comments it appears that the allegation is that Ne Win set up a fake assassination attempt on U Saw before the London conference, trying to implicate Aung San, thereby provoking U Saw into retaliation. Kin Oung seems slightly sceptical, though not denying Ne Win's propensity for infamy.

The assassination attempt on U Saw is interesting as earlier in the book Kin Oung seems to accept the theory that Aung San might have been responsible. This, I think, raises an important scholarly issue. Many of us have come, in recent years, to views on the total unacceptability of the SLORC dictatorship. But there comes a point when questions have to be asked about the Burmese leadership of our time. The symbol of Aung San is a necessary one, but was he without fault? There are suggestions that the British warrant for his arrest on his return from the meetings of the Indian National Congress, the warrant that led to his escape and journey to Amoy, was not for political offences but for a particularly nasty, racist murder.

Kin Oung's style is both committed and urbane. I cannot resist citing an example of the confidence that characterizes the book. He is describing U Saw's appearance in court: U Saw appeared daily in the courtroom, cool, calm and collected. He was well dressed in traditional Burmese silk attire, as befitting a former Prime Minister. He could not be described as handsome, yet he exuded an air of mystique which had a certain appeal, especially to the ladies, who occupied a good number of seats in the hall. His dress, however, was not entirely formal as he did not wear the usually obligatory gaung-baung, a kind of turban worn by Burmese males on official occasions. In fact, his close cropped hair made him look almost nondescript, like any other peasant from his native Tharawaddy district in rustic, central Burma.

I take pleasure in recommending this book to anyone who has any interest in Burma.

Gehan Wijeyewardene

* * *

We have received the following books and notices of books. We hope they will be reviewed in the Newsletter in due course.


Mayoury Ngaosyvathn Lao women: yesterday and today (details tba)

Li Tana and Anthony Reid (eds.) Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen: Documents on the economic history of
Cochina (Dang Trong) Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 1993. 177 pp. S$32.00/US$22.00 (paper) S$47.00/US$32.00 (hard cover).

Journal of Southeast Asian Language Teaching Vol 1 No 1/2 December 1992. A publication of the Consortium of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages (COTSEAL), Southeast Asia Council, Association for Asian Studies, Inc. Membership $15 per year.

For Australian readers we note that The Asian Experts, 37 Bilkurra Street, Middle Park Q. 4074 are marketing Kiscadale Books in Australia. This firm has a strong interest in Burma.

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Notices

CIRCULATION Our circulation list is now nearly as long as our print run and we do not have the resources to increase the latter.

We are therefore unable to place on the circulation list all those who have requested to be included. We are extremely sorry that the following procedure has become necessary.

All names will be placed on a waiting list and added to the circulation list as vacancies occur. The current circulation list will be pruned as soon as possible.

I will reply to all those who have written in, but some requests may have gone astray during my absence from Canberra. If anyone has written and does not hear from me in the next couple of months. Please get in touch again.

Back numbers 1-22 are still available at Aus$10 each. We now have a maximum price of Aus$100 for this run. Copies of Number 23 onwards will have to be photocopied and will therefore be charged at Aus$10 each with no discount.

Please note that all payments must be made in advance in Australian dollars. University bankers do not allow us to handle foreign currencies without exorbitant charges.

Also note that the Newsletter is available on computer network. The numbers available will soon be updated.

ACCESS: ftp to coombs.anu.edu.au gopher to coombs.anu.edu.au OR cheops.anu.edu.au, port 70

G.W.

Scott Bamber is away on fieldwork and this issue of the Newsletter is edited by Gehan Wijeyewardene in the Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University.

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1J.M. Gullick Indigenous political systems of Western Malaya LSE Monographs on Social Anthropology No. 17, 1958

2This is the second of two sets of documents from the Public Records Office, London (Kew), that shed some
interesting light on the British annexation of Ava in 1885.

3 Though not strictly accurate the word 'Tai' is used to describe all groups speaking Tai or related languages - including Zhuang and Lao.

4 The Thai term used here is na dam which means 'transplanted rice cultivation'. This usage appears general. The English distinction between wet and dry rice cultivation would be na/rai. The Thai distinction is a sharper one.

1 Senior Lecturer, School of Social Science, Murdoch University, Murdoch, Western Australia.

2 Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University at Salaya, Nakorn Pathom, Thailand.
DECEMBER REPORT ... from the Thai-Burmese border

by Hazel Lang & Marc Purcell

The end of 1993 saw Burmese opposition groups experiencing a renewed period of pressure from a variety of sources. The arrest of the 13 Burmese students at a human rights seminar in Bangkok by Immigration and Special Branch police on Dec 3 and the accompanying stern warning concerning the conduct of anti-Rangoon political activities on Thai soil marks a change in Thai practice towards the students. Previous arrests were focused on students who undertook public protests outside the Burmese embassy and the like. These arrests and other detentions, along with new building infrastructure we saw at Maneeloy Holding Centre in Ratchaburi province ('safe camp'), indicate a concerted effort to remove these troublesome dissidents from the Thai political landscape.

The clampdown has been extended to making life difficult for the Burmese opposition leaders. DAB Chairman and KNU leader Gen Bo Mya was reportedly refused a re-entry visa to Thailand from his November trip to the UK. Dr Sein Win, prime minister-in-exile of NCGUB, and other opposition leaders, also experienced Thai re-entry visa refusals following their November lobbying trip to the UN General Assembly. National Security Council (NSC) Sec. Gen. Charan Kulawanijaya was quoted saying that Bangkok denied the visas as part of its commitment to stop Burmese opposition figures from using Thai territory as a base: 'Thailand is supporting the Burmese government plan for national reconciliation. To issue visas to those people means to encourage them to continue fighting'.

Other more ambiguous events included news reports of an NSC announcement for an end of December review proposing the closure of the Thai-Burmese border and a self-proposed NSC assumption of control over the border. PM Chuan Leekpai responded immediately denying any reports that the NSC will ask the government to review Thailand's constructive engagement policy with Burma and to close the border. In rejecting suggestions to close the border, he also stated that any such closure order came under the mandate of the local provincial governor in the event of fighting in Burma escalating and spilling into Thai villages. Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri also rejected the reports and when asked about the NSC's planned review of foreign policy, commented the NSC was merely an 'advisory agency'.

In terms of the ethnic nationalities, the Mon have been experiencing substantial direct pressure. In October the Thai military ordered the 8,000 inhabitants of Loh Loe refugee camp to relocate to a new site at Halockhani on the border, a controversial site due to its proximity a few kilometres from the Burmese army (and where at present there are already 500 internally displaced people). Because of this vulnerable position, NGOs working with the refugees feel that while some will go to Halockhani, most would rather go to existing camps in Thailand as a safer option. Further, the forced relocation violates an agreement reached in February by the NSC, Thai army, district officials and the Mon National Relief Committee (MNRC) operating the Loh Loe and other Mon camps which clearly stated that Mon refugees could shelter on Thai soil until they could return home after a change in the political situation.

However, for the moment, relocation is on hold until the end of the dry season while political manoeuvring between the Mon resistance and Slorc concerning a ceasefire is undertaken. The immediate aim of the Thais is to pressure the Mon to enter a ceasefire negotiation with the Slorc. Both the Thai government and Slorc require a stable environment for the construction of the lucrative gas pipeline from the Martaban gas fields. According to the Manerplaw-based environmental NGO, Green November 32, the pipeline, already under construction on the Burmese side, will pass through the narrowest section of the Burmese Tenasserim division (45km to the border). Green November calculate that the most likely route will be through Nat Ei Taung (50km south of Three Pagodas Pass) on the Thai side. GN32 also have reports of highway construction up to Nat Ei Taung and it is also in the vicinity of Loh Loe and other settlements.

Slorc leader Khin Nyunt in November made a call for ceasefire negotiations during his visit to Ye in Mon State; (he also visited Pa-an in Karen state and Loikaw in Karenni state making such statements). The Slorc have targetted the Mon because of their weak strategic position; the territory they hold is marginal and they have Thai cooperation due to the gas pipeline. Publicly, the Mon have responded with the concerted voice of the DAB. Indeed these ceasefire overtures and the concomitant intentions of the Slorc has been a foremost topic in many discussions in Manerplaw and the numerous opposition groups.
The DAB met in Manerplaw between December 7th and 10th and after long debates and discussions agreed to offer a 5-member advance delegation to prepare for any official ceasefire talks (Major Gen Maung Maung of KNU, Khai Soe Naing of the Arakan Liberation Party, Nai Pe Thein Zar of New Mon State Party, Dr Naing Aung of the All Burma Students' Democratic Party and U Mya Soe of the Democratic Party for the New Society). New Mon State Party representative Nai Pe Thein Zar told us at this time that the DAB's previous conditions for talks were not stated in the offer at this point. These conditions were that peace negotiations be held in a third country with the presence of international mediators and that Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners be released. He said that anticipated conditions for negotiations would only be disclosed at preliminary talks. The silence of the DAB on its earlier conditions can be perceived as part of the tactical maneuvering towards the negotiations, or it can be seen as a substantial concession in departing from a previous strongly-held series of demands. The semantic softening process is occurring on the Slorc's part too; Khin Nyunt's speeches deliberately omitted references to the ethnic opposition as 'terrorists' and 'insurgents' instead using the term 'armed groups'.

By December 16 the Slorc officially rejected the offer to talk with a united ethnic and opposition movement under the DAB. A Burmese Armed Forces Attache to Thailand at this time responded:

'As we have stated before, we will not be able to accept...the DAB. We will deal with respective [ethnic] groups...We still prefer to talk with individual groups because each group has its own priorities and interests...We will not even be able to do that with NDF...'.

Also, groups such as DPNS and ABSDF represent political/military groups that are not part of the ethnic national armies that the Slorc wishes to negotiate with. Slorc wants instead to strike ceasefire deals on a unilateral basis with the ethnic nationality armies. They do not want to include Burman dominated pro-democracy groups that sprang from the events of 1988. Indeed they wish to isolate from the negotiation process these groups who rely on ethnic nationality army support to operate in their areas. Such a fate has befallen ABSDF in Kachin areas when their arms supplies were curtailed by the KIO when it entered into negotiations with Slorc. There is an almost universal cynicism expressed towards such a divide-and-rule strategy.

In mid December the KIO - with their DAB membership temporarily suspended - moved out of their Manerplaw office. They have re-established themselves in Wa territory. The KIO are at pains to express they have signed only a ceasefire and not a durable political settlement. Terms of the ceasefire include maintaining current territory held, exchange of prisoners and the prospect of future development projects. Probably to the Slorc's chargrin the KIO have chosen not to attend the National Convention when it resumes in January. They have close relations with the Wa who are participating and will closely monitor through them the Convention's progress.

The Karen are now the largest remaining ethnic army and while there has been no dry season offensive to date, consolidation of strategic positions on both sides is occurring. There is an unconfirmed report that the Slorc has taken over 1,000 porters from the Pa-an district in Karen state. Helicopter surveillance flights by the tatmadaw in early December were also made over ABSDF headquarters in Dag Win. Preparations are being made by ABSDF medics to evacuate patients in anticipation of a late dry season offensive. In strategic terms, it is felt Manerplaw is well defended against direct attack from the Slorc-held Sleeping Dog Mountain. However, it is vulnerable to becoming cut-off from its hinterland if the Slorc were to take the area at the confluence of the Salween and Moei rivers and at another point downstream from Manerplaw. ABSDF camps are also exposed in their positions. Certainly, then, there is a military imperative for negotiations, alone or with the DAB. The Thais would like to see development projects such as the Salween dams go ahead and are keen to remove refugee camps back across the border if ceasefires take place.

Padoh Yo Shu of the KNU in Manerplaw, who among other responsibilities is the chairman of the 'internally displaced relief committee', stressed the scale and severity of the problem for people displaced within the Karen area. While 150,000 people are listed as internally displaced, he estimates the uncounted figure to be around 300,000 in Karen territory alone. Food shortages are critical because it is difficult to grow food when harvests cannot be reaped due to constant forced relocation which has been stepped up in the past 2 years.

Further muddying the waters on the political landscape is Khun Sa's mid-December proclamation of independence from Burma and his election as President of the Shan State Restoration Council. This coincided with Shan New Year
and an influx of foreign and Thai journalists. Contiguous with this 10,000 tatmadaw troops were mustered on the periphery of Khun Sa territory from which an attack was launched. While the Slorc proclaimed the capture of 2 heroin refineries, USDEA officials were meeting in Rangoon with the Slorc. Opposition groups are skeptical about the determination of Slorc, viewing the attack as cosmetic and a propaganda exercise; indeed the Slorc's absence from the November anti-drug meeting in Chiang Mai lends credence to this view.

Overall, everyone we spoke to stressed that because of these pressures, a critical phase had been entered into and that the next few months of the dry season will be crucial for the Burmese opposition groups. In light of the proposed ceasefire talks, the Thai clampdown on opposition groups on its territory, the Thai and ASEAN desire to incorporate Burma into the regional economic framework, the General Assembly's most condemning resolution of the Burmese regime's human rights violations (and the U.S.'s stronger dissenting statement denouncing the National Convention as a fraud) and the approaching 5th anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest to identify some concerns. For these reasons opposition members we spoke to all believed that 1994 will be the most important year since the events of 1988.

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