

CHILDREN OF LAOS:
A DESCRIPTIVE REPORT
with
a Supplement -
CHILDREN
OF CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM

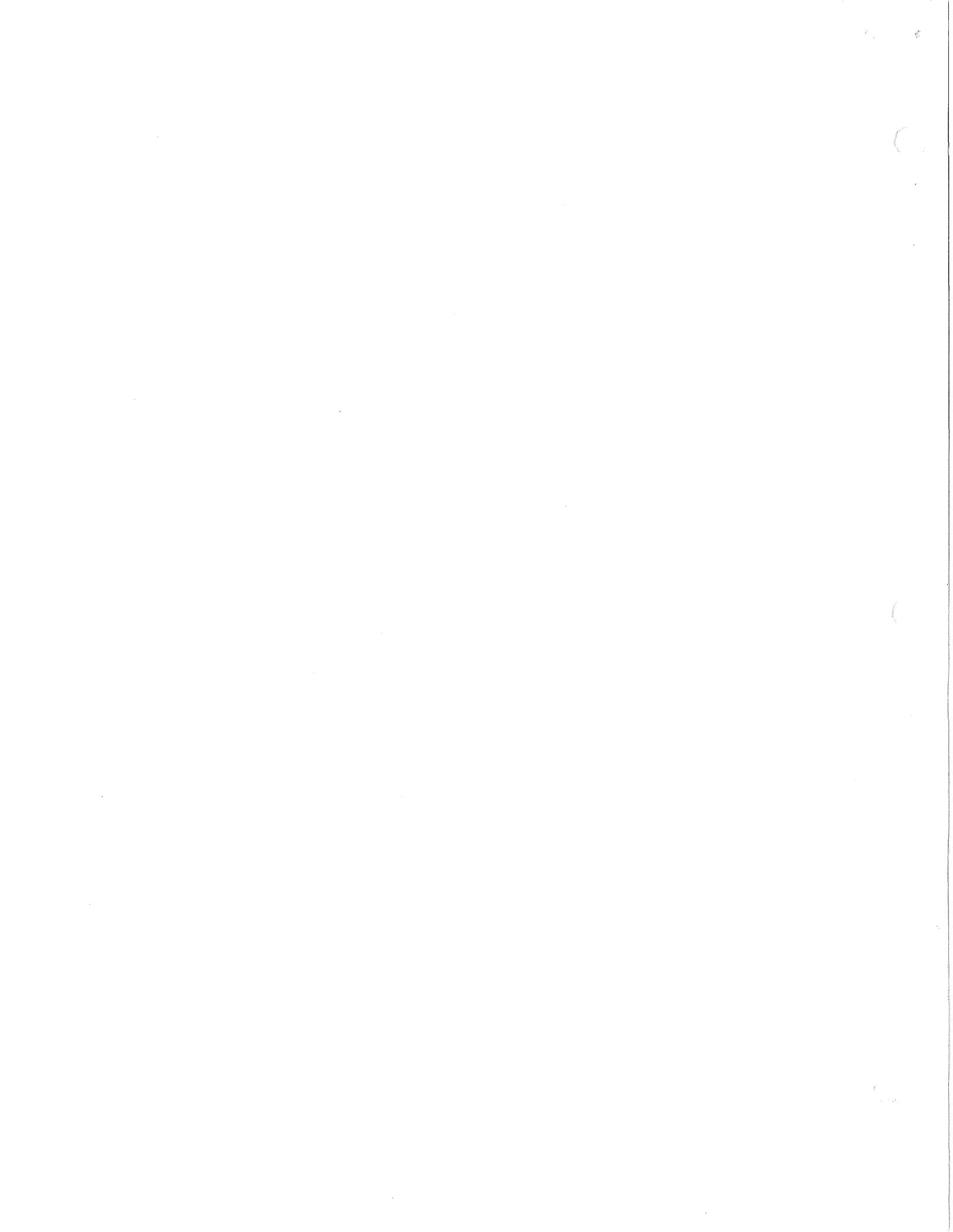


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ABSTRACT

Children are constantly being born of parents who once were children themselves. Culture, beliefs, customs are continually being passed down from generation to generation. Variations occur but change, especially in non-industrial countries, occurs slowly. The author chose to study the traditional environment, and child-rearing attitudes and practices of the Lao and Hmong peoples of Laos (several hundred of whom reside in Linda Vista, San Diego).

It was found that basically the two groups are of cultures that stress harmonious relationships, full of respect for wisdom and of human and beast, and a love of life - a life full of labor, eked out of the soil, moments of rest and festivity, and of a pace considered extremely slow when compared to the American way of rushing and time-schedules. Children - natural or adopted - are cherished, pampered, appreciated. The family is of primary importance - greater in value than education, country, perhaps even religion itself (which pervades every aspect of daily living). Thus, the child is an integral part of everyday life itself, and of all of its activities, be they of a family, "adult", social, or religious nature. Yet, the child is permitted to be a child. Little is expected of the young child in the way of adult behaviors or attitudes until age five or so, and even then, the stringence of complying to "higher" standards of behavior is only gradually enforced. The child learns of him/herself, interpersonal family relationships, extrafam-

lial relations, the village, the province, the state, the world, not through sit-down lessons but through the process, observation of, and living through daily life itself; for the very essence of the culture permeates the attitude and way in which everyday activities and relationships are approached and carried on.

In keeping with harmony, life is generally of a quiet, quiescent nature. Child discipline is of a verbal nature, requesting compliance for no other reason than simply "it" is just not done/said/thought in "this" way. There is no goading - no pressure for immediate unquestioning obedience. The child has his/her own will, and will eventually learn the ways of life for him/herself.

The concepts of life seem almost totally distant from those of American life. Yet, it must be remembered above all that a people - children - are but the results of years of life and living, of history, of discovery, of superstition, of plenty and of want, of beliefs, of philosophies, of ideas and ideals, of necessities, of coping and cooperation. We can all learn about one another. The question is: can we learn from and grow healthier with one another as members of humankind?

FORWARD

1

Information as to the rearing and growth of young children, particularly of ages three to five years, was scarce. The researcher sought materials and information in public libraries, the libraries and the University of California at San Diego and San Diego State University, United Nations' bibliographic references, journals, newspapers, National Geographic magazines, computer search (which contained no useful sources), with limited success. HRAF files were scanned, and interviews held.

Special thanks is due Galen Berry of San Diego's International Rescue Committee for his time and help, and to all of those (including Dr. Barbara Pillsbury of SDSU's Anthropology Department) who sought to never allow the author's motivation lag but added questions, comments, and suggestions to her study. Thanks also to Louise Raney who allowed the author several hours off from work to complete the research and typing processes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

There has been a great influx of Southeast Asians into this country, particularly since the withdrawal of United States troops from the wars there. These immigrants have brought with them cultures, customs, and attitudes "foreign" to the "American" way of life.

The changing of ways and mannerisms is easier for some than it is for others. Throughout America's history, the children of immigrants have sought in various ways, to assimilate the ideals, practices, and values of the "American way"; while parents of the "old ways" set up such means as home lessons, private schools, "planned" marriages, and so on in an effort to retain what they - the parents - felt and feel to be the essence of the "good life".

The potential ensuing conflicts between parent and American born or raised child may be painful for both parties, with decisions to be made concerning the true value of values - American or foreign. Rejection, acceptance, or a blending of the old and the new may occur in the minds of the younger (and possibly the older) generations. An impact, no matter the severity, is made on American society with each struggle over cultural ways, attitudes, and customs by a new generation of immigrant descendents.

It should not be deemed that foreign ways are better or worse than that which has been more or less established by

the White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant "American" society. Too, foreign ideas should not be ignored, over-looked, or disposed of, but rather should be viewed for their intrinsic value, as a possible positive contribution to contemporary American thought, or at the very least, for a better understanding of humanity, of which all men and women are a part.

In view of this potential contribution, a search for a starting point from which to begin a better understanding and appreciation of a foreign parent in a new land may begin. There are many starting points which may be considered as possibilities, for example, the biological, the scientific and technological, the anthropological, the sociological, the psychological, the ethnological, the political, the philosophical. However, one view which takes in the views of each of these and which in addition may give visual clues as to its reality and impact upon the immigrant family as well as the American society (or a part thereof) is the child-rearing attitudes and practices of the immigrant parent with a young child.

It has been agreed upon by many well-known scholars and researchers of human development that the first five years or so of a child's life are formative years - years during which patterns of behavior, expectations, attitudes, and the like, begin to form and develop under the guidance (even mis-guidance may be thought of as a type of guidance) of and in the environment of the caretakers (usually the parents).

Therefore, one may begin to formulate ideas and questions

from seeing how immigrants treat their children, as to the intrinsic feelings of life - particularly human life and relations deeply embedded in their culture, customs, and homeland environment - they carried with them from their native land. Comparing these "facts", feelings and attitudes with those of "typical Americans" and the American way of life would give further insight into growth and potential problems that may arise as a result of cultural conflict.

General Background

Virtually all of the inhabitants of Southeast Asia belong to the family of Mongoloids. The vast majority are village people, living in a land of monsoon weather, mountains, and lowland plains. Their religions are basically animistic, and are derived from the great religions of Asia and India, in particular, Buddhism. Many homes rest on stilts, and are constructed of bamboo or wood with thatch or corrugated iron roofs. Technology is similar throughout Southeast Asia, and iron is the basic material in the manufacture of tools and weapons. The diet consists of rice - their staple food - plus fish, vegetables, some meats, spicy curries, and noodles - in effect, a cross between the cuisine of China and India. Chopsticks and/or the fingers of the right hand are their eating utensils.

The languages are tonal with the syllable being the most common semantic and grammatical building block. Too, each country has hill people and plains people whose thoughts and ideas often conflict, resulting in violence - a two

thousand year old dispute as one might describe it. The plains people are a relatively dense and homogenous population who share one dominant religion and language, and are typically involved in rice agriculture. On the other hand, the hill peoples are heterogeneous in nature, with a multitude of languages, a shifting agriculture, a lack of political unity, and variations as to clothing, rituals, agricultural techniques, kinship practices, and so on. The marked division between the people of the plains and the hills grew as the war brought the construction of roads and the presence of trucks, cars, and the like. Thus, there does exist geographical and cultural uniformity alongside a great diversity.

Introduction to the Lao and Hmong of Laos

Two peoples were chosen by the author for study. These were the Lao and the Hmong of Laos. According to the January 17, 1977 issue of the San Diego Union (p. 4), 18,000 Laotian (Hmong and other tribal groups are often grouped with and may state their ethnicity as being Laotian, as well as the Lao people) refugees have been admitted to the United States. (They were given parolee or refugee status, and in two years will be eligible to become permanent residents. After five years in that status, they may apply for citizenship.) During the last half of 1976, (Ibid., p. 3) approximately 500 Laotians settled in San Diego, with the largest concentration being in the Linda Vista area.

Interest was aroused in the researcher by the admittance

of a dozen Asians into the preschool of which she is the assistant director. Communication problems of not only language but also cultural ways seemed to plague her, her associates, and the many English-as-a-Second-Language teachers there. Communication problems have since given way to questions concerning the why's of why the immigrants do, say, feel, and express things the way that they do. Thus, Lao and Hmong were chosen as the two most prevalent Linda Vista area groups, for study.

Laos is located in the eastern section of Southeast Asia, bordered by China to the north, Vietnam to the east, Cambodia to the south, and Thailand and Burma to the west. The Meking River flows through Laos' southern borders. Mountains pervade much of the land, with lush valleys to be found along the Mekong.

From the 1860's to August 1954, Indo-China, consisting of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, was deemed to be the richest colony of France. On July 19, 1949, France declared Laos a free nation within the French Union. Complete independence came in 1954 under the Geneva Agreement. Threat of and actual war has plagued Laos since then. The Plain of Jars was the first area to be totally destroyed by automated warfare. Laotian refugees fled during the war - many finding some hope in Thai refugee camps.

The "ethnic Lao" people live mainly in Laos, but also cover a wide area of northeastern Thailand. Population pressures generated by the Han Chinese seem to have been the

major reason for the migration of Tai-Lao. This then led to the founding of the Thai capital of Ayuthaza in 1350. The Hmong are just as widespread - from the hills of Laos to those of northern Vietnam and Thailand.

HMONG

Brief History

Hundreds of years ago, the Hmong fled China and slavery. Pressures from the Han Chinese during the past 500 or 600 years have also forced them into mountainous and marginal areas and pushed them southward. There, they had been called Miao or barbarians. Laotians too, scorned them as being "primitive" and called the Meo - barbarians. Today, (since the late 1950's) they call themselves Hmong - the free men.

Traditionally, they settled near mountain summits to grow corn, rice, and opium poppies. As the monsoon rains leached the soil, they relocated their villages in a constant cycle of slash and burn agriculture (clear the land, plant, move when nothing more will grow). As of the 1960's, the Hmong constituted ten per cent of Laos' population (Garrett, p. 78). With Communist infiltration, the Hmong fled from their homes to other villages, and to the lowlands. There was no guarantee that those places would be safe ones for long. "'Runnin' and dyin', runnin' and dyin', . . . 'That's all the Hmong have known. And now there's no place to run.'" (Garrett, p. 78) As of a few years ago, many Hmong lived in lowland jungle ghettos. War between the Communist-led Pathet Lao and the pro-Western Royal Lao Government forces raged on

until the recall of Western (foreign) military forces.

Dress

Originally from China, the Hmong can be said to be shorter; their eyes revealing less epicanthic fold, or Mongolian slant. The women have fair skin - a status symbol, particularly over the darker Lao Theung. Their good clothes consist of skirts, colorful sashes, and blouses with delicately embroidered collars. Silver neck-rings are worn to reflect family wealth. These rings are essential items of social prestige. Men wear the traditional black shirt and flaring trousers (a facimile of which is worn by men and women as working clothes).

Personal Nature

In Laos, the Hmong were noted for their fierce independence, their energy and drive, and their incurable optimism. "Tough, independent warriors, the Meo dwell in the hill villages. They refuse to live at altitudes below 3,000 feet, believing that to do so would cause them to sicken and die." (White, p. 264; relocation did in fact cause an increase in the disease and death rates.) Liberty and dignity are valued over any easy living.

Beliefs; Health and Disease

Their beliefs stem from their history, their culture, and their religion which was basically animism. In more recent years, missionaries have converted many of the Hmong people to Christianity. (Montgomery, discussion) Super-

stitutions, spirits, and spirit doctors are a part of everyday life and living. "Sickness results when evil spirits lure the soul from the body. Death comes if it fails to return." (Garrett, p. 87) Many Hmong - particularly the isolated Hmong - do not eagerly accept new ideas. When an American brought a Hmong village two hundred plants (to grow to supplement their diet), a disease caused many children to fall ill. Although doctors diagnosed and cured the mosquito-born virus, the plants were necessarily removed in order that exorcism could begin (the sacred ground had taken offense at the plants; Garrett, p. 97). Animal sacrifices are also believed to aid in the extinction of evil spirits.

Malaria was virtually unknown among the Hmong until the war forced them to move - a constant cycle of re-location. It strikes approximately eighty per cent of Hmong refugees settled in low-altitude villages. The average life span is thirty-five years; child mortality is fifty per cent.

Homes

Homes are built on the ground (on the hillsides) and have dirt floors, and no windows. Walls are made of puddled clay or ill-fitting boards. The roof is thatched or constructed of crude wooden shingles. Inside are family bedrooms - several nuclear families often inhabit the same house - along one wall, a guest bed (a bamboo platform) at the end of the living area, an inside stove, and an open fire pit (no chimney) and a storage loft. It is mandatory that a distant mountain be seen from either the front or the

back door. The Hmong live off the earth floor. Animal cor-
rals are near-by. Livestock usually consists of some or all
of the following: cattle, pigs, horses, chickens, dogs, and
cats.

Occupation

Farming is done on the extremely steep slopes in a
slash-and-burn system of agriculture. In effect, they
" . . . plow with fire and plant with the spear." (Garrett,
p. 95) A felicitous night is chosen.

On this night all the mountain tribes had
lit torches and had gone up to set the
mountain slope on fire. The jungle would
burn for several days. Then ashes would
cover the slopes of the mountain-blackened
ashes and dead earth. But when the rains
came, in a few days, the water on the ashes
would make rich, fertilized ground. And
in this black scorched earth the tribes
would plant their rice roots. From the
seedlings would grow their rice - not
paddy rice, but poor rice, mountain rice.

(Dooley, p. 341 - third book)

Men punch the holes, and women and children sow the seed.

At a normal pace, approximately four hundred square miles are
burned per year. From an economic standpoint, it is unfor-
tunate that this form of agriculture must be done, for the
burnt logs are monetarily worth hundreds of dollars apiece.
Basically, the Hmong grow rice, cabbage, potatoes, cucumbers,
corn, eggplant, Chinese mustard greens, gourds, sweet and
nonsweet potatoes, sorrell, green beans, and opium.

Diet

The diet of the Hmong consists of steamed rice, and
boiled vegetables. Also eaten are milled corn, and corn

bread, and for the adults, corn whiskey. Infrequently, chicken, pork, or game is eaten. Salt is scarce; food is occasionally spiced with chopped hot chilis. Dairy products are virtually non-existent. Opium is raised solely as a cash crop. Addiction is seen almost exclusively among the aged, the sick, and the dying. "A pound of opium commands the same price as a quarter of a ton of rice." (Garrett, p. 103) It does not spoil, as rice does, in the field or on the way to market. The Hmong do not condone addiction, and ". . . they feel no more moral responsibility for drug addiction than a tobacco farmer does for lung cancer." (Garrett, p. 104)

Family

Marriage is usually monogamous, although war and the decimation of the male population brought an increase in polygamy. The Hmong follow the custom of levirate marriage whereupon at the death of the husband, his oldest brother has first option on the widow, and if she does not marry a brother-in-law, her family must return a portion of the bride-price. The wife cooks, keeps house, grinds corn, pounds rice, tills the fields, and tends the children. Virginity is of little economic or moral value. Polygyny offers the woman her only taste of "women's liberation". Generally, a female who sings cleverly and dances well is worth more monetarily. Selection of one's mate is typically up to the young person, and courtship is often begun intensively during the New Year festival. Families are generally

patriarchal and patrilineal. The Hmong girl may become her mother-in-law's assistant, living in her husband's family. Situations may cause variations in this arrangement. "Many Hmong fear such traditions will disappear with gradual integration into the Lao culture" (Garrett, p. 101), however, as one successful Hmong among Laotians says, "'We must be proud of being Hmong, but we must learn to be proud of being Laotians'" (Garrett, p. 107), for it is only among the Laotians that the Hmong could find opportunities for "advancement".

Children

". . . The home is, for the Hmong, the only and true center of all activity, the prize position of man at the bosom of the universe, the place strongly spiritual and the basic social cell." (Translated by researcher, Lemoine, p. 99; much of the following information was taken from Lemoine.) Children are loved a great deal. Many are born - few survive.

Infancy -

"Moments after birth every baby receives a simple necklace to warn the spirits that he's not a slave and belongs to a family." (Garrett, p. 94) Thus, a symbol of history, economy, status, religious beliefs, and beauty is bestowed upon the child. The infant is fed when it cries, and if the mother has no breast milk, the child is fed rice and sugar. The baby may then be sung to sleep. Married couples may adopt any number of children, and these are treated as

natural-born children. Boys are preferred over girls solely because boys strengthen their own community while girls strengthen a foreign one. (Bernatzik, p. 79) The preference is not stressed by any means. Both boys and girls are treated affectionately by the family.

Infants are cared for by elderly women or older children while the mother works in the fields. However, if no one of these is available, the mother will carry the baby, and/or take a toddler along to the fields. Infants are usually dressed in only a shirt similar to those worn by adults. There is no "special" type of clothing for infants or young children. In fact, young children do not receive parental opposition to nudity until the age of six or seven years. Special attention is given to the infant's/young child's (up to age five or six years) cap to make it beautiful - a masterpiece. Too, the mother lovingly makes and decorates a baby-carrier which is made of a rectangular piece of cotton and is worn on the back to carry and support the infant. Decorations include "batik", embroidery, pompoms, and pieces of money. The infant is carried on the back, two long pieces of cloth crossing under the buttocks of the infant and around the mother's chest and midriff. The infant thus goes wherever the mother goes. Pants for the male child and skirt for the female marks the end of infancy.

The birth of children is important for many reasons, among them being the assurance of care for the parents in their old age, and death - particularly important in their

belief of reincarnation. A close parent-child relationship is begun and maintained throughout life. To the age of three years and more, the young child spends most of his/her time with his/her mother, staying only occasionally with older sisters or other female adults in the home. The infant is given his/her first toys at six to eight months of age. These may consist of small bells, colorful fruits, coins.

The infant is set on the mother's lap to be washed. When awake, the infant is free to play, particularly with his/her brothers and sisters, and familiar adults. Also s/he may be sat (when s/he is capable of sitting) on a mat to play alone. Young and old help the infant to learn to walk. Weary children (age three to five years) may still be carried on a parent's back. Among infants whimper a great deal, the cause often being frequent illness. Crying is considered to be a sign of falling into perdition, however, tears and wailing are easily aroused in adults at appropriate times such as death. Social contact is constant; also the mother will begin teaching the child to talk at a very early age, beginning with the words for mother and father. Talking begins around one year of age, and vocabulary and language increases rapidly.

Three to Five Years of Age -

Between three and five years of age, the young child spends a greater portion of time with the father. Often, another child has been born, taking the infant place of the growing toddler. Emotional ties grow stronger with father

and siblings, and less dependent on mother. The child now learns to feed him/herself and to eat with the family. S/he enters a time in which exploratory behavior prevails, and is tolerated, rarely reprimanded, and prevented only from doing that which is considered dangerous. The child seeks out his/her own playthings, such as sticks which are sometimes attached to strings by older brothers and sisters. Parents rarely make toys for their children (they do for infants, however), but older siblings and relatives often teach the young child to make his/her own wooden tops, cloth balls, and so on. Natural clay is molded into houses, animals, or people. Berries, fruits, and flowers may be plaited into wreaths.

Five Years of Age -

After the age of five years, the child associates increasingly with his/her siblings and less with the parents. Another infant has probably been born and now, the child has grown into an older child's social role. S/he is now of an age to be reprimanded sternly, followed by spankings and moments of hysterical cries (only at the most inappropriate behavioral events). A mother may exclaim, "You cause your mother to die!" Punishment and reward is the method, with punishment being rare - particularly of the physical sort. In addition to the onset of firm discipline, is the beginning of sex differentiation. At the age of five or six years, boys continue to associate among adults at feasts, for example, while girls remain at home and/or with the

women in the kitchen, eating when the females eat, wearing the skirt, and learning batik and embroidery. Adult roles are thus modelled, then increasingly imitated, learned, and performed by children. However, the children continue to have considerable time to play and do as they wish. Cleanliness and proper attire is now actively valued. Of particular importance are the distinctions between family members, for each position involves varying status, respect, and appropriate inter-relational behaviors. Thus, education for the Hmong child could be termed modelled lessons in practical Hmong living. Otherwise, parents seek to comply with their beloved child's wishes.

LAO

Personal Nature

The Lao parents live and raise their children similarly to the Hmong in many respects, yet are strikingly different. "What matters . . . is family loyalty; faith in the Buddha and staying at peace with the phis, the spirits; and to live in harmony with nature." (White, p. 242) Elizabeth Perazic (p. 54) summarizes the Lao nature in this way:

The Lao learn an enviable philosophy of life; respect for elders, for the priesthood, for king and authority; abiding family and village loyalties, love of gaiety, a gentle patience, and a desire to share with others.

Dress

Like the Hmong, jewelry is viewed as an important part of life. Gold is preferred, then silver, and interestingly,

clothing follows these in value. "Jewelry is believed to protect the wearer from harm and prevent the khwan (soul) from leaving his body and so causing illness." (Halpern, p. 88) Adults own at least one set of work clothes, and one set for holidays. Men prefer Western-style clothing to their own home-spun clothing. Women formerly wore no upper garment, until the missionaries came to the people with their beliefs. The female traditional garment consists of silk sarong-type skirts often of multicolored cloth with woven silver or gold trim. Shoes and socks are uncommon.

Beliefs

The two foremost concerns of a Lao are religious merit and pleasure. These concepts are derived from Buddhism. "At the heart of both is giving - expending - surplus lavishly." (LeBar, p. 101) Also of great value are: moderation in speech, willingness to work as hard as is necessary, lack of argumentativeness, readiness to compromise - and thus maintain harmony, and concealment of displeasing emotions. Striving, compulsion, and urgency are lacking. Flexibility and recreational values are strong. Holidays and religious festivals are enjoyed immensely. Merit or prestige are not to be gained through mere hoarding or acquisition. A social hierarchy is recognized and respected by all. The abbot of the village (Theravada Buddhist) pagoda is given the highest prestige, followed by monks, men, and so on. Manners, respect, and hospitality are expressed in the use of language: the joining of the hands, smiling, and bowing slightly; in

the restraint of gestures; and in quiet speech. Physical contact is unacceptable in social greetings. Emotional expression, eg. kissing in public, is discouraged. Pointing at (with finger or foot - eg. when crossing one's legs) the head is considered to be taboo, as the head is sacred. The Lao believe in field spirits, for example, the "soul of the rice". Animals may be sacrificed to the spirits in order to appease them.

The smile of the Lao - or of most any Asian - was reported to be overwhelming by many who visited there. "The Asian uses his smile as the mask or the mirror of his heart" (Dooley, p. 243, second book), however,

the people of Laos are not a happy care-free people. They laugh and smile, but they suffer. Their existence is eked out of this life with great effort, just as their villages are hacked from their savage jungle with great difficulty.

(Dooley, p. 325, third book)

Health and Disease

Malaria is the Lao's greatest problem health-wise. Acute upper respiratory infections, bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, dysentery, yaws, and skin ailments (primarily due to dietary imbalance) are also additional problems. Parasites are to be found, particularly in children. Those commonly found are roundworm, tapeworm, hookworm, and strongyloids. Oriental liver flukes are also health problems. Reinfection is most probable. Acute diseases of childhood take many lives. No national immunization program for mumps, whooping

cough, chicken pox, or measles has existed. Neither scarlet fever nor diphtheria has been prevented or treated on a large scale. "Tuberculosis ranked tenth in over-all prevalence in Laos . . ." as of 1967 (LeBar, P. 180) and dental problems were and probably still are widespread. Before the French colonized Laos, there were few, if any medical facilities. (It is interesting to note that one of the most frequent confusions associated with "modern" medicine to Dr. Tom Dooley was why one would receive a shot in the bottom if it was the tooth, head, etc. that hurt.) Dr. Tom Dooley, in The Edge of Tomorrow (Dooley, p. 182, second book) wrote that

No statistics exist on fetal mortality for Laos but I would estimate them to be about like this: Fifty per cent of pregnancies do not go to completion. Of one hundred babies conceived, only fifty will be born alive. Of these fifty, twenty will die during infancy from smallpox, cholera, malnutrition, whooping cough, or pneumonia. Of the thirty left, ten will die during childhood from malaria, trauma or dysentery. The twenty remaining will live to be ninety years old.

In spite of all of this - which the researcher feels is primarily true even today - Dooley (p. 197) concluded that "the basic fight in Laos is ignorance, not disease."

Homes

A typical house is set on stilts anywhere from three to eight feet above the ground to protect them against the mud of the rains. The floor is constructed of split bamboo, the walls are of woven mats, the roof is of thatch. The space beneath the house is utilized as an animal stable (not en-

closed), a workroom for loom-weaving (silk is produced in the Lao villages for each household's needs), and for polishing rice. Also, garbage and waste water are disposed through cracks in the floor to the pigs and chickens below. The odor of the family animals beneath the house is considered to be a sign of wealth. The Lao live and eat on the floor. Their home is near to paths and rivers. A Lao home is a sacred place presided over by a resident spirit.

Occupation

Irrigated rice cultivation (ie. paddy rice) is at the base of Lao farming. Subsidiary crops of central and northern Laos consist of betel nut, bananas, gourds, fruit trees, sugar cane, pineapple, pomelo, oranges in some areas, coffee, cassava, papaya, cotton, coconut trees, mangoes, yams, and corn. Also to be found in some areas are: beans, cucumbers, corn, chili, okra, citronella grass, eggplant, onions, garlic, cabbage, Chinese mustard, roots, mushrooms, bamboo shoots, tobacco, cotton, and opium. Fishing is also done, and occasional hunting in various areas. Lao livestock may consist of horses, pigs, cattle, elephants, poultry (all families own poultry), buffalo, and ducks.

Diet

Hunger is not uncommon. Malnutrition is prevalent; during peacetime, starvation is rare. Daily privation is present among the villagers. Rice is the basis of every meal, and there are three meals per day. Each meal consists of glutinous rice with chilis and padek - a spicy fish paste -

and sometimes is served with curries or other vegetables. The sticky rice is kneaded together and eaten like bread. Fish is served occasionally, meat rarely. Meat is usually associated with ceremonial and ritual occasions. The common between-meals food is fruit. No use of fresh milk or milk products is to be found. Canned milk however, is sometimes added to coffee, tea, or cocoa by the more prosperous villagers. Children and pregnant women (for reasons unknown to the authors surveyed) are banned from even canned milk.

Family

The extended Lao family is basically matrilocal in nature. The sons leave during adolescence years, enter the army, or travel to other villages. They meet girls somewhere and marry, then live in the girls' homes. Usually the youngest daughter inherits the major share of her parents' household and land. The average Lao family tends to be nuclear. However, as the family prospers materially, increasing pressure is placed upon them to remember their relatives and share it with them. Polygyny has existed, but mostly among the elite. The wife often has a considerable say in the management of the household budget. She may own her own business (eg. selling produce, weaving cloth skirts and scarves), engage in trade, gamble, or have governmental contracts. She may not, however, hold office. The male town dweller is often a government official or store-owner. His home and general way of life - tied to the ways, beliefs, and essence of village living - are greatly influenced by

Western - especially French - ways. This can readily be seen in town food, language, education, newspapers, magazines, bicycles, cars, etc. (see the Appendix for a more extensive comparison.) Ties with Thailand are strong also.

Children

Scant information is to be found regarding the rearing of young children. The family enjoys and strives to do most everything in a pleasant manner. One favorite activity is to sit together on the veranda and pass the time in conversation or in playing with the children. Children are loved and cherished by the Lao.

Infancy -

Birth occurs, it is said, "when the fruit is ripe" and then, "it will drop". (Dooley, p. 182, second book) An infant may be born after a hard day's work in the fields.

This is good. Hard work keeps the child small, and with the mother being on her feet continuously, the baby is in a head-down position. The squatting posture of Asians also helps the pelvic musculature, facilitating deliveries.

. . . Because it is a Lao married to a Lao, the child is fitted well to the pelvis from which he must make his exit.

(Dooley, p. 183, second book)

Birth is definitely a family affair. The rites of birth are many.

A small ball of rice and pork was put behind each ear of the child. This was so that he shall never be hungry. The father wrapped the child in his pakamo, the sarong-like skirt. If the child was a boy, the father put into this swaddling bundle an article of labor. He wished

him to be courageous, so he placed a small knife there too. If he had wished him to be studious he would have placed a writing brush; if a hunter, a crossbow and arrow. If the child had been a girl, a small gourd, or article of the loom, would have been placed in the bundle. The rice alcohol was then passed around, and everyone rejoiced.

(Dooley, p. 186, second book)

There are no rites of a Buddhist nature at birth, nor any corresponding to baptism. It is often a bonze (monk) who has a knowledge of astrology that is requested to suggest an auspicious name for the child. A feast for the entire village may follow this naming ceremony. The given name is usually a descriptive. Family names have been used only since 1943's governmental decree.

The First Years of Life -

During the first years of the infant's life, the child is almost always known by an affectionate nickname. Early, s/he is taught to do small jobs around the house, to help in the garden, and to haul water. Older people help in looking after the children. Usually, the children have no toys, but rather conjure up " . . . trains out of boxes" (White, p. 253), or amuse themselves with paper or string. Infants and small children often go naked. They are allowed to eliminate wherever they are as infants. Upon reaching the "stage" in which the child can crawl, s/he is shown a place beneath the bottom of the house stairs to eliminate in, which the child learns and does readily. After learning to walk, the child is shown where the family "laterine" is. The child is never

forced or goaded into performing but is rather shown through modelling and/or direction occasionally the preferred area of elimination. "Laotian mothers worship their children. They take great care of them and often push their weakness for their children to such a point as to prolong the period of breast-feeding often beyond the child's fourth year." (Reinach, p. 137)

Respect is taught early. The child is to be obedient and always respectful towards his/her father. The same deference is expected, but is less formally expressed toward the mother and women of her generation. Respect is also given to older siblings, however, their relationship, particularly between brother and sister, must more importantly be informal and easy. Siblings usually sleep together, particularly when of a young age. Touching or "over-friendliness" in public between male and female siblings may be interpreted as sexual interest (especially older children). Even husband and wife do not show affection publicly.

Parents follow a somewhat loose code of morals, and yet, affection between parent and child is strong.

The pervading individualism of Lao-Buddhist life and its implicit emphasis on personal responsibility for self is reflected in the lack of overt guidance the young child receives. He is not pushed or even encouraged in learning to walk or to swim (a skill learned among the lowlanders almost as soon as walking) nor is he given any mark of approbation when he does learn. The child is presumed to gain the idea that the acquisition of these skills is its own reward. Apparently the only attention he

gets is a watchful eye lest he hurt himself seriously.

(LeBar, p. 97)

Elizabeth Perazic noted that, "Barely does one meet children as obedient yet not subservient, as well-mannered and charming and still full of mischief, as the children of Laos." (p. 54) By the age of three years, the child is free to alternate between his/her village age-mates' world of play and his/her home environment of family protection, permissiveness, and deference to seniority. The child soon discovers for him/herself the relationships of cooperation, compromise, and consideration. Self-reliance becomes well developed, and as flexibility increases, protection decreases.

LeBar expresses Lao early learning succinctly and well:

Children are not pressed into performing household and farm tasks. It is said of girls, for instance, that they learn rice-hulling, food preparation, and weaving mainly by association with and observation of their elders, picking up first the simpler tasks, and these very much at their own volition in their own good time. The same is true of the boys, but their introduction into family tasks is said to come later, with, for example, minding the family buffalo when it is not at work, taking it to the wallow, or gathering forage for it.

(LeBar, pp. 97-98)

Discipline follows Buddhist philosophy and teachings. Physical punishment is rare, with admonition being the most common form of correction. Shame rather than a guilt-reaction is sought, for example: "'no child of mine should behave thus' (you should therefore be ashamed) rather than 'this conduct is wicked' (you have sinned)." (LeBar, p. 98)

Parents wish for their children to be successful (eg. to take on a higher social position in life if possible) but view their hopes as being dependent upon each child's inherent merit. Although self-responsibility is important, it is not to be pursued regardless of the rights of others. Respect patterns are learned early, and gentle virtues such as modesty, serenity, self-restraint, generosity, and hospitality, reverence for family members and others and for elders in particular, and careful good manners are stressed. The bonze (monk) is given the greatest respect and even infants are aided by their mothers in the joining of hands before the face and bowing to the bonzes. Loyalty goes primarily to the family, then to Buddhist precepts and bonzes, then to one's village.

Traditionally, the bonze was considered to be the best qualified teacher. Much of Laotian culture is transmitted orally from father to son. Village elders aided in the instruction and often added to the recreational delight of children by relating folk-tales, handed down for generations to the children. For male children beginning at age nine or so, the bonze was considered to be the best qualified and only teacher to be found in the Laotian villages until the arrival of the French and their formal education. (Despite this, boys even as young as five years of age, were given to the bonze to train and become a neophyte bonze for a year or so.) In principle, secular education has been compulsory in Laos since 1957. Inadequate funds, the scarcity of trained admin-

istrators and teachers, the limited opportunities for higher education locally, and Laos' ethnic diversity are but a few of the educational problems that were to be faced. Monastic education did continue to provide teaching of practical Lao-tian Buddhist living. The wars in Southeast Asia did much to interrupt the spread of public education.

THE IMPACT OF THE VIETNAM WAR ON LAO AND HMONG CHILDREN

War upset, displaced, and destroyed family and village life. Few were exempt from its affects. Even briefly, it can be seen that children suffered and probably understood the war and killings the least. Refugees of the Plain of Jars said many children died from a lack of discipline - they often failed to come when called by the parents during air attacks, and would eat of the "poisons" dropped from the air. Infants were born, but no fires could be lit lest their locale be spotted by planes. Young children were forced to live in small shelters with many other villagers, and many died as the holes became muddy and " . . . they never got any sunshine." (Branfman, p. 103) The relocation of many from higher to lower altitudes resulted in exposure to weather and diseases to which the refugees were unaccustomed. Illness and death, particularly of children, resulted.

"Rice comes from the sky," a refugee child in Laos might tell you. Many children in the war-battered Southeast Asian land have never received the precious grain any other way.

(Sloan, p. 370)

One haunting tale is reported by Peter White (p. 254):

The father had been sitting on a swing in the big room, as Lao like to do. He was holding his two-year old daughter in his lap. Six feet away his wife peeled cucumbers. Then a grenade went off under the swing. I saw the swing, pierced with two dozen holes. The father was dead. Wife and daughter were in the hospital.

The grandfather and what was left of the family ate quietly around the table. How did the grenade get there? Perhaps someone had planted it. Perhaps a dog had dragged it in. Did it matter? Did anything matter?

It can be easily understood why a Lao father might be inclined to teach his son to be a fatalist (other than the fact that it is a part of Buddhist precepts) - ". . . your life is long - be a fatalist, but move your feet!" (White, p. 271)

A BRIEF VIEW OF AMERICAN CHILD-REARING ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

Thus, the Laotian - be s/he Lao, Hmong, or other Southeast Asian cultural member - full of tradition, left his/her homeland and headed for "places unknown" (basically Thai refugee camps, then the United States). What kind of American family life was s/he to find?

From An Anthropological Viewpoint

Beatrice White (p. 925) summarizes American child-rearing of a 1960's small town New England parents thusly: first, the ideal parent is an observer of the child's behavior, and secondly, s/he is constantly aware and cognissant of the child's potential. Knowledge of norms and stages of growth

are considered important tools in aiding the child's growth process.

Lack of discipline is thought to cause both spoiling and laziness, and forcing the child is thought to develop nervousness, rebelliousness, discipline problems and lack of appetite. The physical growth and health of the child are specifically parental responsibilities to the extent that it is a parental duty to see that the child has proper nourishment, avoids illnesses by dressing properly and keeps away from children with contagious diseases. It is also the parents' duty to divine and aid the development of the child's potential.

(Whiting, p. 925)

Education is essential - particularly of the secular type. The ideal infant, young boy, and young girl, were described by the Fischers (anthropologists - Whiting, p. 928) mostly in terms of cooperative, "proper" behavior.

Problems for American parents concerning child-rearing lend themselves to those concerning: sleep - getting "enough" sleep; training and control of the child by the parent; clothing - getting them on and keeping them on the child; eating - balanced meals, not too many sweets; toilet-training - keeping pants dry. Play is encouraged, and often the young child's request to aid the mother in her housework is viewed as recreation for the child. Toys are many in number and of various sorts. Sharing and property rights of toys are stressed. The daily routine is informal, unsupervised play, with mother close by. Children under the age of twelve years are thought to be incapable of properly caring for the young child. Jealousy is believed to be a "natural" thing

between siblings, thus the parents ideally attempt to treat their children equally. Father's relationship to his children is as varied as his time spent with them. Overall, parents' basic concern is that the child show evidence of being happy and of having positive emotion. As the child grows, s/he is exposed to new relationships with an extended number of people (including children) and places; s/he becomes more capable of meeting his/her own needs; and begins to take on activities/attitudes of the appropriate sex.

Robert Bell in Studies in Marriage and the Family (p. 160) more recently states that

the changes in child rearing and child care have been so extensive in the American middle class that there may be significant differences in beliefs from one generation to another. Child rearing procedures in recent years have undergone such rapid change that mothers sometimes feel concern not over whether what they are doing is right, but whether it is still "believed" to be right. One can almost select child-rearing beliefs at random and then, by looking around, find some experts to support them.

Major emphasis has been placed on individualism and the individual needs of family members. Being liked by many others is considered important, as well as being: moderately competitive, bright but not brilliant, attractive but not beautiful. This concept has been backed by Erik Erikson who feels that

. . . the functioning American, as the heir of a history of extreme contrasts and abrupt changes, bases his final ego identity on some tentative combination of dynamic polarities such as migratory

and sedentary, individualistic and standardized, competitive and co-operative, pious and freethinking, responsible and cynical, etc.

(p. 286)

Weaning and defecation training seemed to occur earlier and be stressed more than in other more "primitive" cultures and societies studied by Whiting and Child.

From an Asian Viewpoint

An Indonesian viewed the United States as being a "gigantic machine monster" (Joseph, p. 196) containing an atmosphere of haste, blaring signs, and advertisements. He felt strongly that "Americans take the bounty of their country for granted." (Joseph, p. 200) Concerning children, a Chinese writer observed America's concern with children's rights, and their support of child specialists.

American parents not only wish to help their children according to their own experiences, but also they must try to find out by elaborate research what the youngsters really want, (so that the elders can better satisfy the youngsters' individual predilections). They feel compelled to reduce even the rudiments of a child's education to a matter of fun.
(Hsu, p. 80)

Hsu also found that the social and commercial world of the parent allows no trespassing by children, just as parents are supposed to refrain from entering into their children's activities. A pattern of mutual dependence among children was found. In reference to the child, Hsu adds that

. . . his needs for sociability, security, and status among his peer group must take precedence over his

feelings for his elders. It is not even that he misunderstands his elders. Rather, the urgency of his own social needs precludes his acceptance of their communication.

(Hsu, p. 107)

LAO AND HMONG PARENTS IN SAN DIEGO

Their Problems and Concerns About Their Children

What have the Lao and Hmong (hereafter grouped together as Laotians for convenience) seen and feel about American children and parents? Rather than making a value judgment on an American family, the Laotian "naturally" thinks in terms of the immediate context of a situation. An American boy named Jay, for instance, plays with a Laotian boy. The Laotian parent would feel that Jay is a nice little boy, and never see any reason to connect his play - friendly or harmful - with the manner in which Jay's parent(s) treat Jay. In the case of a "fight" the Laotian mother might comment that the neighbor's boy hit her boy. Laotian children do not normally fight among themselves. They share because there has never been too much to share; they have little spats but never seem to attack or fight with one another (this is not to say that they never hurt each other); they may take something from another child, and they may become unhappy and yell at one another, but striking another child has not been the Laotian child's way. As an aside - it would be interesting to determine the impact of American television on the Laotian children.

According to Galen Berry of the International Rescue

Committee of San Diego, the greatest adjustments Laotian families have had to make in San Diego are: having someone to care for the children (welfare rules and regulations do specify that able-bodied adults must be in at least a training or school program, and these are usually held during daytime hours) despite the seeming fact that even a child at the age of six can competently care for children and a household for a few hours (California law requires babysitters to be at least in their adolescent years); and adjustment to school. The latter of the two has been quite simple with concern only as to education's monetary cost. Concerning the former, in Laos, young children are quite capable of making group decisions and do in fact, begin taking care of one another from the time they are born - the difference in the United States being that in America, adults make decisions in a "room apart" from the children. Laotian children are accustomed to attending village meetings and such, and if the child should fall asleep it was considered the child's "fault" and believed that after a time, s/he would learn that sleep follows tiredness. S/he may only be excluded from, for example, a meeting because of disruptive crying. The Laotian child is permitted into most every facet of adult life.

Americans make appointments with doctors. Appointments and schedules were confusing in themselves to Laotians. In Laos, if one felt ill, one called someone or went to a dispensary and received help. The Laotian life is a relax-

ed one. Thus, it was difficult for a Laotian to comprehend having sufficient time, energy, and desire to work all day then attend classes at night too plus care for a family. With English class and work being dependent on one another for the continuation of either, the Laotian might have decided to quit both. The trend towards the opposite direction - towards scheduling - is increasing, and the confusion plus the rumor of living well solely off of welfare is decreasing.

The researcher asked Galen about the Laotian parent's attitudes toward and concerns about their children in America. First, they are concerned about who will care for the children during the parents' absence, second is education, and third is adjusting the children to American ways, particularly using the bathroom (which has been, for the most part, successfully learned) and keeping one's shoes on one's feet (which still poses a few problems as a parent may say that the child does not want to wear shoes, and force is not their way of handling such things).

Discipline has remained verbal, the concept behind the verbalizations being: hey, don't do that; grow up!; go play with your things. In extreme cases, a light swat may be given the child, but more often the verbalizations bordering on verbal threats are used. Teachers and monks in Laos disciplined children in a similar fashion, however, there, it was a privilege and an honor to be able to attend school. It would be interesting to study the effects of American extra-familial socialization on the children.

A concern of some of the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers, and the teachers of the day-care center where the researcher is employed, were ailing children. It was felt that the parents should keep their ill children at home. Some did, however, a few parents persisted for a time to bring the sick children to the day-care center or to ESL classes with them. There are among the Laotians, varying reactions of individuals to the sick. Often, if the child is not sick enough to warrant going to the hospital, and is not well enough to leave at home or at the center, and the parent desires and feels the need (particularly if on a welfare program calling for schooling) to attend class but has no one to care for the child, the parent may take the child along with him/her. Most likely, the parent has limited knowledge of the causes or contagiousness of disease and illness and remembers a homeland where the child's presence at even a business meeting was not uncommon. Also, a parent may hesitate to leave his/her child with a neighbor if the neighbor him/herself has many children and has often cared for the parent's child(ren) too.

Should a child cry out of his/her pain due to illness, the parent may gently say something which might be interpreted as: "'I say, we can't have that sort of thing now, can we?' ie. it's not between you and me, it's something bigger than all of us . . ." (Galen Berry, interview). It is quite a different approach than saying "Stop doing that!"

Even in America, the home teaching of Laotian children

is through observation and imitation of parental modelling, particularly concerning differing status and roles. When new and confusing ways and mannerisms of Americans are explained to a Laotian, the typical reaction has been one of complete acceptance. Even the Asian parents of the day-care center children now pat their children on the head in an affectionate, cuddling manner without hesitation.

One man (Laotian) wrote me and said something like this, "one thing I tell you, I think Americans are crazy: they get up in the morning, they rush, rush, rush, they eat breakfast, they rush, rush, rush to work, in the evening they rush, rush off to play somewhere, then they rush back. They do this five days a week, fifty-two weeks every year, then they have heart-attack. I think you are all crazy - but I will learn your ways."

(Berry, interview)

Some concepts have been harder to accept than others. The idea of parents physically or emotionally abusing their children and leaving scars and bruises has stupefied some. Individual Laotian attitudes and reactions do vary, the influencing factors being the degree of cultural sophistication, the locale from which they came - city versus rural or the tribal group to which they belong, and what period of time they have experienced - pre-, mid-, post-war, etc.

There was, during the departure of American troops, great concern over the orphanage children. One may express some relief, as the Communists did take over the orphanages as they were - in fact, it was one of the first things they did after taking over an area - and put a Communist person in

charge of it. The idea behind this was their belief that the children be allowed to lead a good life, just like everyone else. All that has been previously mentioned concerning Laotian child-rearing was basically fitting for the time period up to the Communist take-over. Since then, government-run day-care centers have gradually been set up to take care of children whose parents could attend training or Communist indoctrination programs or study. This action removed many children from a portion of the family environment, however, the change did offer the parents opportunities they had never had before.

The researcher sought to gain additional information about child-rearing attitudes and practices from parents themselves. Few interviews were made, for in the half-dozen or so months the Laotians have been in San Diego, the most common excuse was lack of time. The few interviews that were held via interpreter reflected, for the most part, the everyday living philosophies of "typical" Laotians. The parent wishes her child to "do its thing", the only qualifications possibly being that the child be not overly noisy or say harmful, hurting words. She wishes her child to learn English, and to listen to what the parent says. Toys, dolls for the girls, guns and cars for the boys are given to the child as playthings for the child and for playful interaction of child and parent. When angry with the child, the parent may verbalize it to the child, perhaps following it with restriction (the child may not be allowed to go outside, for example), or

a kind word of reassurance. Dangerous items in the child's possession are taken "gently" (as opposed to snatching the object away) from the child. S/he is then either verbally forbidden to repeat the action or simply told to stop. "Love" for/to the child is shown through the bestowal of presents. To appease a child's crying, screaming, and/or yelling, the parent gives him/her cookies or candy, or the item s/he wanted, and say something nice to him/her. If the child cries out of his/her illness, the parent may say, "don't cry" in a gentle soothing manner, and if the child is deemed to be quite ill, s/he is taken to see a doctor.

The tenor of the few Laotians interviewed is similar in many respects, yet overall calmer and in American parents' sight, most likely more lenient than that of the few Americans interviewed. Whereas the Laotian mothers could not come up with answers as to what nice or naughty things parents and children could do for and to each other (one must remember that the majority of Laotians have not been socialized to be able to answer questionnaires, fill out forms, or participate in interviews, or for that matter, discuss the manner in which they raise children), the American parents had difficulty narrowing their answers down to a few remarks. Sharing, giving something that one has created, evidence of growth, and unexpected affectionate responses were considered the nicer things a child could do for a parent. Being happy was considered important. Destructive behavior of various sorts - overt messiness, tantrums, defiance, etc. - were disliked.

The parents attempted verbal discipline when angered by the child, and sometimes added moderate physical punishment (e.g., spanking). Physical and emotional abuse were cited as unhealthy responses to any child. Crying or tantrum behavior (of the non-injured sort) was either ignored or completely confronted. No appeasement was given to it by those American parents interviewed. Illnesses were to be treated by a doctor if serious, with minor bumps and bruises ignored or merely acknowledged.

Lao and Hmong Children's Adjustment as Observed in a San Diego Day-Care Center

Over the past several months, the Linda Vista Christian Day-Care Center (in which the researcher is employed) has had a dozen Asians, ten of whom have continued their attendance, and seven of whom are Laotian (five Lao, one Hmong, one Lao/Hmong). Observing their progress has been fascinating. Within the past three to five months, the children have come from a crying, withdrawn, completely passive state to one of complete activity, English (more of which is known and understood than spoken - possibly for manipulative reasons and reasons of convenience), and a smattering of non-destructive mischief. They eat, for the most part, any and all of the foods (using spoons and fingers when convenient) presented them at snack and lunch times (particularly the three boys), and participate quietly in circle times (during which stories are read, simple lessons presented, songs sung, etc.). Only a few minor incidents concerning urination in improper places

were incurred. The Hmong girl in particular practices her English words constantly - when in the presence of a teacher, at least - by pointing to objects and saying their name or sending a questioning look to the teacher. She has, over the past few months, become an accepted outdoor playmate of the Lao children (Hmong and Lao traditionally do not view one another favorably). The Lao children also have managed to teach a Thai-speaking Cambodian child the Lao language, and - as her father has told the teachers - encouraged her (more strongly at first, but considerably less at present) to speak Lao and not English.

Indoor play in the classrooms has increasingly brought them into new friend relationships. (Separating the ten Asian children into four separate classrooms has probably aided in this.) Initially, the American and Asian children shyed away from one another, but with curiosity. Having begun learning one another's names, the children, particularly the Americans, have called occasionally on the Asians (especially when there is no one else available to play) to initiate play. Indoor play lends itself to playing in the housekeeping corner (both boys and girls) or playing with cars, trucks, etc. (usually boys). Artwork is also an enjoyed activity. Outdoor play consists greatly of games of tease and chase, running, sitting around and talking. Candy remains primarily at home now, as well as the ailing children. Shoes stay on, the children are now more willing to part with their "precious" clothes (held on to initially it seems as

security items and out of fear they would not be returned), and tears are rare when parent, sibling, friend leaves the child at the center. The assimilation and accomodation of these Asian children and their parents seems phenomenal, particularly if one American enters the thought of his/her being plucked from one's homeland of hundreds of years and dropped into a society which is not prepared to meet, greet, or deal with you, and which is almost completely different from one's own in every respect.

In the opinion of the author, the Laotian children prefer to play with one another not only because they come from similar backgrounds and experiences, but also because they still possess many social qualities different from the American children. For example, the author has rarely if ever, seen the Laotians deliberately approach another Laotian and hurt them. Of course, they tease and poke at one another, but the author has never encountered a child crying and forlorn, apart from the others for more than a few minutes. Their American counterparts will, at times, openly strike and inflict pain upon one another, and in rare instances, upon adults. One may wonder what influence violence on television and the sometimes harmful aggressiveness of American children will have on these Laotian youngsters. The Laotians may tease, and take another's possessions, but upon the former's complaint will return the item intact after a time. Their tolerance of one another and of a wide variety of circumstances seems greater than that of the American chil-

dren. The American children, the author has observed, may grab the item out of another's grasp and return it intact, mutilated, destroyed, or not at all. Galen Berry explained that the Laotian children have never had much in the way of personal plaything possessions, and thus never seemed to have material jealousy, or the intent to destroy another's property. It will be interesting to see if America's value of material wealth - of owning things and striving to possess more - will cause the Laotian child to do as American children do. Another item to be observed is the change/lack of change of the Laotian child's respect for others, particularly his/her elders. American out-spokenness, independence, self-assertion, self-respect, pseudo-equality, and casual treatment of the elderly and those older than oneself, may influence the Laotian child's attitude of respect. In what directions will the Laotian child (immigrant or child of immigrant parents) grow? Conflicting values and practices are many. Observation of the Laotian child's dealings with American children and American society may give clues as to potential generation and cultural gaps in the future.

WHAT LAOTIANS AND AMERICANS MAY GAIN FROM ONE ANOTHER

"All societies in the past and present have regarded childbearing and child rearing as involving a variety of personal and social obligations." (Bell, p. 182) The child grows within a family. Too, most societies delegate to the parents the responsibility of meeting the infant's needs, and providing for the child until s/he reaches the socially

determined age of independence. It is the obligation of the parents to produce a functioning member of society from their child, and they are generally considered responsible for the child's inadequacies. Society's role in socialization is not to be forgotten. Yet,

because the parent-child relationship has been in existence so long in all societies, many view it as a "natural" rather than socially determined. Historically it has been assumed that, if adults were capable of having children, they were capable of rearing them. The fact that many adults in all societies are poor parents, by any criteria, is generally ignored.

(Bell, p. 183)

Thus, there is much that all humans may learn from one another. Just what can Americans and immigrant Laotians learn from each other?

Americans may offer the Laotian ". . . a healthy and strong inner resistance to the threat of conformity arising from mass production, mass communication, and mass culture." (Joseph, p. 203) The Laotian may learn of American pragmatism, rationality, the active search for answers, realization of one's abilities to reach one's objectives, individualism. Too, s/he may encounter the American values of self-expression, progressive education, and self-reliance. As an Indonesian stated, the American may gain perhaps, a greater loving and caring type of concern for the elderly, a less hurried, and more restful way of life, and family cohesiveness in terms of mutual dependency, and better unity of the parent's and the child's worlds and reality in an affectionate, sharing, un-

derstanding, non-judgmental (in terms of good versus bad),
growing way. What Americans and Laotians and their children
learn of and from one another is yet to be seen.

APPENDIX



Vientiane, Saravane, and Champassak provinces were subdivided in 1964, creating the additional provinces of Borikhané, Napikhanthong, and Sithandone respectively.

(Halpern, p.x)

The following information is provided not only for interest but also to answer some of the many questions about diet the author has received concerning the Lao people from ESL and day-care center teachers.

Fruits and Vegetables of Northern Laos
(paraphrased and chosen) (Halpern, Table 20)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Comments</u>
bamboo shoots	important food item
bananas	fresh or dried
bean sprouts	common
beans	available
cabbage	grown by Lao and Hmong
chili peppers	important in diet of all groups
Chinese mustard	grown by Hmong
coconut	eaten as sweet, milk and meat important supplementary foods; used in cooking
coffee	fairly common
coriander	plentiful in July
corn	grown by Hmong - usually fed to livestock
cucumbers	available
eggplant	available
ginger	common to Lao as a spice
lemon	Lao - frequent food
lichees	plentiful in July
limes	plentiful in July
mangoes	plentiful in July
melons	summer fruit
mint	in many Lao dishes
onions	fresh and dried
oranges	in Nam Bac
papaya	a favorite

peaches	Hmong
peanuts	shelled/unshelled
pineapple	in July
pomelo	in July
potatoes (white)	Hmong
rice	Lao staple
scallions	Lao
sugar cane	Lao and some Hmong villages
tamarind	used for jam
tomatoes	available in spring
watermelon	Lao

Livestock, Fish, and Fowl Products in Northern Laos

(paraphrased and chosen)

(Halpern, Table 21)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Comments</u>
bat	Lao - dried and fried
birds	Lao - in soup or fried with vegetables
buffalo bones	for soup
buffalo skin	Lao - boiled and eaten
chicken	medium-size, plucked
chicken eggs	aged
cicadas	delicacies
crickets	delicacies
doves	delicacies
duck eggs	aged
lard	Lao - supplement to fish oil for cooking

pig intestines	Lao - in making sausage
pig skin	Lao - dried delicacy/eaten as snack
pork	primary meat source - all groups

Some Home-Prepared Foods Sold on the Luang Prabang Market
(Luang Prabang is a Laotian province) (Halpern, Table 22)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>
Khao poun	Lao noodles: a fine rice vermicelli
Khao poun	The noodles served in a sauce of meat, fish, and grated coconut cooked in coconut milk and flavored with onions and garlic; raw chopped bean sprouts, mint, and banana flower stamens are sprinkled on top
Padek	Fish mixed with salt, rice, and rice bran and allowed to ferment; keeps for 6 to 12 months; purchased by Lao and Khmu
Som mou	Chopped pork, pig skin, salt, saltpeter, onions, and steamed rice packed into banana-leaf wrappers and allowed to ferment for several days
Sai ou	Similar ingredients as above, but no saltpeter as preservative; instead stuffed in pig intestines and smoked to make sausage.
Khao lam	Glutinous rice mixed with coconut milk and a little sugar and steamed inside a section of bamboo
Voun	A candy made of coconut milk cooked with gelatin and tinted a bright pink color; after setting, it is cut in squares

Some Rural-Urban Differences Among the Lao

(Halpern, Table 29)

Villages

Prosperous Town Dweller

Works at agricultural labor	Works in an office or store
Has largely subsistence economy, with small amount of cash	Is salaried or gets other cash income
Is illiterate or rarely has more than three years of schooling	Has had six years or more of schooling
Speaks only Lao	Fair to good speaking knowledge of French
With rare exceptions, has traveled only within his own province	At least moderate travel within Laos and possibly abroad
Has no contact with Europeans, only occasional with Chinese or Vietnamese	Some contact with Europeans, frequent contact with Chinese and Vietnamese
House is traditional bamboo and thatch, possibly with some wood, on piles; sleeps on bamboo mat, uses low stools, simple kerosene lamp or candlelight illumination	House may be of concrete construction in European style, usually has electricity; home has chairs, tables, and beds
Usually has only one wife	May have two or three wives
All domestic work usually done by members of own household	May have one or more servants
May own a bicycle	Owens a bicycle; may own a jeep or other type of automobile
Clothing is mostly homespun, plus cheap manufactured items; often has no shoes, little jewelry	Clothing is both European and traditional Lao; women have gold and silver jewelry
Has little knowledge or interest in government affairs	Often has considerable interest in government and politics and reads a newspaper

Distrusts, resents, and sometimes fears townspeople	Often shows disdain for villagers, treats them with consideration
Relies for recreation on traditional village celebrations, rice wine	Often attends movies, plays tennis, drinks beer, listens to radio
Treats monks with great respect and often joins priesthood (usually on a temporary basis)	Religion and participation in pagoda activities plays a smaller role in his life
Relies primarily on traditional curing techniques from monks or village curers	Uses both Western and traditional medical techniques

Concerning the following questionnaire:

It was intended that this study be primarily involved with answers and information received from interviews with Asian and American parents, however, problems of time, convenience, translation, and so on besseged the author, who as a result, chose to use interview material as an added source of information.

Also, the English of the English/Lao translation is worded as closely as possible to the Laotian interpretation. An American version follows.

INTERVIEW

1. What country do you come from?

ຫາມມາຈາກປະເທດໄທ?

What town?

ເມັງໄທ?

In what province?

ແລະ ເມັງໄທ?

2. Are you Lao, or Hmong, or what?

ເຈົ້າເປັນຄົນລາວ, ມັງ ຫຼື ເມັງໄທ?

Is your wife/husband Lao, Hmong, or what?

ສົມ. ຫຼື ເມັງຂອງເຈົ້າເປັນຄົນລາວ, ມັງ ຫຼື ເມັງໄທ?

3. How old are you?

ບາງເຈົ້າໄດ້ຈັກປີ?

How old is your wife/husband?

ສົມ ຫຼື ເມັງຂອງເຈົ້າອາຍຸຈັກປີ?

4. What was your job in the country you came from?

ເຈົ້າໄດ້ ທຳກິດຈະກຳ ທີ່ປະເທດໄທ ແຕ່ລາວ ຫຼື ຂ້າມຂອງເຈົ້າ?

5. How many children do you have?

ເຈົ້າມີ ຄົນຈັກຄົນ?

What age are they?

ຂອບເຂດ ຂອງ ທ່ານ ບາງປີ ຫຼື ບາງປີ?

Are they boys or girls?

ເຂົາເປັນ ຜູ້ຊາຍ ຫຼື ຜູ້ຍິງ?

6. How many months have you been in the United States?

ເຈົ້າໄດ້ ຢູ່ ສະຫະລັດ ມາ ມາດເກີດ ຈັກ ຄອນແມັດ?

ABOUT A 3 TO 5 YEAR OLD CHILD

ໃຫ້ ທ່ານ ອາຍຸ ແຕ່ 3 ຫາ 5 ປີ

1. If a 3 or 4 year old child did something nice for you, what would s/he do?

ຖ້າ ມີ ຄົນ ຄົນ ທີ່ ອາຍຸ 3-4 ປີ ໄດ້ ສົນໃຈ ທ່ານ ຫຼື ຈ່ວຍ ທ່ານ ແລະ ພ້ອມ ພ້ອມ ຈັກ ທ່ານ ເປັນ ບາງ ສິ່ງ ທີ່ ທ່ານ ໄດ້ ທຳ ກິດ ຈັກ ທ່ານ ຫຼື ທ່ານ ຈັກ ທ່ານ?

2. What is the worst thing a 3 or 4 year old child could do?

ສິ່ງ ທີ່ ຈ່ວຍ ທ່ານ ແລະ ຈ່ວຍ ທ່ານ ທີ່ ທ່ານ ຈັກ ທ່ານ ຫຼື ຈ່ວຍ ທ່ານ ຫຼື ຈ່ວຍ ທ່ານ ທີ່ ທ່ານ ຈັກ ທ່ານ?

11. What do you do when your child is playing with something dangerous (knife, fire, etc.)?

အကယ်၍ သူ့က သေဆုံးစေနိုင်တဲ့ အရာတွေကို ကစားနေရင် အဖေအမေက အတင်းအဓိကတည်း ခြိမ်းခြောက်ပြီး ရှောင်ဖို့ ပြောရမယ်။ (သတ်၊ နှစ်)

12. How does a mother/father show her/his child that s/he loves the child?

အဖေအမေက သူတို့ရဲ့ ကလေးကို ချစ်တဲ့ အပြုအမူတွေကို ပြသပေးရမယ်။ ချစ်စရာ အပြုအမူတွေကို ပြသပေးရမယ်။

13. What does a mother/father do when a child starts to scream, yell, and cry? *(The child is not crying because s/he is physically hurt)*

သားသမီးက အော်နေရင် အဖေအမေက သူတို့ရဲ့ ကလေးကို ချစ်စရာ အပြုအမူတွေကို ပြသပေးရမယ်။ သူတို့ရဲ့ ကလေးကို ချစ်စရာ အပြုအမူတွေကို ပြသပေးရမယ်။

14. What does a mother/father do when a child hurts him/herself and starts to cry?

အဖေအမေက သူတို့ရဲ့ ကလေးကို ချစ်စရာ အပြုအမူတွေကို ပြသပေးရမယ်။ သူတို့ရဲ့ ကလေးကို ချစ်စရာ အပြုအမူတွေကို ပြသပေးရမယ်။

INTERVIEW

1. What is your ethnic background?
What is your husband/wife's ethnic background?
2. How old are you?
How old is your husband/wife?
3. What type of job do you now have?
4. How many children do you have?
How old are they?
Are they boys or girls?

ABOUT THE 3 TO 5 YEAR OLD CHILD

1. If a 3 or 4 year old child did something nice for a parent, what would s/he do?
2. What is the worst thing a 3 or 4 year old child could do?
3. What is the nicest thing that a mother/father could do for her/his child?
4. What is the worst thing a mother/father could do to her/his child?
5. What does your child do that makes you angry?
6. What does your child do that pleases/makes you feel happy?
7. What is the best thing a parent could do to help his/her child behave?
8. What is the worst thing a parent could do to help his/her child behave?

9. What do you enjoy doing with your child?
10. What do you do when your child makes you very angry?
What does your husband/wife do?
11. What do you do when your child is playing with something dangerous
(knife, fire, etc)?
12. How does a parent show his/her child that s/he loves the child?
13. What does a parent do when a child starts to scream, yell, and cry?
(the child is not crying because of a physical injury)
14. What does a parent do when a child hurts him/herself and starts
to cry?

BUDDHISM

(from The World's Great Religions, pp. 37, 40, 42, 46, 50)

"The Way of the Law"

All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts. . . . If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love Carpenters fashion wood; wise people fashion themselves.

- from the Dhammapada

There are two extremes, brothers, which he who has given up the world ought to avoid. What are these two extremes? A life given to pleasures, devoted to pleasures and to lusts - this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble and profitless. And a life given to mortifications - this is painful, ignoble and profitless. By avoiding these two extremes, brothers, I have gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge and Supreme Enlightenment It is the Noble Eightfold Path.

- from the Maha-Vagga of the
Vinaya Texts

Four Noble Truths

1. Suffering is universal.
2. The cause of suffering is craving, or selfish desire.
3. The cure for suffering is to rid oneself of cravings.
4. The way to be rid of craving is to follow the Noble

Eightfold Path.

Noble Eightfold Path

1. Right knowledge.
2. Right intention.
3. Right speech.
4. Right conduct.
5. Right means of livelihood.
6. Right effort.
7. Right mindfulness.
8. Right concentration.

One's own self conquered is better than all other people
conquered

- from the Dhammapada

Hinayana Buddhism

Salvation depends on one's own right living.

The Hinayana stress is on each individual's mastering
himself, so that he may reach self-purification.

Mahayana Buddhism

. . . Buddha's greatest virtue lay in his selfless
devotion to others.

Since a Mahayana Buddhist can appeal for help to a
godlike figure, who is a glorious redeemer, he can hope for
salvation through his faith and devotion.

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Diego, Calif. 92111, (714) 277-0523.

YOUNG CHILDREN OF CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM

with

a Table

comparing

Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, and American
National Identity, Beliefs, Families, Children

This supplemental section has been briefly drawn up to allow the reader an outline of Cambodian and Vietnamese (pre-Communist) life, particularly of the environment in which the "typical" child was raised. It may be read apart from the former study "Children of Laos". It is not a totally complete study, but is an additional source of information from which further study might be inspired. Too, the supplemental material will hopefully adequately answer some of the many questions of the ESL (English as a Second Language) and day-care center teachers at the Linda Vista Presbyterian Church and Christian Day-Care Center.

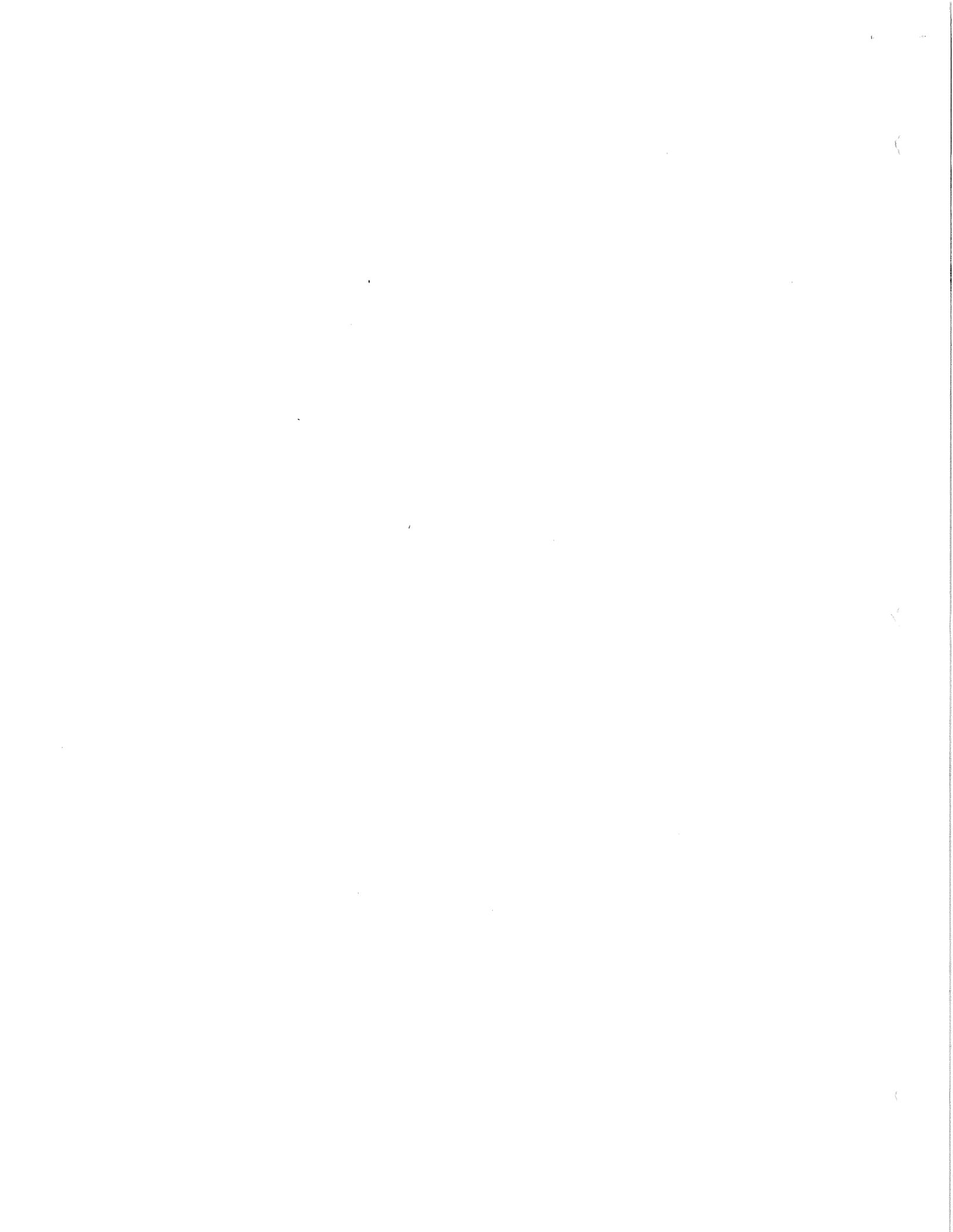


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TABLE A Comparison of National Identity, Beliefs,

Families, and Children
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

". . . Virtually all mainland Southeast Asians belong to the worldwide family of Mongoloids, whose various members look a lot less distinctive than often is assumed." (White, p. 304) More than half of the peoples of Southeast Asia are villagers. There is much cultural similarity among them. Prosperity is not flaunted, sharing what one has and helping one another is taken for granted.

Like everyone else, he lives in a bamboo house; he exerts himself during the rice-planting and harvesting seasons, and works hard around the house and relaxes in the time of festivals. If the government has not provided a teacher, his children will be taught like everyone else's - the boys by the village monks, the girls by their mother. And if he falls ill, he'll call the spirit doctor . . .

(White, p. 317)

Social harmony is the aim of, and a way of life. It must be preserved, and is a necessity for the welfare of everyone. Anger may exist, but it is improper to show it lest one's neighbor (who may be needed to help harvest the rice) take offense. Thus, the Asian will smile, and s/he will smile not only in anger, but also in sorrow, misunderstanding, worry, embarrassment, and so on.

The smile reflects the Buddha's teaching - to take the middle path, to avoid anger and hatred if possible, to avoid showing any strong emotions as much as one can. Strong emotions mean craving, which is the root of all suffering in the world. The Buddhist way to remove the suffering is to remove the craving. The principle injunction in terms of one's own life is to avoid emotional extremes and social disharmony.

(White, p. 320)

There is great geographical and cultural uniformity. Monsoon weather pervades the mountains and lowland plains of Southeast Asia. Many homes, particularly those in non-hilly areas, are on stilts, and constructed of bamboo or wood with thatch or corrugated iron roofs. Technological habits are similar - tools and weapons made of iron - and the majority of people cultivate rice - their staple food. Other foods consist of fish, vegetables, meat (but not often), spicy curries, and noodles, usually eaten with chopsticks or the fingers of the right hand. The cuisine is somewhat of a cross between that of China and India.

Each Southeast Asian country has both hill people and plains people. Their relationship is usually one of conflict, and their differences are many. Their languages - although they are many in number and different from one another - are tonal. The syllable is usually considered to be the grammatical and semantic building block. The family organization is usually free of domination by grandparents. Language reveals the status of the person spoken to as well as that of the speaker. Women hold a respected position. Southeast Asians also believe in the propitiation of malignant spirits and have a variety of religions, most of which involve animism. Plains people constitute a relatively homogenous and dense population. There is one dominant language, and adherence to one religion. In Laos and Cambodia, it is Theravada Buddhism, in Vietnam it is Mahayana Buddhism. The hill people on the other hand, are a heterogeneous group with no

political unity and a multitude of languages. Shifting agriculture and varying religious beliefs are practiced. Clothing, kinship practices, religious rituals, and agricultural techniques may also vary according to the tribe. Roads, trucks, cars, and so on, have since caused a greater division between the people of the plains and the people of the hills.

Education of the secular type has not been very successful in any part of Indochina on a nationwide basis. None of the countries are wealthy enough, nor have they the resources with which to provide schooling and insist that all children attend. French, missionary and Western ways have influenced the urban and some lowland areas, however, and provided limited public schooling.

The children and child-rearing practices and attitudes of Indochina vary and contrast as the cultural and geographical aspects of the land and peoples. Indochina consists of three areas: Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam - the region in the most south-eastern part of mainland Southeast Asia. The former has already been discussed in some detail. Attention will now be directed toward the latter.

VIETNAM

Family

The family is the basic unit of Vietnamese society. It has been deeply influenced by the Chinese. Every Vietnamese bears one of a limited number (perhaps as few as three hundred) of family names. The family name precedes the given name. The most common surname is Nguyen, followed by others

such as Le, Tran, Pham, Phan. People are referred to by their given - not family - names. With so few surnames, it is not uncommon for two people of the same surname to marry. Chinese characters are chosen to stand for their names. Like the Chinese, Vietnamese idealize large extended paternalistic families. (Young moderns however do not always agree with this ideal.) Traditionally, the authority of the father is almost absolute. This ideal is rarely realized however, the more typical family being nuclear. The family system has been somewhat broken down and weakened by members moving to other areas. Regardless, the family is first in importance, followed by the state. There is little interest in aiding those outside of the extended family. As a whole, the people are gentle and shy, yet outgoing in nature. Their devotion to Mahayana Buddhism lends their acts to be often ones of service orientation. Their children seem fearless, fun-loving, and natural care-takers of one another.

Dress

Women commonly wear the ao-dai which is an over-dress worn over white or black trousers. Men traditionally dress in attire similar to that of the women, but generally prefer Western-type clothing. Children usually wear Western-type until adolescence.

Diet

The staple food is rice. (The major occupation is rice cultivation.) Other elements of the Vietnamese diet are:

fish, pork, tongue, heart, intestines, stomach, coagulated animal blood, soups laden with noodles, hot peppers, spices, fish sauce, soy-bean sauces, fresh fruits (bananas, mangoes, papayas, oranges, coconuts, pineapple), vegetables, green tea, sweets, coconut cakes, Chinese food, and American candy. Two or three meals are eaten daily, with a two-hour siesta following lunch.

Beliefs

Respect for one's ancestors and those of higher hierarchical status than oneself is of primary importance. Ancestor worship and pessimism and fatalism are concepts stressed in Buddhism. One indication of the former is the habit of the Vietnamese to not look straight into the eyes of the person being spoken to. To look thusly is considered most impolite - a clear sign of disrespect. Waving or beckoning with an up-turned finger is also discouraged, as this is how dogs and animals were called. It is an insult to touch anyone on the head (a spirit lives there) or shoulder (a genie resides there). Loud arguments as well as heated discussions are frowned upon. Self-discipline is thus important. Unlike Americans, the direct approach in dealings is considered untactful. Compliance to another's wishes, particularly to one who is of higher status, is valued. Thus, a Vietnamese may respond with "yes" when the answer should be "no".

The average Vietnamese has never been in a position to control his own environment, and he is reluctant to act on his own initiative Over the centuries he has been taught to accept authority

at every stage of his existence.
(Hammer, p. 28)

Duty and hierarchy are therefore stressed and expressed.

Education

The Vietnamese have a great tradition of education. They are quite aggressive in the sense that they are taught to value studying and learning, for with an education, it is believed that one can "get ahead in the world", plus bring honor to one's family. Education turns man into a scholar, and a scholar into a ruler. In fact,

the mother must carry on prenatal education with her baby, acting and talking as if he were in her presence at all times, guiding and counselling him in physical, intellectual, and moral activities.

(Crawford, p. 122)

Home teaching through lessons is begun when the child is very young. In South Vietnam, the law (before Western troop recall) provided for free compulsory education for children over five years of age for the first three grades of primary school. Unfortunately, few went beyond that. Private French schools, if one could afford it, were quite good. Criticism (pre-recall of Western troops) of secular government-run education of north and of south was justified. The north emphasized political indoctrination whereas the south's teachings were old-fashioned and ill-adapted to the present time.

Women

Women have great influence in the family and are considered thrifty and are treated with respect. They do heavy field

work, and have the right to inherit land and property. Also, they maintain special property rights separate from those of their husbands. There is separation of the sexes, however the socially assigned differences may be at times difficult to ascertain. Women are the family treasurers and the family moral authorities.

Health and Disease

Health and hygienic habits are poor when compared to Western standards. The poor dental condition of the Vietnamese is due mostly to their diet which is light in proteins and heavy in carbohydrates, and to their poor mouth hygiene. Parasites (particularly those of the intestines) are endemic. The majority of children have some form of worms. Scabies is common as well as hepatitis and trachoma. Circumcision of infants is not common. Malaria, tuberculosis, and some leprosy may be found. In the south, cholera and bubonic plague continue to be health problems. Malnutrition is often chronic.

Superstitions, astrology, and divination are woven into most every part of life. Disease is thought to be caused by spirits, who may be appeased by food offerings. One is "don't express lavish admiration for a new baby, because the devils might hear you and steal the child because of his desirability." (Crawford, p. 111) Parents choose the child's name carefully, for the proper one can bring good fortune to the family. One custom, better explained in quote follows.

Vietnamese refer to their children by numerals. It is convenient in their large families, and confuses any evil

spirits that might do harm, especially to the first-born. For this reason the oldest child in the South is number two, not one. The rest follow in numerical order. By doing this, the parents can also be sure they will not offend an older relative who might have the same given name.

(Lifton, p. 34)

It is no wonder that a parent may occasionally forget the given names of his/her children.

Children

Infants are held and carried a great deal. They are not encouraged to walk as much or as early as American babies. The responsibility for the care of the children is the task of the children themselves. Each is directly responsible for the younger one than s/he. Toilettina habits are learned through a child's imitation of older children. It is not uncommon for a child to urinate on the ground where s/he is, rather than going to the proper toilettina place. (To immigrant Vietnamese children, toilets, bathtubs, trash cans, and separate bedrooms for family members are an unfamiliar sight.) Childlessness is considered a tragedy. Boys are desired in order that they might carry on the family line and ancestral worship. Those unfortunate enough to have only girls must have done something wrong in their lives for which they are now being punished.

Love is communicated to the child through softly talking to him/her and through close physical contact and affection. Discipline is of a soft, verbal nature. Corporal punishment and extensive limits are generally not placed

on young children.

The Vietnamese people, including the children, usually do not express their anger or displeasure in a very direct manner; instead, it is expressed in a more passive way which may sometimes be interpreted by Westerners as stubborn, obstructionistic behavior.

(HEW pamphlet, p. 7)

The child is also not taught to verbally express thanks. S/he is expected, however to obey and respect his/her father throughout his/her life. Playthings are limited to pet crickets, caged mice, or lanterns at festival time. Children are more often left to discover for themselves things to interest them.

After the Communist take-over, the Communists set up many day-care centers in an attempt to reach out to the parents in caring for their children while offering the adults educational and indoctrinational programs. Also, orphanages were allowed to remain as they were, but under the administration of a Communist director.

Vietnamese in San Diego

The number of Vietnamese refugees in San Diego as of April 1976 was estimated at nine thousand. (San Diego Union-Tribune, no page number given.) However, this figure probably included many transients, and those waiting for sponsors from various parts of the country. No recent figures could be given the author by the newspaper or libraries.

CAMBODIA

'This section is presented in the past tense as there are

doubts that Cambodia will return to its pre-Vietnamese War life.)

Personal Nature

Cambodia was a land of rice plains and hilly jungles. About the size of Washington state, it was the home of Cambodians who called themselves Khmer after the royalty that once inhabited the land. A proud but easygoing people, they were usually smiling, always polite. Independence was gained from the French in 1953. Cambodia's national attitude might have been considered to consist of " . . . the quiescent life, the resignation of Buddha." (Abercrombie, p. 533) (War has devastated them, however, this will be discussed later.)

Beliefs

They were followers of Hinayana Buddhism, plus they believed in such things as seers, fortunetellers, and diviners. Respect of status and rank distinctions was important. Also valued were the unity of all life; the ultimate spiritual equality and perfectibility of mankind. Individual merit and reincarnation were additional beliefs. The Cambodian sought to avoid suffering - they emphasized self-discipline and harmonious relationships with others. Religious merit was something to be worked at and achieved.

The Cambodian's greatest anxiety is that he will be unable to perceive the nature of the situation in which he is involved at the moment, and hence not know how to act or what to expect of others.

(Steinberg, p. 274)

S/he felt most secure in knowing exactly what was expected

of him/her. When uncertain of the situation, or if placed in a situation of conflicts, s/he tended to withdraw. The Cambodian way contained no true concept of negotiation. Formal and private roles were kept distinct. A high tolerance was held for variations in personal behavior. Personal independence was valued greatly.

. . . Independence connotes freedom from any obligation or commitment beyond the prescribed role of his immediate status and the particular situations he is in The ability in certain limits, at will and to make a clean break with the past is highly prized.

(Steinberg, pp. 276-277)

Occupation and Homes

Rice cultivation was the main occupation. The average farmer produced little more than his grandfather did - sufficient rice for the family. His wife preferred small-grained rice, thus the long-grained rice preferred by the Europeans, was exported. Farmers were fishermen too in the lowland areas. Forestry and limited industry also existed. Exports were commonly rubber, rice, and corn. Farmers lived in thatched stilt houses (because of the monsoon rains and ensuing mud) clustered around the village pagoda. Mangrove piles were the foundations of the homes, whose front yards were shaded by banana trees and lemon groves. Most resided along the shores of the Mekong River and Tonle Sap (Great Lake). Some Cambodians lived on the waters, many of these were fish farmers. Sampans, junks, bamboo rafts, barges, and boats would fill the rivers with people going from place to place or buying

and selling or trading goods. Carp, chub, and eels were caught and sold. Rubber plantations were worked by Cambodians but were owned and operated by the French.

A Khmer-Loeu village was considered tribal when compared to the few urban areas. The Khmer's value of independence was evident in their everyday life. Their houses were small. Each family group occupied a separate house, farmed its own vegetable garden and rice paddy, planned and operated as an independent unit. Major social, domestic, religious, and shared daily activities were handled by the immediate family members. The very poor had one-room houses, the better off families had homes containing several rooms. A kitchen shed, also on stilts, was adjoined to the back of the house by a ramp. Looms, livestock, and carts were stored beneath the house. "Crowding is general and privacy at a premium; since there is also little protection from outside curiosity, everybody in the community knows a good deal about everyone else." (Steinberg, p. 78) Elephants were trained to aid the rice and manioc farmers in clearing the land of trees in order that cultivation could commence. A community storehouse contained surplus foods. The diet consisted of mainly rice, pork, and fermented rice wine. Other foods included bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, sweet manioc, melons, blood soup, roast lizard, sunflower seeds, chong roet - cicadas broiled crisp over charcoal, ansamcheks - leaf-wrapped rice cakes with banana centers.

Dress

The men wore only a loincloth. Bare-breasted women were often laden with jewelry - bracelets, rings, necklaces of brass and aluminum, and strings of glassy blue beads. A bright belt and black sarong (called a sampot) completed the hill-tribe costume. They also wore bundles of sticks through their ear lobes, and like men and children, darkened their teeth with betel nut.

Beliefs and Practices

The wife carried the basic social and moral values of life and was thus highly regarded by men and society. She maintained the household, was usually the family treasurer, and had an equal footing with her husband. All ages and sexes puffed tobacco, which one writer likened to smoking lava.

Infants were toted by parents in cotton shoulder slings. Many infants had all of their hair shaved save for a center lock. It was believed that hair was the favority hiding place of evil spirits. At an astrologically proper time during puberty, the lock was cut by the achar and the monks. The child was deemed to be an adult, and hair was left to grow until the person became a monk, got sick, or until a death occurred in the family.

Education

In traditional pagoda schools, young boys chanted lessons from sastras - Buddhist scriptures written in rhyme on long bundles of palm leaves. The monks were the teachers. Their robes were either yellow (a royal color) or red (a pro-

pitious color). Secular schools did allow girls, and were built by village people, with materials generally supplied by the government.

Cambodians of Non-tribal Villages

Cambodians of non-tribal villages lived somewhat differently. All of the women wore sampots with blouses (usually white ones). Wedding sampots were richly made of brocade. The very wealthy resided in urban villas which had beautiful verandas. Education was gradually being sought as a means of personal advancement and as a patriotic duty. Its goals were to train administrators and technical experts, and to create civil servants. Much schooling was in French. National patterns of thought were reinforced. These Cambodians had elaborate festivals, complete with ritual, ballet, fireworks, and dancing. They enjoyed the spectator sports of soccer, bicycling, auto racing, basketball, and boating. Kite flying, and movies were favorite pasttimes. Yet they too followed the Buddhist precepts of sanctity of all life and love for man and all creatures. Ties to the homeland were strong, and permanent separation from it was feared to have an effect on one's reincarnation.

Diet

Meals were considered to be rituals - no talking was allowed. All wash before and after eating. The basic foods were rice, fish, and water. Tea was drunk between meals. Supplemental foods might have consisted of vegetables, beef and pork, poultry, eggs, and fruits (particularly bananas) which

were available according to one's wealth and the season.

Health and Disease

Disease was common among the Cambodian peoples. Malaria, tuberculosis, yaws, and dysentery were but a few of the illnesses to be found. Dysentery was one of the major causes of infant mortality. Fifty percent of the children born died before the age of one year. Life expectancy of a villager was barely thirty years.

Family

An ideal household in Cambodia consisted of a married couple and their unmarried children. Extreme poverty in some cases did not allow for this. Plural marriage was sanctioned with monogamy being the rule for most (polygyny was expensive). Five children were considered to be the ideal. Adoption was common and orphans - even if Eurasian - were usually taken into the family and treated as offspring. Illegitimate children too were accepted without shame or prejudicial attitudes. The kinship system was bilateral with no maternal or paternal bias. Respect for one's elders was expected, but ancestor worship was not stressed. Language primarily reflected the status of persons. Children used respectful language in speaking to their elders, while parents used a familiar, curt language in conversing with their children. From early childhood, the Cambodian was encouraged to confide in the bonze (monk). Also, it was not considered shameful to display emotions outwardly. Patting or touching another's head

was considered injurious to the soul residing in the head of the person involved.

Children

Normal childbirth was but a slight disruption in the family's daily routine. Shortly after delivery (a few days or so) the mother resumed her work. When her strength was mostly restored, a celebration was held. The mother breast-fed her child until two or three years of age, the extent of it usually being determined by the arrival of the next sibling. From the initial months, the infant is also fed large quantities of masticated rice and mashed bananas.

Children were often nicknamed after grotesque animals or astrological numerals in order to ward off evil spirits. When ill, the nickname was changed to confuse the responsible spirit.

Affection was expressed through cuddling, fondling, and a kiss - the pressing of the nose close to the cheek and strongly inhaling. Children were not fussed over, nor were they goaded into adopting adult behaviors and attitudes. They were encouraged to care for themselves, and one another. As the child began to assert his/her individual personality, parental attentiveness began to diminish. A few chores were not given until adolescence. As an aside: unlike children of the rural people, urban children enjoyed movies, particularly American ones depicting cowboys and gangsters which the city children then imitated in their play. (A lack of information as to village children's play was encountered by the author.

It is assumed that it was similar to the play of the village children of Laos and Vietnam - self-created and self-initiated.)

Cambodia During and After the Vietnam War

There has been little hope of the renewal of Cambodia since the onset of the Communist take-over in April, 1975. Unlike Vietnam and Laos, the take-over of Cambodia was and continues to be a bloody, murderous, ruthless one. Premeditated killing and looting was and is carried out by the Angka Loeu - the Organization on High. The young and the old were the first to die. Disease, pestilence, hunger and death continue to spread as the actual destruction of the Khmer culture is being carried out. There exist strictures against everything foreign - music, dance, sex, traditional family relations.

Parents might "request" a certain form of behavior, but their children were free to disregard the request. And children were singled out for the most intensive brainwashing "As a result, all the children turned into little spies, reporting everything that was said at home." . . . Some children derived a heady sense of power from the knowledge that he could place the life of any elder in jeopardy.

(Barron, p. 254)

Thus, it was with grief - grief over the loss of a beautiful culture - and fear - fear for the non-Communist Cambodians (the Khmer, once a proud people) - that the author wrote this section. Even conditions of the Thai refugee camps, despite their noise, crowded conditions, stench and filth, and rancid water seem lovely when compared to the tragedy that began at the recall of Western troops.

Cambodians in San Diego

Approximately 300 Cambodian refugees were estimated to reside in San Diego as of February 1977. (Sexton, p. B-8) Most were originally villagers, farmers, or soldiers. They, like the Vietnamese and Laotians, are striving to "fit-in". Their progress has been remarkable. It is therefore hoped that with an increased understanding of Indochinese immigrant parents and children, that greater acceptance and improved positive relations be developed, and lessons learned of one another.

The following table is "A Comparison of National Identity, Beliefs, Families, Children" compiled by the author. This is not and should not be viewed or utilized as a means of stereotyping these peoples, but only as another tool by which to come to a greater understanding of some of the refugees' backgrounds, values, cultures, and behaviors, as compared and contrasted to one another and to American society.

Item	Khmer	Laotian	Cambodian (Khmer)
National Character	fiercely independent energetic optimistic liberty and dignity more important than an easy living quiet	moderation respect of elders loyalty love of safety balance conscientious sharing harmonious religious merit and pleasure are two foremost concerns individualism self-responsibility quiet	proud easy-going usually smiling polite individual religious merit important self-discipline harmonious avoid suffering roles - important personal independence valued greatly
	The Family is Primary in Importance and is Valued Most Highly		
Religion	animistic beliefs superstitious	Theravada Buddhism (Hinayana) superstitious	Theravada Buddhism superstitious believe in reincarnation
Family	paternalistic patriarchal	matrilocal	bilateral five children considered ideal
Pace of Life	slow pace, work as hard as is "necessary"; harmony the aim		
Infants and Very Young Children 1. and parents	boys and girls loved equally adoption allowed loved	cherished worshipped adoption allowed, done frequently	cuddled, fondled, but not fussed over adoption - common illegitimate children - readily accepted
2. clothing	none specifically (shirt or naked)	often naked	often naked
3. rearing	mother - infancy to) or so	mother, older women, siblings - care for infant	mother cares for infant children care for themselves and one another

Vietnamese

oriented toward service
orientation, ie. giving,
sharing
respectful of elders
pessimism and fatalism
self-discipline
compliant
family is most important

Mahayana Buddhism
ancestor worship
superstitions

paternalistic
large (the more children the
better)

slow pace, work as hard as is
necessary; harmony the aim

childlessness - parents are
being punished for past
wrong-doings
close physical contact and
affection

Western-type in lowland areas

mother cares for infant
children care for one another
and themselves

American

individualism
individual needs of family
members are important
moderately competitive, bright)
attractive (ideally)
status among peers - important
roles - important
pragmatic
rational
goal oriented
individual is most important

Protestant and variety of
other forms of religion

varies, mostly nuclear
family with no close ties
to others

full of scheduling, fast
pace
much competition

equal number of boys and
girls - ideally one of
each, for example
adoption and illegitimate
children - generally ac-
cepted but not always com-
pletely

special clothing made for
children, modelled some-
what after adult styles

basically mother is res-
ponsible for infant and
child

<u>Item</u>	<u>Laotian</u>	<u>Lao</u>	<u>Cambodian (Khmer)</u>
rearing (cont.)	<p>social contact constant by age 3, vocabulary is almost adult level</p> <p>3-5 - time mostly with father, engages more fully in family life</p> <p>5+ - time spent mostly with siblings</p>	<p>3+ - allowed to play with village children or play at home</p> <p>fathers enjoy young children, often in evenings</p>	<p>given a few chores (no real responsibilities until adolescence)</p>
4. toys	<p>infancy - small bells, fruits, coins</p> <p>young children - wooden tops, cloth balls</p> <p>natural clay - molding</p> <p>berries, fruits</p>	<p>child seeks and makes own amusement</p>	<p>child seeks own amusement</p> <p>Khmer children may smoke</p>
5. discipling	<p>no punishment child is rarely reprimanded except when in danger</p> <p>5+ - stern reprimanding followed by spankings and moments of adult hysterical cries - the most extreme response to extremely "inappropriate" behavior</p>	<p>physical punishment - rare</p> <p>admonition - shame rather than guilt - reaction is sought</p> <p>restriction of activities</p>	<p>physical punishment - rare</p> <p>gentle verbal reprimand not goaded into adopting adult behavior and attitudes</p>
6. sex differentiation	<p>boy infants preferred but is not evident in parental behavior</p>	<p>not evident until school age (6-8 or so)</p>	<p>not evident until school age (6-8 or so)</p>

Vietnamese

American

weaning early, toilet-training as early and quickly as possible
may be left with babysitter briefly or at day-care center and/or preschool

pet cricket or mouse in cage
festival lanterns
child seeks own amusement

many and varied, mostly manufactured then purchased by parent

soft, verbal type
no corporal punishment
no extensive limits on behavior

physical and/or emotional abuse at extreme end of responses to inappropriate behavior
commonly restriction, reasoning, spanking, slap, removal from item/situation

not evident until school age (age 6-8 or so)
boys desired to carry on family line and ancestral worship

stress on it varies, usually "tom-boys" tolerated better than "sissies"

<u>Item</u>	<u>Hmong</u>	<u>Laotian</u>	<u>Lao</u>	<u>Cambodian (Khmer)</u>
sex differentiation (cont.)	begins more strictly at age 5.			
7. education	learn through observation of parental and sibling behaviors, respect of status emphasized, other-wise parents comply with child's wishes	early - taught to do small chores taught respect, obedience no overt guidance assumed that child will eventually learn by himself, or through observation and imitation		sought after in urban areas taught respect of elders encouraged by parents to confide in bonze
8. character	fighting to hurt one another is rare little evidence of jealousy, fighting, overt aggressiveness curious exploratory capable of making adult decisions at an early age (ex. 6 years or so)	fighting to hurt one another is rare obedient yet subservient well-mannered and charming yet mischevious self-reliant		respectful quiet self-reliable
9. relationship to adult's world		child is allowed to be as much or as little a part of the adult's world as s/he chooses infant - taken everywhere (ie. wherever adult chooses to take him/her which includes adult activities)		
10. parental reaction to child's interpersonal conflicts with other children		taken in context: "_____ hit my child"		

Vietnamese

American

from prenatal stage, mother
begins talking to and "teach-
ing" fetus
valued highly by parents
mother teaches young child
child also learns through ob-
servation of others
child is not taught to verbally
express thanks

manners - considered fairly
important
secular education - essen-
tial
sharing
toilet training - essential
at an early age
"play" - encouraged
rely somewhat on child spe-
cialists for guidance

fearless
fun-loving
natural care-takers of one
another
expected to obey and respect
father

"naturally" jealous
curious
moderately irresponsible
for the most part incapable
of making adult decisions
or dealing in the adult
world until late adoles-
cence
consequences of certain be-
haviors must be explained
to the child

child is allowed to be as much
or as little a part of the
adult world as s/he chooses
infant - taken everywhere

child's world separated
from adult's world

taken in context: "___ hit
my child"

child is seen as product
of parent sometimes to
the point that a parent
might say "Your naughty
(bad) little child hurt
my child" therefore mak-
ing a value judgement of
the parent

item

Hmong

Laotian

Lao

Cambodian (Khmer)

11. parental reaction to tantrum, fitful crying, etc. (not caused by physical pain)

placate with liked things (in U.S. - toys, candy) and nice words

12. parental reaction to crying out of pain

comfort, if illness/injury is serious, seek "medical" attention
continue daily routines unless child is deemed ill enough to warrant hospitalization or treatment

Vietnamese

placate with liked things
(in U.S. - toys, candy)
and nice words

comfort, if illness/injury is
serious, seek "medical"
attention
continue daily routines unless
child is deemed seriously
ill

American

ignore to confront-type of
response - - wide variation

ignore if minor abrasion,
etc.
seek medical attention if
seriously ill or injured
keep child home

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