

January 2, 1973

Dear Bill,

Thanks for the wire. We got a lot of work done the last trip and made some important findings. As usual, every time we go, we discover more work which should be done, but isn't, and sadly enough probably never will.

This b^o t^he family in Pha Te looks to be extremely important, a group which no one has had contact with for a great many years. I would like to arrange for us to visit them next trip (not sure when but I'll let you know in advance this time).

The Akha dialect of your informant is not the usual one. To go by Bellinger (Tribal Research Center Publication) it is closest to Dauffles (1906).

We are having discussions now about the possibility for a summer project of linguistic investigation in Houei Sai for the ten students at the Lao section. Can you think of any possibilities for housing and do you have any comments to make on the whole subject? We will keep you informed of our progress here.

I have just read your Education in Muang Sayasila. Could we please beg a copy for our files at Ethnic Minorities Project?

Enclosed find copy of field trip report.

Best wishes to you and all my
friends in Houei Sai,



James R. Chamberlain

Bill Sage

Report of Field trip to Ban Houei Sai December 13-16, 1972

Asia Foundation - Ministry of Social Welfare

Ethnic Minorities Research Project

James R. Chamberlain - Research Consultant

0. In many ways this report represents a continuation of the last report dated 10/27 - 10/31. It is aimed at clarifying the classification of the ethnic groups in Houa Khong Province and locating informants and talented people from the various groups.

1. Revision of Classification

According to the informants interviewed, the Mon-Khmer languages of Hqok, Kwen, Sam Taw, and Kĕt are closely related, and Bit, Sila, and Lamet form another branch, more distantly related. That Sam Taw and Kwen are very close was born out by subsequent linguistic work done with the aid of Ford Foundation linguist Jimmy G. Harris, and our work with Lamet also showed that group to be much less closely related. These informants all claimed that Khmu? was very close to the Kwen group. Lamet revealed only a very few loan words from Lao, whereas Kwen and Sam Taw both contained a relatively high percentage of Lao loans. One fascinating thing was the existence of tone contrasts in Sam Taw and Kwen on native words (ie. non-borrowed lexical items).

Kassak (ksak) in Luang Prabang are supposed to be a Mon-Khmer group that became Laoized. M. Amphay Dore, however, feels they might be an older Tai group similar to Saek. More investigation is needed.

The Akha informant gave us three different names for different Akha groups:

1. tc^hi cə
2. bu li?
3. bə tc^hE

The latter group was unknown to other Akhas and it was later discovered that there was only one family of bə tc^hE living at Ban Pha Te, and they are able to read and write with a kind of Tibetan alphabet. These are probably Nakhi or Nashi from northern Yunnan province in China. There is, however, still the possibility that they are Minchia or Lutzuo who have learned the script. All efforts should be made to contact this family as soon as possible.

Gordon Young was able to clarify the classification of Lahu groups for us as follows:

Black Lahu:

Lalø (or White Lahu)

Ku-lao

Na-hpeh

Other Lahu:

Panna?

Aga

Shi (Yellow)

2. As evidence of the great need for collecting manuscripts, we photographed examples of Kalom, Lanten, and Nua documents. The Lanten script (a Chinese based system) was not comprehensible to the Yao who also use a Chinese system. (On our most recent trip, the Lanten language was shown to be very different from Yao, not mutually intelligible, but some Lanten speakers have learned how to speak Yao).

3. Interviews with Kwen, Sam Taw, Yay (Nhang), and Akha informants gave us great insight into the divergent social systems of these groups. The need for human understanding is great in this province and we have not yet scratched the surface.

4. An unexpected event was making the acquaintance of M. Amphay Dore in Luang Prabang. He is a Lao man who has recently returned from France with an advanced degree in Psychology and who is currently carrying out anthropological and sociological research under a grant from the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique. We would like to recruit him for research with the Ethnic Minorities Project. The ^{subject} ~~topic~~ of his thesis was a socio-psychological study of the word ປຶ້ງ (piap) in Laos.

Addenda: This trip was made along with M. Panh Phomsombath and M. Sumitr Pitiphat, both researchers with the project. The second trip alluded to with the Ford Foundation linguist was made with myself and M. Khotamy Phanorith, Director of Studies, Lao Section, Dong Dok 12/20 - 12/23 for the sole purpose of linguistic field work in order to prepare materials for the teaching of phonetics in the Lao section.