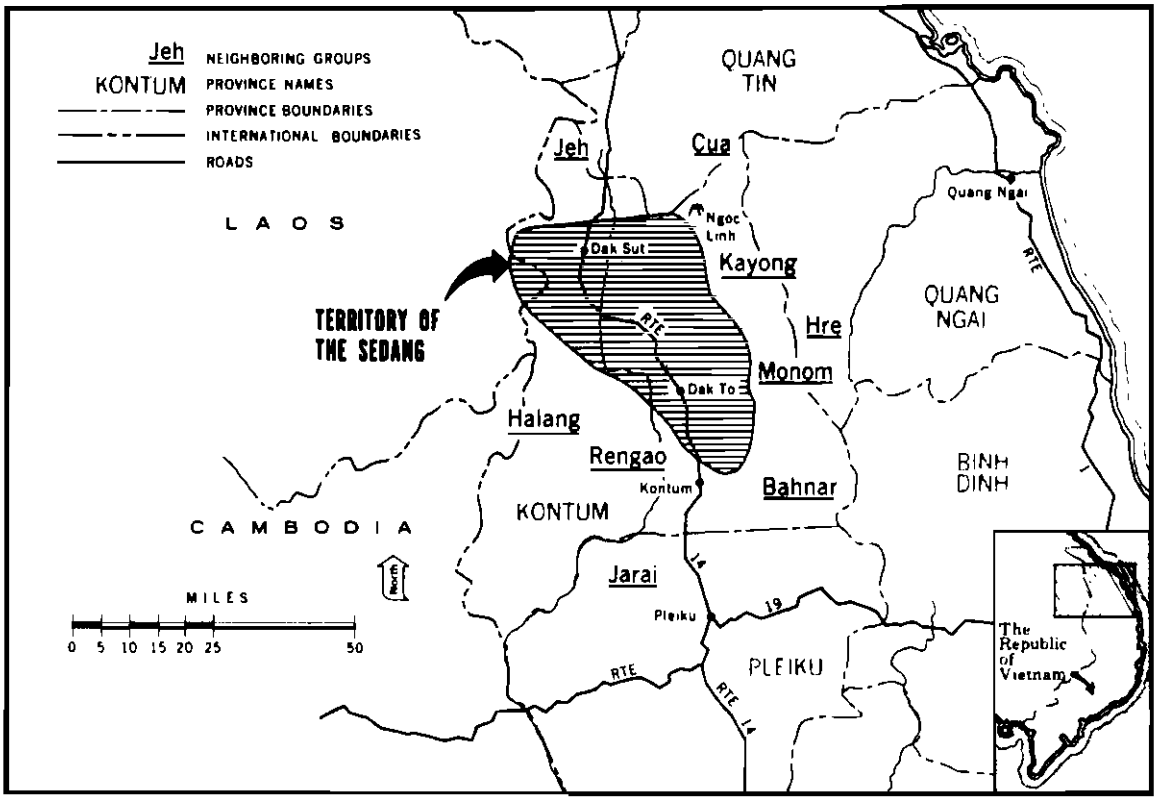
Jeh NEIGHBORING GROUPS
KONTUM PROVINCE NAMES
PROVINCE BOUNDARIES
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES
ROADS
LAOS
CAMBODIA
TERRITORY OF THE SEDANG
QUANG TIN
Jeh
Cua
Ngoc Linh
Dak Sut
Kayong
RTE
Hre
Monom
Dak To
Halang
Rengao
Kontum
Bahnar
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QUANG NGAI
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The Republic of Vietnam

The Sedang

CHAPTER 17. THE SEDANG

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Numbering between 40,000 and 80,000, the Sedang, a Mon-Khmer tribal group in the Republic of Vietnam, speak a language related to those of the Bahnar, M'nong, Halang, Hre, Stieng, and Koho tribes. The village is the basic political unit; the household, consisting of an extended family living in a longhouse, is the basic economic unit. The father is the head of the household, but kinship is reckoned on both the male and female sides of the family. The Sedang have a subsistence economy based on slash-and-burn agriculture. Their religion is animistic, involving the belief that spirits inhabit the lands, vegetation, animals, and objects around them.

The Sedang live in the area northwest of Kontum, the capital of Kontum Province and one of the larger and more important cities of the Republic of Vietnam. See the map for the location of the tribe. The first highland tribe to receive U.S. military training and equipment, the Sedang were also the first tribe to actively resist the Viet Cong.

Name, Size, and Location of Group

The Sedang have referred to themselves collectively as Ha(rh)nedea(ng).[1] Within the framework of this overall name, the tribesmen employed two additional names to indicate a geographical distinction among their tribal members; they referred to members in the eastern portion of their territory as Se-Dang, and to those in the western portions as He-Dang.[2]

A North Vietnamese source gives the size of the Sedang population as 80,000;[3] a South Vietnamese source, 57,376.[4] A missionary in 1962 reported the number as 40,000.[5] The Sedang are concentrated in the Province of Kontum, with scattered villages across the border in Laos.

The Sedang tribe is composed of a number of subgroups, each with a distinct dialect. The subgroups include the Danja, the To-drah the Kmrang, the Duong, and the Cor or Ta-Cor. The word *to-drah* means "brush" and the To-drah subgroup is known as the

"people of the sparse forest (brush)." The To-drah subgroup is located northeast of the Rengao in the mountainous region between the Psi and Bla Rivers. The word *kmrang* means "great forest," and the Kmrang subgroup is designated as the "people of the great forest." They live between the Poko and the Psi Rivers in the craggy mountains as far north as Ngoc Linh, the highest mountain in the Republic of Vietnam.

The Jeh live to the north of the Sedang. To the northeast and east the Sedang are surrounded by the Kayong and Monom who separate them from the Cua and Hre. The Bahnar live to the southeast of the Sedang. The Rengao, whose name means "borders" and who are believed to be a mixed Bahnar-Sedang tribal group, inhabit the area to the south and southeast of the Sedang, separating the Sedang from the Jarai. Southwest of the Sedang are the Halang.[6]

Terrain Analysis

The region inhabited by the Sedang is quite rugged with granite outcroppings, some of which reach 2,598 meters in height, such as the summit of Ngoc Linh.[7]

The Poko, Kan Ta, and Psi Rivers join one another in the Sedang area and flow southward to form the Sesan River, which flows south and then west into Cambodia to become a tributary of the Mekong River.[8]

The Sedang area is covered with monsoon and tropical rain forests. The monsoon forest is fairly open and easy to travel through, since there is little dense undergrowth. The monsoon forest turns brown during the dry winter season, and many of the trees lose their leaves. During the summer rainy season, when travel becomes difficult because of flooding, the elephant is a useful means of transportation.[9]

The dense tropical rain forest has three levels: The highest level is a canopy created by ancient trees from 125 to 150 feet high; the middle level has shorter trees and vines; and the lowest level is underbrush. Little grass or herbaceous vegetation grows on the forest floor. A secondary rain forest, also in the Sedang area, develops when a cleared forest area has been left uncultivated for a number of years. Here the trees are small and very close together; an abundance of vines and brush entwined around trees forms tangled thickets, making travel difficult.[10]

The climate of the Sedang area is influenced by two monsoon winds, one coming from the southwest in the summer (April to mid-September) and the other from the northeast in the winter (mid-September to March). Agriculture is greatly dependent on the summer monsoons, which bring heavy rains—up to 150 inches

annually--creating local floods. Temperatures in the region are as much as 15 degrees lower than along the coastal lowland regions.

National Route 14 extends northwest from Kontum, through the Sedang area to Dak To and north to beyond Dak Sut, where it turns east to the coast at Hoi An, south of Da Nang.[1]

SECTION II

TRIBAL BACKGROUND

Ethnic and Racial Origin

The Sedang are classified with the Mon-Khmer ethnic grouping in terms of language, customs, and physical appearance. As such, they are related to the Bahnar, the Stieng, the M'nong, the Halang, the Hre, the Bru, the Katu, the Jeh, the Cua, and the Koho groups.[1]

The Mon-Khmer ethnic grouping is generally believed to have originated in the upper Mekong valleys, whence these peoples migrated in many directions.[2] The Sedang represent a people derived from that stock, but specific details of this relationship are not available at this time.

Language

The Sedang language belongs to the Bahnaric group of the Mon-Khmer language.[3] Linguistically, the Sedang tribe is distinguished by numerous variations of dialect, each of which is ridiculed by members of other dialect groupings. At the borders of an area where a dialect is spoken, it merges gradually into adjoining dialects.[4]

In 1963, a Protestant missionary group was reportedly devising a written form for the Sedang language.[5] However, neither the current status of their work, nor the earlier linguistic activities of Roman Catholic missionaries are known. Some Sedang understand the language of the neighboring Jeh. The only Sedang able to read and write are the few who learned Vietnamese or French by attending government schools. The Sedang greatly admire people who can read and write.[6]

Legendary History

The Sedang, like all the Montagnard tribal peoples, have legends that deal with the creation of the earth, the flood, and the activities of legendary heroes. These legends, recounted in poetic language, provide entertainment for the tribesmen during their leisure time. The legends are passed orally from generation to generation and are part of the large body of oral tradition which includes the laws and precepts known by all the Sedang tribespeople.[7] Specific examples of Sedang legends were not available at this writing.

Factual History

During the period of instability (from about 1859 to 1885), while the French were consolidating their power in Indochina, anarchy tended to increase among the mountain tribes. The Sedang intensified their raids on their less warlike neighbors.[8]

For a very brief time (1888–1890), a soldier-adventurer, David Mayrena, with the backing of the French administration and the assistance of the established Catholic missionaries, was able to form a loose confederation of the Bahnar-Rengao-Sedang tribes. The confederation did not survive Mayrena's departure from the Central Highlands.

After 1893, the French made little attempt to control the more independent tribes: the Sedang, Rhade, Jarai, and M'nong. Left to their own devices in their mountain isolation, the tribes became increasingly lawless. Raids and attacks against convoys and billets of Indochinese soldiers became common, leading, in turn, to the expansion of the French occupation of the mountain areas and the pacification of the tribes.[9]

Settlement Patterns

Sedang villages vary in size from 3 to 20 longhouses and usually center around a large common house. During periods of peace, the common house is used as the ritual center of the village and as the sleeping quarters for the unmarried young men. During periods of war, the common house serves as the traditional mobilization center for defense of the village. Sedang villages also have a miniature spirit house reserved for visiting spirits. Prior to French pacification, stockades were erected around the villages.[10]

The Sedang define a village as a group of houses receiving their water from the same water duct—water is brought into villages from its source through bamboo ducts. When a group of houses is served by two ducts, then the Sedang consider the group to be two villages and give each its own name.[11]

The Sedang live in longhouses, each shared by many members of the same family—as many as 100 people may live in the same longhouse.[12] These longhouses are built above the ground on pilings, although where the site slopes, one side of the house may rest on the ground. All houses have an entrance at each end, with one end having a platform where rice is pounded.[13] The Sedang longhouse is reached by a detachable ladder. During the day when the house is empty or the men absent, the ladder is lowered; at night, when all occupants have returned home, the ladder is lifted onto the platform.[14]

The slightly inclined roof of the longhouse is made of bamboo tiles split in half lengthwise and placed in two layers, one layer covering the other.

Figure 48. Layout of Sedang village.

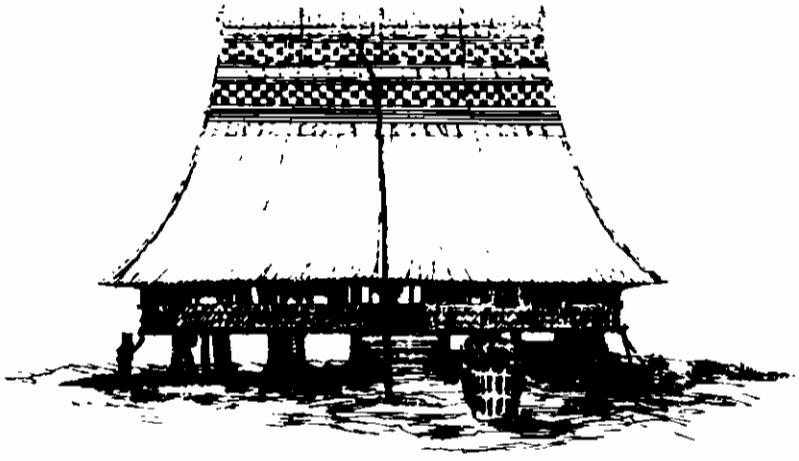

Figure 49. Sedang communal house.

The interior of the longhouse is divided into compartments by partitions of plaited bamboo.[15] A common room at one end of the house contains the hearth or "soul fireplace" *(mahua pla)*, believed to be the residence of the tribesmen's soul. Closely related groups within the larger family unit occupy separate compartments.[16]

Customarily, the interior of the Sedang longhouse is divided into two parts, the upper and the lower. In the upper half live the house chief *(kan hngii)* and his wife *(tyin)* or wives, or his oldest daughter. This is the only part of the house where rice may be cooked, for the Sedang believe this area is the home of the rice soul or *mahua phae*. In this upper half of the house, each nuclear family may have its own hearth on which to cook rice, and the

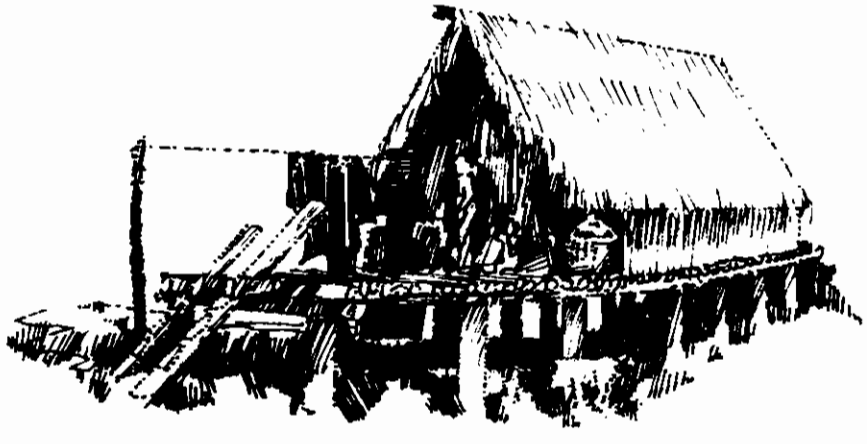

Figure 50. Sedang house.

souls of the family may reside in their own hearth. However, since no rice may be cooked in the lower half of the house, all rice is cooked in the upper level and is then carried to the lower level for eating. The rice souls of those who live in the lower half of the house are believed to reside in the chief's hearth on the upper level.

SECTION III

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Physical Characteristics

The Sedang show considerable variation in appearance. Generally, however, they are short—5 feet 4 inches to 5 feet 6 inches in height—and well muscled, with smooth reddish-brown skin, varying from dark to light shades. Their hair is long and black and is worn, by both men and women, in a chignon on the back of the head. The chignon is fastened in place with long strands of colored beads which are also wound around the head. The Sedang women have long bangs; their earlobes are pierced for wearing pieces of bent metal. Some Sedang tattoo three dots on either side of the mouth.[1]

Formerly, upon reaching adolescence, many Sedang filed their teeth and lacquered them black. Now this custom is dying out.[2]

Health

Many diseases in the Sedang area are insect-borne—carried by the anopheles mosquito, the rat flea, and the louse. Some diseases are caused by hookworms, some by poor sanitary conditions and inadequate sexual hygiene.[3]

Malaria is a common disease in the area; most tribespeople have contracted it at least once in their lives. The two common types of malaria are the benign tertian malaria, which causes high fever with relapses over a period of time but is usually not fatal, and malignant tertian malaria, which is fatal.[4]

The three types of typhus found in the tribal areas are carried by lice, rat fleas, and mites. Mite-borne typhus is reportedly rampant among the tribes.[5]

Cholera, typhoid, dysentery, yaws, leprosy, venereal disease, tuberculosis, and various parasitic infestations are also found in the Sedang area.[6]

The Sedang believe that disease is caused by the activities of evil spirits and that only spirits can cure illnesses. To cure disease, the Sedang resort to sorcerers or shamans who determine, through divination, how many blood sacrifices are required to appease the spirits. As soon as the proper sacrifice to the spirits has been made, the Sedang believe that the sick person will recover. The

Sedang also believe a sorcerer may cure illness from a distance with only a piece of clothing belonging to the patient.[7]

Reportedly, during an outbreak of smallpox, the Sedang of Kon-Krok visited contaminated villages for rice and salt. Because they entered and left the village during the night when the spirit of the smallpox was sleeping and could not see them, they thought themselves safe. When they did contract smallpox, they sought a sorcerer's aid.

Father Guerlach, an early French Catholic missionary in the area, had vaccine to innoculate the Sedang, but was denied access to their villages because the Sedang did not believe in Western medicine. Even the stream beds in the Sedang territory were covered with small bamboo lances to prevent his approach.[8] Guerlach reported that he met considerable resistance in his attempts to provide medical treatment to the tribesmen.

In many villages, killing lepers was common practice in the past. However, from time to time, powerful families were able to prevent the elimination of afflicted relatives; as a result, leper colonies were established; one still exists in Sedang back country.[9]

The Sedang once killed deformed children in the belief that they had a religious obligation to prevent the survival of "evil monsters." [10]

Endurance

According to an early report of Father Guerlach, the Sedang tribesman could travel quickly and for long periods of time in the mountains, but tired easily in the plains.[11]

Psychological Characteristics

The Sedang are reported to be intelligent and to have a capacity for abstract thought. The anthropologist Devereaux, simply with the aid of a candle, was able to explain the Copernican system relating to the movement of the earth around the sun, the phases of the moon, and the movement of the planets to a 17-year-old Sedang girl.[12] Sedang tribesmen also told Devereaux that the quantity of numbers and fractions was infinite, and that one could count or divide them forever.

The Sedang are aware of the value of schooling and literacy They envy and admire people who can read and write.

The Sedang tribesman does not think of himself as an individual, but identifies himself in terms of his village. When asked, "Who are you?" he will answer, "I-am from———village." [13] Only when he violates taboos and custom is a Sedang an individual. When a Sedang is observing custom, he is doing so not as an individual but as a part of the village. A tribesman who persistently flouts custom —for example, by living incestuously with his sister—can be ostra-

cized from his soul hearth (mahua pla) and driven from the village into the forest, where antisocial behavior may be continued without interference. Ostracism to the forest is a mixed blessing, for culprits often accumulate much wealth there, since in the forest they are not obligated to offer sacrifices or pay fines. When the culprits are able to pay their fines, they return to the village and humiliate everyone with their affluence.[14]

The Sedang believe that they live in a hostile universe, where their gods and the spirits of their ancestors decree severe punishment for any offense. As a result, the Sedang are defiant and quarrelsome, taking advantage of anyone weaker than themselves.[15]

The Sedang are an artistic people; many are talented musicians, while others are gifted in the decorative arts—decorative weaving and basketmaking. They also apparently have some inherent mechanical ability, as they quickly learn to operate and repair mechanical devices.

SECTION IV

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Among the Sedang, society is organized around the longhouse, the extended family, and the village. The village is the basic political unit; the longhouse, or household, made up of a number of related nuclear families, is the basic agricultural unit.* A single extended family usually lives in each longhouse, although the family may be so large that it requires two or three houses. Likewise, the head of the household is usually the head of the extended family. But where the family is so large that it inhabits more than one house, there are two or three household chiefs, although there is still only one extended family head. The father is the head of the nuclear family, but kinship is reckoned on both the father's and mother's side. Intermediaries make marriage arrangements. Marriage between close blood relatives is prohibited.[1]

Kinship System

The Sedang have a bilateral kinship system, that is, family relationships are reckoned on both the male and female sides of the line. Upon marriage the young couple may go to live in the house of either the groom's family or the bride's family.[2]

Here is a list of terms the Sedang use for various members of the kin group: [3]

Father	*pa*
Mother	*no*
Father's elder brother	*taa*
Father's younger brother	*taa*
Father's elder sister	*meh*
Father's younger sister	*mie*
Mother's elder brother	*mie* (woman's side) *meh* (man' side)
Mother's younger brother	*mie* (woman's side)
Mother's elder sister	*cya* (woman's side) *meh* (man' side)

* See "Economic Organization," p. 744.

Mother's younger sister	*cya* (woman's side) *mic* (man' side)
Elder sister	*na*
Elder brother	*tao* (woman's side) *na* (man's side)
Younger sister	*a*
Parallel cousins	Same as for brothers and sisters
Cross cousins	*mae*

Place of Men, Women, and Children in the Society

Among the Sedang, the father is the head of the nuclear family. There are a few cases of polygamy among rich Sedang, but even wealthy tribesmen usually have only two or three wives.[4]

The Sedang husband is responsible for the payment of damages incurred by his wife. The wife's family is liable only if the husband cannot meet his obligations. A Sedang wife is not responsible for her husband's debts; however, she usually helps him, if only partially.[5]

The men hunt and contribute the game to the household, while the women clothe the family by weaving the China grass from their gardens.[6]

Both men and women participate in agricultural activities. Men prepare the fields and make the holes with digging sticks. Women plant the seeds, and the whole household group participates in the harvest. Women also cook, weave, and care for the children and the domestic animals. Basketry and any woodworking are exclusively male functions. Young boys usually are responsible for herding the buffaloes.

Marriage

During childhood and adolescence, lovemaking short of actual sexual intercourse is permissible. A couple guilty of premarital intercourse is fined one pig by the village. Marriages are often contracted to permit cohabitation without the penalty of a fine.

The boy initiates marriage negotiations through his parents and an intermediary. The parents give a feast to announce the engagement, and the couple drink from the same jar of rice wine, a ceremony formalizing the contract before the spirits.[7]

The engagement is announced publicly with an exchange of necklaces. Engagements may be broken by mutual agreement without the payment of an indemnity or a ritual ceremony. If one party desires to end the engagement, he or she must pay a small indemnity and sacrifice a chicken. If, however, the agreement is canceled because of the misbehavior of one of the parties, the complainant need not pay an idemnity or make a sacrifice.[8]

Marriage is prohibited between close lineal relatives, such as brother and sister, uncle and niece, aunt and nephew. In addition, marriage is banned between an individual and a stepparent and between first cousins.[9] If a Sedang wishes to marry one of his in-laws or the spouse of his deceased mother or father, he must perform a ritual purification ceremony to the spirits.[10]

After the marriage ceremony, the couple may live in the house of the parents of either the bride or the groom. If they move into the house of the bride's parents, the groom must make a ritual payment to her family. If the young couple moves into the house of the groom's parents, the same payment must be made by the bride.[11]

Should a young couple desire to move from the house of the groom's parents to the house of the bride's parents or vice versa, they must make a sacrifice so that the power of the rice soul* of the first house will not be diminished by their departure. The Sedang believe that an animal sacrifice will augment the strength of the rice soul of the house.[12]

A Sedang may take a second wife if he wishes, a custom prevalent among only the very wealthy tribesmen. First, permission must be obtained from his first wife, who may divorce him if she does not agree to the second marriage. More often than not, the first wife accepts the second wife, receiving an indemnity payment from her husband. The first wife usually treats the second wife as an inferior or as a servant.[13]

Birth

Birth occurs outdoors. The woman kneels over a shallow hole dug in the ground, grasping a bamboo pole for leverage and support. Another woman may assist the mother. After the baby is born, they bury the afterbirth before cutting the umbilical cord.

A child is not suckled immediately after it is born, since it must be decided whether or not he is to live. The Sedang do not consider a child as being alive during this time. In the past, if babies had some physical defect or were illegitimate, they could be killed.[14] However, if the villagers discovered the infanticide, a fine had to be paid to the village.[15]

The Sedang cause abortions by hitting the abdomen of the pregnant woman with their hands. No stones are used for fear the result would be fatal. There are said to be old women in the tribe who can cause a woman to abort by merely touching her abdomen.

The Sedang believe that drinking hot water will dissolve the fetus and wash it out of the woman, thus producing an abortion.

* See "Religion," p. 741.

Figure 51. ***Sedang tribesman in ceremonial dress.***

When discovered by the villagers, abortion is penalized by the payment of a fine to the village.[16]

Child-Rearing Practices

Sedang children are given various responsibilities. Small boys, 3 or 4 years old, watch buffaloes and other animals. Little girls carry water, help with the cleaning, and care for their younger brothers and sisters. The children are disciplined from an early age. Punishments include rubbing pepper in the eyes, in the vagina, or under the foreskin of the penis.[17]

At the age of 6, boys may enter the common house to sleep every night, returning to their respective longhouses for meals. In the common house, the boys learn to be men; they are taught to hunt and fight, as well as other skills expected of males.[18]

Puberty Rite

In the past, at puberty, young men and women had their front teeth filed down and lacquered black. The young person's parents gave permission for the performance of the operation. The upper teeth were filed with a piece of basaltic rock, while the lower teeth were protected by a piece of wood. It was considered unlucky for a tooth to break during the operation. Following the operation, the mouth was washed out, and the teeth coated with a lacquer which turned the teeth black. The lacquer was derived from the following plants: the *krae, long thang, long krap, long hot,* and *long nghik nheng.*[19]

This practice of filing and lacquering the front teeth is now apparently dying out.

Death and Burial

Unlike many other tribal groups in the Republic of Vietnam, the Sedang have relatively simple burial customs. After a waiting period of 20 to 30 hours following death, the body is taken to the grave where it is buried with appropriate religious ceremonies involving the sacrifice of animals.

Because they believe that the soul leaves the body about 6 days after death and is no longer present in the area of the grave, the Sedang do not visit the grave again or perform additional sacrifices for the deceased.[20]

Widows are prohibited from remarrying for a particular period of time after the death of their spouses. A widow who remarries after 9 to 12 months must sacrifice a pig at her husband's grave.[21]

SECTION V

CUSTOMS AND TABOOS

The Sedang have many customs and taboos associated with their fear of offending the spirits. These are established by tradition, and each tribesman knows and attempts to observe them. Some customs and taboos may vary from village to village. Tribesmen in regular contact with outside influences may not observe their customs and taboos as closely as tribesmen living in greater isolation.

Dress

Generally, Sedang men wear a loincloth, and the women wear only a skirt that reaches almost to their knees. For protection against the cold, an additional blanket-like garment of locally woven material is wrapped around the shoulders by both sexes. The material of this garment has stripes and various border designs.

Sedang women wear strings of colored beads wound around head and neck. In their pierced earlobes, they wear metal loops or dangling pieces of metal. The tribesmen wear baskets or woven bags on their backs to carry articles.[1]

Folk Beliefs

The Sedang live in constant awareness, and often dread, of the supernatural world, where nothing happens by chance, and where every bit of good luck, every success, every failure, every dream, and every accident is a sign from the spirits. Since everything means something, much of a Sedang's life is taken up with discovering and/or interpreting the meaning of everything that goes on about him. Still more time is spent in attempts to ward off misfortune, to placate angry spirits, and to keep the favor of the more friendly spirits. In short, the life of the Sedang is continually overshadowed by an invisible world that, for the most part, is hostile.

There are certain actions which a Sedang must not commit in order to remain in harmony with the spirits. The Sedang will not engage in trade when about to build a house, as this would tempt an adverse reaction from the spirits. Another interdiction forbids

a man to take a meal in his own house shortly after eating at the common house.[2]

Before building his house, a Sedang tribesman goes alone to a previously selected spot and places seven grains of rice on a banana leaf held on the ground by a piece of wood. If the grains of rice are undisturbed on his return the following morning, the signs are favorable for his building the house and for the ricefields to flourish. If, however, the rice has been disturbed, he must select a new site and go through the same ritual until the signs are favorable.[3]

Some local taboos against specific activities vary from village to village. For example, one village may have a taboo against making pottery, while a neighboring village does not.[4]

Violations of taboos connected with agriculture (such as those pertaining to rice) and certain breaches of taboos involving the desecration of the house are remedied by the collective action of the members of the house, and may necessitate sacrifices to placate the offended spirits.[5]

Breaches of other taboos by any of the tribe may bring reprisals upon the entire village. Incest and secret premarital intercourse are believed to result in the burning of the entire village by the spirits. The guilty parties must offer up sacrifices to placate the angered spirits and to strengthen the power of the rice souls of the hearths of the village* which these violations have weakened.[6]

Eating and Drinking Customs

Rice, the staple of the Sedang diet, is supplemented by various vegetables, game, and fish. Although chickens, goats, pigs, and buffaloes are raised primarily for sacrificial purposes, the meat of the sacrificed animal is eaten following the ceremony. The Sedang follow traditional methods of cooking and preparing foods to avoid offending the spirits involved in the particular activities.

Rice wine is prepared by the women according to traditional techniques handed down from generation to generation. The drinking of rice wine is an integral part of religious rituals and is considered a sacred act. Tradition also dictates the manner in which the rice wine is served and drunk.

Specific details dealing with the traditional Sedang methods for preparing and consuming food and drink were not available at this writing.

Customs Relating to Animals

The Sedang believe that to see a snake suddenly on the path when returning from a trip signifies future misfortune, but to encounter a snake when setting out on a trip means nothing. When a roebuck crosses a tribesman's path, this is an unfavorable sign. A bird

* See "Religion," p. 741.

singing on the right or left of the trail is a bad omen, but a bird singing in front or behind the tribesman on the trail is a good omen.[7]

Customs Relating to Outsiders

The Sedang view the arrival of a stranger with reserve and caution: they will receive him hospitably but will observe him closely to determine his motives in their village. The tribesmen are also concerned about the reaction of the spirits to the stranger; they will watch for any signs that might indicate that the presence of the outsider offends the spirits. Although an outsider with no known affiliation may be in danger in a Sedang village if he breaks a tribal taboo, an outsider who represents a powerful group will not be harmed. Observance of local taboos by an outsider generally helps win the confidence of the tribesmen, but the Sedang do not expect outsiders to know and observe all their customs.

Customs Relating to Warfare

The Sedang consider raids on other tribes permissible, but intratribal raids are permitted only to avenge an injury.[8] Rarely does a Sedang war party attack a village directly, preferring instead to seize men, women, and children who are farming ricefields some distance from their village.[9] If the Sedang do storm a village, they rush in and slaughter all of the old men, considered useless as prisoners, and anyone else offering resistance. They then hastily retreat to avoid being cut off by possible reinforcements.

While the Sedang women do not participate in actual warfare, they are expected to do all of the men's work while the men are fighting. Women also assist in preparing the village defenses, such as planting sharpened bamboo spikes in paths leading to the village.[10]

A fixed ritual in the common house always precedes an attack against another village. A chief cuts a special root into three pieces, places the roots on the blade of his sword, and lets them fall one by one on his shield with a religious invocation. If the roots land in a prescribed position, the attackers will be invincible. Then the warrior considered by the village to be the bravest rises and asks the spirits for success, explaining the reasons for the war. He then leads the attack, running through the woods followed by the other warriors armed with shields, crossbows, swords, and lances. This war leader is usually not the village headman, who is normally an older man.

Each warrior wears his best belt and a piece of blue or white cloth across his chest; his only rations are enough rice and tobacco for 2 or 3 days. Sometimes, the warriors break up into several bands and travel separately, meeting at predetermined rendezvous

points. En route, they listen attentively to every noise from the woods. If the birds are singing and no mice are on the trails, the warriors consider the operation progressing to the satisfaction of the spirits. A bird of prey circling overhead is an omen of much booty.[11]

After a successful expedition, the Sedang return to their own village and immediately sacrifice a goat and drink wine to the accompaniment of drums and a monotonous blowing of a buffalo horn.[12]

Later, to celebrate the victory, there is a public feast, which is announced 15 days in advance by the young people, who march around the common house every night beating drums. Buffaloes equal in number to the captured prisoners are offered for sacrifice. For a day and a night before the feast, the buffaloes are staked out in the center of the village, while the villagers dance around them drinking many jars of wine.[13]

At daybreak of the feast day, in a ceremony known as *rolang*, the young men take up their weapons against the buffaloes who symbolize the defeated enemy. First the men shoot the animals with arrows, then they attack them with swords, cutting at the beasts' legs until they fall to the ground; and finally they kill the animals with lances. The meat is then cut up and roasted; the villagers feast until dawn of the next day.

After the victory feast, a peace ritual between the warring villages is conducted through intermediaries. Two elders from the villages involved, a man from one village and a woman* from the other, meet in the victor's common house to undertake the negotiations. Each elder cuts a finger, and the blood of each is mingled in a cup. With the proper religious invocation, each drinks from the cup. A few days later, this same ritual is repeated in the other village,[14] thus formalizing the vows of the villages to live in peace.

* An exception to the rule: "No women are permitted in the communal house."

SECTION VI

RELIGION

Religion dominates every aspect of Sedang life. The Sedang religion is animistic and involves the belief that gods or spirits inhabit the lands, animals, trees, and objects. There are good and evil spirits, spirits of the deceased, and ghosts. Sacrifices are offered to placate spirits who have been offended by taboo violations and to insure the fertility of soil and an abundant harvest.

Principal Spirits and Rituals

Among the Sedang, good spirits are called *yang* and bad spirits *kia*. Spirits may be classified according to their nature, residence, and duties. Generally, spirits go in pairs—for example, the fundamental pair of yang and kia. Each yang spirit represents some aspect of good, and each kia spirit represents some aspect of evil. The Sedang attribute to the bad spirits all misfortunes, such as crop failure, sickness, and death.[1]

There are spirits of the sun, the moon, the sky, and the earth. The spirit of the sun represents fertility, and the spirit of the moon represents the rhythms of life—the calendar, vegetation, and the crops. The spirit of the sky is connected with agrarian rites; the spirit of the earth is associated with the growth and generation of living things. The most powerful Sedang spirits are Grandfather and Grandmother Kanda, the creators of the world. Also important are the thunder gods, the *tara*, who are associated with warfare.[2]

There are also the spirits who inhabit all surrounding things, such as rocks, trees, buildings, tools, and rice. Each spirit plays a part in the considerations of the tribesmen.[3]

The Sedang believe that the fertility of their dry-ricefields is related to the power or strength of the rice soul (mahua phae) of the cultivator's house. If the rice soul is strong, the fields will be fertile; if it is weak, the crops will be poor. The strength of the rice soul can be increased by the performance of religious rituals by the household chief's wife (tyin), for the tribesmen believe that the rice soul resides in her cooking hearth.

The sacrifice of a buffalo at planting time greatly strengthens

the rice soul of a particular house and benefits the fields belonging to the house. Other households of the village are invited to the sacrificial ceremony and feast, and share in the benefits of the buffalo sacrifice. The skulls of sacrificed buffaloes are kept in the house to maintain the strength of its rice soul. Only the cultivation of dry rice is considered a sacred activity subject to religious requirements; there are no rites involved in the cultivation of kitchen gardens and wet rice.[4]

At one time the Sedang offered a human sacrifice whenever a common house was built. A living man was put in the hole dug dug for a heavy column. After the column was placed in position, crushing the man, dirt was packed around it, completing the construction. Such sacrifices were believed to please the spirits and bring strength and protection to the village and the common house. During the past 150 years there have been no reports of human sacrifices among the Sedang.[5]

Sedang sacrifices vary with the particular ceremony or with the gravity of the taboo violation. The sacrifices range from an offering of a chicken and a little rice wine to the sacrifice of buffaloes and large jars of rice wine. Between these extremes varying numbers of pigs and other animals may be sacrificed.

The ceremony itself consists of prayers to the particular spirit or spirits being honored, the ceremonial slaughter of one or more animals, and the drinking of rice wine by those attending the ceremony.

Religious Practitioners

The Sedang religious practitioners are the tyin and sorcerers *(bojau)*. Since the basic Sedang agricultural unit is the household, which collectively cultivates and owns its sacred dry-ricefields, and since the rice soul is believed to live in the hearth of the household chief, the chief's wife or tyin, is considered a religious leader. The tyin is responsible for sacrifices held in connection with clearing the fields, planting, and harvesting, that are designed to insure that the power of the rice soul will be strengthened and the crops abundant. Failure of the crops is considered a tragedy, as the Sedang believe crop failures result from a weakening of the rice soul. If sacrifices by the tyin do not strengthen the rice soul, the house chooses another tyin.[6]

The chief functions of the sorcerers or bojau are the determination by means of divination, of the causes of misfortune or sickness and the designation of appropriate sacrifices to mollify the spirits.[7]

Divination by sorcerers involves the use of dice and snails.

When a question is asked of the spirits, the dice are thrown, revealing the answer by the way in which they fall. Snails are used to foretell the outcome of military questions. Two rows of snails—six in one row and five in the other—face each other; the row moving into the other signifies the victorious group.[8]

SECTION VII

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

The Sedang have a subsistence agricultural economy based on the slash-and-burn cultivation of rice. The slash-and-burn technique of the Sedang involves the clearing of land by cutting and burning the original vegetation, using the ashes as fertilizer, cultivating the land for approximately 3 years until it is exhausted, and then allowing the land to lie fallow, for as long as 8 years. When forest growth has re-covered the land and the soil has revitalized itself, the land is once again cleared and cultivated.

During the dry season the clearing is done: brush and trees are cut down and allowed to lie where they fall while the sun dries them thoroughly. When dried sufficiently, the brush and trees are burned under prescribed conditions to prevent the spread of fire. When a burnt field has cooled, most of the debris is cleared away, leaving only large boulders and tree stumps. Before sowing, the remaining charred debris is collected into small piles and burned again. The resulting layer of ash in the field is subsequently washed into the soil by the rain. As the rainy season starts, sowing begins. The men go through the field making holes in the ground with dibble sticks. Women follow, placing seeds in the holes, and tamping earth over the seed. At maturity, the crop is harvested and stored within the houses.

The household is the basic and most important economic unit among the Sedang. Land for the cultivation of rice is owned collectively by the members of the household and is administered by the household chief with the assistance of his wife, who performs the religious agricultural rituals. Individual nuclear families may own their own land, but dry rice is not cultivated in these fields.[1]

The Sedang have two types of cultivated land: dry-rice fields and all other fields. Dry-rice fields *(tyek)* are owned by the households and tilled collectively. Considered sacred, they require agricultural rituals to insure their fertility; under the leadership of the tyin, every member of the household participates in these ceremonies.

In other fields, not considered sacred, corn, vegetables, and a limited amount of wet rice are cultivated. Such fields are owned by individuals and nuclear families. The methods of cultivating

each type of land are the same—except in the case of wet-rice paddies which are necessarily planted in bottomland along water courses.[2]

Secondary crops grown by the Sedang include corn, millet, various garden vegetables, a small amount of tobacco, and ramie or China grass. The Sedang also keep domesticated animals.

Special Arts and Skills

Sedang men are skilled hunters and fishermen. They are also proficient at basket weaving. Ironworking, a skill restricted to men, produces swords, hatchets, hoes, picks, and spear points. Skilled ironworkers are believed by the Sedang to have special spiritual powers.

Trade

The Sedang trade with Vietnamese peddlers who travel through their area. The Vietnamese also employ some Sedang tribesmen as middlemen, who trade on behalf of the members of their villages. Individual tribesmen may also go to town and trade directly with the shopkeepers there. The Sedang trade baskets, cloth, lances, and sabers for salt, clothing, and various metal goods.[4]

Property System

The Sedang village is considered the collective owner of all uncleared land in its area, while households and nuclear families hold title to cleared and fallow land. The village must give permission to clear new land or to rent or sell land.[4]

Sedang households and individuals—both men and women—may own both real and personal property. The household group owns the dry-rice land and cattle. The men are responsible for debts and damages incurred by members of their nuclear families, but a Sedang wife is not liable for debts or damages incurred by her husband. Men and women have an equal right to own property and to conserve the fruits of their labor.[3]

After marriage each spouse retains possession of the personal property *(tomam kodih)* which he or she brought to the marriage. However, property acquired after marriage as a result of a couple's joint effort is known as common property *(tomam atum)* and is jointly administered. When a household chief dies, his share of common property is managed by the next senior member of the extended family.[6]

When a spouse dies, the burial expenses are taken from his personal property, and the remainder is divided among the descendants or other blood relatives of the deceased. Common property is divided in half, the surviving spouse receiving one half, while the other half is divided among his blood relatives. Children generally inherit equal shares regardless of sex, except that a youngest child who has looked after his parents receives a double portion.

SECTION VIII

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The Sedang, like other highland groups of the Republic of Vietnam, have no overall tribal political organization. Although the Sedang regard themselves as a distinct ethnic group, their highest realized form of political organization is the autonomous village, which occasionally cooperates with other villages in the immediate area. As previously mentioned, the Sedang define a village as the sum of all persons who drink from the same water source. There are no clans within the Sedang; only the village and family function as political units.[1]

Within the village, the basic political unit is the extended family, consisting of as many as 30 nuclear families—man, wife, and unmarried children—living in the same longhouse and presided over by the eldest male member, the household chief or *kan hngii*. In turn, the several household chiefs in a Sedang village form the village council of elders which meets to solve village problems as they arise.

The village headman or *kan pley* is selected by lot from among the household chiefs, or elders. He has only the power to voice the collective consensus of the village as expressed by the elders and to execute the elders' decisions. Although the headman has little personal political power, he does represent the village to outsiders, lead war parties, and act as priest at village sacrifices.[2]

In addition to the traditional village headman; the French administration created another village functionary—the *tyulang*. Appointed by the French from among the villagers, the tyulang was the liaison between the French and the Sedang. Although the French delegated many responsibilities to him, such as initiating French programs, collecting taxes, and communicating French policies and decrees, he had little real local authority. The Sedang preferred to follow their own traditionally selected village headman. The tyulang merely served as a buffer between the French and the Sedang village; if Sedang villagers wished to ignore the French directives communicated by the tyulang, they did so—often with impunity.[3]

Although in theory the village headman takes precedence in all matters, in reality the household and the household chiefs have

most of the political power among the villagers. Should an individual, a nuclear family, or an entire household commit a crime or oppose the majority of the other villagers, exile is an alternative to submission to the collective judgment of the village.[4]

The village is the supreme political unit among the Sedang, but the Sedang do have a concept of "region" or *kon*, a loose cooperative organization of several villages, usually of the same subgroup. The villages within a kon trade with one another, generally abstain from raids on each other, and sometimes unite for offensive or defensive warfare. Due to a general similarity of laws and customs among the villages, intervillage quarrels are usually settled by discussion and agreement between village elders and headmen. Although there is no formal political organization within the kon, an aggressive village sometimes becomes dominant, and the other villages will follow its dictates. Occasionally when such a dominant village is subdued by an outside group, the other villages of the kon will also submit.[5]

The Government of the Republic of Vietnam handles relations between villages; a government representative deals with each group of seven or eight villages, while the villages themselves are represented by their village headmen.

Legal System

The Sedang reportedly have a complex legal system. Traditional tribal laws are unwritten and are expressed by taboos known and respected by all tribal members. Disputes and punishments for violations are the concern of the family and village. The household chief administers justice and arbitrates disputes among members of the extended family; however, the village chief and the council of elders must be informed of his actions; in the event of a serious violation, the village headman and council of elders will take jurisdiction from him. The nuclear family and, ultimately, the household are responsible for violations by tribemen.[6]

Most laws are inforced through economic sanctions. Guilty persons are required to pay a fine to both the offended party and the village; in addition, a sacrifice to appease the spirits is often required. In the past, capital punishment was not unusual among the Sedang; it was an alternative for those unable to pay the blood price—a fine in money or goods (usually a large number of buffaloes) paid to relatives of a murdered person by the murderer or his family to atone for the crime.[7]

The French administration instituted a special legal system to govern the Montagnard tribes. Allowing the traditional system to continue, they began the codification of tribal laws and the organization of native tribunals, located in the provincial capitals of the Central Highlands. Montagnard judges sitting in these tribunals

handled cases that could not be settled at the village level. Judgments were made according to the various tribal laws.

The legal system instituted by the French still governs the Montagnard tribes, although steps have been taken by the Vietnamese Government to revise the legislative code in the tribal areas. Under the Diem regime, an attempt was made to substitute Vietnamese laws for tribal practices. This attempt was connected with Vietnamese efforts to integrate politically the tribal people into the Republic of Vietnam.

In March 1965, the Vietnamese Government promulgated a decree restoring the legal status of the tribal laws and tribunals. Under this new decree, there will be courts at the village, district, and province levels which will be responsible for civil affairs, Montagnard affairs, and penal offenses when all parties involved are Montagnards.[9]

Village customs law courts, consisting of the village administrative committee chief aided by two Montagnard assistants, will conduct weekly court sessions.[10] When a case is reviewed and a decision reached by this court, it will be recorded and signed by the parties involved. This procedure will eliminate the right to appeal to another court. If settlement cannot be reached, the case can be referred to a higher court.[11]

District courts, governed by the president of the court (the district chief) aided by two Montagnard assistants, will hold bimonthly court sessions. Cases to be tried by the district court include those appealed by the village court and cases which are adjudged serious according to tribal customs.[11]

At the province level, a Montagnard Affairs Section will be established as part of the National Court. This section, under the jurisdiction of a Montagnard presiding judge and two assistants, will handle cases appealed from the Montagnard district courts and cases beyond the jurisdiction of the village or district courts. It will convene once or twice a month, depending upon the requirements.[12]

Subversive Influences

Factors contributing to the vulnerability of the Sedang to subversion are geographic location, historical isolation, and traditional suspicion of the Vietnamese. Effective government presence and control in the Sedang area have been eroded by Viet Cong activity during the past few years.

The principal objective of Viet Cong subversive activity among the Sedang is to win the allegiance of the tribesmen and develop them into a hostile force against the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.

Still other important Viet Cong objectives are the maintenance

of their supply lines through the Sedang area, the prevention of movement of Central Government forces in the area, and the destruction of any Government strongholds in the region.

Generally, the Viet Cong infiltrate a village, attempting to win the confidence of the whole village or its key individuals. This is a slow process, requiring the creation of a bond with the villagers by helping them with community development and medical aid. The Viet Cong usually have a thorough knowledge of tribal customs; they will adopt Sedang dress to identify themselves with the tribe.

When suspicions of the villagers are allayed and their confidence won, the Viet Cong begin an intense propaganda campaign against the Central Government with the ultimate purpose of recruiting and training the tribesmen for various support or combat missions.

Should propaganda and cajolery fail, the Viet Cong will resort to extortion and terror to coerce the Sedang into refusing to cooperate with the Central Government.[13]

Great pressure has been put on Sedang tribesmen to aid the Viet Cong, but the Viet Cong have apparently had to resort to kidnapping young Sedang tribesmen to get them to join active combat or support units.[14] When villagers support the Viet Cong, they do so because their family or villages are threatened. Whether any Sedang have willingly joined the Viet Cong is not known.

The Sedang were the first highland tribe of the Republic of Vietnam to be trained by the U.S. Special Forces. About two battalions of the Sedang were armed, and weapons were distributed to villagers to enable them to defend themselves. In one case, the Sedang fought aggressively against the Viet Cong with only crossbows,[15] indicating that they will fight the Viet Cong, whom they consider a threat to their way of life, with whatever arms are available.

SECTION IX

COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES

The principal means of relaying information in the Sedang area is by word of mouth. The Sedang do not have a written language, although one is now reportedly being devised by the missionaries. Hence, written communications would have little effect. Any radios in the Sedang area have probably been brought in by outsiders for military use.

Because of their strong communal feelings, information activities among the Sedang should probably be oriented around projects explicitly beneficial to the Sedang village. Possible themes are the control of disease, improvement of agriculture, and protection from Viet Cong harassment.

SECTION X

CIVIC ACTION CONSIDERATIONS

Any proposed civic action should take into account Sedang religious, social, and cultural traditions. Because of the Sedang political structure, all initial contacts should be made with the village headman and the elders. The Sedang must also be psychologically prepared for the proposed changes. This requires detailed consultation with village leaders, careful assurance as to results, and a relatively slow pace in implementing programs.

Because they are village-oriented and prefer to remain isolated in their traditional way of life, the Sedang respond most favorably to ideas for change presented in terms of local community betterment. Civic action proposals should stress the improvement of village life rather than emphasize ethnic or cultural pride, nationalism, or political ideology. The reasons for an innovation should be thoroughly explained; the Sedang resent interference in their normal routine if they do not understand the reason for it.

Current civic action programs of the Vietnamese Government include the resettlement of the Sedang into new and larger villages, the control of malaria, medical aid programs, agricultural assistance, and some attempts to educate the Sedang tribesmen.

The following civic action guidelines may be useful in the planning and implementation of projects or programs.

1. Projects originating in the local village are more desirable than suggestions imposed by a remote Central Government or by outsiders.
2. Projects should be designed to be challenging but should not be on such a scale as to intimidate the villagers by size or strangeness. Projects using familiar materials and products, as much as possible, are more easily accepted by the tribesmen than projects requiring the use of strange materials or devices.
3. Projects should have fairly short completion periods or have phases that provide frequent opportunities to evaluate effectiveness.
4. Results should, as far as possible, be observable, measurable, or tangible.

5. Projects should, ideally, lend themselves to emulation by other villages or groups.

Civic Action Projects

The civic action possibilities for personnel working with the Sedang encompass all aspects of tribal life. Examples of possible projects are listed below. They should be considered representative, but not all inclusive or in the order of priority.

1. Agriculture and animal husbandry
   a. Improvement of livestock through introduction of better breeds.
   b. Instruction in elementary veterinary techniques to improve health of animals.
   c. Introduction of improved seeds and new vegetables.
   d. Techniques to improve quality and yields of farm land.
   e. Insect and rodent control.
   f. Construction of simple irrigation and drainage systems.
2. Transportation and communication
   a. Roadbuilding and clearing of trails.
   b. Installation, operation, and maintenance of electric power generators and village electric light systems.
   c. Construction of motion-picture facilities.
   d. Construction of radio broadcast and receiving stations and public-speaker systems.
3. Health and sanitation
   a. Improve village sanitation.
   b. Provide safe water supply systems.
   c. Eradicate disease-carrying insects.
   d. Organize dispensary facilities for outpatient treatment.
   e. Teach basic principles of sanitation, personal hygiene, and first aid.
4. Education
   a. Provide basic literacy training.
   b. Provide basic citizenship education.
   c. Provide information about the outside world of interest to the tribesmen.

SECTION XI

PARAMILITARY CAPABILITIES

The Sedang have a reputation as skilled and capable fighters in both offensive and defensive warfare. They have a long history of warfare and are proud of their skill as warriors and hunters. The Sedang have natural abilities and instincts which are useful in modern jungle warfare. Given support and leadership, Sedang may become effective forces in modern military operations.

Prior Military Training and Experience

The Sedang were the first Montagnard tribe to receive U.S. military training and equipment, as well as the first tribe to actively resist the Viet Cong. Early in 1962 the Sedang began receiving U.S. assistance; by the middle of that year, they had been formed into a Montagnard Self-Defense Corps comprising two battalions of armed tribesmen. The platoons of this military force were distributed among 57 armed villages, with about one platoon of 10 men in each village. Approximately 650 hand weapons were distributed among the villages. With these arms and training, the villagers aggressively resisted the Viet Cong.

In June 1962, a Sedang village was attacked by a Viet Cong force. Armed with only traditional weapons, the villagers drove off the Viet Cong attackers. Two days later, the Viet Cong returned; after an hour's fighting, they penetrated the village and took away all the young men. This and similar incidents have turned the Sedang against the Viet Cong.[1]

Americans working with the Sedang evaluate them highly as fighters. It has been reported that every man, woman, and child in the Sedang area is an effective soldier.[2]

Weapons Utilized by the Tribe

The traditional Sedang weapons are spears, swords, crossbows, and poisoned arrows. The Sedang are familiar with the use of traps, pits, and concealed, sharpened bamboo sticks—spiked foot traps.

As noted, some Sedang have received training in the use of modern weapons from U.S. military personnel. Their relatively small physical size makes the Sedang more comfortable and adept with

small, light weapons. Traditionally the Sedang have taken good care of their weapons.

Like many mountain tribes, the Sedang are skilled and proud hunters—their skill and pride are transferred to their use and care of modern weapons. If a Sedang tribesman can conveniently carry and handle a weapon, he can be expected to use it well.

Willingness to Fight

In warfare on their own terms, the Sedang are willing, often even anxious, to use offensive tactics. However, they are reluctant to fight offensively without superiority in numbers or in weaponry; nevertheless, the Sedang defend their villages even if attacked by a clearly superior force. Night attacks and fighting from ambush are their favorite methods.

SECTION XII

SUGGESTIONS FOR PERSONNEL WORKING WITH THE SEDANG

Every action of the Sedang tribesman has specific significance in terms of his culture. One must be careful to realize that the Sedang may not react as outsiders do. The outsider should remember that a relatively simple course of action may, for the tribesman, require not only divination but also a sacrifice.

A few suggestions for personnel working with the Sedang are listed below.

Official Activities

1. Initial contact with a Sedang village should be formal. A visitor should speak first to the village headman and elders.
2. Sincerity, honesty, and truthfulness are essential in dealing with the Sedang. Promises and predictions should not be made unless the result is assured. The tribespeople usually expect a new group of personnel to fulfill the promises of the previous group.
3. Outsiders cannot gain the confidence of Sedang tribesmen quickly. Developing a sense of trust is a slow process requiring great understanding, tact, patience, and personal integrity.
4. An attitude of good-natured willingness and limitless patience must be maintained, even when confronted with resentment or apathy.
5. Whenever possible, avoid projects or operations which give the tribesmen the impression they are being forced to change their ways.
6. No immediate, important decision should be asked of a Sedang. An opportunity for family consultation should always be provided; if not, a flat refusal to cooperate may result.
7. Tribal elders and the appointed village chief should receive some of the credit for projects and for improved administration. Efforts should never undermine or discredit the position or influence of the local leaders.

Social Relationships

1. The Sedang should be treated with respect and courtesy at all times.
2. The term *moi* should not be used, because it means savage and is offensive to the tribesmen.
3. Outside personnel should not refuse a Sedang offer of food or drink, especially at a religious ceremony. Once involved in a ceremony, one must eat or drink whatever is offered.
4. A gift, an invitation to a ceremony, or an invitation to enter a Sedang house may be refused by an outsider, as long as consistency and impartiality are shown. However, receiving gifts, participating in ceremonies, and visiting houses will serve to establish good relations with the Sedang.
5. Outsiders should request permission to attend a Sedang ceremony, festival, or meeting from the village elders or other responsible persons.
6. An outsider should never enter a Sedang house, unless accompanied by a member of that house; this is a matter of good taste and cautious behavior. If anything is later missing from the house, unpleasant and unnecessary complications may arise.
7. Outsiders should not get involved with Sedang women.
8. Generally, the Sedang are eager to learn; however, teachers should be careful to avoid seriously disrupting traditional cultural patterns.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

1. Do not enter a village where a religious ceremony is taking place or a religious taboo is in effect. Watch for the warning signs placed at the village entrances; when in doubt, do not enter.
2. As soon as possible identify any sacred trees, stones, or other sacred objects in the village; do not touch or tamper with them. The Sedang believe these sacred objects house powerful spirits. For example, if a sacred rock is touched without due ceremony, the village may have to be moved or expensive sacrifices may have to be made.
3. Do not mock Sedang religious beliefs in any way; these beliefs are the cornerstone of Sedang life.

Living Standards and Routines

1. Outsiders should treat all Sedang property and village animals with respect. Any damage to property or fields should be promptly repaired and/or paid for. An outsider should avoid borrowing from the tribesmen. Animals should

not be treated brutally or taken without the owner's permission.

2. When trading with the Sedang, outsiders should always allow time for family conferences, as the individual Sedang is obliged by tradition to consult his family before selling anything.
3. Learn simple phrases in the Sedang language. A desire to learn and speak their language creates a favorable impression on the tribespeople.

Health and Welfare

1. The Sedang are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of medical care and will request medical assistance. Outside groups in Sedang areas should try to provide medical assistance whenever possible.
2. Medical teams should be prepared to handle and have adequate supplies for extensive treatment of malaria, dysentery, yaws, trachoma, venereal diseases, intestinal parasites, and various skin diseases.

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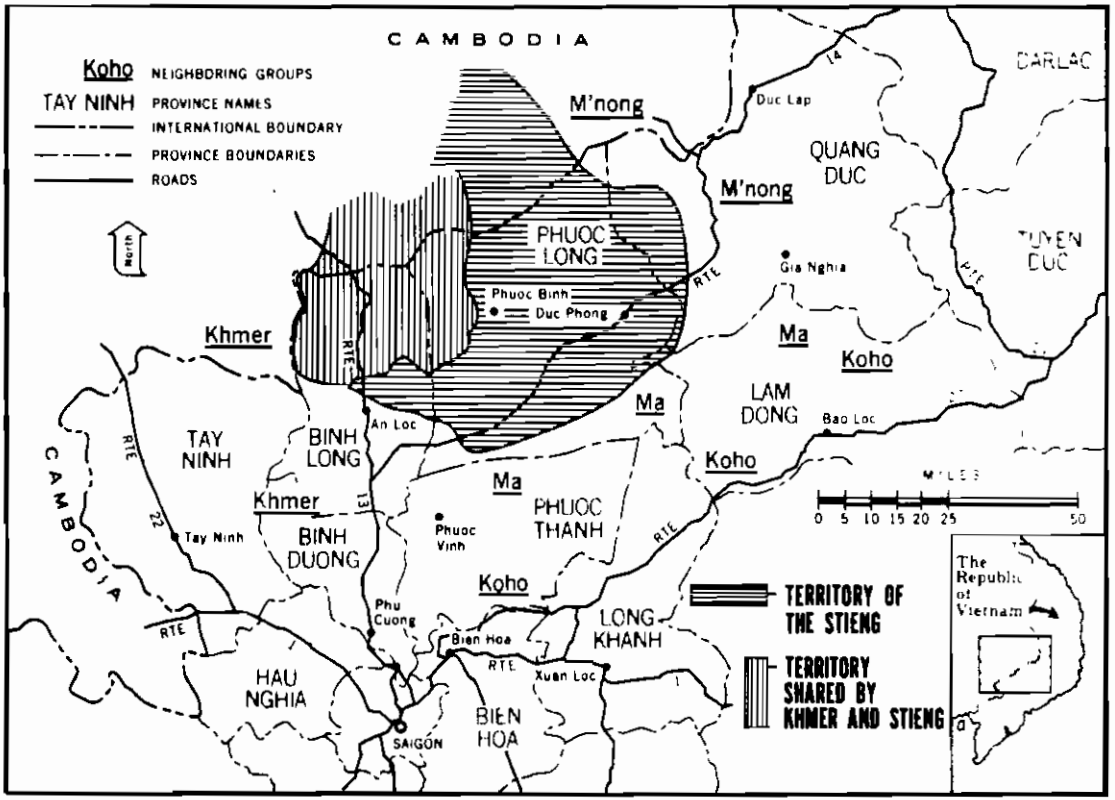
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TUYEN DUC
Gia Nghia
PHUOC LONG
Phuoc Binh
Duc Phong
Khmer
Ma
Koho
LAM DONG
Bao Loc
An Loc
TAY NINH
BINH LONG
BINH DUONG
PHUOC THANH
Phuoc Vinh
Tay Ninh
Phu Cuong
Bien Hoa
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TERRITORY OF THE STIENG
TERRITORY SHARED BY KHMER AND STIENG
The Republic of Vietnam

The Stieng

CHAPTER 18. THE STIENG

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The Stieng are a large tribal group living on both sides of the Republic of Vietnam-Cambodia border some 75 miles north-northwest of Saigon. Of Mon-Khmer ethnic stock, the Stieng speak a language similar to that of the Bahnar, M'nong, Sedang, and other important Montagnard groups.

The Stieng have a patriarchal society and live in villages which individually form the highest level of political organization they have attained. The Stieng have a subsistence economy based primarily on the slash-and-burn cultivation of dry rice and supplemented by hunting and fishing.

An intensely religious people, the Stieng believe they live in constant interaction with animistic spirits. Among the last of the highland groups to be subdued by the French, the Stieng have a reputation for belligerence and, until recently, have remained isolated from outside influences.

Name, Size, and Location of Group

The Stieng, sometimes called the Budip, number about 60,000 people. Approximately 23,000 live in South Vietnam in the region northwest of Saigon, while the remainder live in the neighboring provinces of Binh Long and Phuoc Long; some Stieng are also in the provinces of Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Phuoc Thanh, Quang Duc, and, possibly, Bien Hoa.[1]

Although specific information on the subgroups of the Stieng was not available, there appeared to be four subgroups—the Budip, the Budeh, the Bulach, and the Bulo. The specific location of these groups is unavailable.[2]

The Stieng inhabit an area bordered on the northeast by the M'nong tribe, on the east by the Ma group, and on the south by the Vietnamese. The Khmer, who are to the west and southwest, share a large portion of territory with the Stieng in the provinces of Binh Long and Phuoc Long.[3]

The Stieng area rarely exceeds 500 feet in elevation. The landscape varies from low, undulating foothills, strewn with rocks and lava blocks, to flat terrain. The gray, red, or brown soils are generally the compact basaltic type. The red soils are deep because of the decomposition of the easily crumbled basalt or the volcanic ash. The brown soils, less rich in clay than the red soils, are lighter, less cohesive, and easier to work. All the soils in the area are rich in chemicals and, when cleared, are excellent for the cultivation of rubber trees.

The area receives a great deal of rain, generally more than 78 inches per year. The unusually heavy rainfall, during the period from April to mid-September, comes from masses of humid equatorial air moving from west to east. The air masses lose their moisture as they rise on their approach to the high plateau areas.

Most of the Stieng area is covered with a dense rain forest of three levels. The highest level is a canopy created by very old trees, 125 to 150 feet high; the middle level has shorter trees and vines; and the lowest level is underbrush. Little grass grows on the forest floor. Occasional glades are covered with *tranh (Imperata cylindrica)* grass, while rocky areas of lava blocks and conglomerate masses are covered with light forests, consisting mainly of thorny bamboo. Areas along water-courses have particularly luxuriant growths of rattan and bamboo.

Although the area has an annual dry season in the winter (November to March), the forest is almost always extremely humid, either because of the heavy rainfall during the spring and summer seasons or because of the seepage of water through the soil during the dry season. However, the vegetation along the riverbeds and in the occasional glades or rocky patches suffers severely from drought during the relatively dry winter months.

The Stieng area has few large animals, with the exception of roving herds of elephants and boars. Hunting in the Stieng area is difficult because of the scarcity of large game. An inexperienced hunter might easily starve. However, many small mammals—porcupines, scaly anteaters, squirrels, civets, and monkeys—as well as reptiles, birds, and insects are found in this region. During the wet season, numerous leeches and other bloodsuckers appear in the forests.

Many springs in the forest area are breeding places for malaria-bearing mosquitoes. Cambodian and Vietnamese peasants in bordering locations are aware of the health hazards and are reluctant to go into the Stieng forest or to spend any extended period of time there.

The lowlands in the southwest portion of the Stieng territory are

comparatively open and are under cultivation. Rubber plantations are scattered throughout the southern and western portions of this area.

Many rivers and streams flow through the western Stieng lowland area; mountain streams are prevalent in the eastern part near the Annamite Mountains. The Song Bo is the principal river.

National Route 13 runs north to south in the western area near the Cambodian border; Route 14 runs southwest to northeast through the Annamite Mountains in the eastern section. Secondary roads and trails are few in the Stieng area. All roads in this region are difficult to maintain.[1]

SECTION II

TRIBAL BACKGROUND

Ethnic and Racial Origin

Anthropologists consider the Stieng a Mon-Khmer people, related to the Khmer or Cambodian people. Several other tribes in the Republic of Vietnam—including the Bahnar, the M'nong, and the Sedang—are also of Mon-Khmer stock. These tribes have similar customs and agricultural patterns. Their languages also are similar, though not mutually intelligible.[1]

Language

The Stieng language gives its name to a part of the Mon-Khmer family called the Stiengian subgrouping. The M'nong, Ma, and Sre languages are also members of this language subgroup.[2]

The Stieng language is made up, for the most part, of monosyllabic words. Word order in sentences seems to be flexible.[3] Available information does not indicate the existence of a written Stieng language.

Stieng tribesmen have a limited knowledge of French, Vietnamese, and languages of neighboring tribes, probably obtained from trade contacts. Stieng tribesmen who served as soldiers with the French army know some French, and members of the Budeh subgroup apparently understand some of the M'nong dialects.[4] Very few Stieng can read and write; the literate tribesmen probably attended Government or missionary schools, where the languages taught were French and Vietnamese.

Legendary History

According to a Stieng legend, their tribesmen once belonged to only one tribe and lived along the shore of the China Sea. The legend relates that a god descended from heaven and married a tribal girl named Dai Cho Phek. The god and Dai Cho Phek had a son, Djieng, who was taken back to heaven, where he was taught magic and the trades. Djieng was very ingenious; he knew how to forge tools, to weave baskets, to build houses, and to till the soil. The god sent Djieng back to earth to teach the trades to his tribe. Djieng married a girl named Lo'm, and they both became immortal.

The ruler of China made war on Djieng, who was compelled to retreat to the south with his soldiers and tribespeople. One day

Djieng and his soldiers crossed a stream by cutting their way through a quick-growing shrub, *tom rklang*. The rest of the tribespeople, who were somewhat behind, met a talking dog at the stream. The dog told them that Djieng and his soldiers had passed that way long before—a lie. "See how clear the waters of the brook are and how the bushes are undisturbed," said the dog. Djieng's followers believed the dog, not realizing that the fast stream had carried the mud away and that a new growth of tom rklang had appeared. The group of tribespeople remained at that site and founded the Stieng tribe.[5]

Factual History

Little information concerning the factual history of the Stieng is available. However, they are known to have revolted against French rule on at least two occasions. In 1862, before the French were firmly in control of Cochin China, the Annamese (ethnic Vietnamese) revolted with the support of several Stieng groups.[6] The Vietnamese, however, then invaded the Stieng territory; the lower regions were overrun first, and the invaders slowly moved inland. By 1875, most villages in the area of Hon Quan were designated by the Vietnamese names—An Loc, Binh Tay, Dong Phat, Dong No, and Xuan La—although they were inhabited solely by the Stieng. These villages made up two cantons of the Delegation of Hon Quan and were subjected to Vietnamese law. By superior strength the Vietnamese were able to inflict their will on the Stieng.

In the years following this first revolt, the Stieng peacefully remained in their villages and were of little concern to either the French or the Vietnamese. Occasional travelers passed through Stieng territory, but they apparently met with no interference from the tribesmen. Largely because of the inhospitable terrain and climate of their area, the Stieng remained relatively isolated until the French began to develop the area in the 1920's and 1930's.[7]

When the French found that the soils and climate of the Stieng area were favorable to rubber trees, they established large rubber plantations in the 1920's and 1930's. The French dispossessed the Stieng and attempted to use them as field laborers on the plantations. Since the Stieng were not good fieldworkers, the French imported North Vietnamese—Tonkinese—to work on the plantations. The loss of tribal land and the importation of the Tonkinese created dissention between the French and the tribespeople, causing the Stieng to withdraw deeper into the tropical forests, further isolating them from outside influences.[8]

In 1933, the second Stieng rebellion against the French occurred, apparently due to the encroachment of the rubber plantation owners. On October 29 of that year, Morere, a French official, was

killed at a military post in Stieng territory. Over the then newly constructed roads, the French quickly moved in their troops, including some Rhade tribesmen among the militia. Within 3 months, the uprising was crushed.[9]

After the Stieng area had been completely pacified by the French, relations between the tribesmen and the French improved. Stieng tribesmen began to serve in the French army, and some fought for the French during the Indochina War. The Stieng are still very proud of their military service with the French and proudly wear tattered remnants of their old uniforms.[10]

Settlement Patterns

Every few years, the Stieng shift their agricultural activities to new sites; at the same time, their villages are moved close to the new fields. These shifts are not migrations, as the new sites are usually not far from the old ones, but do constitute a regular movement within the tribal area. The villagers themselves establish the pattern of settlement, including the choice of the village site.

Stieng villages are usually small, seldom containing more than 30 persons and occasionally consisting of only one family. The villages are widely scattered over the Stieng area; the distances between them are great enough to permit each village to be completely independent.

In the past, when intervillage warfare was prevalent, Stieng villages were fortified with walls of large logs covered with tree branches. Thousands of sharpened stakes were interspersed among the tree branches and arranged at various heights. In addition, the dense foliage of the jungle itself hid the fortified villages and made detection difficult.[11]

The Stieng live in thatched houses built on bamboo poles about 6 to 10 feet off the ground. The walls of the typical Stieng house are made of woven bamboo screens, which slant slightly outward to join the roof of grass or palm fronds. The loosely woven bamboo floor permits refuse to fall through to the ground.

A platform, 6 to 10 feet above the ground, is built at the entrance to the house and is reached from the ground by a bamboo ladder or a wooden log with notched steps. The entrance to the house is quite small, and one must stoop to pass through it. The door is apparently made in this fashion for easy defense against attack.[12]

The interior of the house is divided into two sections, one for sleeping and the other for communal activities. The sleeping area, raised slightly above the communal area, is sectioned off into compartments by woven bamboo screens. The communal area, longer than the sleeping area, is also divided into two parts: one area is used for cooking and food storage; the second area is used for entertaining guests, eating, and storing valuables such as gongs, jars,

weapons, iron cooking pots, and gourds. Because the house has no chimney to carry away the smoke from the cooking fires, the air inside may be quite heavy and close. However, the smoke does serve as an insect repellent.

Some equipment is kept underneath the house, such as howdahs, baskets, and mortars and pestles for pounding husks from rice. Areas underneath and around the houses are littered with refuse that falls through the floor of the house, as well as that from the dogs, chickens, and pigs that live under the house.[13]

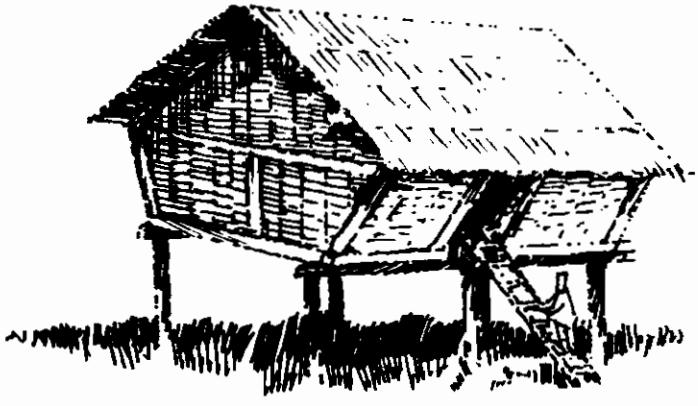

Figure 52. Stieng house.

SECTION III

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Physical Characteristics

A typical Stieng tribesman is about 5 feet 5 inches tall. His skin is darker than that of the Vietnamese and may range from brown to copper. A Stieng wears his hair long, fastening it in a bun at the nape of his neck with one of many varying decorations.

The Stieng tribesman is well built, strong and muscular. His thigh and chest muscles are especially well developed, although the limbs sometimes appear frail. Few Stieng are fat. The Mongolian eyefold is rarely encountered. The nose is more bridged than that of the average Oriental, and the forehead is high with generally prominent brows. The Stieng tribesman usually has body odor, as he rarely takes a bath and he sleeps in a smoke-filled house.[1]

Distinctive physical characteristics of the Stieng are pierced and elongated earlobes. The earlobes of the Stieng are usually pierced when they are very young. At first, a small wire or piece of cloth is worn in the hole in the earlobe; later, larger items are placed in the hole, until a plug, often ivory and approximately 1.5 inches in diameter, is worn.

The arms, chests, and foreheads of the Stieng tribespeople are often tattooed with various symbolic lines and triangles. They tattoo by puncturing the skin with a sharp piece of bamboo dipped in a root stain; after the wound heals, a blue design remains indelibly etched in the skin. Tattoos are losing favor among the Stieng who served in the French Army or have otherwise been in contact with outside groups. However, tribesmen living in remote villages and all the tribal women still use tattoos for personal decoration.[2]

Health

Village sanitation and personal hygiene among the tribespeople are very rudimentary. In the tribal area, diseases are spread by insects, worms, poor sanitation, and sexual contact.[3]

Malaria is a major disease among the Stieng. In 1947, the French reported that 92 percent of all infants in the Stieng area had malaria;[4] thus, by adulthood, every tribesman has probably

contracted the disease. Two common types of malaria in the Stieng area are the benign tertian malaria, which causes high fever with relapses over a period of time but is usually not fatal; and malignant tertian malaria, which is fatal.[5]

The carriers of the three types of typhus prevalent in this area are lice, rat fleas, and mites. Reportedly, mite-carried typhus is especially prevalent among the tribes.[6] Cholera, dysentery, yaws, venereal diseases, smallpox, and various parasitic and fungus diseases are also prevalent in this area.[7]

The Stieng believe disease is caused by evil spirits; for cures, the tribespeople resort to a village sorcerer. The sorcerer knows how to use remedies concocted from herbs, barks, and other items; how to select the proper amulet; how to properly place curative objects in the house or village; and how to make the proper blood sacrifices. Blood sacrifices involve prayers, the sacrifice of a dog, pig, or buffalo, and the drinking of rice wine. Such sacrifices are most frequently associated with birth and serious illnesses. At these sacrificial ceremonies, the sorcerers throw themselves into trances and writhe about on the ground.[8]

Aside from the contagious diseases, the health of the Stieng is largely dependent upon the adequacy of food supplies obtained from farming, hunting, and fishing.[9]

The Vietnamese Government operates medical facilities in towns near the Stieng area. In more remote Stieng areas, free from the Viet Cong, medical assistance teams have occasionally brought aid to the tribal villages. These activities, however, have met with only limited success because of the isolation of the Stieng villages, which cannot be easily reached by modern means of transport.

The Stieng have been receptive to the Western medical treatment available to them. Western medicine is known in most of the tribal areas, where tribesmen served in the French or Vietnamese armies, where U. S. Army medical teams have visited, and where the people are in contact with missionary hospitals. Western medicine would probably be resisted in only the most isolated villages.

For hunting and traveling long distances through the forests, Stieng endurance is good. The Stieng are able to remain in the forests, hunting and living off the land, for as long as a month.[10]

The physical size of the Stieng tribesmen (about 5 feet, 5 inches) limits the size of the weapons that they can handle to lightweight, portable arms for mobile operations. In fixed emplacements, however, the Stieng could handle heavier equipment.

Psychological Characteristics

The Stieng are considered one of the more warlike tribes of the Republic of Vietnam. Before the Stieng area was completely con-

trolled and pacified by the French and the Vietnamese, the Stieng raided other villages for slaves in well-organized and well-executed attacks.

By Western standards, the Stieng may appear lazy, for they do not submit to the observance of regular hours.[11] Judged by their performance of tasks of a routine nature, the Stieng are apathetic and seem incapable of sustained effort.[12] Hence, the Stieng were not considered satisfactory workers for the rubber plantations in the area. Nevertheless, the Stieng are capable of hard work, in terms of seasonal activities and their own culture. The Steing, for example, work long and hard in the late winter and early spring to prepare for planting; at other times, they are very active in hunting, fishing, and harvesting.

The Stieng love their independence and will obey a chief's directions only if they agree with them. In disputes with chiefs, villages have been known to split, and members to leave the villages.[13] Stieng tribesmen are oriented first toward the family and then toward the village. The individual tribesman trusts the members of his family, because he is familiar with their obligations to him as well as with their behavior. Loyalty is centered in the family and, to a degree, in the village.

SECTION IV

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Stieng society is patriarchal, family and village centered, and generally monogamous. Social status is determined by affluence; families own land, while individuals own personal items.

The Stieng have never had overall tribal unity or an overall tribal leader, nor do they appear to have a clan structure.[1]

Place of Men, Women, and Children in the Society

The Stieng have a patriarchal society: the women are subordinate to the men, who hold all positions of authority. Upon marriage, the men remain in the household of their fathers, in contrast to the custom among the Rhade and Jarai, where the man goes to live in the house of his wife's mother. Among the Stieng, inheritances and the family name are passed through the male line, again differing from the Rhade and Jarai.[2]

Stieng men do the heavy work, such as clearing the land and bringing in the harvest; they also hunt and fish. The women perform lighter farming tasks and are responsible for collecting edible tubers and other foods from the forest.[3]

The Stieng greatly prize their children, who are allowed much freedom.

Marriage

Since the Stieng have a patriarchal society, the male selects his future spouse, either directly or through a go-between who is a member of his family. However, mutual consent is the rule, and only rarely will parents, unless driven by need, sell a daughter to the highest bidder. Normally, young people yield to their mutual desires, often having intercourse before the wedding.

Once the young Stieng has made his choice, his parents sound out the girl through a female go-between. If the girl accepts, the two families confer and agree upon the terms of the marriage contract. Each family chooses a witness, a *nak mha* or a *konran sai*, who knows the traditional customs, as well as the prayers to invoke the spirits. The wedding is celebrated by tying the wrists of the couple with a cotton string and asking the spirits to bless the union with health, love, wealth, and many offspring. Following the ceremony, the two witnesses, the two families with their kin and friends, and

the village notables are invited to the feast. When the groom's family is wealthy, a buffalo and three pigs are sacrificed, and a number of jars of rice wine are provided for the feast; a poor family will provide pigs and serve one jar of rice wine.

If a tribesman wants to set up his own home or bring a wife into his own family, he must pay his wife's family a bride price—money, property, or services given by or in behalf of a prospective husband to the bride's family. In addition to the bride price, various sacrificial objects must be delivered before the wedding: one pig for the spirits of the forest, one pig for the household gods, a third pig in honor of the witnesses, and a buffalo in honor of all of the wedding guests.

If no bride price is paid, the groom joins his wife's family, and he becomes a *djo'ma sai* (adopted son). When his in-laws die, he stays on in their house, or at least in the same village. This custom corresponds to *lam re* (making a son-in-law) in Vietnamese society.

Adultery by a husband is tolerated by Stieng custom; adultery by a wife is treated as a transgression. When a husband deceives his wife, she cannot ask for a divorce; she may only reproach him and ask that he sacrifice a chicken in conciliation.

When a Stieng wife commits adultery, her partner must make restitution to her husband. This payment is customarily a fine—cattle, pigs, gongs, or jars of rice wine—or reimbursement of the husband's bride price.[4] The severity of the penalty is determined by the site of the offense (the fine being higher if the offense occurred in the house of the adulterer) and identity of adulterer (a stranger paying a larger fine than an acquaintance).

If the wife repeats the adulterous act, her husband will ask for a divorce and for the repayment of his bride price by either her lover or her family. A woman with several lovers is repudiated as a common prostitute.

Divorce and Second Marriages

Divorce, allowed by Stieng custom, is based on the consent of husband and wife, the consent of their families and children, and the reimbursement of the bride price to the husband or to his family.

When the husband, with the consent of his wife, wishes a divorce, her family keeps the bride price and receives, in addition, a sacrifice of a pig and a jar of rice wine. If the wife remarries, her family must return half the bride price. The children go with their mother when the father has initiated the divorce.

When the wife wants the divorce, her family must return the bride price, the gifts, and cost of the wedding ceremony and must offer a sacrifice of a pig and a jar of rice wine. In this case, the children remain with the father.

When a Stieng husband has been absent for several years, his wife may ask her in-laws for permission to remarry. If the in-laws give their consent, the second husband must reimburse them for the bride price.

If a woman dies from a miscarriage or in childbirth, and if the husband, living with his in-laws, seeks to remarry, he must pay the entire bride price plus a sacrifice of a buffalo and a jar of rice wine.[5]

In general, Stieng society permits the widow or widower to remarry according to his or her own choice. However, a widow is free to marry again only if her husband did not fully pay for the presents due his wife's family: if the presents were given and paid for, the widow is compelled to marry the brother of the deceased husband, even if this means relegation to the rank of second wife. Refusal to follow the tradition automatically entails return of the bride price.[6]

Birth and Abortion

Apparently, Stieng women in childbirth are attended by midwives who receive no payment. Information on delivery, birth ceremonies, and postbirth activities is not available.

Birth of a stillborn child, in normal course of events, does not result in punishment of the wife. But if the wife induces abortion, her husband may abandon her: in case the bride price has not been paid, the wife is returned to her family, without indemnity; if the bride price has been paid, she must remain with her in-laws. If a wife is aborted by someone else, in agreement with her husband, nothing is done. If the abortion was without the husband's consent, the person performing it must care for the wife until she is completely recovered, must pay the husband an indemnity of eight buffaloes, and must offer an appropriate sacrifice. Should the woman die, the person who performed the abortion must pay damages to the husband and the woman's family.[7]

The Stieng rarely tolerate infanticide, which today is punishable by severe penalties—even the death sentence. In the past, however, the Stieng reportedly killed deformed infants.

Class Structure

The Stieng have three classes: wealthy tribesmen, ordinary tribesmen, and slaves.[8] The wealthy Stieng achieve their position by accumulating slaves, elephants, valuable jars, and gongs. The vast majority of Stieng, however, are born into ordinary families.

The Stieng have two types of slaves: permanent slaves, captured or purchased, and considered permanent property of their owners; and temporary slaves, in bondage for debt. Orphans are sometimes sold as slaves, and occasionally a family might even sell a child to satisfy debts.

Degree of Social Mobility

There is mobility among the three Stieng social classes, especially between the ordinary tribesmen and the slaves, because tribesmen frequently go into debt and temporary slavery to buy animals for religious sacrifices. Thus, a tribesman may move up or down within the social structure.

SECTION V

CUSTOMS AND TABOOS

Almost all Stieng activities are regulated by numerous customs and taboos. There are prescribed methods and procedures governing everything from dress to construction of houses to the settlement of disputes and individual behavior. Having no written language, the Stieng have passed down these prescriptions from generation to generation until they have attained the force of customary law. Believing that the world around them abounds in both good and evil spirits, the Stieng are constantly trying to avoid actions, activities, and contact with objects or animals that they believe might displease the spirits.

Dress

In the Stieng area, men usually wear a simple loincloth. On ceremonial occasions, they also wear a thigh-length coat which buttons down the front. Men who served in the French Army still wear remnants of old uniforms. Other articles of Western apparel are also seen, and T-shirts are especially prized. Neither the men nor the women wear sandals.

Stieng women ordinarily wear a short skirt, and leave the upper part of the body nude. On ceremonial occasions the women usually wear a cloth, 9 to 12 feet long, draped over one shoulder and tied under the opposite armpit. This long cloth is also used to carry their babies.

Stieng children wear no clothing until they are about 6 years old; their hair is always cut very short, except for a single lock at the crown.

Jewelry or other ornaments are worn by all the Stieng. Women wear heavy brass or copper bangles on their ankles. Both men and women wear copper or brass bracelets. Large plugs of ivory are worn in the earlobes, and the tribespeople are tattooed with symbolic lines and triangles.* Hairpins are worn to keep their hair in place. Children usually have jewelry around their necks, and from birth until about the 4th year they wear an anklet with two bells.

* S. "Physical Characteristics," p. 729.

Folk Beliefs

Numerous fears, superstitions, and prejudices are associated with the Stieng's animistic religion. The Stieng believe that good and evil spirits inhabit all the objects of their world, including such things as streams, rocks, the soil, crossbows, jars, and gongs. The evil spirits actively cause trouble for the man who fails to observe the appropriate actions when dealing with any object or when performing any task. The spirits cause evil to befall the offending person or the village; hence, the Stieng live so that they will not offend the spirits. Stieng customs deal with human-spirit relations, taboos, and the penalties for violations. For example, a person entering a taboo village is thereby responsible for any illnesses or accidents subsequently occurring in the village, for he has offended the spirits who, in retaliation, cause illnesses and accidents.

The most significant customs and taboos are discussed in the sections which follow. Tribesmen violating the taboos are punished; outsiders from a powerful group, such as the Vietnamese or United States Government, are not usually held responsible for violations of tribal taboos. However, the Stieng long remember the person flouting their customs and may associate the group, as well as the individual offender, with the taboo violation.

Customs Relating to Outsiders

Because life among the Stieng is village centered, nontribal members and nonvillage members are treated alike: all outsiders are viewed with suspicion. The villager's main concern is, "Will the presence of the outsider offend the spirits and bring illness and accidents upon the village?" Persons who so offend the spirits are called *càng rai*. If an outsider, by his presence, offends the spirits and does not perform the appropriate placating sacrifice, he has, in the eyes of the tribesmen, committed an extremely serious offense. Before the Stieng area was completely pacified by the French, such offenses were a principal cause of conflict in Stieng villages; reportedly, many offending Frenchmen lost their lives.[1]

Although the Stieng are cautious in receiving outsiders, they are usually hospitable, even appearing to be happy to receive the visitors, as this is a good excuse for a rice wine ceremony. The visitor is courteously received, fed, and housed during his stay. The Stieng manner of receiving visitors is quiet and civil with a natural curiosity.

While the Stieng receive strangers courteously, they do so cautiously, as they are suspicious until they can determine the strangers' motives. In addition, religion probably plays a part, as the Stieng are alert and sensitive to the presence of the stranger who may offend the spirits. The rice wine ceremony for greeting

strangers probably also has a religious function—pacifying the spirits for the presence of the stranger in the village.

Eating and Drinking Customs

Rice is the basic staple to the Stieng diet. Indoors, the Stieng sometimes use chopsticks to eat rice, but in the field or while traveling they eat with their hands. A bowl of water is placed among the diners so they may wet their hands; then, with wet fingers, they roll fistfuls of rice into small balls without having the rice stick to their fingers. After two or three mouthfuls, they take a piece of uncrushed salt to crack between their teeth for flavoring. Pimiento is also used for flavoring. After the meal, the Stieng drink water stored in a bamboo tube. The floor is covered with the skin of a cow or deer, used as a tablecloth.

In addition to rice, the Stieng eat soups made of flowers, leaves, gourds, or pumpkins. Other Stieng foods are fish, wild game, buffalo, snails, rats, lizards, crickets, scorpions, snakes, toads, chickens, ducks, eggs, worms, and ants. Taboo foods are tigers, turtles, and domestic elephants.[2]

Rice wine drinking is a key element in all Stieng ceremonies. The wine is prepared by fermenting a mixture of unhusked rice (paddy) and water in a large jar. After the mixture is allowed to ferment for about 10 days, it is poured into another jar. The Stieng drink the wine through bamboo straws directly from this second jar. In order of rank, the participants in the ceremony take turns drinking from the jar. Reportedly, the Stieng drink great quantities of rice wine and are often drunk for long periods of time.

Customs Relating to the Village

Outsiders are forbidden entrance into a Stieng village under certain circumstances. The first 7 days following a formal inauguration of a newly built village are considered sacred. No strangers are allowed to enter the village during this time. It is also forbidden to bring in paddy, jars of rice wine, mortars, pestles, and winnowing baskets. During this same period, there is no cooking in the houses, and no vegetables, pork, or chicken may be eaten. While sacrificial poles—to which sacrificial buffaloes are tied—are being built in the new village, all the men must sleep in the forest. The sign outside the village warning away strangers is a rope, intertwined with a handful of leaves, across the village gate.[3]

When a stranger comes to live permanently in a Stieng village, he must sacrifice a chicken or a pig and rice wine. He must then live in the field he is cultivating—not within the confines of the village—until the village is moved to a new location. In this way

the stranger will not offend the evil spirits, thus causing illness and accidents in the village.

There are also certain times when entrance into a Stieng house is forbidden. A house is taboo for 3 days after the birth of a child or the birth of a buffalo or pig belonging to that household. However, if the buffalo or pig is born in the forest rather than near the house, the house is not considered taboo. No one may enter a hut on a cultivated field for 3 days after a child has been born in it, and a house is taboo for 3 days after a sorcerer has conducted a healing ceremony in it.

Warnings that a house is taboo are a closed door and a bamboo pole, with leaves fastened at the top, stuck in the ground in front of the house.[4]

Customs Relating to Warfare

The Stieng techniques for defensive and offensive warfare are discussed elsewhere in this study.* Little information is currently available concerning customs and taboos during war. An early account stated that if a group of warriors en route to an attack saw something that might be an evil omen, the attack would be abandoned.[5]

* See "Paramilitary Capabilities," p. 796.

SECTION VI

RELIGION

The life of the Stieng is dominated by their animistic belief that the gods and spirits inhabit every animate and inanimate object. The Stieng pantheon comprises good and evil spirits, principal and lesser gods, spirits of the deceased, and ghosts. Sacrifices to placate spirits offended by violation of taboos are the primary religious ritual.

Principal Spirits

The most important Stieng spirits are those of the sun, moon, earth, sky, and lightning. The spirit of the sun is responsible for fertility; the spirit of the moon, for the rhythms of life, such as the calendar, vegetation, and crops; the spirit of the earth, for the growth of things; and the spirit of the sky, for agrarian rites. The spirit of lightning is especially feared by the tribesmen; if certain taboos are broken, they believe this spirit will strike down the guilty party.[1]

The Stieng also have numerous local spirits, including the spirits of the trees, ponds, rocks, and implements, that require certain behavior on the part of the tribesmen. For example, if a tree is to be cut down, the tribesmen will make a small sacrifice to the spirit of the tree in order to avoid arousing its anger. These local spirits take their names from the objects they inhabit; for example, the spirit of a particular mountain is called *yang* (spirit) and the name of the mountain.[2] Evil spirits, or good spirits that are angered by the tribesmen, are believed to cause misfortune, illness, and death. The Stieng believe the evil spirits can "eat the soul" of a living man, thus bringing illness and death.[3]

Religious Ceremonies

Seasonal sacrifices are made for clearing the land and planting the rice in the spring and for the crop harvests in the fall. Every 5 years or so (approximate time of recurring crop failures) a large sacrifice of buffaloes—sometimes as many as 70—is offered to the most important spirits.

An illness, disease, malady, or violent death is regarded as punishment for the violation of a taboo, thus necessitating sacrifices to effect a cure. The appearance of a stranger in the village

and trading (before and after the exchange of goods) may also call for sacrificial rituals.[4]

Stieng religious rituals consist of prayers to the offended spirit or spirits, the ceremonial slaying of the sacrificial animals, and the rite of rice wine drinking. With one exception, all sacrificial ceremonies occur in the village: sacrifices necessitated by the occurrence of violent death are held in the forest so that the ghost of the deceased will not return to haunt the village.

The gravity of the taboo violation of the offense to the spirits determines the kind of sacrifice required, varying from minor offerings of a chicken and a little rice wine to major immolations of one or more buffaloes and very large jars of rice wine. Some sacrifices involve a number of different animals of the same color; for example, after the discovery of incest, the sacrifice calls for white chickens, white pigs, and white buffaloes.

Neighboring villages may be invited to attend the important rituals, such as the seasonal ceremonies.

Missionary Contacts

In 1851 a Catholic mission was established at Brolam; in 1861 Father Azemar came to the area.[5] The Protestants arrived in 1954 with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, sending a Pastor Sung to Nui Bara. Reverend and Mrs. Duncan, assigned to Budop in 1959, are no longer in the Stieng area, presumably because of Viet Cong terrorism.[6]

There is little evidence to show that missionary work among the Stieng had any substantial effect on the tribesmen. Not only were the missionaries confronted with the obstacles of a barsh climate and unhealthy living conditions, but they were also pitted against a primitive culture with a strong animistic religion and the elemental tradtion of the extended family. Individual conversions, at best difficult to achieve, are few among the family-dominated Stieng.

Religious Tenets with Respect to Warfare

There appears to be no religious influence on warfare other than certain ceremonies connected with military activities. Before the French administration, it was reported that ceremonies calling upon the spirits for help and protection preceded all Stieng raids.[7] Whether the tribesmen consider such rituals necessary today is not clear from available information.

SECTION VII

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

Type of Economy

The Stieng have a subsistence economy based upon swidden or slash-and-burn agriculture and supplemented by hunting and fishing. The family is the basic economic unit among the Stieng.[1]

In the slash-and-burn method of cultivation used by the Stieng, a future field is selected by the men in March; the field is cleared of brush, bamboo, and trees; and the dry, dead cuttings are burned just before the rainy season. The first rain then washes the ashes into the ground and the field is ready for the planting of rice.

Sowing rice, the principal crop of the Stieng, is a communal operation. Neighbors come to each family plot: the men, armed with two sticks, poke holes in the ground at regular intervals; the women, following behind the men, throw several grains of rice into each hole and cover them with soil. Pumpkin seeds and grains of corn are also sown, as they grow faster than rice and help the tribesmen subsist while the rice crops are maturing.

Hunting and fishing are important activities among the Stieng, for the rice crops are frequently insufficient to carry the tribesmen through a whole year.[2]

Special Arts and Skills

The ordinary tribesman can track and stalk game with great skill. His principal weapon is the crossbow with poisoned arrows, and he is also skillful in the use of pits and traps.

The Stieng are versatile and accomplished in the use of bamboo, from which they make the columns, floors, and roofs of their houses, vases, pots, water jugs, baskets, chests, lances, knives, scabbards, and earrings. From the small quantities of cotton they grow, the Stieng weave cloth. They also make primitive pottery, which they occasionally sell.[3]

Although the Stieng have little experience in the use of Western tools and machines, they have simple tools of their own: light weaving frames or looms,[4] two fire-making devices—a bamboo tube containing an oblong iron flint and a sliver of silica, and a rotat ng bamboo tube inside a hole in another bamboo tube[5]—and iro ı-bladed tools, such as knives, *coupe-coupes* (machetes), axes,

and hoes. Before the advent of the Vietnamese traders, the Stieng worked iron forges, but that art has largely been lost.[6]

Exchange System and Trade

Although they have recently become acquainted with money, the Stieng basically depend upon a barter system of trade. The principal unit of value for barter is the buffalo; lesser units of value are jars, gongs, weapons, and clothes. On occasion, human beings are traded, either as slaves or as indentured servants, in exchange for a service or a material object.[7]

Stieng trade seems to be largely limited to trade between their own villages. However, they do trade some animal and forest products, especially supposed aphrodisiacs, with the Vietnamese in return for salt and highly prized gongs and jars.[8]

Property System

Goods, such as gongs, jars, animals, and tilled lands, belong to the family and are under the control of the husband. Untilled lands are the common property of the entire village and are under control of the village chief.[9] Individual tribesmen own only their personal effects and weapons.

SECTION VIII

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The village is the highest degree of political organization achieved by the Stieng, while the extended family is the basic political unit. The Stieng have never had an overall tribal organization, and before the arrival of the French, the Stieng had never recognized any outside governmental or administrative authority.[1]

Stieng villages are autonomous and can best be described as associations of autonomous extended families, often interrelated, having common economic interests. Each village has an elected chief and a council of elders—"the notables"—made up of the most influential and affluent heads of extended families.

Primary political authority within a Stieng village rests with the family chiefs, usually the eldest males of the extended families. Thus the authority of the chief is limited, making the political unity of any Stieng village loose. Frequently, because of disputes or disagreements, individual families will leave the village and start a new village or join another village.[2]

Method of Selecting Leaders

The eldest male of a Stieng extended family is the head of that family. The most influential and affluent heads of extended families form the village council of elders.

When a village chief dies, the elders of the village ask the villagers to consider the election of a new chief. After consideration, a general meeting for the election and consecration of the new chief is held in the common house. This important session includes the sacrifice of several pigs, oxen, or buffaloes, and many jars of wine.[3] Over the years, this method of selecting leaders has changed little, despite French and Vietnamese efforts to bring the Stieng under a central authority.

Authority Within the Village

The authority of the Stieng village chief is limited; the heads of the various autonomous families within the village actually have more real power. At festivals and ceremonies, the village chief is given the first place, and he presides at village assemblies. In the past, he led the villagers in battle; in recent years, his orders have

been obeyed only if the villagers wished to do so, and his tone has become one of request rather than command.[4] Nevertheless, the village chief is held responsible by the Vietnamese Government for actions taken by his village.[5]

The household heads of the Stieng determine when and where to move or to plant crops and resolve disputes within the families.

The council of elders makes collective decisions for the village and serves as a group of advisors for the village chief.

Legal System

Like other tribes in the Republic of Vietnam, the Stieng have long possessed many unwritten laws expressed in terms of taboos and sanctions. These laws, known and respected by all members of the society, are enforced within the family by its head and are implemented in the village by the council of elders and chief.

Traditionally, sanctions were primarily economic, based on the payment of fines. The entire family of an accused individual, not only the individual himself, was responsible for the payment of fines or proper sacrifices. Even voluntary homicide, except in the case of a second offense, could be atoned by the payment of a fine. Although the guilty man could be condemned to death, his life could be purchased by his family by paying the material value of two to four human lives and conducting a special ceremony called *pai kliar*.[6]

The death penalty was imposed upon second offenders whose families refused to help them and upon individuals considered dangerous to the whole village, such as those believed capable of casting an evil spell, or *cak*. The condemned were killed with a lance or a machete; their goods were confiscated, and their wives and children were sold to pay their debts.[7]

Before the French occupation, Stieng justice was administered at two levels or degrees, without any differentiation between civil and criminal offenses and without opportunity of appeal. First-degree judgments involved infractions with a maximum penalty not exceeding two buffaloes. These judgments were determined by a tribunal presided over by the village chief assisted by two village elders experienced in local tradition.[8] In litigation between persons from two different villages, both village chiefs attended. The plaintiff and his chief traveled to the village of the defendant.[9] No kin of either involved party was allowed to sit on the tribunal; if partiality was proven, the decision of the tribunal was considered void.

Second-degree cases were heard by the chief of the village, assisted by a tribunal chosen from among the chiefs or elders of neighboring friendly villages, known for their integrity and competence in jurisprudence. Cases involving punishments equivalent

to more than two buffaloes are heard in second-degree tribunals.[10]

The French administration allowed the basic, traditional system to continue, reinforcing the authority of the Stieng village chief, a heretofore purely nominal position.[11] On the village, district, and provincial levels, a special system of courts was established under the French to adjudicate tribal matters. In the village, the chief presided over the village court and decided the sentences. His sentences could be reviewed on the district level. Three court members were assigned to each ethnic group in a district's jurisdiction, and such groups handled only tribal matters. Each group selected a president to preside over it and the court met in the house of the district chief.[12]

Under the French, those cases that could not be resolved by the chief were sent to the Tribunal Coutumier, which convened for the first 7 days of every month. In judging the cases brought before the tribunal, the chief judge relied on the numerous traditional tribal customs.[13] The tribunal dealt only with cases in which both parties were Stieng tribespeople. Cases involving Vietnamese and Stieng were the responsibility of the province chief, but provincial authorities tried not to interfere with the operation of the tribunal.

The legal system instituted by the French still governs the Montagnard tribes, but steps have been taken by the Vietnamese Government to revise the legislative code in the tribal areas. Under the Diem regime, an attempt was made to substitute Vietnamese laws for the tribal practices. This attempt was connected with Vietnamese efforts to politically integrate the tribal people into the Republic of Vietnam.

In March 1965, the Vietnamese Government promulgated a decree restoring the legal status of the tribal laws and tribunals. Under this new decree, there will be courts at the village, district, and province levels which will be responsible for civil affairs, Montagnard affairs, and penal offenses when all parties involved are Montagnards.[14]

Village customs law courts, consisting of the village administrative committee chief aided by two tribal assistants, will conduct weekly court sessions.[15] When a case is reviewed and a decision reached by this court, it will be recorded and signed by the parties involved. This procedure will eliminate the right to appeal to another court. If settlement cannot be determined, the case can be referred to a higher court.[16]

District courts, governed by the president of the court (the district chief) aided by two Montagnard assistants, will hold bimonthly court sessions. Cases to be tried by the district court include those appealed by the village court and cases which are adjudged serious according to tribal customs.[17]

At the province level, a Montagnard Affairs Section will be established as part of the National Court. This section, under the jurisdiction of a Montagnard presiding judge and two assistants, will handle cases appealed from the Montagnard district courts and cases beyond the jurisdiction of the village or district courts. It will convene once or twice a month, depending upon the requirements.[18]

Subversive Influences

Factors contributing to the vulnerability of the Stieng to subversion are geographical location, historical isolation, and their traditional suspicion of the Vietnamese. Due to Viet Cong activity, effective governmental presence and control had been on the wane in the Stieng area during the early 1960's.[19]

The principal objective of subversive activity among the Stieng is to divert tribal support and allegiance from the Government to the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong also seek to control the strategic highways (National Routes 13 and 14) in the Stieng area, which are essential for communication and supply between Viet Cong bases in the tribal area and across the border in Cambodia and their military operations in the Mekong Delta.

Generally, the Viet Cong infiltrate a village and work to win the confidence of either the whole village or its key individuals. Usually a slow process, this is achieved by providing community services and by adopting tribal mores and customs.

Once the villagers' suspicions are allayed and their confidence won, the next phase is an intense propaganda program directed against the Government of the Republic of Vietnam. Then individuals are recruited, trained, and assigned to various Viet Cong support or combat units.[20]

When propaganda and cajolery are not effective, the Viet Cong resort to extortion and terror, which usually results in passive resistance to the Government or active support for the Viet Cong.[21]

Reportedly some Stieng served with the French at Dien Bien Phu during the Indochina War. These Stieng are proud of their accomplishments and might be effective elements of opposition against the Viet Cong; however, little specific information is available concerning the extent of current tribal opposition to subversive elements.[22]

SECTION IX

COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES

The principal means of information dissemination in the Stieng area is word of mouth.

No information is available at this writing concerning the number of radios in the tribal area and the degree of Stieng familiarity with them. Presumably, however, radios are no less rare among the Stieng than among other tribal groups in the Republic of Vietnam. Any radios operating in the Stieng area could pick up broadcasts from Saigon and provincial radio stations. Wherever feasible, short movies in the Stieng language covering simple subjects could be an effective means of communication.

Available reports indicate that the Stieng have no written language, although various missionary groups have attempted to devise a written language for them. No information is available concerning the success of those efforts.

So little is known about the roles of storytellers, minstrels, and criers among the Stieng that it is impossible to make a definite statement about this means of communication. Available information, however, indicates that music plays a large part in the life of the Stieng. At all religious festivals and at all other ceremonial occasions, there is music of the typical oriental five-tone scale played on gongs, which are the most valued possessions of the Stieng. Therefore, it may be advisable for personnel to have in mind both the value of gongs as gifts of friendship and respect as well as the necessity to express appreciation of Stieng music.

Apparently the Stieng prefer the colors of red and black, but they do not especially avoid any specific color.[1] The Stieng tattoos are symbolic lines and triangles, the meaning of which is not known.

Information activities should be oriented toward improving the living conditions of the Stieng as individuals, families, or villages. Information should be connected with programs explicitly beneficial to the village to elicit any cooperation. Control of disease, improvement of agriculture, and protection from Viet Cong harassment are possible themes. Care should always be taken to avo d taboo violations in the presentation of ideas.

SECTION X

CIVIC ACTION CONSIDERATIONS

Any proposed civic action should take into account Stieng religious, social, and cultural traditions. Because of the Stieng political structure, all initial contacts should be made only with the village chief and the elders. In addition to considering specific social and cultural factors in developing individual civic action projects, it is essential to psychologically prepare the Stieng to accept the proposed changes. This requires detailed consultation with village leaders, careful assurance as to results, and a relatively slow pace in implementing programs.

Because they are village-oriented and prefer to remain isolated in their traditional way of life,[1] the Stieng respond most favorably to ideas for change presented in terms of local community betterment. Civic action proposal should stress the resulting improvement of village life rather than emphasize ethnic or cultural pride, nationalism, or political ideology. The reasons for an innovation should be thoroughly explained; the Stieng resent interference in their normal routine if they do not understand the reason for it. Current civic action programs of the Vietnamese Government include the resettlement of the Stieng into new and larger villages, the control of malaria, medical aid programs, agricultural assistance, and some attempts to educate the Stieng tribesmen.[2] These programs have not been wholly successful because of the isolation of the tribesmen, their traditional suspicion of the Vietnamese, their stubborn adherence to traditional ways, and Viet Cong interference.

The following civic action guidelines may be useful in planning and implementing projects or programs.

1. Projects originating in the local village are more desirable than suggestions imposed by a remote Central Government or by foreigners.
2. Projects should be designed to be challenging but should not be on such a scale as to intimidate the villagers by size or strangeness. Projects using familiar materials and products, as much as possible, are more easily accepted by the tribesmen than projects requiring the use of strange materials or devices.

3. Projects should have fairly short completion dates or should have phases that provide frequent opportunities to evaluate effectiveness.
4. Results should, as far as possible, be observable, measurable, or tangible.
5. Projects should, ideally, lend themselves to emulation by other villages or groups.
6. Credit for success should be attributed to the Republic of Vietnam's civil and military authorities, as appropriate.

Civic Action Projects

The civic action possibilities for personnel working with the Stieng encompass all aspects of tribal life. Examples of possible projects are listed below. They should be considered representative but not all inclusive and not in the order of priority.

1. Agriculture and animal husbandry
   a. Improvement of livestock quality through introduction of better breeds.
   b. Instruction in elementary veterinary techniques to improve health of animals.
   c. Introduction of improved seeds and new vegetables.
   d. Techniques to improve quality and yields of farmland.
   e. Insect and rodent control.
   f. Construction of simple irrigation and drainage systems.
2. Transportation and communication
   a. Roadbuilding and clearing of trails.
   b. Installation, operation, and maintenance of electric power generators and village electric light systems.
   c. Construction of motion-picture facilities.
   d. Construction of radio broadcast and receiving stations and public-speaker systems.
3. Health and sanitation
   a. Improve village sanitation.
   b. Provide safe water supply systems.
   c. Eradicate disease-carrying insects.
   d. Organize dispensary facilities for outpatient treatment.
   e. Teach sanitation, personal hygiene, and first aid.
4. Education
   a. Provide basic literacy training.
   b. Provide basic citizenship education.
   c. Provide information about the outside world of interest to the tribesmen.

SECTION XI

PARAMILITARY CAPABILITIES

The Stieng are reportedly skilled and capable fighters, both offensively and defensively. They are skilled hunters, trackers, scouts, and guides with experience which, if coupled with intensive modern training, support, and leadership, could result in the development of exceptionally effective units for jungle combat.

Organization for Defense

In the past, organized under the leadership of the village chief, the Stieng tribesmen fought well. Prior to any military action, plans were considered fully, being discussed by every villager. Women played an active supporting role by outfitting and supplying the men with weapons and food before a raid and by assisting in preparation of the almost impenetrable barricades around the village. The barricade was a formidable, circular wall of felled trees with leaves and branches facing away from the village. Many branches and pieces of bamboo were placed on top of one another and interlaced, concealing thousands of razor-sharp pointed sticks, traps, and snares to confront the enemy. The Stieng simply waited behind the barricade and picked off their enemies as they attempted to fight their way through the barricade. The density of the obstruction would render the enemy momentarily defenseless, unable to use his weapons.[1]

At present, there is no formal, adequate organization for the preparation of offensive or defensive action under modern conditions. To establish such organization, capable hunters and village chiefs who are recognized and respected among the Stieng would appear to be the persons to initiate action.

Inclination to Fight Defensively

Despite a reputation for vigorous defense the Stieng determination to defend themselves is strongly influenced by estimates of probable success. If faced with an enemy of numerical and weapon superiority, the Stieng will capitulate rather than fight, a characteristic not unique to the Stieng but common among people inadequately armed, trained, and led.

Given suitable weapons, training, and leadership, it is believed

that the traditional Stieng desire to defend themselves, their families, and villages would express itself effectively.

Inclination to Fight Aggressively

Although the Stieng prefer defensive warfare, reportedly, they are aggressive if provoked; in the past they have mounted well-organized attacks on distant villages. However, the tribesmen have a history of raiding other tribes, sometimes traveling long distances by foot. In the past, Stieng raiding parties of between 100 and 200 men would set out on an expedition without any real order and, although avoiding excessive noise, without observing absolute silence. Proceeding surreptitiously through the jungle, avoiding ricefields and main roads, and camping overnight near water sources, the Stieng would time their arrival for a sudden surprise attack just before sunrise.

Weapons Utilized by Tribe

Traditionally, the Stieng have relied upon spears, swords, billhooks, crossbows, and poisoned arrows and were familiar with the use of traps, pits, and concealed sharpened sticks used as spiked foot traps. Some Stieng are trained in the use of modern weapons, and some have military knowledge gained from service with the French.

Because of their relatively small physical size—an average height of about 5 feet 5 inches—the tribesmen are more comfortable and adept with small light weapons, such as the AR.15 and carbines, rather than the heavier M-1 rifle or BAR. The tribesmen can use weapons easily disassembled and quickly assembled. The Stieng have a tradition of taking good care of their weapons.

The Stieng are skilled hunters and excellent marksmen. They take great pride in their careful and skilled handling of weapons. When the Stieng can carry and handle a weapon conveniently, they will generally use it well.

The Stieng can handle devices such as mortars, explosives, and mines; however, their proficiency with these weapons is limited by their lack of understanding of the more theoretical and technical aspects of timing and trajectory. Nevertheless, the Stieng are capable of being trained in the use of some sophisticated devices.

Ability to Absorb Military Instruction

The Stieng may be capable of absorbing the more basic military training and concepts better than many of the neighboring tribes, for their history shows an aptitude for such training. They are accomplished in their use of terrain, tracking, and ambush, and they are resourceful and adaptable in the jungle. The Stieng learn readily by actual demonstration of techniques and procedures. The tribesmen who have seen service with the French are an asset in the training and instruction of their fellow Stieng.

SECTION XII

SUGGESTIONS FOR PERSONNEL WORKING WITH THE STIENG

Every action of the Stieng tribesman has specific significance in terms of his culture. One must be careful to realize that the Stieng may not react as outsiders do. The outsider should remember that a relatively simple course of action may, for the tribesman, require not only divination but also a sacrifice.

A few suggestions for personnel working with the Stieng are listed below.

Official Activities

1. Initial contact with a Stieng village should be formal. A visitor should speak first to the village chief and elders, who will then introduce him to other principal village figures.
2. Sincerity, honesty, and truthfulness are essential in dealing with the Stieng. Promises and predictions should not be made unless the result is assured. The tribespeople usually expect a new group of personnel to fulfill the promises of the previous group.
3. Outsiders cannot gain the confidence of Stieng tribesmen quickly. Developing a sense of trust is a slow process requiring great understanding, tact, patience, and personal integrity.
4. An attitude of good-natured willingness and limitless patience must be maintained, even when confronted with resentment or apathy.
5. Whenever possible, avoid projects or operations which give the tribesmen the impression they are being forced to change their ways.
6. Personnel should require some form of payment for services to the tribe. Something useful to the village should be obtained from the tribespeople themselves in return for the outside assistance.
7. Tribal elders and the village chief should receive credit for projects and for improved administration. Efforts should never undermine or discredit the position or influence of the local leaders.

Social Relationships

1. The Stieng should be treated with respect and courtesy at all times.
2. The term *moi* should not be used because it means savage and is offensive to the tribesmen.
3. Outside personnel should not refuse an offer of food or drink, especially at a religious ceremony. Once involved in a ceremony, one must eat or drink whatever is offered.
4. A gift, an invitation to a ceremony, or an invitation to enter a Stieng house may be refused by an outsider, as long as consistency and impartiality are shown. However, receiving gifts, participating in ceremonies, and visiting houses will serve to establish good relations with the tribespeople.
5. Outsiders should request permission to attend a Stieng ceremony, festival, or meeting from the village elders or other responsible persons.
6. An outsider should never enter a Stieng house unless accompanied by a member of that house; this is a matter of good taste and cautious behavior. If anything is later missing from the house, unpleasant and unnecessary complications may arise.
7. Outsiders should not get involved with Stieng women.
8. When helping the Stieng learn new techniques, methods, and concepts, be careful to avoid seriously disrupting traditional cultural patterns.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

1. Do not enter a village where a religious ceremony is taking place or a religious taboo is in effect. Watch for the warning signs placed at the village entrances; when in doubt, do not enter.
2. As soon as possible, identify any sacred trees, stones, or other sacred objects in the village; do not touch or tamper with them. The Stieng believe these sacred objects house powerful spirits. For example, if a sacred rock is touched without due ceremony, the village may have to be moved or expensive sacrifices may have to be made.
3. Do not mock Stieng religious beliefs in any way; these beliefs are the cornerstone of Stieng life.

Living Standards and Routines

1. Outsiders should treat all Stieng property and village animals with respect. Any damage to property or fields should be promptly repaired and/or paid for. An outsider should avoid borrowing from the tribesmen. Animals should not be treated brutally or taken without the owner's permission.

2. Difficult, rigorous work should be done early in the morning, from dawn to 10:30 or 11:00 A.M. A nap during the middle of the day is customary, and light work is done in the afternoon.
3. Learn simple phrases in the Stieng language. A desire to learn and speak their language creates a favorable impression on the Stieng.

Health and Welfare

1. The Stieng are becoming aware of the benefits of medicine and will request medical assistance. Outside groups in Stieng areas should try to provide medical assistance whenever possible.
2. Medical teams should be prepared to handle and have adequate supplies for extensive treatment of malaria, dysentry, yaws, trachoma, venereal diseases, intestinal parasites, and various skin diseases.

FOOTNOTES

I. INTRODUCTION

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2. David Thomas, "Mon-Khmer Subgroupings in Vietnam" (University of North Dakota: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1962), p. 4.
3. R. P. Henri Azemar, "Les Stiengs de Brolam," *Excursions et Reconnaissances*, XII (Saigon: 1886), p. 7.
4. Gerber, *op. cit.*, p. 227; Azemar, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–8; Irving Kopf, Personal Communication, July 1965. [Ph.D. candidate, Columbia University; extensive U.S. Government service in tribal areas of Vietnam.] U.S. Army Special Warfare School, *Montagnard Tribal Groups of the Republic of South Viet-Nam* (Fort Bragg, N.C.: U.S. Army Special Warfare School, 1964), p. 211.

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4. Henri Maître, *Les Jungles moi* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1912), p. 407.
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10. Kopf, *op. cit.*
11. Azemar, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–20.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.
13. *Ibid.*; Maître, *op. cit.*, p. 101; Kopf, *op. cit.*

III. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

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2. Kopf, *op. cit.*
3. H. C. Darby (ed.), *Indo-China* (Cambridge, England: Geographical Handbook Series, 1943), pp. 109–31.
4. Pierre Delbove, "Le Paludisme et les Moi (Note à propos de l'article de M. Raulin sur l'Évolution des Stieng de la délégation de Honquan)," *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises*, XXII (1947), p. 109.
5. Darby, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–14.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 114–16.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 116–24.
8. Kopf, *op. cit.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Azemar, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
12. Kopf, *op. cit.*
13. Azemar, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–14; Gerber, *op. cit.*, pp. 227–28.

IV. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
3. Kopf, *op. cit.*
4. Gerber, *op. cit.*, pp. 262–63.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
6. Maspéro, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–77.
7. Gerber, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
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V. CUSTOMS AND TABOOS

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VII. ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

1. Gerber, *op. cit.*, pp. 228–29.
2. Azemar, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–54; Dam Bo, *op. cit.*, pp. 1012–13.
3. *Ibid.*
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5. Henri-Pierre Raulin, "Les Techniques de la percussion et la production du feu chez les Stieng," *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises*, XXII (1947), p. 121.

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VIII. POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

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19. *Washington Post*, July 7, 1965, p. A–14.
20. Malcolm W. Browne, *The New Face of War* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), pp. 72–74.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 121–43.
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IX. COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES

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X. CIVIC ACTION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Henri-Pierre Raulin, "L'Évolution des Stieng de la délégation de Honquan," *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises*, XXI (1946), p. 70.
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XI. PARAMILITARY CAPABILITIES

1. Azemar, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

XII. SUGGESTIONS FOR PERSONNEL WORKING WITH THE STIENG

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