

Libraries in Laos and Vietnam

A Report from a consultant mission on
the library sector in Laos and Vietnam
16.2.1991 - 9.3.1991

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Preface

In 1988 the first Swedish support to Laos in the field of culture started through SIDA. It has been discussed how the cultural support could be included into the general frame of cooperation between Laos and Sweden starting from the financial year 1991/92.

SIDA has focussed its attention on two projects which could be of considerable importance to secure the traditional Lao culture for the future and to strengthen the traditional and modern particulars of the Lao culture. This task is especially important, because the country is being transformed quickly in this period inspired by reforms in the economic and social spheres. The first project concerns restoration of the old Royal Palace in Luang Prabang, now the National Museum. The second one is related to the written Lao culture, mainly based in libraries and archives. The library sector is storing the traditional culture, but it contains the future culture as well: knowledge is the base for research and development.

SIDA asked NIAS to compose a team of consultants, which could make a report on the situation of libraries and preservation and outline a long-term project of cooperation between Sweden and Laos in this field. The consultants were also asked to look more briefly on the situation in Vietnam. Although the discussion about a cultural agreement between Vietnam and Sweden is less advanced than the one with Laos, a cooperation in the field of libraries and conservation might as well be relevant.

The mission visited Laos from February 17 to March 5, 1991, and continued in Vietnam until March 9. It was composed of Mr. Stig Rasmussen, Head Librarian of the Oriental Department of the Royal Library in Copenhagen and of NIAS' library, who has special expertise in the field the libraries; Mr. Jonas Palm, chief conservator at the University Library in Uppsala, who has special expertise in conservation; and Ms. Irene Nørlund, Vice-director and researcher at NIAS with long time experience from Laos and Vietnam and in the field of research and research cooperation.

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Libraries constitute the collective memory of a nation, and just as man without a memory has no personality, a nation without libraries (and archives and museums) is in danger of losing its identity. Without memory there can be no history, and without history man must repeat the endless pattern of myths.

In the collective memory of libraries are kept records of the thoughts and ideas of men long dead whom otherwise could never meet and whose work we would have been forced to repeat. Religious thinking and philosophical

analyses, ethics and moral guidance, jurisprudence and administration of the state are represented in the heritage of the great cultures of Asia.

Libraries keeping the heritage of one culture form the basis of organic evolution, whereas libraries with collections of central works of other cultures as well are the prerequisites of dynamic development through exchange of thought.

The ideal library system thus takes care of the cultural heritage of a given nation, and at the same time it acquires an appropriate selection of works originating in other cultures. - But libraries ever so rich in variegated collections are of little use to library users if these collections are unorganised and not accessible by means of adequate classification which provides an easy survey of any given field, and a good descriptive catalogue which gives easy access to specific works.

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Laos 16.2 - 5.3. 1991

1. Summary

During our stay in Laos, a number of valuable collections relating to the culture and history of Laos was identified. These collections consists of palm-leaf manuscripts, the largest source on early Lao culture and history; of archival materials relating back to the set up of a French protectorate in 1893 and of book-collections from 1893 up to today, including photographs and films.

These collections, however, are insufficiently stored and to some degree unorganised, they are only grossly classified or not classified at all, and catalogues are scant. If these collections are left to themselves a considerable part of the national-heritage of Laos will remain inaccessible to researchers and the public and soon reach a stage of destruction beyond repair.

Laotian institutions are very interested in cooperation with SIDA and other foreign agencies, but their capacity to do so is limited and financial resources are almost non-existent.

The consultants recommend a long-term support to key libraries and institutions in Laos with the aim of improving the infrastructure of research and popular education of which libraries form an integral part. Support should in particular be given to improve *storing conditions*, to *preservation of existing collections* and *development of new collections*, and *further training of the library staff*. It is only too obvious that Laos is in desperate need of even basic knowledge as well as the material basics, to be able to preserve a part of its history.

The key institutions are the **National Library**, the **Library and Archives at the National Museum** in Luang Prabang and the **Library at the Committee for Social Sciences**. It is recommended that these three institutions should receive support as the first major step to improve the library system in Laos.

If the cooperation should include the whole library sector other institutions should be included as well in the project. The National Archives have a very important collection of paper manuscripts, and with limited resources as well as recently established contacts to the archives cooperation may be established through support with equipment (shelves and protective boxes) and indirectly by starting up organisation of the archives at the National Museum. In this way the expertise provided to the National Museum could also give recommendations to the National Archives. The library at Dong Dok Teachers' High School, which is an university in spe, has obvious needs of shelves, new books and training, but is given lower priority than the other projects. The provincial libraries are by now established in a number of the 17 provinces, they are important in order to decentralise the access of knowledge from Vientiane. To develop all the provincial libraries will cost about 2,2 million SEK. It will be reasonable to include in the long-term cooperation (beyond the first three years). The library at the National Assembly needs books and training to be of any real value for the National Assembly.

The key institutions in a long-term library cooperation have three different functions: The **National Library** is regarded as the main library with the largest collection, better skilled staff and a key function to the other libraries in respect of preservation, training and acquisitions. This position should be strengthened. During the visit of the Consultants it became clear that the National Library has to move to a new building and that the new building provided would be only temporary. A permanent building with the required facilities is of central importance to support the key functions of the National Library. However, the Laotian government has to show its sincerity to support the National Library by providing the basic needs. Towards the end of the visit it turned out that the National Library had made a detailed building project, which was feasible and reasonable in costs. The Ministry of Information and Culture was positive, but the Ministry of Finance has to be involved to make a decision. A co-financing of a building for the National Library will cost 3 million SEK (50% of the total), which is included in the long-term suggestion. The immediate need on the short-term budget for equipment, conservation, collections and training is 1,17 million SEK. In the long-term budget is also included a conservation workshop of 250.000 SEK.

The National Museum in Luang Prabang contains a book collection from the royal family and archive materials dating from 1893 and up to 1975. The book collection contains valuable books, but is not very big. The documents in the archives were so scattered in various bookshelves, cupboards and archives that it was only possible to estimate the total volume, which came up to 20 cubic meters, about half the size of the archives in Vientiane. The library and archives are expected to move to another building the former building for the royal guard next to the museum. The building needs repair but is appropriate for the purpose. The immediate short-term budget, including bookshelves, consultants to give instruction on the spot about the organisation of archives and library and training of the staff amounts to 950.000 SEK.

The Committee for Social Sciences (CSS) plays a role different from that of the two other institutions as the institution in Laos most similar to an university for the time being. The official status is like an academy of science in the socialist countries, i.e. a research institution. The research organisation has however only recently been reorganised in Laos. Most of the research in humanities and some fields of social sciences is now carried out by the members of the various institutes under the Committee for Social Sciences. Most of the members are well reputed scholars, yet younger people with education from abroad are accepted as members, and a process of renewal is taking place. A considerable part of the human base for preserving and extending the knowledge about the Lao culture is to be found in the CSS. However, the library is very limited and the working facilities very bad. It will encourage research if the library contained relevant literature, and reading facilities were improved. The immediate short-term budget to support CSS is 301,000 SEK. If the air-conditioning should be improved for the whole floor 300.000 SEK is needed, which is included in the long-term budget proposal.

According to the report on preservation, the palm-leaf manuscripts are in quite good condition, and with support from Toyota Foundation the manuscripts in Vientiane Prefecture and two of the provinces are being registered. Hopefully this project will be extended to registration in all the provinces. Beside of the manuscripts kept at the National Library and the National Museum under fairly good conditions, the manuscripts are kept in or near the wats, the Buddhist temples. They form an integral part of the Buddhist tradition and rituals and are regarded as sacred; hence it would not be reasonable to suggest a removal of the documents. From the point of view of preservation the manuscripts are well stored in the wats and the original leaves are much longer lasting than microfilms in the Laotian climate. However, for the purpose of research it would be valuable to microfilm the manuscript to make the texts centrally available. This projects is of considerable size and is estimated to cost 2-3 million SEK, but is not been recommended for support at this stage. It would, however, be important to look for further funding for this project.

Summary of costs

1991-93(3 years) 1994-96(3 years)

National Library	1,172,000 SEK	3,750,000 SEK
National Museum	950,000 SEK	
CSS	301,000 SEK	300,000 SEK
National Archives	400,000 SEK	?
Library of National Assembly	260,000 SEK	
Dong Dok Teachers' High School	270,000 SEK	
Provincial Library	270,000 SEK	2,250,000 SEK
Library consultants	275,000 SEK	

Total 3,898,000 SEK 6,300,000 SEK

Administration 25%¹ + 974,500 SEK 1,575,000 SEK
 Telecommunication 75,000 SEK

Grand Total 4,947,500 SEK 7,875,000 SEK

¹. The short term project 1991-93 is administration heavy and NIAS has calculated 18,5% for administration and need of consultancies to carry out the project. An overhead of 6,5% is moreover included. As for the long-term project the administrative costs have a different character and should probably be calculated following other criterias.

A minimum budget short-term is also calculated concentrating on the three core institutions:

1991-93

National Library 1,172,000 SEK
National Museum 950,000 SEK
CSS 301,000 SEK
Library consultants 275,000 SEK

Total 2,698,000 SEK

Administration 693,250 SEK
Telecommunication 75,000 SEK

Grand total 3,466,250 SEK

2. Travel diary

February 16

Departure from Uppsala and Copenhagen

February 17

Arrival in Vientiane

Accommodation at the Swedish Guesthouse

Dinner with Mr. Rolf Samuelsson, representative of SIDA, and Mr. Thongsa Sayavongkhamdy, Director of the Department of Museums and Archeology

February 18

8.30 Meeting at the Committee for Social Sciences with
Mr. Houphanh RATTANAVONG, Director of the Institute of Arts, Literature and Languages
Mr. Khampeng KETAVONG, Deputy director of the Institute of Art
Mr. Khambone THIRABOUTH, Head of the CSS Archive
Mr. Khammeung SOUNAVONG, Responsible for the Library
14.00 Discussions continued with the CSS

February 19

8.30 Meeting at the National Library with
Mr. Oudomsavanh KENENOUVONG, Deputy director of the National Library
Mr. Bounleuth THAMMACHAK, Responsible for the palm-leaf manuscript collection

Visit to the Library of Science and Technology

14.00 Visits to libraries at Wat Khunta, Wat Naxay, Wat Xiengnhun and Wat Sisaket

February 20

9.30 Meeting with Mrs. Dara KANLAGNA, editor of the cultural journal VANNASINH and discussions about the palm-leaf manuscript project
Meeting with Mrs. Douang Deuane BOUNYAVONG, writer and researcher on Lao classic literature, specialist on textiles, writer on women's issues

14.30 Discussions with Mrs. Kongdeuane NETTAVONG, Director of the National Library Mr. Oudomsavanh, Deputy Director, and Mr. Boonthanom, Responsible for acquisition

February 21

8.30 Visit to the depot of the National Library, Research Institute of Education

10.15 Visit at SIDA, Mr. Rolf Samuelsson

15.00 Library of Science and Technology closed. Visit to the Geodetic Institute.

16.00 Meeting with Mr. Sisanonh PASEUT, Vice-minister of Information and Culture together with Mr. Rolf Samuelsson, Mrs. Kongdeuane and Mr. Oudomsavanh

February 22

8.30 Visit to the Dong Dok Teachers' High School. Meeting with Mr. Padipha ARIYA, Head librarian at the Central Library
Visits to the English and French Departments, -the Department for Literature and the Department for History and Geography

14.00 Discussion at CSS with Mr. Khambone THIRABOUTH and Khampeng KETAVONG

February 23

8.30 Discussions with Mr. Noupahnh SIDPHAXAY, Vice-President of CSS and Director of the Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies (IN)
Meeting with Mr. Thongpet KINGSADA, Institute of Literature (IN)

11.00 Leaving for Luang Prabang

16.00 Accommodation at Phusi Hotel
Visit to a number of wats in Luang Prabang with Mr. Götz Hagmueller, architect consultant to SIDA on restoration of the Royal Palace

February 24

Excursion arranged by the National Museum on the Mekong. Visits to villages, wats, the holy cave of Tham Ting, gold-diggers
Wedding at the Phusi Hotel

February 25

8.00 Visit to the Archives and Library at the National Museum (Royal Palace)
Mr. Khampui PHOMMAVONG, Director of the Palace Museum and his staff

11.00 Visit to provincial library. Mr. THONGKAN, librarian

14.00 Visit to the Museum. Arrival of Mrs. Elisabet Lind, consultant to SIDA from the Ethnographic Museum, Stockholm, and Mr. Rolf Samuelsson

Meetings with the whole SIDA group and Mr. Thongsa, Director of Department of Museums and Archeology

February 26

8.00 Visit to Mr. Vangpheth SAIKEUYOTUNGTOA, Governor of the Province, by the whole SIDA group

11.00 Return to Vientiane

February 27

9.00 Visit to the Library of the National Assembly with Mr. Viseth SAVENGSAKSA, MP, People's Supreme Assembly, Vice-President of Inter-Parliamentary Group of Laos, and Mrs. Souda PHOUMMASAK, Librarian

12.30 Lunch with Mr. Per Kökeritz, Chargé d'Affaires, Head of SIDA and Mr. Owe Andersson, First Secretary at the Swedish Embassy

14.30 National Library

15.00 Meeting with Mr. Teng VONGSAYG, Vice-Minister for Information and Culture, p.t. Acting Minister, and Mrs. Kongdeuane NETTAVONG

16.30 Vientiane Bookstore

February 28

9.30 Visit to the National Archives and Library
Mr. Loma NAMVONG, Director of the Archive
Mr. Sangneum Mahavong, Chief of the Section

15.00 Meeting with Mr. Sissavang, Director of the Institute of History, Geography and Archeology of the CSS (IN)

16.00 Visit with Mrs. Douang Deuane BOUNYAVONG to a weaving village near Vientiane

March 1

Preparation of preliminary report
Visit to Wat Nam Phu

March 2

14.00 Visit in the surroundings of Vientiane (the peninsular and Nong Khay)

March 3

Outline of preliminary report

20.00 Dinner with Mr. Sisanonh PASEUT, Vice-Minister of Information and Culture, Mrs. Kongdeuane NETTAVONG, Mrs. Dara KANLAGNA, Mr. Boualiane, Chief of the Cabinet, Mr. Khannoane VONGKHAMDY, Director of the Mass Culture Department, Mr. Oudounsavanh and others

March 4

8.30 National Library. Final discussions

10.00 Visit to the Swedish Embassy, Meeting with Per Kökeritz and Rolf Samuelsson.
Outline of suggestions from the consultants

14.00 Visit to CSS. Talk with candidates to apply for Ph.D. studies (IN)
Visit to the State Films & Video Company (JP)

20.00 Dinner at the Swedish residence by Mr. Per Kökeritz, the SIDA staff, Swedish statisticians, Lao statisticians and economists

March 5

9.00 Meeting at CSS with staff from the Ethnographic Institute
Mr. Khamsoo KAYSON, Mr. Khambai NUNALAT, Mr. Khamdeng KHOMMADANG, Mr. Suksavang SIMANA, Vice-Director of the Ethnographic Institute (IN)

11.00 Final meeting at SIDA, Mr. Rolf Samuelsson

12.00 Departure for the airport

3. Laos - general observations

Laos is a society under very quick transformation. This statement might be odd for the visitor coming at her first trip to Laos, because Laos with its small population of 3,9 million inhabitants and Vientiane, the capital, with about 300.000 inhabitants for the newcomer seems to be one of the areas in the East- and Southeast Asian world which is most like what one would imagine as 'the old world'.

Laos has a long history and cultural background², and it is still very apparent in the cities with hundreds of temples, in some places almost side by side. But the changes have started and they are coming even quicker after the Laotian economy has opened up to the world, when the 'New Economic Mechanism' was introduced at the fifth Congress of the Party in 1986, but especially since 1988 the liberalisation has accelerated. It is also true, however, that the cities are changing much quicker than the countryside. Laos is a multi-ethnic society. About 68 different ethnic groups are living scattered in the country. Even the largest group called Thai-lao or Lao-lum does not consist of more than a third of the population.

This is not the first time that the economy is opening up. During the Indochina War from about 1960 to 1975, USA was present with large amount of aid, soldiers and fancy lifestyle in the cities and at the same time bombing the areas where the liberation movement, Pathet Lao, had its strongholds in the countryside. After 1975 Laos started to build a socialist society, and for a period Laos looked inward.

This is just some apparent examples of contradictions in the society today.

Laos has an old culture, and even if some of it still survives in the daily life, through Buddhism, the temples, the rituals, the feasts, the clothing - both in fashion and the patterns of the textiles, the house construction etc., new lifestyles are certainly having its impact on the daily life. First of all new patterns of consumption are evolving, because of the new more open economy. This is having a fundamental impact at the society, direct in some fields, indirect in others. Because of this, the present economic and political changes are also of importance for the cultural field. For example has the 'New Economic Mechanism' has led to an increased import of consumer goods - both waking up new tastes of consumptions and incitement to acquire higher incomes in order to make the consumers able to buy the goods. At the same time the foreign goods challenge the national based production through competition both in choice of products and in prices of goods.³

On the level of the economic policy the reforms do also have its impact on culture on a broad level. In the attempt to make a more balanced economy the number of state employed is being cut down. This influences both education and other fields of culture, which usually will obtain a lower priority by the government than more strict economic activities. Education had a relatively high priority compared to other poor countries in the developing world after the establishment of the PDR Laos; but the recent years have shown an increasingly neglect of the field, which will cause difficulties to build a national base of human resources.⁴

² A survey is found in Samuelsson, Lindell and Lind: Laos and her culture. SIDA, Stockholm 1990.

³ A thorough discussion about the implication of the 'New Economic Mechanism' see Yves Bourdet: LAOS. Macroeconomic Studies. Stockholm School of Economics 11/90.

⁴ Asia Yearbook 1991. Hong Kong 1991 p. 151

The international relations do also have an impact on the field of education. The political changes in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union mean that the number of students going abroad has diminish and will probably be substantially lower in the years to come. The total number of fellowships fell from 1988 to 1989 from 1036 to 838.⁵

The cultural sector in general is probably not starved more than many other fields of the public economy; but it might be more difficult for many cultural activities to find own sources to supply the budgets. The consumption oriented tendencies are pushing a number of people into economic activities rather than cultural activities. On the other hand televisions are now becoming more common, introducing both local and foreign cultures among the population.

In the towns the wealth seems to increase with the obvious higher level of consumption and a more visible public life. This does not necessarily reflect realities, because the country has a deficit in balance of payments and trade in its foreign relations.⁶

The deficit is now fill up with development aid and loan adding to the foreign debt which has increased from 0.7 billion \$US in 1987 to 1.3 billion \$ US in 1991.

The biggest aid donors are Soviet Unions which provided 970 million \$US from 1976 to 1988 plus training of about 3,500 students. Japan, Australia and Sweden are the largest donors from the convertible area. Japan has reached a level of aid annually of around 14 million \$US. Sweden a little lower with about 11-12 million \$US.⁷ France is currently providing 2 million \$US annually, but it is expected to increase to about 8 million \$US over a number of years.⁸

A the same time as tendencies of 'modern Western life' is increasingly having its impact, it should be said that the temples are having a time of consolidation. Restauration is taking place in the richer districts, totally supported by the local population. About 2000 temples and other holy constructions exist and about 16,000 monks. In many respects the Buddhist life has not changed and the temple is still important for feasts, celebrations and teaching. Because of the temple schools and the education policy of the state, the literacy is quite high in Laos. Still the culture is not a profound 'intellectualised' like the one in Vietnam and China. Reading for fun and interest seems to be an interest for the few. Foreign languages has suddenly got an increased interest. The former Francophone country where the older and even the middle aged are able to speak French has suddenly developed an interest to learn English as the tool to get an education or better job in other fields. Again the contradictions are as obvious as the whole development process.

4. The purpose of the mission and main observations

4.1. The terms of reference⁹

⁵ Basic Data about the Social and Economic Development of Loa People's Democratic Republic 1989. Vientiane 1990 p. 93.

⁶ Asian Development Bank: Asian Development Outlook 1990. Manila 1991, pp. 92-94. Südostasien Aktuell, Institut für Asienkunde, Hamburg Juli 1990, pp. 341-43.

⁷ The cooperation between Sweden and Laos is presented in: LAOS. Svenskt u-samarbete. SIDA's informationssekretariat, Stockholm 1989.

⁸ Asian Development Bank: Asian Development Outlook 1990 p. 95.

⁹ Annex I presents the full text of terms of reference.

The purpose of the mission to Laos was to line out the possibilities of improving the library system in Laos in accordance with wishes of the Laotian government.

The Consultants should estimate the competence of the various institutions in the field of libraries in order to carry out a long term project of cooperation. The cooperation will take place within the cultural agreement between Laos and Sweden due to be signed in June 1991 to cover the period from Fiscal year 1991/92 to 1993/94 (three years).

Based on their findings in Laos, the Consultants should line out a proposal for a long-term library cooperation between Laotian and Swedish/Nordic institutions.

The purpose of the long-term agreement between Laotian and Swedish/Nordic institutions in the library sector is to create a base for restoration, organisation and development of collections and libraries in Laos. Moreover the need for education and appropriate institutions for education within Laos or in other countries. This is necessary to improve the capacity of institutional and human resources to preserve and extend the knowledge of the cultural heritage for the benefit of the present and future development of the country.

The task includes the whole library sector, but with the main emphasis on the National Library and its cooperation with the public libraries, the library at the Committee for Social Sciences and the library and archives at the National Museum in Luang Prabang.

4.2. General observations related to the library sector

During their stay in Laos the Consultants have verified the existence of very valuable collections concerning the history and culture of Laos. The collections of palm leaf manuscripts contain invaluable source materials about the Lao history and culture back to the 15th century.

The printed material is divided into books and documents:

The book collections are limited and need proper storing, registration, classification, cataloguing and improved climatical conditions. Conditions that are not present at the present. Moreover, the collections need to be updated. With the exception of the National Library none of the libraries has a budget for acquisition of books. The National Library has an insignificant budget which equals US\$ 150 annually. However, in 1991 an overall amount of US\$ 10.000 has been donated to acquisition of books for the whole library sector in the country. The National Library is responsible for this amount of money and the distribution of books, partly on request of the various libraries. The National Library has at present an agreement with Australia to buy books annually for US\$ 1000 from Australia. Otherwise new books derive from donations from embassies and other institutions.

The documents are located in the National Museum in Luang Prabang and in the National Archives in Vientiane. These collections contain original source material from the establishment of the French protectorate in 1893 up to the establishing of the PDR Laos in 1975. The National Archives also have a collection on the period after 1975, which is in the process of being organised since late 1990. All the material is otherwise not organised at all, and if left unpreserved, unorganised and improperly stored it will not last for more than a decade - some of it may even within a shorter time reach a stage beyond repair.

The general situation in all the libraries and the archives is - to a varying degree - characterised by lack of proper storing, space and bookshelves, organisation, classification, cataloguing and capacity of labour and skill to do the necessary work. The state of deterioration of books and archival material in itself limits the accessibility of the material, as the use of it may cause further damage.

4.3. Organisation of the library sector

The Consultants visited all major libraries in the country and a number of the about 15 medium sized libraries. Among the libraries not visited are: the library at the Ministry of Agriculture; the library at the Ministry of Law; the library at the Medical School and the Polytechnical library 'Lao-Soviet'. A number of small libraries are established in connection with ministries and institutes.

Libraries/archives Responsible authority

The National Library Ministry of Information and Culture

The library at the Research Institute of Education Ministry of Education (a substantial part of the books belongs to the National Library)

Library of Science and Technology Ministry of Documentation and Technology

Library of the Committee of Social Sciences (CSS) CSS has ministerial status

Library at Dong Dok Teacher's High School Ministry of Education

Library of the National Assembly Council of Ministers

Library and archive at the National Archives Council of Ministers

Library and archives of the National Museum
in Luang Prabang Department of Museums, Ministry of Information and Culture

Provincial library in Luang Prabang Provincial government, contact to National Library

4.3.1. Links of communication and cooperation between the libraries

The National Library has a central position in organising general acquisition for the whole library sector. This is especially important in relation to the funds provided by the Asia Foundation. Moreover some books have been distributed from the National Library to the provincial libraries. It distributes children's books in the provinces in mobile book cases, supported by Unesco. However, the communication between the various libraries seem to be fairly limited. This might be caused by the different administrative set-up with the various ministries, lack of staff and low priority given to the question. Even if the trained staff at the National Library is limited, the situation is ahead of other libraries (except the Library for Science and Technology).

The National Archives have a fairly large staff with a number of trained archivists. The **archives** are responsible for contacts to provincial archives, which is seemingly not too intensive. There are no contacts to the archives in Luang Prabang at present.

The national archive include also a **library**. This is a large collection taken over from the Former U.S. Aid Agency. The library apparently has no visitors, although the librarian said that access to the library was open. The collection has probably not been touched since the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the library has no links to other libraries. Staff and expertise from other libraries is much needed.

The library collection, the palm-leaf manuscript collection and the documents at **The National Museum in Luang Prabang** are seen as an integral part of the museum, which is now established in the former palace. No links are established so far with the National Archives.

The Committee for Social Sciences has a small library of about 3000 books. Classification and cataloguing have started recently. The links of communication to the National Library and other libraries are not established.

The Library of Science and Technology situated upstairs from CSS is probably the best equipped, catalogued and updated library in Laos. This library has been given substantial assistance from abroad, but the links to other libraries seem weak.

The Library of the National Assembly has at present a small collection of about 1000 books. The library has received funding from Asia Foundation to buy books, but it was not clear whether this acquisition would be coordinated with the National Library. Closer contacts with the library at the Ministry of Law should be established.

The central library at the Dong Dok Teachers' High School outside Vientiane is classified, catalogued and functioning. New acquisition is very limited, mainly through donations from foreign embassies or agencies. No contacts to other libraries seem to exist.

The provincial library in Luang Prabang is one of the first attempts to build libraries in the provinces. A number of books in Lao, Russian and English were available. Books were provided from other collections and the National Library.

4.4 Capabilities of institutions.

Recommendations:

The National Library has at present the overall responsibility in a number of fields. This role should be strengthened in order to make its experiences useful for other libraries as well. It is recommended that the National Library should have the overall responsibility of training, preservation and acquisition.

The links between the various libraries should be extended. The National Library has so far the best potentials to be the core of the system to help with acquisition, training and preservation, if the library is provided with resources for these tasks. This includes sufficient staff, who must have basic education in library organisation. A union catalogue must be organised also in order not to buy the same books; and the libraries should to a large extent maintain their speciality. This should be possible to establish when the collections are registred on computers. This requires time and skill, but is a fairly simple process.

These recommendations are not connected to the problem of access to a permanent building for the National Library, but it is essential that the facilities are available for the library to have the time to concentrate on building the library system.

The National Archive needs long-term upgrading of the archive staff. However, a staff is available. The National Archives are responsible for a number of provincial collection spread out in the country. As the institutional contacts with the National Archive were established during this visit, it may be too early to know about its actual role vis-a-vis the provinces. Cooperation with the archives at **The National Museum** in Luang Prabang should be established.

Usually the archives were split up, when the colonial power left the country, and undoubtedly the collection contain sources of great value. Along with classification and organisation of the archives it could be important to register useful collections.

An experienced archivist should train staff members on the spot. It would be useful to cooperate with the National Archives, which should be able to provide a person for the purpose. The archives should be organised following the French system which is appropriate

for the colonial collection and make them compatible with collections in France for exchange-cooperation (some exchange has started between Vietnam and France).

The **library at the National Archive** ought to be handed over to the National Library or eventually the CSS library to make use of the books available here. The only librarian is not able and seemingly not working on an organisation of the library. A catalogued was not identified, but there might be one available somewhere. If the National Library take over the library, it has implication for the National Library as well. As soon as it has capacity, the collection should be organised. At first in the localities where it is now, but in the longer perspective it ought to be unified with the rest of the collection at the National library - in a new and larger building with public access.

The **Committee for Social Sciences** should be strengthened as the only major research institute in the country. Its own capacity seems to be growing, but the research in the field of social sciences is still limited. Establishment and provision of books and training to the library will support the research and the role of the CSS.

It is important to establish a research environment with a library and reading room to provide better facilities for researchers. The climatical conditions are not acceptable for the researchers as the air conditioning in the window-less building has broken down.

Support to **other libraries** will help them to improve their work and make books accessible. Moreover it would encourage cooperation between the libraries.

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The reform process in Laos has an impact on more than the economic field. The communication with the main institutions is increasingly more informative and they take more initiatives by themselves. Cooperation seems much more likely to be successful than earlier on. The Consultants were received very positively also by the National Archives, which usually is not open to foreigners.

However, the number of visitors in the various libraries is still limited. This probably has to do with the fact that libraries are a new phenomenon among the population. The better organised libraries are definitely visited by more people, but the libraries have at the same time different target groups. Books in foreign languages will only benefit a fairly narrow group of people. If Laos shall have a chance to follow the trends taking place in other parts of the world, access to scientific traditions and new research must be available. Today it is also obvious that both young people and the older generation working with research and in the library sector are very interested in learning English.

NIAS : LIBRARY CONSULTANCY GROUP/SIDA PROJECTS
IN LAOS & VIETNAM 1991 sqq.

LAOS

The Library Sector: Report on a consultant mission 17 February - 5 March 1991. Recommendations for 1991-1993 (immediate needs), with suggestions for long-term support.

Preamble

Libraries constitute the collective memory of a nation, and just as a man without a memory has no personality, a nation without libraries (and archives and museums) is in danger of losing its identity. Without memory there can be no history, and without history man must repeat the endless patterns of myths.

In the collective memory of libraries are kept records of the thoughts and ideas of men long dead whom otherwise we could never meet and whose work we would have been forced to repeat. Religious thinking and philosophical analyses, ethics and moral guidance, jurisprudence and administration of the state are represented in the heritage of the great cultures of Asia.

Libraries keeping the heritage of one culture form the basis of organic evolution, whereas libraries with collections of central works of other cultures as well are the prerequisites of dynamic development through exchange.

The ideal library system thus takes care of the cultural heritage of a given nation, and at the same time it acquires an appropriate selection of works originating in other cultures.

- But libraries ever so rich in variegated collections are of little use to library users if these collections are unorganized and not accessible by means of adequate classification which provides an easy survey of any given field, and a good descriptive catalogue which gives easy access to specific works.

The Consultant Mission

During their stay in Laos from 17 February through 5 March 1991 the NIAS Library Consultants Irene Nørlund, Jonas Palm and Stig Rasmussen on behalf of SIDA identified a number of valuable collections relating to the culture and history of Laos.

These collections, however, are insufficiently stored and to some degree unorganized, they are only grossly classified or not classified at all, and catalogues are scant. If these collections are left to themselves a considerable part of the national heritage of Laos will remain inaccessible to researchers and the public and soon reach a state of destruction beyond repair.

Laotian institutions are very interested in cooperation with SIDA and other foreign agencies, but their capacity to do so is limited and financial resources are almost non-existent.

The Consultants recommend a long-term support to key libraries and institutions in Laos with the aim of improving the infrastructure of research and popular education of which libraries form an integral part. Support to the emerging public libraries in each province is also recommended as well as to the

school libraries which now exist only in the form of about 150 UNICEF book cases circulating among the schools with literature for children and teachers.

Support should in particular be given to improve *storing conditions*, to *preservation* of existing collections and *development of new collections*, and *further training of the library staff*.

General impression of the state of preservation of manuscripts and printed material

("Preservation" comprises storage conditions for collections as well as conservation measures on individual objects).

The preservation situation in libraries and archives in Laos is virtually non-existent. In a country where the tradition of writing and reading has been focused on palm-leaf manuscripts for both religious and secular matters, and where copying has been the traditional way to deal with deterioration of these manuscripts, the idea of preserving the cultural heritage in content as well as object represents an entirely new way of thinking. The libraries and archives in Laos consist today literally of bundles of books and documents, dated back to the last decades of the 19th century. The books are mostly from France, England, Russia, Laos and Vietnam. They are piled on floors and whatever has been at hand. A minor part of the book collections are kept on shelves. The climate, warm and - half of the year - humid, is highly destructive to paper which becomes brittle and eventually disintegrates.

It is only too obvious that Laos is in desperate need of even the basic knowledge as well as the material basics, to be able to preserve a part of its history.

One spot of light in the darkness is the condition of palm-leaf manuscripts. During talks with representatives from Laos in the autumn 1990 it seemed that the main concern was with these objects. The manuscripts are normally kept in book-towers by the temples - the wats - and the oldest manuscripts known are about five hundred years old. They have been used for prayers, law texts, medical texts, literature etc. Today the manuscripts are used only for religious purposes. The texts are copied from older manuscripts but each copy is still considered an original, as is the case with copies of art in China and Japan. It is estimated that Laos has about 300.000 manuscripts kept in the wats, and of these about 50.000 are of interest. This year the first traditional law text will be published as a book in modern Lao language. A registration of manuscripts in the prefecture of Vientiane and two provinces has been supported by the Toyota Foundation.

The majority of palm-leaf manuscripts observed was found to be in a very good state. Obviously the palm-leaves were comfortable in the climate, and damages were due to improper handling and/or storing.

Apart from the objects mentioned collections of audio-tapes, film and photographic materials were found in a couple of the archives. Being even more sensitive to heat and humidity than so-called modern paper (i.e. manufactured after the 1850's) - they all suffered from bad storage conditions.

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1. **The National Library**, Vientiane, is a key institution and should be regarded as the main focus point of future SIDA library support. High priority should be given to consolidate the central position of the National Library in the entire library system of Laos.

The present situation

a) The National Library will soon have to move into a temporary housing until a new building has been erected - detailed plans dated July 1987 were shown to the Consultants and a suitably central site is at hand, but the Government is able to fund only 30-50% of the cost of construction.

The plans for a new National Library show a two-storey building with offices, reading rooms and stacks amounting to 1.800 m. Previously the need for new bookshelves was estimated at 1.500 m which according to the Director equivalates 40% of the entire collection of books, which implies that a total of 3.750 m of bookshelves is needed to store all 225.000 books properly. The projected building thus will not hold the entire mass of books; however, the original plans were for a four-storey building to be constructed in two stages due to economic restraint. It is recommended that all four storeys are constructed from the beginning and the distribution of rooms on offices and stacks is reconsidered; if not, the projected building will barely hold the now existing collections.

The temporary housing - adjacent to the Lane Xang Hotel - was inspected by the Consultants and found well suited to the purpose, provided necessary repair is undertaken.

b) The present building does not have sufficient room for all the collections which should be kept there - and certainly no room for additional acquisitions. The total amount of books is estimated at ca. 225.000. In two rooms upstairs a large quantity of books are piled up in bundles as is also the case in the corridor. The number of these books is estimated by the Consultants at 35.000-40.000.

In store-rooms in a nearby building a quantity of books belonging to the National Library is kept. The Director, ms. Nettavong, estimated their number at ca. 10.000 but a tentative count by the Consultants resulted in a number at least twice as high.

The National Library has a collection of ca. 6.500 palm leaf manuscripts wrapped in cotton and kept in appropriate, recently manufactured glass-fronted bookcases.

c) There is a grave lack of bookshelves in the National Library. The Consultants estimate that 1.500 m of bookshelves are needed to accomodate the printed material. Metal book-shelves are preferred to wooden ones in order to avoid continued termite attacks.

d) Classification (Dewey Decimal Classification; formerly the USSR-system BBK and French classifications) and descriptive cataloguing (ISBD/AACR-2) of printed material is proceeding at a lower speed than desired due to lack of skilled personnel.

An inventory of all palm leaf manuscripts in the Vientiane Prefecture, plus Vientiane and Luang Prabang Provinces is supported by the Toyota Foundation. A central database is established in the National Library with the aim of making a union catalogue of all palm leaf manuscripts in Laos.

A computer (DOS system) has been donated by the said foundation. Its use is limited to the palm leaf manuscript inventory only - thus this computer can not be used to establish the desired computerized catalogue of printed material. A

national bibliographic database and union catalogue is essential in the development of a modern library system.

e) The National Library has a yearly budget of 100.000 kip (equivalent to ca. 150 USD) which certainly is insufficient.

From foreign sources (Asian Foundation; Australia, Japan, other countries) additional funds have been raised (USD 10.000 + book donations).

There is no legal deposit in Laos which means that the National Library has to buy the national literature when and if it comes to the knowledge of the Library.

f) The National Library is staffed by 25 persons, of whom 12 are educated in library science or trained in library matters (in the USSR, Thailand, India and France).

Director: ms. *Kongdeuane Nettavong*; deputy director: mr. *Oudomsavanh Kenenou-vong*; responsible for the palm leaf manuscripts: mr. *Bounleuth Thammachak*.

g) The preservation conditions in the National Library in Vientiane are unacceptable. The library has no permanent building thus has not been able to settle down. According to the staff the national library had moved five times during the last years and it was supposed to move to yet another building during this year. The present building is leaking when it is raining thus giving perfect conditions for mould. Air-conditioning was sparse. The collections consists of 250.000 volumes and 6.500 palm-leaf manuscripts.

Only 20 % of the books had shelves, the rest was piled in the floor in two rooms. Even in the acquisition- and catalogue department the newly registered books were piled on the floor while lacking shelves. The books showed a palette of all imaginable states of deterioration, partly through handling and partly through chemical reactions within the material. Warm and humid climate is one of the worst enemies of modern paper. As with other libraries and archives the consultant visited it was not known by the staff what books the library was keeping. Thus it is not possible to pin-point the valuable items and secure them.

The palm-leaf manuscripts had been properly taken care of. They seemed to be complete - with wooden endings - and had been wrapped with cotton and were placed in cupboards. A minor amount of money had been given by "the Australians" to accomplish this arrangement.

It was said that three persons were working with restoration of books but that seemed to be slightly exaggerated. A couple of re-sewed book-blocks were found but seemed to be very low end-work. No one at the library had any knowledge of preservation, neither as a general idea nor of any details.

As the National Library does not have a permanent building of its own it is hard to suggest a complete preservation programme for a co-operation project between Sweden and Laos. Some acute measures can be taken, though.

Desiderata of the National Library

ad a) A new building.

ad b) Assistance to sort the 35-40.000 books now lying in piles, put them on shelves and process them.

ad c) Bookshelves in metal to accomodate about 40% of the printed material.

ad d) A second computer; a special typewriter for cards (Olympia/Lao alphabet)

ad e) Books: Reference literature, handbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries (highest

priority is given to science).
ad f-g) Education and further training of the staff.

Recommendations of the Consultants

ad a) No immediate action with respect to the new building is recommended. In the longer perspective, however, it may be considered to support the proposed new building, on condition that the Government provides 50% of the construction cost.

The project would, according to the Director, cost about USD 500.000 today. With two storeys added and inflation taken into account an adequate new building for the National Library could be constructed for about USD 1.000.000 - far below costs in most other countries.

Repair of the temporary housing should be performed by the Lao authorities.
ad b) Manpower should be provided by Lao authorities for the initial sorting and putting on shelves of the 35-40.000 piled-up books. Supervision and assistance - if needed and desired by the National Library - could be provided by NIAS.

ad g) As a current preservation policy does not exist in Laos, it is suggested that the National Library in Vientiane should have the national responsibility of preservation issues in libraries and archives. It should be the knowledge centre and should play an active part in the field of preservation not only in the National Library but all over the country. As the position is crucial for preserving the the cultural heritage in Laos it is an important one. It should be occupied by a person trained in not only preservation but also must have knowledge in Lao culture. It is essential that he or she knows English well, being the main language in preservation. Thus *a person is to be trained* in the basics of preservation for one year in Sweden/Denmark in such a way that he or she may be able to start a preservation programme in Laos.

Apart from education acute practical measures can be taken with some material aid. The action of getting the collections in order (read: getting the books on shelves) is a major measure of preservation. Books in disorder deteriorate quickly. It is suggested that the library is provided with *steel shelves*.

Furthermore *protection boxes* are needed for a lot of books already in a very fragile condition. These objects are actually crumbling while "resting" due to high degree of chemical deterioration of the paper. They need protection as it is today and as the entire library is to be moved to another place the objects in question will not survive without such. With the Lao climate it is essential that these boxes are made of high quality cardboard [quality in this context means good aging properties] that they will not deteriorate and in that process "infect" the material they are keeping. 10.000 Arkiwell (made by Tumba Bruk, Sweden) in two sizes are needed.

A *photocopying machine*, supply of *medium quality paper* and a *glue-binding kit* is needed to copy fragile books for saving the information and making it available to the public. As with the protection boxes it is essential that the copying paper is of a fairly good aging stability in tropical climate. The glue-binding kit is for binding the copies into books.

Information posters is a simple way of making both staff and visitors aware of how to treat books and documents to make them last and why.

The above mentioned measures can be taken immediately or as soon as possible. The following are to be seen in a long term perspective. Education is also a long term measure but is a most important one and thus should also be seen upon as an acute one.

If the library should get a permanent building in the future a very simple but effective measure to be taken is the installation of *air-conditioning*. Chemical reactions, mould growth and insects all thrive in warm and humid environment. If the Lao literal culture is going to survive, especially as it is today printed on very low-grade-quality paper, air-conditioning is essential.

The second measure to be taken when a permanent building is a fact is the *equipping of a conservation department*. There is no need today of such a contribution. Conservation of individual objects is, with the present situation at libraries and archives in Laos, a luxury which one has to wait with until the basics of preservation - a proper permanent building, skilled personnel and a basic preservation programme running - has been achieved.

ad c-g) Estimated costs, immediate needs

- Bookshelves, 1.500 m à SEK 100
- Consultant to assist in the sorting out and shelving of books, 1 person in 3 months
- Computer, special typewriter, f
- Reference literature, 200 titles à SEK 1.000
- Preservation equipment and materials SEK 197.000
- Education:
 - Library science: 6 persons 3 months at 100.000
 - Technology, Bangkok (per person 100.000)
 - Preservation: 1 person 2 x 6 months 100.000

Total

SEK 1.172.000.-

Estimated costs on the long view

- Preservation workshop, National Library, Vientiane SEK 250.000.-
- New building according to plans, 50% of USD 1.000.000 SEK 3.000.000.-

Further suggestions to be considered by Lao library authorities

- 1) There is an immediate need for a *legal deposit* to secure all material printed in Laos for the National Library. The legal deposit should also ensure that all Lao printed material is at the disposal of the 17 Provincial Libraries.
- 2) *Funds in convertible currencies* must be allocated regularly in order to ensure that the National Library can acquire foreign research literature on Laos and other subjects of interest to Lao researchers.
- 3) An *acquisition policy* should be decided upon to guide acquisitions of non-Lao material. The NIAS library could assist in formulating such a policy.
- 4) More *detailed statistics* should be introduced to facilitate library administration on the local as well as on the ministerial level.

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2. The National Museum in the former Royal Palace, Luang Prabang, is another key institution. In the basement are the archives and the small private library of the former king. The Consultants recommend that high priority is given to the archives and library of the National Museum. These collections will

not grow and form a harmonious whole with the former official rooms and private living quarters of the king on the main floor of the Palace. Moreover, SIDA is already involved in restoring the Museum on the main floor.

The present situation

a) The library is found in one room in the basement. The books are stacked tightly on various types of bookshelves and in old book-cases.

A collection of palm leaf manuscripts is kept in appropriate net-fronted bookcases in a separate room and is in good condition (cf. the report of J. Palm).

The documents are scattered in a number of rooms in the basement and are stored in a less suitable way, stacked on shelves and in old cupboards without proper bonds. There is an overlap with pre-1975 documents in the National Archives in Vientiane.

A suitable building on the premises - the former quarters of the Royal Guard - is reserved for the archives and library but needs repair. The library and a general reading room can be installed on the upper floor with the archives and offices on the ground floor. An adequate total of 800 m² is available.

b) The library holds about 4.000 printed books, 1.000 palm leaf manuscripts, around 300 photo albums and about 20 m³ of important archives.

c) The existing bookshelves and bookcases are insufficient. The Consultants estimate that a minimum of 330 m of bookshelves are needed to accommodate the library and archives.

d) There is no inventory or catalogues of any kind. A French researcher has recently been working on a few per cent of the documents and started a rearrangement in one bookcase. However, this endeavour has not been followed up. Further sorting is needed, as is classification and descriptive cataloguing of the books.

e) The archives and library have no regular budget (salaries aside).

f) The National Museum is staffed by 13 persons: 1 director, 2 guides, 1 craftsman, 1 cashier, 1 typist and 7 assistants. None has any relevant museum/archive/library education.

Director: mr. *Khampouy Phommavong*.

g) The preservation status of the library and archives at the Royal Palace in Luang Prabang are similar to the one at the National Library in Vientiane. Warm and humid storage conditions and subsequent damages (brittle paper etc. as described above), lack of shelves and lack of knowledge in preservation. The collections consist of books, documents, a minor collection of audio tapes, films and about 300 albums with photographs. There was also a record-collection of about 200 albums, 78's and LP's. The books were from about 1890 up to 1975 (?), the documents were from the same period. Some of the books were kept in cupboards and some on rough shelves, several rows on each and the documents were piled bundles, approximately 20 m³. The audio tapes and films were from the 1950's and 1960's. The tapes were supposed to contain Lao folk music, and the films showed official trips and visits of the Lao king. The photographic collection dates further back in time but seemed to consist mainly of 20th century photographs. The film-collection contains a few highly deteriorated nitrate films that were immediately removed from the palace. The rest of the collection, acetate film, was mould-attacked. The audio tapes

were old but they did not seem to suffer from mechanical damages. The magnetic content, though, is most certainly in need of restoration. The Royal Palace also kept a palm-leaf collection of about 1000 manuscripts, ordered and, as it seemed, in a good condition.

Desiderata of the National Museum

- ad a)* Repair of suitable building at hand.
- ad b)* Assistance in archive and library matters.
- ad c)* Bookshelves and other equipment (files, cards, reading room and office furniture).
- ad d)* Inventory of archives, cataloguing of books.
- ad e)* Preservation.
- ad f)* Training of the staff.
- ad g)* Preservation equipment.

Recommendations of the Consultants

The desiderata of the National Museum seem reasonable, and the necessary funds should be granted.

ad g) During the discussions there was, as mentioned above, talk about restoring a near-by building into a new library and archives. That would improve not only the functions of the library but also the storage conditions. Air-conditioning is, as always in tropical climate, essential. Preservation is to be the responsibility of the National Library as suggested above.

Acute measures to be taken are *new shelves* and *protection boxes* for the documents. The audio tapes and the acetate films should be taken to Sweden as soon as possible for restoration; they are deteriorating fast. The photograph collection in albums ought to be put in an *air-conditioned room* to prevent further deterioration. As a rule, photographic material is extremely sensitive to warm and humid environments. The major part of the record-collection was in need of *covers* as it now is piled up and gathering dirt.

ad a-g) Estimated costs

- Repair and renovation of building, 800 m² à USD 100
 - Bookshelves 330 m, bookcases, files
 - Library consultant, 1 person in 3 weeks
 - Archive consultant, 1 person in 8 weeks
- Preservation equipment and materials SEK 142.000
 - Education:
 - Library/archive science, 3 persons 3 months
 - Study tour to Thailand, 3 persons 2 weeks

Total SEK 950.000

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3. The Committee for Social Sciences, Vientiane, is now the central research institution in Laos. It is evidently in need of a library which is reasonably well equipped with literature on the social sciences in order to strengthen research and broaden its scope as well as to create an inspiring research environment.

The present situation

a) At present the library is situated in the corner of a large conference room.

b) The number of books is estimated at 5.000, mainly in French, English and Russian. Subjects vary but do not include technics, since a technological library is found on the next floor.

c) The existing bookshelves (130 m) are made of wood and seem to be of an acceptable quality but are too few in number and not practical (too deep, too roomy for the books). New book-shelves should preferably also be made of wood. The price of local manufacture is surprisingly high - about equivalent to that of imported metal bookshelves.

d) There is no catalogue ("the users know the collection") and no fixed shelf order. A list of the books is in the making as a first step towards a descriptive catalogue. The library also needs classification.

It is possible to take the books out of the library. Users are mainly researchers and students, but in principle the library is open to the public.

e) The library has no budget (salaries aside) and thus can not buy books or equipment. Acquisitions are limited to gifts and exchange.

f) The library is staffed by 2 persons (1 educated in the USSR, 1 in Hanoi). More personnel is not needed to carry out daily work but extra manpower is temporarily needed to help classify and rearrange the collection.

Librarian: mr. *Khammeung Sonnavong*.

Desiderata of the library of the CSS

ad a) Repair of the airconditioning equipment, USD 15.000 according to the quotation of a local company.

ad b) Literature on sociology, economy etc. in general and in particular related to Laos. Needs were defined by mr. Khambone Thirabouth - head of the CSS archives and apparently a man of influence also on the library - as follows: Lao researchers will read the research reports of foreign researchers on Lao matters, then follow their footsteps to see if anything has been over-looked - at the same time learning the methods, completing (if necessary) the research of others and preparing Lao research projects.

ad c) Locally made wooden bookshelves.

ad d) Classification and descriptive cataloguing (cf. f, below).

ad e) Equipment other than airconditioning, according to list, kip 5.680.000.

ad f) Further training of the staff in Thailand.

Recommendations of the Consultants

ad a) The malfunctioning airconditioning equipment of the library is integrated with that of the whole building and should be considered in a wider context. The equipment dates from 1966 and repair may not be reasonable - new motors etc. may cost only slightly more than repair of the old. However, it deserves mentioning that this library had the worst climate of all the libraries visited by the Consultants - it is indeed very difficult to work here under the present circumstances.

ad b-f) *Estimated costs, immediate needs*

- Bookshelves, 150 m à SEK 100	
- Literature in relevant fields, 500 titles à SEK 35	
- Equipment according to CSS list of desiderata, kip 5.680.000	
- Education in library science, Mahasarakam Teac 2 persons in 3 months.	
	<i>Total</i> <i>SEK 301.000.</i>

B. Estimated costs on the long view

- Airconditioning, Committee for Social Science, Vientiane SEK 300.000.-

Further suggestions to be considered by the CSS library authorities

Closer contacts and cooperation with the National Library and the National Archives where much valuable material is found.

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4. The National Archives, Vientiane, hold a large quantity of documents and a surprisingly large library taken over from the former U. S. Aid Agency. The archives - which include at least part of the Party archives - are of primary importance to research and deserve great attention. For the time being only members of the Administration and researchers are admitted to the archives and library.

The library contains a number of reference works missing e.g. in the National Library.

The present situation

a) The present archives and library have been established 1983 in a building adjacent to that of the Committee for Social Sciences. For documents up to 1975 there is an overlap with the former palace archives in the National Museum, Luang Prabang.

b) The documents (estimated at 40-50 m³) are kept in tightly packed cases in two rooms, whereas the ca. 75.000 books in the library are scattered in a number of small rooms and stacked on all kinds of bookshelves.

c) The archives lack protective boxes, and the library is in need of suitable bookshelves.

d) As of 1990 a registration of documents dating from the post-1975 period has been started. The library is as yet unorganized and has no catalogue - probably the original card catalogues have been destroyed or discarded during the 1975 revolution.

e) There is no budget for the library which seems to be considered a closed collection.

f) The archives and library are staffed by 34 persons, of whom 8 are archivists (trained 3 or 5 years in Vietnam), 1 is the librarian responsible for the library (trained in the USSR) and 25 are secretaries or assistants.

Director: mr. *Loma Namvong*. Librarian: mr. *Sangngeum Mahavong*.

Desiderata of the National Archives and its library

ad c) Protective boxes and bookshelves.

ad f) Further training of the archivists.

Recommendations of the Consultants

ad f) With 8 trained archivists there seems to be no immediate need for further training. However, since the personnel expressed wishes to discuss archive matters with fellow archivists, it is recommended that if a consultant archivist is sent out by SIDA to assist the National Museum (cf. 2.b, above) he should also contact the National Archives.

ad c) Estimated costs

- Bookshelves for the library, 1.000 m	à SEK 100
- Bookshelves for the archives, 750 m	à SEK 100
- Protective boxes for the archives	SEK 225.000

Total *SEK 400.000*

Further suggestions to be considered by Lao authorities

In the longer perspective the library of the National Archives should be integrated with the National Library in order to fill gaps there and in general put this literature at the disposal of wider circles of interested readers.

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5. The Library of the National Assembly, Vientiane, has been established in 1990 and is a small library of considerable importance to a community founded on the rule of law.

The present situation

a) The library will have to move when the new Parliament building now under construction is completed. For the time being it occupies two rooms in a building adjacent to the National Assembly Hall. Admission is reserved for members of the Assembly and the Administration but it is planned to give access to the public after the library has moved to the new Parliament.

b) The library holds about 1.000 books on political science, law and lawmaking etc. mostly from the Eastern European states and the USA, as well as typed minutes of the National Assembly debates.

c) The bookshelves in the library are sufficient for the present collection but will not take much addition.

d) The classification system used is Dewey Decimal Classification, and descriptive cataloguing is in accordance with the ISBD.

e) There is no regular budget but a number of books are obtained as gifts or through grants from Asia Foundation (200 titles from Japan, USD 6.000 in 1991-1993). The library in particular needs more literature on the legislative process. A new constitution is in the making, and recently a number of important laws have been published (a.o. a penal code, an administration of justice act, the establishment of a supreme court, a people's procurator act and a law of wills and succession).

f) The library is staffed by one librarian not trained in library science except for a 10 day course in the National Library.

Responsible for the library: mr. *Viseth Savengsouksa*. Librarian: ms. *Sousada Phommasak*.

Desiderata of the library of the National Assembly

ad c) Bookshelves, files.

ad e) Literature on lawmaking; science and technology; encyclopedias; lexica and

dictionaries; yearbooks; daily newspapers and periodicals.

ad f) Further training, in particular at the International Parliament Union (IPU) in

Geneva.

Recommendations of the Consultants

ad f) No information was available concerning courses or training at the IPU in Geneva. However, the desire seems reasonable, and on the basis of a syllabus and actual prices it should be taken into consideration on the long view.

ad c and e) Estimated costs

- Bookshelves, 50 m à SEK 100
- Files SEK 5.000.
- Literature on lawmaking etc., 500 titles à SEK 50

Total SEK 260.000.

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6. Dong Dok Teachers' High School, Vientiane, is a university in spe with 9 departments covering a variety of fields with very limited resources.

The present situation

a) There are plans to erect a new building to house the central library and integrate all the small libraries of the 9 departments.

b) The central library holds about 28.000 books of which 2-3.000 are placed in the reading room and the rest in densely packed stacks.

c) The existing bookshelves in the reading room are sufficient for the purpose, whereas the bookshelves in the stacks are less well suited.

d) The books are classified according to the Dewey Decimal Classification and catalogued according to the AACR-2 (based on the ISBD). The books in the reading room are arranged according to the Dewey Decimal Classification.

The catalogue in the reading room does not cover the libraries of the departments.

e) There is no regular budget - books are donated by various organisations (about 135 titles per year).

f) The central library is staffed by 1 librarian and 6 assistants (none is trained in library science). Internal courses have been held based on Australian educational material ("Workshop on Library Science" 1-2 + Glossary, published by the National Library of Australia, Canberra 1990).

The small libraries in the departments are to be taken care of by the teachers but in practice few teachers have time to do so.

Librarian: mr. *Pradiph Ariya*.

Desiderata of the central library

ad c) Bookshelves for the stacks.

ad e) Literature on marxism-leninism; science; languages: Lao, English, French, Russian; psychology; pedagogy.

ad f) Education in library science.

Recommendations of the Consultants

ad c, e and f) Estimated costs, immediate needs

- Bookshelves, 600 m à SEK 100
- Literature in relevant fields, 500 titles à SEK 35
- Education: library science, 1 person 3 months i

Total *SEK 270.000.*

*

7. The Provincial Libraries (17 when all are established) are the focal points of the future public library service in Laos. According to unofficial sources only a few of the provincial libraries, i.e. Luang Prabang and Savannakhet, are actually in operation - whereas official sources say all are in operation. The provincial library in Luang Prabang was visited by the Consultants and looked promising. According to the librarian needs concentrate on acquisition of literature in Lao and Thai as well as education in library science; the librarian in this library has learned in a pagoda library when he was a monk.

A. Estimated costs per library:

- Literature, 1000 titles à SEK 20

- Education in library science, 1 person 3 months i

Total per library SEK 135.000.

Suggested support: initially 2 libraries - 1 in Luang

Total 2 x SEK 135.000

- Provincial libraries, 15 x SEK 150.000 (adjusted)

B. Estimated costs, longer perspective
SEK 2.250.000.-

*

8. The State Films & Video Company (SFVC), Vientiane, keeps about 500 titles of motion films in a special building on its premises. The films are documentaries and fiction films, all on acetate base. The documentaries were taken during the revolution and some of these films were taken to Vietnam where they are kept in the Vietnam Film Archives in Hanoi. The responsibility for the films rests with the Government but SFVC is a private company.

The rooms, four of 25 m², in which the films are stored are non-air-conditioned and thus very warm. This is not good for acetate film as it dries and shrinks. An obtrusive odour of acetic acid in the store-rooms indicated deterioration of the films. If the films are to survive it is necessary to put in *air-conditioners* in these rooms and in a yet empty room for new acquisition. The four rooms were already crowded.

There were some differences in the information given at the SFVC about the amount of films in Hanoi from what was later learned from the Vietnamese. SFVC said that 6 tons of film was kept in Hanoi and that the Vietnamese did not want to keep it without charge. "Either Laos pay or take the films back from Vietnam." In an article in *Far Eastern Economic Review* (28 February 1991) it was said that "about two-and-half to three tons [were kept] in Luang Prabang".

When the Consultants later visited the Vietnam Film Archives in Hanoi it was said here that they were keeping "400 reels" [about 800 kilos] and that they did not have any plans to charge the Lao SFVC. "It is a neighbour country" as the chief of preservation Nguyen Xvan Hao said. This made the Consultants

wonder how much truth there was in the statement about a major film collection in Luang Prabang. There were only about 15-20 reels (30-40 kilos).

One other aspect on the SFVC is that there were rumors that a Japanese company was willing to buy the Lao films. The Consultants suggest that a condition for providing the SFVC with air-conditioning is that there will be no deal if the films are to be sold.

*

General follow-up

- Library consultants, 3 persons in 2 x 2 v

Note: Bookshelf and equipment prices above do not include freight, as this depends on where purchases are made (e.g. Scandinavia or Thailand). Allowance must be made for such costs.

NIAS, Copenhagen, 3 April 1991.

Irene M. Nørlund

Jonas Palm

Stig T. Rasmussen

Report to SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority) on the current Situation in Preservation of Library and Archives Materials in Laos / by Jonas Palm.

17 February - 5 March the consultant visited libraries and archives in Laos at the request of SIDA. The purpose of the visit was to identify the needs for a

Swedish-Lao co-operation in the sector of preservation within library and archives, focusing on the National Library of Laos, Vientiane, and the library and archives in the Royal Palace, Luang Prabang. The survey should also, at special request by the Lao counterpart, take special interest in the traditional palm-leaf manuscripts.

The visit was to result in a suggestion to SIDA on a co-operation program on preservation in library and archives between Sweden and Laos.

["Preservation" comprise storage conditions for collections as well as conservation measures on individual objects.]

General impression

The preservation situation in libraries and archives in Laos is virtually non-existent. In a country where the tradition of writing and reading has been focused on palm-leaf manuscripts for both religious and secular matters and where copying has been the way to deal with deterioration of these manuscripts, the idea of preserving the cultural heritage in content as well as object is a new way of thinking. The libraries and archives in Laos consist today literally of bundles of books and documents, dated back to the last decades of the 19th century. The books are mostly from France, England, Russia, Laos and Vietnam. They are piled on floors and whatever that has been at hand. A minor part of the book collections are kept in shelves. The climate, warm and - half of the year - humid, is highly destructive to paper which becomes brittle and eventually disintegrate.

It is only too obvious that Laos is in a desperate need of even the basic knowledge as well as the material basics, to be able to preserve a part of its history.

One spot of light in the darkness is the condition of palm-leaf manuscripts. During talks with representatives from Laos in the autumn 1990 it seemed that the main concern was with these objects. The manuscripts are normally kept in book-towers by the temples - the wats and the oldest ones known are about five hundred years. The manuscripts have been used for prayers, law texts, medical texts, literature etc. The religious use of the manuscripts is the only one still in use. The texts are copied from older manuscripts but each copy is still considered as an original, as is with copies of art in China and Japan. It is estimated that Laos has about 300.000 manuscripts kept in the wats and of them about 50.000 are of interest and this year the first publication of an old law text is published as a book in modern Lao language. A registration of manuscripts in three provinces has been supported by the Toyota foundation.

As it turned out the majority of palm-leaf manuscripts observed was found to be in a very good state. Obviously the palm-leaves were comfortable in the climate and damages were due to improper handling/storing.

Apart from the objects mentioned collections of audio-tapes, film and photographic materials were found in a couple of the archives. They all suffered from bad storage conditions, as being even more sensitive to heat and humidity than so called modern paper [manufactured after the 1850's].

The National Library, Vientiane: Status today

The preservation conditions in the National Library in Vientiane are unacceptable. The library has no permanent building thus has not been able to settle down. According to the staff the national library had moved five times during the last years and it was supposed to move to yet another building during this year. The present building is leaking when it is raining thus giving perfect conditions for mould. Air-conditioning was sparse. The collections consists of 250.000 volumes and 6.500 palm-leaf manuscripts.

Only 20 % of the books had shelves, the rest was piled in the floor in two rooms. Even in the acquisition- and catalogue department the newly registered books were piled on the floor while lacking shelves. The books showed a palette of all imaginable states of deterioration, partly through handling and partly through chemical reactions within the material. Warm and humid climate is one of the worst enemies of modern paper. As with other libraries and archives the consultant visited it was not known by the staff what books the library was keeping. Thus it is not possible to pin-point the valuable items and secure them.

The palm-leaf manuscripts had been properly taken care of. They seemed to be complete - with wooden endings - and had been wrapped with cotton and were placed in cupboards. A minor amount of money had been given by "the Australians" to accomplish this arrangement.

It was said that three persons were working with restoration of books but that seemed to be slightly exaggerated. A couple of re-sewed book-blocks were found but seemed to be very low end-work. No one at the library had any knowledge of preservation, neither as a general idea nor of any details.

As the National Library does not have a permanent building of its own it is hard to suggest a complete preservation programme for a co-operation project between Sweden and Laos. Some acute measures can be taken though.

The National Library, Vientiane: The Future

As a current preservation policy does not exist in Laos it is suggested that the National Library in Vientiane should have the national responsibility of preservation issues in libraries and archives. It should be the knowledge centre and should play an active part in the field of preservation not only in the National Library but all over the country. As the position is crucial for preserving the the cultural heritage in Laos it is an important one. It should be occupied by a person trained in not only preservation but also must have knowledge in Lao culture. It is essential that he or she knows English well, being the main language in preservation. **Thus a person is to be trained** in the basics of preservation for one year in Sweden/Denmark in such a way that he or she may be able to start a preservation programme in Laos.

Apart from education acute practical measures can be taken with some material aid. The action of getting the collections in order (read: getting the books on shelves) is a major measure of preservation. Books in disorder deteriorate quickly. It is suggested that the library is provided with **steel shelves** as described in the part, of the complete report, covering library organisation.

Furthermore **protection boxes** are needed for a lot of books already in a very fragile condition. These objects are actually crumbling while "resting" due to high degree of chemical deterioration of the paper. They need protection as it is today and as the entire library is to be moved to another place the objects in question will not survive without such. With the Lao climate it is essential that these boxes are made of high quality cardboard [quality in this context means good aging properties] that they will not deteriorate and in that process "infect" the material they are keeping. 10.000 Arkivell (made by Tumba Bruk, Sweden) in two sizes are needed.

Photocopying machine, supply of **medium quality paper** and **glue-binding kit** is needed to copy fragile books for saving the information and making it available to the public. As with the protection boxes it is essential that the copying paper is of a fairly good aging stability in tropical climate. The glue-binding kit is for binding the copies into books.

Information posters is a simple way of making both staff and visitors aware of how to treat books and documents to make them last and why.

The above mentioned measures can be taken immediately or as soon as possible. The following are to be seen in a long term perspective. Education is also a long term measure but is a most important one and thus should also be seen upon as an acute one.

If the library should get a permanent building in the future a very simple but effective measure to be taken is the installation of **air-conditioning**. Chemical reactions, mould growth and insects all thrive in warm and humid environment. If the Lao literal culture is going to survive, especially as it is today printed on very low-grade-quality paper, air-conditioning is essential.

The second measure to be taken when a permanent building is a fact is the **equipping of a conservation department**. There is no need today of such a contribution. Conservation of individual objects is, with the present situation at libraries and archives in Laos, a luxury which one has to wait with until the

basics of preservation - proper permanent building, skilled personnel and a basic preservation programme running - has been achieved.

The Royal Palace, Luang Prabang: Status today

The preservation status of the library and archives at the Royal Palace in Luang Prabang are similar to the one at the National Library in Vientiane. Warm and humid storage conditions and subsequent damages (brittle paper etc. as described above), lack of shelves and lack of knowledge in preservation. The collections consisted of books, documents, a minor collection of audio tapes, film and about 300 albums with photographs. There was also a record-collection of about 200 albums, 78's and LP's. The books were from about 1890 up to 1975 (?), the documents were from the same period. Some of the books were kept in cupboards and some on rough shelves, several rows on each and the documents were piled bundles, approximately 20 m³. The audio tapes and films were from the 1950's and 1960's. The tapes were supposed to contain Lao folk music and the films showed official trips and visits of the Lao king. The photographic collection dated further back in time but seemed to consist mainly of 20th century photographs. The film-collection contain a few highly deteriorated nitrate films that were immediately removed from the palace. The rest of the collection, acetate film, was mould-attacked. The audio tapes were old but they did not seem to suffer from mechanical damages. The magnetic content, though, is most certainly in need of restoration.

The Royal Palace also kept a palm-leaf collection of about 1000 manuscripts, ordered and, as it seemed, in a good condition.

The Royal Palace, Luang Prabang: The Future

The collections are seen upon as an integrated part of the Royal Palace, thus they shall not be parted from it. During the discussions there was talk about restoring a near-by building into a new library and archives. That would improve not only the functions of the library but also the storage conditions. Air-conditioning is, as always in tropical climate, essential. This is discussed in the library functions-part of the complete report. Preservation is to be the responsibility of the National Library as suggested above.

Acute measure to be taken are **new shelves** (see library functions-part of the complete report) and **protection boxes** for the documents. The audio tapes and the acetate films should be taken to Sweden as soon as possible for restoration. They are deteriorating fast. The photograph collection in albums ought to be put in an **air-conditioned room** to prevent further deterioration. As a rule, photographic material is extremely sensitive to warm and humid environment. The major part of the record-collection was in need of **covers** as it now was piled and gathering dirt.

State Films & Video Company (SFVC), Vientiane

The SFVC keeps about 500 titles of motion film in a special building on its premises. The films are documentaries and fiction films, all on acetate base. The documentaries were taken during the revolution and some of these films were

taken to Vietnam were they are kept in the Vietnam Film Archives in Hanoi. The responsibility of the films are on the government but SFVC is a private company.

The rooms, four of 25 m² that the films are stored in are non -air-conditioned and thus very warm. This is not good for acetate-film as it dries and shrinks. An obtrusive odour of acetic acid in the store-rooms indicated deterioration of the films. If the films are to survive it is necessary to put in **air-conditioners** in these rooms and in a yet empty room for new acquisition. The four rooms were already crowded.

There were some differences in the information given at the SFVC about the amount of films in Hanoi from what was later learned from the Vietnamese. SVFC said that 6 tons of film was kept in Hanoi and that the Vietnamese did not want to keep it without charge. "Either Laos pay or take the films back to Vietnam." In an article in Far Eastern Economic Review (28 February 1991) it was said that "about two-and-half to three tons [were kept] in Luang Prabang".

When the consultant later visited the Vietnam Film Archives in Hanoi it was said that they were keeping "400 reels" [about 800 kilos] and that they did not have any plans to charge the Lao SFVC. "It is a neighbour country" as the chief of preservation Nguyen Xvan Hao said. This made the consultant wonder how much truth there was in the statement about a major film collection in Luang Prabang. There were only about 15-20 reels (30-40 kilos).

One other aspect on the SFVC is that there were rumors that a Japanese company was willing to buy the Lao films. The consultant suggests that a condition for providing the SFVC with air-conditioning is that there will be no deal if the films are to be sold.

BUDGET

Education 1 person 1 year	estimated cost: 300.000:-
Protection boxes Arkiwell, 16.000	: 240.000:-
Photocopying machine	: 25.000:-
Glue-binding kit	: 20.000:-
Information material on dayly care	: 16.000:-
Airconditioning (The National Library, Vientiane):	200.000:-
Airconditioning (SFVC, Vientiane)	: 20.000:-
Conservation equipment for cons.dept.	: 250.000:-
Record covers, 200	: 2.000:-
Conservation and restoration of films	
Restoration of audio tapes	: 50.000:-

Freight costs not included

Total cost in SEK: 1.123.000:-

NIAS : LIBRARY CONSULTANCY GROUP/SIDA PROJECTS
IN LAOS & VIETNAM 1991 sqq.

VIETNAM

The Library Sector: Report on visits to institutions in Hanoi: The National Library, the Institute for Social Science Information (formerly l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient) and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (INSAS).

Purpose of the visit

The visit took place at the request of SIDA to inquire whether it would seem reasonable to include aid to the library sector in a future cultural agreement between Sweden and Vietnam.

Summary

The Consultants recommend that the library sector is included in a future cultural agreement between Sweden and Vietnam, and that this sector is made the object of further study to identify fields and institutions in need of support.

Recommended measures to be initiated immediately

The Consultants recommend that - irrespective of any cultural agreement - one employee of the National Library, Hanoi, is educated in preservation in Sweden and Denmark (2x6 months, together with one person from the National Library in Vientiane, Laos); and that at least one person is trained in documentation and information management at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Bangkok. The education of one conservator in the National Library will consolidate its central position in the library sector, and the training of an English-speaking librarian at the AIT will enable the National Library to arrange courses in up-to-date documentation and information management in Vietnamese.

The Consultants further recommend that a donation for the purchase of reference and research literature in Western languages is given to the National Library. Such literature is sorely needed, and in particular a well-stocked reference collection will be of lasting value.

By strengthening the National Library in the way described a limited but very specific support will benefit the entire library sector of Vietnam.

- *Cost estimation:* Education in preservation: SEK 300.000; training in information and documentation management, SEK 35.000; reference and research literature, 150 titles: SEK 52.500. *Total SEK 387.500.-*

The Consultant Mission

NIAS Library Consultants Irene Nørlund, Jonas Palm and Stig Rasmussen visited Hanoi 5 through 9 March 1991. The visit was scheduled to start on 28 February, but according to the Swedish Embassy it was postponed by the Vietnamese side. In Hanoi, however, library authorities expressed surprise at our late arrival - we were expected on 28 February. These apparent communicatory complications resulted in a shorter and more condensed

programme for the visit but did not prevent the Consultants from forming an opinion of the library sector, its needs and the impending deterioration of materials.

The programme looked as follows:

5 March: Arrival.

6 March: The National Library.

7 March: Swedish Embassy.

Historical Museum, Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum.

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Institute of Social Science Information (formerly EFEO).

Traditional theatre performance (later cancelled, regrettably).

8 March: Sightseeing in Hanoi.

The National Library, continued.

Reception.

9 March: Departure.

The visit took place under the auspices of the National Library with Vice-Director ms. *Ha Thu Cuc* and Head of the Lending Department ms. *Hanh* very kindly taking care of the Consultants. Ms. *Lan* from the Office of External Relations, Ministry of Culture, acted as our competent interpreter.

An outline of the library sector in Vietnam

The majority of libraries - including the National Library, the research and university libraries, the army libraries as well as the public libraries - belong under the Ministry of Culture, Department of Libraries.

There are 44 provincial libraries. 480 out of 510 districts have district libraries, and of the 10.000 villages about 1.000 have village libraries. The provincial and district libraries are state financed whereas the village libraries are financed by the local authorities. The public libraries of Vietnam have been established since 1954.

The National Library holds ca. 1 million books, a provincial library 100.000-300.000, a district library 15.000-30.000 and a village library 5.000-10.000. The provincial and district libraries lend technical assistance as well as personnel to the village libraries.

*

1. The National Library, Hanoi

The National Library was established by the French in 1917 and is situated in central Hanoi with a branch in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) - the latter seemingly being little more than a large provincial library.

The National Library is a general science library covering all subjects including science and technology. Literature in Vietnamese (old and new scripts), printed in Vietnam or abroad, has priority over literature in foreign languages. There is a legal deposit in Vietnam securing 8 copies of each book from the publisher and 2 from the printer for the library sector - but there are plans to abolish this arrangement, leaving the libraries with the problem of having to buy all literature.

Part of the books acquired by way of legal deposit are kept in the National Library while a number of books is distributed to other libraries - e.g. the Institute for Social Science Information and the Institute of Technology. Two copies are reserved for the archives of the National Library, and two copies are for lending.

The National Library is the central library to which all libraries in Vietnam refer when unable to provide literature requested or solve organizational and administrative problems (the National Library also lends assistance to the provincial libraries). It is the general information centre for arts and culture as well as purchasing centre regarding foreign literature for all libraries. When borrowing books from the National Library the provincial and district libraries have to furnish a deposit

Until 1990 the National Library was reserved for officials only, but now user groups comprise researchers and advanced students (during the first 2 years of study students are referred to college libraries, and during their last 3 years they can use the National Library). Books cannot be borrowed for use outside the National Library. The two reading rooms accommodate 150 and 60 readers respectively, and a new reading room for students will open soon. 3-400 persons per day use the National Library during the opening hours 7.30 AM to 19.00 PM.

Until 1945 the National Archives (not visited by the Consultants) formed an integral part of the National Library but was then established as a separate institution holding all unprinted materials including manuscripts and block-prints. The National Archives belong under the Council of Ministers and are found in the right wing of the group of buildings which also houses the National Library.

a) The buildings at present housing the National Library in Hanoi were erected by the French around 1900 (originally for other administrative purposes) and are now in a state of very visible decay. The French have recently offered to restore the buildings as one out of five projects in Hanoi but have apparently come up against financial difficulties. The Vietnamese Government plans to build a new house for the National Library which will, however, still retain the old buildings.

The arrangement of the rooms seems adequate for the purpose although the stacks are filled up. The stacks and the reading room are found in the left wing and the central edifice respectively, with offices in an adjacent smaller building to the right, when seen from the gate of the garden.

b) The National Library holds about 1 million printed books. 25% are in Vietnamese, 50% in Russian and 25% in other foreign languages.

There is a small collection of old and rare books (500 boxes à 5-6 titles).

Through the legal deposit the National Library yearly receives ca. 2.500 titles in Vietnamese. Translations from European languages - mostly belles-lettres - make up 80%, the rest originating in Vietnam. The National Library catalogues all national literature in a database from which is generated the National Bibliography published monthly and in a yearly cumulated edition. Floppy disks are regularly sent to the National Library of Australia (ms. Helen Jarvis) where the national bibliography of Vietnam is available for on-line searching which for the time being is not possible in Hanoi.

The acquisition of literature in foreign languages amounts to 7-8.000 titles per year: 4-5.000 in Russian, 3.000 in other European languages. Older readers know French, younger readers prefer English, and a fair number having worked in the former GDR know German. Literature in foreign languages concentrate on research taking Vietnam and the Vietnamese as an object. The book selection is taken care of by the staff in general following suggestions from personal loaners and institutions.

c) The equipment is generally old and heavily used but adequate. There is apparently no shortage of bookshelves, and in the central reading room all seats were not occupied during the visit of the Consultants. The stacks were densely packed but well-ordered and well ventilated in spite of the adverse climatic conditions.

The National Library has 4 computers (Olivetti and IBM) of which two are gifts from Australia. A modified MARC-format is used also to produce printed catalogue cards for all libraries in the country.

A database - primarily comprising the national literature but intended to cover also the foreign literature held - is being built up in cooperation with the National Library of Australia, Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Corresponding databases are being built up at the Social Science Information Institute (comprising social sciences - in close cooperation with the National Library) and the Technological Institute (technical literature).

d) The descriptive catalogue is in accordance with the ISBD (AACR-2). The classification systems used are the Soviet BBK in the National Library, and the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) in the provincial and district libraries. The National Library, however, wants to introduce UDC subject headings in addition to the BBK classification; prior to 1983 the National Library used UDC with certain modifications.

A computerized article index is planned.

e) The resources allocated to the National Library for the purchase of books amount to USD 40.000 per year. Periodicals are given first priority.

The National Library exchanges books with to more than 100 libraries and institutions abroad, including the US (though there are no diplomatic relations between the two countries); 2,5 tons of books were received during February this year.

f) During the war with the USA most of the collections were evacuated to the provinces, not only from the National Library but also from other institutes in Hanoi. A lot has been damaged and some of the collections are still more or less unpacked. Thus it was surprising to find that the National Library was in such a good order. The climate, which in Hanoi is constantly humid and warm (even though the temperature can drop to +10 °C) deteriorates books, document and photographic materials at a rate we hardly can imagine on our latitudes. The lifetime for paper can be measured in decades and photographic material is subject to extensive mould growth unless it is kept cold and dry. There were no economical recourses to air-conditioning the National Library.

An improvised visit to the Vietnamese Film Institute was made. It was situated in a modern building and the government had supplied the Institute with air-conditioned store-rooms, with an in-house electricity back-up unit, for keeping films. These store-rooms were now filled and the need for more storage area was apparent. The ground floor, under the present store-rooms, was planned to be the new storage area but the Institute did not have any illusions on getting money within the near future.

As in Laos, there was in Vietnam a total lack of people educated in preservation of library- and photographic materials.

A Swedish-Vietnamese co-operation project in this field should be concentrated on education of the kind suggested in the Laos-report, i.e. the education of a conservator, who would play an important part in developing the

preservation policy and activities in Vietnam. The Laotian and the Vietnamese could benefit from being educated together. It would be a good investment for the future as these persons could exchange experiences and be a support to each other as well.

g) The National Library is staffed by 115 persons (70% are women) of whom 85 are educated in Vietnam and 30 in the USSR; two (the director and the vice-director) hold a Ph.D. in Library Science.

There are two institutions offering education in library science: the Library Department of the Institute of Culture in Hanoi (from which most librarians are educated), founded 1961, and the University of Saigon where studies in library science have been established recently (1986).

Personnel is also sent to Australia, France and the USSR for further training - in particular in computer science.

Director: mr. *Nguyen The Duc*; vice-director: ms. *Ha Thu Cuc*.

Desiderata of the National Library

ad b) Reference works and research in English and French.

ad g)

1. Education:

- in Preservation.

- in Information and documentation service, at the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok. The aim is to have persons trained at the AIT, where English is obligatory, and then let these persons arrange courses in the same subjects in Vietnamese in the National Library.

- All-round (with special reference to the village libraries). Can be provided as described in the previous paragraph.

2. Resources enabling the National Library to participate in conferences abroad

- CONSAL (Conference on Southeast Asian Libraries; 1987 in the Philippines, 1990 in Indonesia, 1993 in Malaysia). Participation in these conferences is considered important, as problems of mutual interest are discussed - e.g. a joint regional information centre, and village libraries.

Recommendations of the consultants

ad b) A grant of 150 titles is recommended.

ad g) One person from the National Library in Hanoi should be educated in preservation in Sweden/Denmark at the same time as one person from the National Library in Vientiane, Laos.

One employee should be trained in information and documentation management at the AIT, Bangkok.

Cost estimation

- 150 titles à SEK 350	SEK	52.500.-
- Education:		
- in preservation, one person 2x6 months in Scandinavia	SEK	300.000.-
- in information and documentation management	SEK	35.000.-

Total SEK 387.500.-

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2. The Institute of Social Science Information is situated in the center of Hanoi vis-à-vis the Hoa Binh hotel.

a) The building is that of the former Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient. It is too small for the collections and needs restoration.

b) The ISSI holds ca. 1 million titles among which is found modern research literature, a large number of older French and English books on Indochina and Southeast Asia in general, and collections of older literature in Chinese and Japanese. A considerable part (estimated at ca. 15 m³) of the Japanese collection is stacked on the floor.

The institute also holds grammophone records and around 100.000 photographs (history, landscape, manners and customs - mostly from Vietnam but also from Laos and Cambodia).

The Information Department has a special collection of introductory works on social science and offers an abstracting service (also in English from books in Vietnamese).

c) Bookshelves are needed (cf. the Japanese stacks, above) but there is nowhere in the building to place them.

d) The descriptive catalogue is in accordance with the ISBD. The classification system has since 1960 been the Soviet BBK which, however, does not cope well with Western literature.

All processing is manual, but a room is reserved for future automation. The ISSI cooperates with the National Library in compiling a union catalogue of Western literature on social science.

e) 5-600 titles in foreign languages are acquired through exchange with about 50 institutions (a.o. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Cornell University; and Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris).

Books are selected by the researchers who make suggestions to a committee (members are the director and the head of the acquisition department).

f) The ISSI is staffed by 120 persons. 70 are librarians (educated in Hanoi, in library science and foreign languages), 40 are in the department of information and documenta-tion, and 10 in the administration.

10 persons have to do with preservation, some of them are trained, others are cleaners.

Desiderata of the ISSI

ad c) Bookshelves.

ad f) Preservation equipment.

Recommendations of the Consultants

ad c) Should await further analysis.

ad f) To be considered in connection with the recommended education of one employee of the National Library in preservation (cf. above, **1.g**).

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3. The Institute for Southeast Asian Studies is situated in a ministerial building where a number of other institutes are also found.

a) The library is small, but a new wing of the building is under construction and here the library is to be housed.

b) The collection is small (no figures were given, and not all the books were placed in the one room visited).

c) Equipment is wanted, in particular computers (the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., has promised to donate one computer, but as yet it has not arrived). The INSAS has a reader/ printer and microfiche copying facilities (3M).

The INSAS wishes to participate in compiling the computerized union catalogue at the National Library.

d) The descriptive cataloguing is according to the ISBD, and the classification system used is the Vietnamese version of UDC ("Phân loại thập phân bách khoa", Hanoi 1984).

e) No information available concerning budget. Acquisition policy presumably gives priority to actual research projects.

f) The INSAS is staffed by 63 researchers and 2 librarians.

Desiderata of the INSAS

ad b) Research literature, according to list.

ad c) Equipment, in particular computers.

ad d) Instruction in classification of foreign literature, possibly in the shape of photo-copies of relevant material.

ad f) Education in library science.

Recommendations of the Consultants

ad b) Such literature should primarily be given to the National Library where it will be accessible to wider circles of users.

ad c) Should await further analysis (and LC's decision).

ad d) Ought to be provided by the National Library.

ad f) To be considered in connection with the education of employees of the National Library (cf. above, **Summary** and **1.g**).

*

17.4.1991/STR.

11.4.1991/STR.

Annex III
Committee for Social Sciences - research and
research cooperation
Irene Nørlund

1. Introduction
2. CSS and recent developments in the CSS
3. Information about the research in the various institutes
 - a. Institute of Art, Literature and Linguistics
 - b. Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies
 - c. Institute of Research on Lao History, Archeology and Geography
 - d. Institute of Ethnology (Anthropology)
4. Possible areas of cooperation
5. The Nordic resource base on Laos

1. Introduction

During our stay in Laos we paid a number of visits to the Committee for Social Sciences. One main purpose was to discuss issues with the Committee related to the library. Beside of this, the purpose was to follow up on the agreement of cooperation between NIAS and CSS, which was signed in 1990. This agreement is of 'open-ended' nature, i.e. NIAS is able to make projects in cooperation with CSS, but not less important help other scholars to start cooperation. A third - although related - purpose was to inquire about possible joint research projects. It could either be independent projects or projects in fields of interest for development organisations, which are heavily involved in Laos, like SIDA. Research in itself is not included in the focus of SIDA's work in general, and research projects will have to seek support from SAREC or other Nordic agencies.

To follow up on the agreement of cooperation on libraries, it was necessary to know about the work of the institutes of the CSS in greater detail. The following report is based on meetings with the institutes under CSS and is reflecting their views.

2. CSS and recent developments¹⁰

The Committee for Social Sciences (CSS) is the research institution where much of the research in humanities and social sciences is going on. So far no university exists in Laos.

¹⁰ This section is based on information from a visit to Denmark by the president of the Committee, Mr. Sisane Sisana and Mr. Khampeng Ketavong, Institute of Art, Literature and Languages in December 1989 at NIAS, Copenhagen; visit of a Lao delegation to Sweden and Denmark in October 1990; the Report 'Laos and Her Culture' by Rolf Samuelsson, Kristina Lindell and Elisabeth Lind, SIDA, Stockholm 1990 and meetings with the CSS in Vientiane in April 1990 and February-March 1991.

The Teacher's High School in Dong Dok is a university in spe, but the research taking place is mainly on undergraduate level and the facilities such as access to books are not sufficient for broader research. So for the time being CSS is the research body most likely to take the role of a university in a number of fields. Even some training of scholars is taking place.

An Institute for Social Sciences was established in 1988, mainly centered around the Institute of Arts, Literature and Languages. In December 1989¹¹ the Committee for Social Sciences was established along with some new institutes. The CSS was composed by: The Institute of Marxism-Leninism; Institute of History, Geography and Archeology; Institute of Ethnology (or Anthropology) and the Institute of Arts, Literature and Linguistics. In 1990 the name of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism was changed to the Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies.

CSS has ministerial status, responsible to the Council of Ministers, but its administrative structure is different from that of a ministry. When the plan to set up the CSS was scheduled, it took place within the Ministry of Culture. In the statutes, the general guideline and in the orientation of the institutes, the cultural dimension is dominant. The general guideline from December 1989 says:

"In this new stage of the Revolution, the cultural sector should deeply assimilate the following guideline and tasks: endeavour to genuinely advance the ideological and cultural revolution one step ahead the other sectors, actively build the new cultural basis, the new socialist man in tight concordance with the revolutionary requirements and economic development stage, thus giving more impetus to the national defense and socialist construction."¹²

CSS has the role of coordinator of national research on social sciences, responsible of providing scientific information to the community, and training of staff. For this purpose CSS has established a number of international contacts. Formal agreements have been signed with France, USA, England, Thailand and NIAS/Nordic countries. It is stipulated in the guidelines:

CSS should "Draw general conclusions, strengthen auxiliary apparatus and grassroot units under their jurisdiction; manage, build educate, apply all policies towards officials and employee standing under the committee's responsibility; outline plans, budgets, statistics, foreign relations and the overall administration work of the Committee of Social Sciences."

The president of CSS, Mr. Sisana Sisane, has had an active role in promoting cooperation with foreign countries and to establish the structure of the committee. There are several Vice-presidents, who are nominated by the Council of Ministers. A Council of Science composed of the President, the Vice-presidents, the Chief of the Cabinet of CSS and a number of individuals.

During the last year, the winds of change have also renewed CSS. Information is provided about the research staff the and on-going and planned projects of the various institutes. This is the basis for proposing cooperation in research and training of staff. Moreover the members are eager to include new research from abroad and bring inspiration about how to organise the committee in a more efficient way and start up new projects. During our visit the president Mr. Sisana Sisane was absent because of illness and Mr. Noupanh Sitphaxay was acting head of CSS.

In general CSS seems to have improved its work in the field of research activities, administration and in relation to the library, where cataloguing has been started up. But a number of basic difficulties are still major obstacles to fulfill the task of the committee. The research staff is fairly limited, consisting of 30 permanent members. This number has been extended with a number of associate members of the Committee. The procedure to become a member is not very encouraging, as the full members have to be appointed by the president. This is of course related to the fundamental problem of a very limited base of well educated people in Laos. There are bottlenecks all the way up through the educational system. At the research level a

¹¹ By decree of December 28, 1989. See annex I.

¹² 5 years plan guideline and tasks of the Ministry of Culture. See Annex II

number of lacunae are present where no experience are available. As mentioned, what we would usually call humanities are the centre of the research in the CSS: linguistics, literature, art. The social sciences are mainly seen in relation with ethnography, archeology, ancient history and geography. Subjects like economics, economic history, modern history, sociology, political science are virtually lacking at present and is mainly covered by the Institute for Marxism-Leninism which recently has been transformed into the Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies. Some elements were included in the former Institute, but with the new winds blowing starting after the 4th Party Congress in November 1986, accelerating in the recent years, it has been appropriate to set up the new Institute of Political, Economic and Social studies.

Another difficulty for the CSS is that this field of research apparently has a lower status than for instance planning, which takes place in the ministries. The best educated staff in the field of economics and statistics are employed in the ministries, to which more resources are allocated. There are some contacts between the CSS and the economists in the ministries, but so far the value of independent research as a challenge to the work taking place in the ministries has not been appreciated to the extent that it has materialised into concrete proposals or action. In the field of archeology, the Department of Museums and Archeology, with Mr. Thongsa Sayavongkhamdy as director, has set up some research teams with success.

It seems as if a core person with ideas and initiative is important to start up research and studies in new fields. To set up a team or research unit a number of researchers have to be trained. It is important to facilitate training of a number of scholars abroad in fields where research is needed. Moreover cooperation with foreign researchers might inspire the national research, although the danger also exists that too many of the Laotian researchers become engaged in projects which are more in accordance with the foreign project's aim than that of the institute. However, as long as the resources for research are as limited as for the time being - almost nil except for salaries and buildings - cooperation with foreign researchers in general must be seen in a positive light.

3. Research and activities of the various Institutes

3.a. Institute of Art, Literature and Languages

The Institute of Art, Literature and Languages is the oldest and the largest Institute of the CSS. It was set up in 1983. The staff consists of 17 members. Mr. Houmphanh Rattanavong is the director and Mr. Khampeng Ketavong vice-director. During the first period the Institute was responsible to the Ministry of Culture. In 1986 it moved to the newly formed Social Science Institute. By that time it worked in the field of ethnography, literature and history. It brought its library and documentation along. Because of this background the library and documentation centre is closely related to the Institute today. The researchers are working in a number of disciplines and have various educations.

Name Education and country of study

Mr. Hounphanh: Journalism, France
Mr. Khampeng: Literature, France
Mr. Kidang: Literature and linguistics in Laos
Mr. Som: Literature, France
Mr. Khambone: Audio-visual engineering in France
Mr. Khammanh: Audio-visual studies in Vietnam
Mr. Phoxay: Music, Vietnam
Ms. Uttara: Literature, Laos
Mr. Amthito: Library studies in Vietnam and Laos
Mr. Khammeung: Librarian, Soviet Union
Dr. Thongphet: Linguistics, Vietnam
Mr. Soorynanh: Audio-visual education in Laos

Mr. Boonthiang: Arts in France
Mr. Khamchanh: Music in Vietnam
Mr. Somsaeng: Literature in Mongolia
Mr. Ath: (not informed)
Mr. Prida: Educated in arts in Laos and Thailand

The Institute is subdivided into four centres: Documentation, headed by Mr. Khambone Thirabouth; Literature, headed by Mr. Khampeng Ketavong; Linguistics, headed by Mr. Phonekaseumsook, and Arts headed, by Mr. Phoxay Sunnarath.

So far no survey exists of publications published by the CSS, but it has been requested to publish one. A preliminary list of activities was provided by the institute.

Publications of the Institute of Art, Literature and Linguistics 1983-91

1. Thao Hung - Thaocheung - classical texts
2. Folktales, 2 vols.
3. Music
4. Lung Son Lan (Uncle's advises for nephews)
5. Inthinan Son Luk (Inthinan advises his sons)
6. Lao proverbs
7. Kutsvan (?) - Lao dictionary
8. Final report on palm leaf manuscripts
9. Translation - Vientiane 40 years after its destruction
10. Translation of Japanese tales
11. Lao arts, 2 vols.

Seminars 1987-90 (and support to the seminars)

1. Palm leaf manuscripts - supported by Toyota Foundation
2. Round Tables on music - national budget
3. Lecture on charta(?) and experiences of research - CNRS, France, Prof. Lafont
4. Seminar on methodology in social sciences - UNESCO, Dr. Atal ?
5. Lecture: Phouan (?), Xieng Khouang province - Hawaii University
6. Seminar on the history of Laos - national budget
7. Seminar on Lao language - national budget
8. Seminar on Khammu scripts - SSRC - New York
9. Lecture 'Research organisation' - CNRS, prof. Lafont
10. Research on millenarism in Laos - CNRS
11. Identification and formulation of project on prehistory and archeology ?? - SSRC prof. Hutteres? and Keyer?
12. Seminar on environment - Forest?? Foundation
13. Lecture on inscriptions at the right side of Mekong - Maharakam University
14. Textile projects
 - a. Chongsavith co: Lao textiles, album and collection
 - b. Lecdons projects, studies in cooperation with Thailand and US
15. Restoration of historical monuments - Ford Foundation and Santipaxaithan(?)
Seminar - formation of restaurators

Projects in cooperation with foreign institutions

Asia Foundation

1. Publication of three classical texts
2. Training in English
3. Palm leaf manuscripts: microfilming of non-canonic texts (historical sources)
4. Lao-Hinong dictionary

Toyota Foundation

1. Seminar on palm leaf manuscripts, 1988, and publication of final report
2. Publication of Lao decorative art (2 vols.)
3. Oral folk-tales (2 vols.)
4. Translations of Japanese folk-tales (2 vols.)
5. Lao-Khmer Dictionary (2 years project)

SIL (Switzerland)

1. Practic Khammu (khmer?)- Lao dictionary
2. Linguistic survey. Project for Southern Laos (Prof. Miller)

CNRS (France)

1. Surveys and inventories of historical sites
2. Ethno-musicologie
3. Expo-historic photo of Laos
4. Publications: Translation of historical documents on Laos Literature about the French revolution (1789)
5. Expo: That Luang
6. Interdisciplinary studies on the region of Vientiane
7. Documents on Laos from France

SOAS (England)

1. Inventory catalogue - non-canonic literature

USSR

1. Dictionary Russian-Lao
2. Linguistic research (Prof. Morev)

Thailand

1. Copies of documents
2. Inscriptions
3. Exchange of specialities

Nordic countries

1. Translation of Khammu-English dictionary to Khammu-Lao (Damrong Tayanin)
2. Study of Khammu and Lamet (Kristina Lindell, Frank Prochan, Elisabeth Lind, Sven Cederroth)
3. Renovation of marionet theater (SIMA - Swedish International Marionet Theater)
4. Library cooperation (NIAS)

Studies supported by national sources

1. History of Laos (three volumes, vol. III from 1893 was published in 1989)
2. Biographies:
 - a. President Souphanouvong
 - b. Secretary general Kaysone Phomvihane
 - c. President Ho Chi Minh

Two projects have been presented by the research staff more in detail. Mr. Khampeng Ketavong is among others working on a project 'Portrait of Lao Women through the Literature'. The role of women will be analysed in the various historical periods, with the use of canonic and non-canonic texts (palm-leaf manuscripts). Out of 200 texts, women were for instance heros in 30-40. Dr. Thongpet Kingsada has a project proposal to make a linguistic survey of Laos. In 1985 the first census in Laos was carried out in which the ethnic minorities were asked to which group they belong, but this is not the same as a definition of their linguistic connection. The main linguistic groups are Sino-tibetan, Thai and Mon-khmer. It was mentioned that in connection with the UNDP supported project of the building of the Nam Thanh dam, a number of studies were started in the fields of economy, environment and forestry. But no studies were undertaken in the field of ethnic-linguistic character.

During a visit in 1990, it was discussed in CSS to set up a Center of Research on Lao Women. This idea has been proposed by SIDA, who is interested to include the gender dimension in its aid policy. A study was carried out in cooperation with the CSS on 'The Role of Women in Forestry'¹³. Prof. Rita Liljestöm, sociologist from Sweden, visited CSS during 1989, to discuss some prospects of cooperation in this field.

For the moment there are no plans to set up a centre on women's studies, but to include women's studies into the general research. Some discussions had apparently taken place about the status of women's studies and the implication of setting up an independent centre. The subject has now been moved into the jurisdiction of the Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies.

3.b. Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies.

As mentioned above this institute has recently been set up (1990) on the base of the former Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Mr. Nuphanh Sitphaxay, the Vice-president of the CSS, is the head of the institute and Mr. Khamphon is Vice-director. The research staff is composed of 11 persons:

Name Background and country of study

Mr. Nuphan France
Mr. Sinxay Ethnology, Soviet Union
Mr. Khambay Ethnology, Vietnam and Soviet Union
Mr. Suphaxay Economy, Soviet Union
Mr. Mahakhamphenh Khmer linguist, Laos and Cambodia
Mr. Sooksakhon Marxism-Leninism, Soviet Union
Mr. Vangsua Marxism-Leninism, Vietnam
Mr. Khamphon Marxism-Leninism, Vietnam
Mr. Boonnang Marxism-Leninism, Vietnam
Mr. Voeunxay Literature, Vietnam
Mr. Boonthat Marxism-Leninism, Vietnam

Mr. Nuphanh gave a general outline of the research interests of the CSS. One of the main fields concerns the history of Laos before the 14th century, which is considered pre-history. Written sources start from the 14th century. A second field of concern is to deepen and develop research on national ethnic groups in all fields: social, cultural, economic, psychologic and questions of race. The migrating ethnic groups constitute a special area of research. One particular group live in the Central Laos and on the border of Thailand and Laos and is usually called 'the people of the yellow leaves' (mla bri).

The Institute has been established step by step. At first it was called 'Committee to the edition and translation of the works of Marx and Lenin'. Later on it was called 'Committee to the edition of the history of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party'. First in the third period it got the name of 'Institute of Marxism-Leninism' until the set up of the Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies.

In the field of politics the main areas of research concerned of are:

- a. The history of the Lao people's revolution for independence
- b. Critical studies of the political orientation of the lines of the party and the government.
- c. Studies of the international situation and the changes of the world

¹³ Carol J. Ireson et al: The Role of Women in Forestry in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Vientiane 1989. A team of researchers and assistants were set up with support from SIDA. The team consisted of Carol J. Ireson, SilviNova Forestry Consultant, team leader; Boun Nyang Boutsady, CSS; Minavanh Kennavong, Forestry Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Douang Deuane Bounyavong, SilviNova Forestry Consultant and associate member of CSS; Bouaphet Khotnhotha, SilviNova; and Arun Saydarath, SilviNova.

In the field of economics the main area of interest is 'Critical studies on the political economy of the party and the government and the carrying out of the political economy in the neighbouring countries and the big countries'. In the fields of social studies the priority is given to psychology, sociology, conditions for women, children and the youth, the influence of buddhism and religion in general. A final area is labour studies and living conditions for the people.

The research has only partly been started up, because the number of researchers is too limited. In the recent years a number of specialists from abroad - Soviet Union, France, Vietnam and U.S. - have been invited to discuss and conduct seminars on subjects related to especially the juridical system.

Related to cooperation, a weak field is economics where the institute has no expertise. A possibility is to send a few persons abroad on fellowships to study fields like

- economics
- applied political economy
- economic ideas
- sociology
- anthropology and ethnography

The institute also lacks documents and foreign literature in these fields.

3.c. Institute of Geography, History and Archeology.

Mr. Sissavang¹⁴ is the head and Mr. Khamdeang is Vice-director of this institute. It was set up in December 1988 and has a staff of 9 persons of whom 7 are researchers:

Namebackground and country of study

Mr. SissavangForestry and history, France
Mr. KhamdeangHistory, Soviet Union
Mr. ThongkhumArcheology, Thailand
Mr. BoonkhianeLiterature, Vietnam
Mr. BoonmyGeography, Soviet Union
Mr. SunethHistory, Mongolia
Ms. NoolekVietnam
Ms. ManichanhHistory, Soviet Union
Ms. SaodaraGeography, Vietnam

Mr. Sissavang underlined that one of the problems for carrying out research on Lao history is the very sparse number of available documents, especially related to the pre-historical period. On the contrary the documentation related to the colonial period is numerous. Going to the period of American dominance the documentation is again limited.

One of the main projects of the Institute is a project to 'Study the history of Laos before the establishment of the Lane Xang kingdom of the 14th century'. The period is divided into two separate phases:

1. Pre-history of Laos
2. Antique Laos

¹⁴ The information about the Institute of History, Geography and Archeology is mainly based on a meeting with M. Sissavang.

Only little documentation is available, mainly some French and Chinese texts. A French geologist, Mlle Coloni, has started a study of menhir monuments. Another French geologist made a study in 1935-36 about the 'L'existence des races humaines'. The purpose of the Institute is to study the track of the present human being. By inclusion of anthropological methods it should be possible to follow this track of history.

In 1991 two researchers in history will be going to Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang. They will work in some ancient caves where traces of human settlement are found. Another group is going to Bokeo province to excavate ancient villages, and to trace the social structures.

The project on the History of Laos is taking place in cooperation of several institutes and volume 3 has been published (the history after 1893). This institute is working on the second volume about the history from 14th century. Mr. Sunet Potisan, historian and archeologist educated in Mongolia and Thailand, is the main responsible. The writing of this volume has recently started, based on documents from France, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. A seminar has been organised to use memoirs from old persons, and palm-leaf manuscripts are being used. A young Frenchman is studying the palm leaves.

In the field of geography the Institute has two scholars, and the work is still limited. A programme has been set up on economy and social studies. The main field is a study about the relations between irrigated and dry production at the Plain of Vientiane. The focus is also to study the living standard and the lifestyle of the peasants. The economic and social development. The method is to make field studies in the provinces to make the researchers know the life in the countryside. Mr. Bounmi is the head of this program which Mr. Sissavang is enthusiastic about, but which is still only in its beginning. One of the problems is to find financing for this project.

In the field of archeology, the main purpose is exploration of the archeological sites. There are many archeological hand-overs of human activities: the period of Chen La, the Khmer kingdom, is very important. It should be marked where it existed, but much work is still needed to explore this period. In the Mahasai cave in Thakhek province, Mlle Colani has found ancient objects produced by humans which are older than the findings from the Chen La period.

The director of the SSRC of US, Dr. Hatterer, has visited the Institute recently and a program for cooperation has been established. Dr. Hatterer is specialist in pre-history. His speciality is tool made of stone. The agreement will be signed later this year. The project is targeted to explore the Plain of Vientiane and designate pre-historic, archeological sites. Mr. Thongsa, Director of the Department of Museums and Archeology, is also taking part in this project.

Mr. Sissavang is also member of the UNESCO Committee on Social Sciences. Mr. Natal, National Advisor for Social and Human Sciences in the Pacific Region, has discussed with Mr. Sisana, president of CSS, about the state of Social Sciences in Laos in the CSS and at the Dong Dok Teacher's Highschool. The basic idea was to identify competent people within social sciences. Mr. Natal proposed that CSS should organise a seminar on social sciences in June or July 1991. Association of Social Science Research in Asia is planning a seminar in August or September 1991. UNDP will sponsor the seminar: The Situation of Social Sciences in Laos. The purpose is to develop the human resources in Laos, and CSS will prepare a number of documents. It is still a point of discussion how to define the social sciences. As a follow-up, a conference will be organised with the foreign agencies which might support various programmes. Moreover representatives from the government and various unions and branches like agriculture, industry, women, youth and education will be invited. NIAS and SIDA could take part in the process.

The institute is much in need of funds to publish documents in Lao language. It has a special request for 500.000 kips to photocopy historical documents on Laos.

3.d. Institute of Ethnology (Anthropology)

The Institute of Ethnology was set up in 1989 under the CSS. Sometimes it is called Institute of Anthropology or Etnography or even two of the terms are used. This confusion about terminology is not unique for Laos.

The research staff consists of six persons. Mr. Khambay Nunalat is the head of the Institute. Mr. Sookavang Simana is Vice-director. A meeting took place with Mr. Sookavang and two of his colleagues: Mr. Khamxao Kayson, specialised on Hmong and Yao minorities; Mr. Khamdaeng Khommadang, specialist on To Yo minority (?) and mon-khmer linguistics. Mr. Sookavang, is specialist of Khammu minority and former professor in literature at Dong Dok. The Director, Mr. Khambai is specialist on Ma Kong (?). They were all educated in Vietnam at the Institute of Etnography under Prof. Tran Quoc Vuong.

Mr. Sookavang explained that the Institute was of new date and needed very much to cooperate with foreign countries concerning equipment for the Institute. Laos is a polyethnic society, but still it has not been possible to study each group in depth.

First of all materials for studying each ethnic group in the country are needed, secondly, training courses for scholars set up in Laos, thirdly, to set up courses in English, fourthly, to have more in-depth training.

Mr. Sookavang is Khammu himself. Khammu is the largest ethnic group in Laos following the Thai-lao. They live in the whole country in the uplands. There are about 3-400.000 people living of swiftling agriculture. The life is still poor compared with other ethnic groups. They have abundant of folk tales and music, but so far the studies of Khammu customs and spirits are limited. Sookavang suggested that the Khammu customs both have positive and negative aspects. The origin of the culture is very positive, but the superstition of the Khammu prevents them from economic progresses. The economy has to be studied, too, and the old ideas have to be changed. The research plan on Khammu consists of two areas: 1. language 2. customs and culture. Moreover they would like to study Khammu from an ethnological point of view and study the music. His most recent study concerns Khammu poems. The poems follow some special rules different from those of others groups.

Mr. Khamdeng explained about the organisation of the Institute. It is divided into sub-groups working on:

1. Lao-Thai (Mr. Khampeng)
2. Hmong-Yao
3. Sino-Tibetan
5. Mon-Khmer

A book has been written *Introduction to the Ethnic Groups in Laos*. The Institute would like to publish this book and translate it into French and English. However, no funds are available. The publication of the book of 400 pages in Lao, English and French will cost 13 million kips (130.000 SEK).

The Institute also lacks funds to buy textiles and tools of the various ethnic groups. There is a wish to make an exhibition on ethnic material culture in the CSS, which is also depending on funds from outside. Another proposal concerns an *Ethnographic and ethnomedical map*. A final projects is to study in depth the various ethnic groups.

Mr. Khamxao Kayson is studying the Hmong-Yao minorities. He would like to write a Ph.D., but has just started to study English. His project is to study ethno-medicine, especially the Hmong medicine. The budget to carry out the project is about 10.000 US\$ including transportation, lodging, food, buying of plants, camera and chemicals. It is also a wish to acquire textiles and tools from Hmong and Yao.

4. Possible areas of cooperation

In relation to the Nordic countries a number of projects are started and another number has been proposed from various scholars, some of them were mentioned above.

SIDA has a special interest in studies within fields that will shed light on subject related to the Swedish aid and the general development of human resources. NIAS is interested that research projects or cooperation are started up in fields where both Nordic and Lao scholars have common knowledge, moreover it is possible to promote research in special fields where research is lacking. That is the reason why the identification of research and researchers in both Laos and the Nordic countries is a necessity.

NIAS is by now mainly involved in this process of identification of research and fields of research and in the library project, which is regarded as an important way to support and promote the Lao researchers.

It has moreover been discussed to find Ph.D programmes in the Nordic countries for one or two Lao candidates. Mr. Bounmi from the Institute of History, Geography and Archeology, seems to be a well educated scholar. He has graduated from Soviet Union in geography and wishes to take a Ph.D. preferably in socio-economics. He has a project on 'Agriculture in the plain of Vientiane'. Another interested candidate to acquire a Ph.D. is Mr. Boisi Rasaphon. He is educated in history in Soviet Union and works at present in the external relations of the CSS. His subject should be in the field of socio-economics. They both speak English, although not on the most advanced level.

Projects in cooperation with the CSS

1. The library project and improvement of research facilities in CSS (with SIDA support)
2. Participation in the meeting on Social Sciences in Laos (proposed by Mr. Sissavang)
3. Finding programme and economic support for one or two Ph.D. candidates

Possible areas of cooperation

4. Support for the publication of the book 'Introduction to the Ethnic Groups in Laos'
5. Making of a collection of ethnic material culture in CSS. It should, however, be coordinated with the project of Elisabet Lind and Sven Cederroth to organise an exhibition of ethnic minorities exemplified by Lamet. Their project will take place in coordination with the Department of Museums and Archeology.
6. Training in Laos of ethnographers might be coordinated with the work by Mr. Jesper Trier, who wants to do field research on the Mla Bri minority.
7. There are possibilities for training of a conservator and an archeologist at the Museum and Ethnographic Institute at Moesgaard in Århus. Period of about 3 months. This should be coordinated with the training possibilities at the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm (in cooperation with the Department of Museums and Archeology in Laos).
8. Training of economists at University of Lund, Sweden.

5. The Nordic Resource base on Laos

Prospects for project cooperation

a. Ongoing projects:

1. Ms. Kristina Lindell - projects on Khammu
2. Mr. Damrong Tayanin - dictionary Khammu-Lao with an orthography of Khammu language in Lao alphabet

b. Projects in preparation:

3. Ms. Elisabet Lind and Sven Cederroth (Rolf Samuelsson?) - project on Lamet (cooperation with the Department of Museums and Archeology)

4. Mr. Per Sørensen - masterplan of archeological excavations (cooperation with Department of Museums and Archeology)
5. Mr. Jørgen Rischel - Mla Bri, linguistics
6. Mr. Jesper Trier - Mla Bri ethnography
7. Randi Jerndal - swidden agriculture
8. Jonathan Friedman and Kajsa Ekholm - oral history - war experiences
9. Tue Magnussen - inward looking development strategies
10. Irene Nørslund - colonial history, textiles and women in Laos

c. Projects in planning by the aid agencies:

18. SIDA: -Poverty analyses
 - The new economic mechanism - effects on the daily life
 - Ethnic minorities
 - Gender relations
19. UNDP project: Policies towards ethnic minorities
20. IBRD: Analyses of standards of living (ongoing project)