He said, "I would like to go further in school if I had the opportunity, because I think I will not be able to find a good job if I do not have a good education. I do not want to be a shoeshine boy forever, but it cannot be helped for now, because I have no other opportunity. Perhaps when I am older I could repair bicycles, or if I am in Bangkok, I could be a ticket-collector on the bus.

"The falahongs [white foreigners] always seem to have a lot of money, much more than the Lao. Most of them are rich and own automobiles." In reply to a question, he said that he would rather marry a Lao girl than a Thai when he grows up, because "Thai girls are very deceitful."

BOY STUDYING AVIATION MECHANICS AT THE VIENTIANE AIRFIELD

This seventeen year old boy said he likes to study but is not interested in doing anything into which he is forced. He would like to have a higher education but does not feel it is necessary now, because most of the young Lao people do not have this opportunity. He is interested in medicine and agricultural sciences and thinks they will be good for the country, but his own ambition is to serve in the Lao Air Force.

He would like to see roads built and government buildings constructed and thinks there should be enough schools for the children. He claims he does not take much interest in national affairs other than feeling that his country should be progressive as other nations. He has seen the Crown Prince and the Premier many times. He likes French movies because, he said, he is able to learn the language that way. He has a few foreign friends from France, and some from the United States. He said he appreciates American aid but does not clearly understand its purpose.
IX

RURAL LAO
The following extracts from essays written by three village school-teachers illustrate something of the accomplishments and problems from a rural teacher's point of view.\(^1\)

The typical three-year village school has one teacher and is housed in a building of bamboo and thatch with a dirt floor. Crude benches and desks are fashioned from bamboo. Keeping the schoolhouse in repair is a major problem, and it is not always easy to get the villagers to contribute their services toward its upkeep. Supplies of even the most basic materials such as pencils and paper are often grossly inadequate. There are rarely enough primers to go around. The major school support generally comes from the central government.

I am twenty years old. I was born in Ban Pak Ngan, Tasseng of Pak Beng, Luang Prabang Province. I started to study when I was young. When I finished the sixth grade I received a certificate, and I took the examination to be a teacher. I passed it. The government sent me to the Teacher's Training School in Vientiane. After I finished the course I was sent back to my native province, Luang Prabang, and was assigned to Ban Nah Pah, Tasseng Muong Beng, in Luang Sai District. When I reached there I organized the building of the schoolhouse. When the school building was finished I began my class on October 10, 1955. Aside from my teaching, I told the villagers that if anybody was interested in learning [to read and write] and they were over-age (for school attendance) I would teach them any time they were free. Whenever there was a holiday I visited with the villagers to encourage their interest in education.

In this village there are eighty-five houses. It is divided into two sections, one big and one small. The school is in the big section where there are fifty-five houses. I have forty-five pupils, all boys, from both sections ... When they need tools, they come to the school. When someone is sick, I give the medicine that is good for them.\(^2\) I teach the pupils to show respect for country, religion, King and laws.

This teacher, in keeping with Lao concepts of politeness, replied that everything was fine when asked to describe general conditions in

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\(^1\)These essays translated from Lao.

\(^2\)Tools and medicines were supplied as part of a rural aid program.
the village where he worked. In response to specific questions about his problems, however, he conceded that he had some difficulties, particularly with regard to keeping the school in repair:

   The villagers don't give much support to education and improving the school. When I asked for aid to repair the schoolhouse I had to speak to them many times and then only three or four people came to help, so I couldn't accomplish anything. The two sections of this village oppose working together, and the people are interested in their personal work, too busy to support the school ... Some villagers don't have any children who go to school, so they don't care about the school. They grumble that they cannot earn any money by repairing the schoolhouse. They are not willing to work. Some parents want their sons to work in the fields so they take them out of school and never tell me. So many students are always absent.

   Although this teacher mentions some parents' resistance to schooling for their children, particularly when it deprives them of needed labor, there are other teachers who claim that more pupils ask to be admitted than there is room for, necessitating their limiting the size of the class. The foregoing essay points up problems caused by lack of support from villagers who have no children attending school and by inter- and intra-village rivalries which make it difficult for villagers to work together. There is also a certain amount of coercion on the part of some Nai Bans who force children to go to school so that attendance figures desired by the Provincial Education Inspector can be achieved.

   The following account is by a teacher at a groupe scolaire in a village which is the seat of a muong.

   Ban Fa is a big village with many merchants. There are more than seventy houses here and four other villages nearby. These other villages have merchants too. People came here from the neighboring villages to help build the schoolhouse. It is a clean and nice school. Boys and girls from the other four villages come to learn here. There are eighty-seven pupils. After I had taught here for two years another teacher was sent to be the head of the school. This school became a groupe scolaire. Now there are 156 pupils. The number of boys is equal to the number of girls. They are all very polite and know the rules of the school very well. They also show respect for the customs of the country. When they meet elders or government officials they also show respect.
Every Sunday when I have time I go to see the parents. I talk with them about education and about Laos and other countries.

My living conditions are good because there are many places to find food and a place to fish and hunt. It is easy to buy clothes from a Chinese merchant. Talking about recreation, the village has bounds and the villagers give charity according to custom. There are several government officials here -- teachers, administrators, a nurse, soldiers and police. I have taught at this village for over three years. I have seen that the villagers are interested in their work and obey the government officials. This makes me trust them very much, and I want to continue to stay with them.

In contrast, the following essay is by a Lao teacher in a relatively isolated tribal Khmu village where the level of living is much lower.

There are eighteen houses in this village and there are three villages nearby. There are forty-six pupils, four girls and forty-two boys.

One of the problems in this village is that the drinking water is very dirty. Another is that life is very difficult because when people want something there is no place to buy it. Another is that it is very difficult to travel over the mountain trails. Also it is a big problem when someone is ill because there is no one to care for him. It is very far from a hospital and there is no nurse in the village. This means that sometimes children cannot come to school because of illness. I have taught the children about health matters, to keep their bodies, clothing and homes clean. I try to show them how to exercise. The village elders love me as a second parent.

This is a Khmu village. They clear rice and vegetable fields high up in the mountains. There are no fields near the village because there are no level places. The villagers can grow good crops, and would like to make permanent fields. This is the reason why the mountain peoples have never become civilized. They still show respect to the evil phi.

On holidays I go with the children to take trips to the
forest so that they can see the kinds of trees there are in the lessons. I want to make friends with the children, and I want them to be friendly with me. These trips are also for finding something to eat, and for finding some firewood so that it is possible to read books at night. Every holiday I take children to see their neighbors, to encourage other children to come to school and to make new friends.

The village elders and the children's parents give good support to the school, because they never had a school before. The parents send enough children to school and sometimes more than is necessary. Some of the children want to learn, but others are forced by their parents and they are very lazy. If we divide the pupils into five groups one is lazy, but the other four like school and look after it, clean it and work on the school grounds. When the schoolhouse needs repairs the children do not want the villagers to repair it. They repair it by themselves and they repair the teacher's house, too.

A LAO VILLAGE HEADMAN

His village is located approximately twenty kilometers from the town of Luang Prabang, about fourteen kilometers of which are over the main dirt road connecting Luang Prabang and Vientiane, and the remaining six kilometers on a jeepable trail. There are seventy-three houses and under four hundred inhabitants. There is a relatively new village school and a resident teacher. At present only about one third of the men are literate and almost all of the women are illiterate, although there are now some girls attending school. Most of the villagers cultivate slash-and-burn fields, and only a few have irrigated rice fields. They sell pigs, ducks, chickens and bamboo mats in Luang Prabang in order to earn a little cash income. Occasionally some of them work as coolies.

When shown a picture of the Crown Prince (the present King) only one villager was sure who it was, because he had formerly worked as a servant for the royal household. There is a single radio in the village, belonging to the school teacher. The Nai Ban and some other villagers said that they like everything on the radio—music, news and advertisements. Since the station in Vientiane can not be received clearly, they listen to Thai stations which they understand, although not without difficulty.

There are no local health facilities, but there are three traditional herb doctors. The Nai Ban said that if the cures of the tradi-
tional healers do not work well, only then do they think about going to
the hospital in Luang Prabang. At the time of our visit the school
teacher was ill and was being treated by a village healer. The Nai
Ban said that he believed that this local curer was valuable for certain
types of treatments only and that those illnesses ascribed to the phi
must be treated in another way, by a shaman. Sometimes the monks are
helpful in these matters.

According to the Nai Ban there are four people concerned with
the village government: himself, two assistants, and one person respon-
sible for relaying news to the villagers, a sort of local town crier.
Recently the Nai Ban sent a petition through the Tasseng to the
Chao Muong asking permission to resign. The Chao Muong in turn for-
warded it to the Chao Khoueng, who gave it his approval. When his
resignation was accepted, the Chao Muong sent a district assistant to
aid in the selection of a new Nai Ban. The villagers nominated six
candidates and then held an election; a ballot box was used and votes
were counted by the Chao Muong's assistant.

His resignation was necessary, he said, "because it is too dif-
ficult and takes too much time to deal with government officials. I
was constantly being called to meetings without being reimbursed for
my time or bus fare. I was also annoyed at the requisitioning of
cows, buffalo and rice that had been done by the soldiers. Sometimes
these requisitions are at the request of the officials such as the
Chao Muong, and when I had not complied with them, soldiers were sent
to the village. But when I asked for help from the government officials
I never received any. For example, our crops are often infested by in-
sects, and despite repeated requests, the government has done nothing
about it."

However, in seeming contradiction, he said that the road to the
village, a rather rough trail, was built after his request to a member
of parliament. The government gave 50,000 kip to each village along
the trail. The Nai Ban said this sum was not enough, however, and he
had to force the villagers to work on the road.

Quite a different situation is reflected in the development of the
pagoda. There are two bonzes and three novices permanently resident
in the village. The pagoda itself was built six years ago. Last year
a big boun was held in the village to raise money for it. The celebration
was advertised in Luang Prabang and elsewhere, and many people came to
the village. Some 25,000 kip was raised by lam vong dancing alone, and
another 20,000 kip was raised by contributions of those who came to hear
visiting monks recite passages of Buddhist scripture. This money was
then used to buy materials for the pagoda. Both the monks and vil-
lagers worked together in the improvements to the wat. In addition
the Nai Ban went to Nong Kai in Thailand to buy gold leaf for further
adornment, traveling by air from Luang Prabang and returning by boat.
(It would be hard to over-emphasize the importance of religion in rural Lao life. When funds are made available for rural welfare, they are almost always requested for development of the local pagoda. Certainly it would seem that although religious and commercial contacts with the town are fairly well developed, administrative integration lags far behind. While the Nai Ban gladly made the trip to Vientiane and Nong Khi to buy gold leaf, his relatively expensive travel being financed by village contributions, it was evidently with a great deal of hesitation and resentment that he made the much shorter trips to Tasseng or Muong centers on official administrative business.)

LAO MERCHANT ENGAGED IN TRADE WITH TRIBAL GROUPS

Although contact between many of the tribal peoples and government officials is often tenuous, there do exist numbers of Lao and Chinese merchants who go out into the hill-country every dry season to trade with these people, and are often more effectively in contact with them than is the government. The following are some of the comments of a Lao merchant engaged in this trade:

"Most business is with the Meo and Yao. The Yao are more civilized because they have their own system of writing; they are also cleaner, using soap to wash with, and having such items as tables, beds and mattresses. Actually Lao merchants buy only two things from the Meo and Yao: opium and potatoes. In return we sell them salt, red and black cloth for clothing, matches, needles, thread, and plastic beads. We also sell small amounts of condensed milk, iron bars, flashlights and batteries, and shotgun shells."

(This is the merchant's evaluation, and it is possible that the Meo would not agree, particularly with regard to iron bars.)

If the Meo or Yao are not interested in any of these trade goods, they are given silver bars in payment for their opium. The merchant felt that the customs of the Meo were very similar to those of the Chinese. "They are much better craftsmen than the Lao, since they can make guns, knives and all kinds of tools in their villages. They also make cloth from tree bark, and they work very hard to improve their crops and their livestock. Meo crops and animals are better than those of the Lao." The Meo pride themselves on the fact that they are better than the Lao, but they respect the Ho (merchants from Yunnan) whom they feel are richer and fiercer. The Meo deeply respect the Nai Bans of their villages, and when they give orders, all obey.

"When we merchants to go the villages, we work through the Nai Bans. If they agree, we are able to conduct our business; if not, then we leave."
"The Khmu are very lazy, and if they have food to eat, they do not work. In contrast to the Meo, who always keep their promises, very few Khmu bother to do so. Most of them work only during the rainy season when they plant their rice, while the Meo work hard throughout the year. They wear their clothes until they rot and then try to find some money. The Khmu are exploited by the government, and are unlike the Meo who retain their independence. The Meo use the Khmu as coolies and pay them in opium."

**LAO VILLAGER ABOUT SIXTY MILES FROM VIENTIANE**

When asked about the American aid program, one villager first wanted to know what it was and what it had done to help the people. After an explanation had been made, he asked that the Americans be told that the villagers were poor in contrast to the people in the city, and that they needed help. When asked if the Lao people could not help themselves, he said this was difficult to do since the officials steal money from the government.

This man said that in his village, which was the site of a Civic Action model village, the land on which the Civic Action people erected buildings was owned by another villager. The officials from Vientiane told him that if things worked out he would be paid in five years, if not, the land would be returned to him. There is a medical building in this village and a doctor has been promised but has never come. The Civic Action people have erected a fence around their compound and cultivate gardens. The villagers did not ask for this project, but the site was selected by the "Director General". Exactly who he was, or from which government department he came, the villager did not know. He said that the Director General spoke too loudly, and if one was not acquainted with him, one might be afraid.

The villagers are sometimes called to meetings about this project and they were also told to erect posts for a school, but labor for the building was supplied from town. They do not consider the school building thus constructed as their school, but hope to build another near their pagoda. The villager continued, "When officials come to our village they do not visit with us but go to the Civic Action compound. When the Director General comes through he tells us to clean up our houses. Once he ate a meal with us. The Civic Action people built a well with our help, and we villagers use it, but it formerly belonged to one man in the village. Now the well belongs to no one."

When asked what he would really like for his village, the man replied that they would like some stone to pave the road connecting the village with the main road.
TRIBAL PEOPLE
TOUBI LYFONG

Vice-president of the National Assembly and Deputy from Xieng Khouang, Toubi Lyfong is the only Meo in the National Assembly. His grandfather was a Tasseng and his father was also an official. He has a brother studying in France and a son at the Lycee in Vientiane. An uncle and a cousin are in the Pathet Lao and he himself is a member of the Rally of the Lao People. He has traveled abroad extensively and is reputed to be quite wealthy as a result of opium trade. His wife and children are Protestant but he has not become a Christian. This is said to be for political reasons. Toubi said there are many Meo officials in the Pathet Lao, but none of them received posts under the integration plan. In addition to those Meo who side with the Lao government and those who favor the Pathet Lao, he indicated that many are neutral. There are some 50,000 Meo in Xieng Khouang Province, of whom approximately 3,000 to 4,000 are Protestants; there are also a few hundred Catholics.

(Foreign Christian missionaries have been active in Xieng Khouang for some time. The Christian Meo seem more anxious to settle on the plains than do other Meo groups, but the me, or paddy land, is hard to find, especially combined with an adequate water supply. In Luang Prabang Province, for example, there is not too much valley land which can be settled in this way. In Luang Prabang the mountain people sell their rice to the valley Lao, who are the traders, while in other areas the process is reversed.)

With regard to participation of the Meo in the government, Toubi said there are now about six nurses in Xieng Khouang, three of whom are women. The situation is fairly good among the Meo in Xieng Khouang, where there are a number of Meo functionaries. There are also increasing numbers of Meo schools and clinics. Roads are being constructed to the villages as part of the rural self-help program. "But this is not the situation in Luang Prabang," Toubi maintained, "where there is discrimination in the administration. There should be a Meo representative on the court, for example, because often the Meo do not know Lao, or speak it very poorly."

Concerning the opium trade he said that currently the price of this commodity is stable. He is against its cultivation, but there remains the problem that there still are smokers. A good deal of the opium is shipped across the border to Vietnam.

Toubi injected a little historical note in our conversation, stating that at the end of the war he sided with the King and the French against Souvanna Phouma and Katay, but that this is past history now and he is good friends with them. (Under the French administration there was a tendency to favor some of the tribal groups.)
With regard to the Committee for the Defense of the National Interests Toubi said, "They say that the old people are not good enough but I believe you must judge an individual on his merits." He strongly implied that the members were using their organization to advance their own career interests. As to young Meo belonging to the CDIN, he said they were never asked to join. (This is contrary to what some organizers of the Committee have said, maintaining that their membership included many tribal people including village people in all the provinces.)

During the Civil War Toubi became a member of the government of Prince Boun Oum. Xieng Khouang came under control of the Pathet Lao, but considerable resistance has been reported, particularly from Toubi's home territory.

The following comments about Toubi [Touby] appeared in an issue of a missionary bulletin:

Although Phanya Touby has the official title of Chao Muong Miao (Chief of the Miao) in the Xieng Khouang Province and acts as the governor during the absence of the Lao governor, his influence reaches to all the Miao in Laos. I was told of one who travelled in the north bordering China, found that the Miao tribesmen in that area, although never having seen Phanya Touby, respect him as their great Emancipator.

Touby Ly Fuong (his full name) was the first Miao tribesman to receive a formal education. In addition he has an Abraham Lincoln personality. He is extremely friendly and kind, making no distinction between the illiterate tribesmen who have little or no contact with civilization and the elite Lao Officials ...

MEO VILLAGER

He lives in Phou Kao Quai, a large Meo village about 60 kilometers from Vientiane and was originally from North Vietnam. After serving with the French Army during the Indochina War he came here and married a local girl. He presently lives with the family of the Nai Ban, who has the same surname and has accepted him as a member of their clan. He is thirty-two and his wife is eighteen.

"Several months ago a Meo who had been in Thailand appeared in our village. He had worked for missionaries in Vientiane for some time. Upon his arrival he announced that God was coming to this village in a jeep. This God was a white Meo with the face of an American and with fingers as big as water glasses. He would wear no clothes. When this God arrived, he would make all the Meo officials in the government. The Meo from Thailand said that anyone who opposed him as the representative of the God would be struck dead by lightning. He stayed in the village for two months, during which time local Meo gave him food. However, when nothing happened, someone reported him to the government, and some soldiers came to arrest him and took him to Vientiane."

(According to the son of the man who was arrested, his father had never been in Thailand, but had spent some time in Vientiane where he became a Christian under the instruction of "the Frenchmen with beards" presumably the local Catholic priests. When his father returned to the village he told them about Christianity.)

YAO WORKING FOR CIVIC ACTION

This twenty-four year old Yao tribesman was born in a mountain village near Nam Tha. He went to the Lao elementary school in his village for three years and then continued his education in Nam Tha for one year. For several years he worked as a carpenter in the office of the Chao Khoueng.

He impressed the Civic Action people when they were recruiting, and they sent him to school in Saigon for a few months, where he was instructed by Lao-speaking Vietnamese. He was then sent back to Nam Tha and later assigned to Muong Sing. In addition to Lao and Yao, he also speaks Yunnanese, as do most of the Yao.

One of his aims, he said, is to bring his family down from the mountains so that they can settle in the valley and cultivate irrigated rice fields. He said he likes to live like a Lao, and would prefer also to marry a Lao girl.

In the Muong Sing area, some Yao have begun to cultivate irrigated rice fields with seed, hoes and plows given them by the government. He said buffalo are also supplied. The mountain people come down to the valley only temporarily and retain their upland homes.

His work consisted of giving lectures to Kha Kho tribesmen who had been summoned to Muong Sing for a Civic Action indoctrination course. He also showed government films in the villages.
The interviewee, a Christian tribesman, is forty-eight years old and has a wife and five children. His eldest son is a soldier, and two of his daughters are students in the local groupe scolaire. He was born in the area of Muong Sai in northern Luang Prabang Province. At the age of sixteen he went to Northeast Thailand where he studied for a year in a Thai school. At twenty-six, he was sent to Vientiane where he studied with the missionaries for two years and then returned to Luang Prabang. Since that time he has visited Vientiane twice. He said that if he can pass an examination to be a "professor" he will be able to earn about 5,000 kip a month.

He earns over 2,000 kip a month and is supplied with a house and some furniture by the mission for which he works. They also give his family some clothing. When he stays in his village he gets only 1,500 kip and his food is supplied by the villagers. He prefers to live in town, he said, so that his children can go to school.

Of his group he said, "The Khmu in the area of Luang Prabang town are poor because they are lazy. They don't grow enough rice to feed themselves. Last year all the chickens and pigs in the area died. The Khmu here believe that their 'King' has been born and will come to help them by giving them gold and silver. If anyone works in the fields and grows rice, it means they do not have respect for the 'King'."

This 'King' is said to have been born in a sacred cave in a jungle and not to have had human parents. In time he is supposed to grow stronger, and finally emerge from the cave and come out into the world to help the Khmu. He will help only them. Reputedly, there is one Khmu who went to this cave and saw the 'King'. He said that the interior of the cave was as big as a city and that there were many people there, who speak another language but that it was easy for a Khmu to understand after a little practice. The cave itself was guarded, and it was necessary to ask permission of the guard to enter. According to the Khmu observer, inside everything was very civilized, with "all sorts of things:" cars, boats, airplanes, a lot of silver, gold, clothing, pigs, cows, buffalo, chickens, all of which are to be distributed to the Khmu when the King emerges. The observer continued that when he saw him, the King was still too young and not strong enough to leave. He was not able to take anything with him because the King would not give his permission.

(All the facts on this Messianic cult are not available, but the factor of cultural compensation for the inferior status of the Khmu in social hierarchy is readily apparent. It is also significant that this King is not said to be reestablishing the old way of life but rather will magically bring to his people those modern material goods of which
the Khmu have become aware, but to which they are denied access.)

When the government heard about this movement they arrested some of the people involved. The Khmu went back to work in their fields, but because of the loss in rice yield many were forced to work as coolies in the Lao towns.

The Khmu in the area of Luang Prabang know no handicrafts, but they come to the Luang Prabang market to sell bamboo shoots, betel leaves, mushrooms and banana leaves. Usually they arrive the night before, sleep in the market and sell their goods in the early morning. Then they buy some clothing or food, and return to their villages. A very few Khmu act as merchants, selling buffalo and pigs.

According to the pastor the Khmu in the north, where he comes from, are very much better off, since they work harder and also grow opium. Lao merchants visit their villages to buy opium and offer goods in exchange. The people dislike paper money, preferring silver coins. The pastor said, "The Khmu in my home area live like the Lao and eat better than the Meo. They grow rice and vegetables, but only for their own consumption. This is largely because of the difficulty in transportation. However, when they visit a town they sometimes take vegetables with them. They also practice various crafts such as weaving, blacksmithing and silversmithing. They can make guns, bracelets, necklaces and silver bowls. Usually they do not have to visit the towns, since the merchants come to their villages for opium. A hard-working man is never poor in the north because he is not lazy like the people here, who never work when they have something to eat."
TAI LU PRISONER

This tribal prisoner claims he was jailed because he was engaged in the opium trade, and that one of the merchants who competed with him wanted him out of the way. He has already spent nine months in jail in Luang Prabang and has to stay another three. There is not enough sleeping space in the jail, so some of the new prisoners have to sleep on the ground, while those who had been there longer sleep on boards. He is permitted out during the day and has worked as a coolie at the government-owned bungalow. At present he is working at the home of the Director of the prison. When he finishes his chores, he is free to wander around the town at will, on the condition that he return to the jail at night. The informant said that many government officials use prisoners as personal coolies.

His own work consists of gathering firewood and hauling water and doing the laundry. He likes working outside the jail because in this way he is able to get better food. Sometimes he is paid for his work. He said, "Last week I built a drain for a government official and received 300 kip. With this money I bought a shirt and some cigarettes."

He said his village, located in Sayaboury Province, is composed exclusively of Tai Lu. There are some hundred and fifty houses and approximately five hundred people. It is reached by a six-day walk over mountain trails from Luang Prabang, or by a two-day river trip by pirogue plus another day's walk. The village is the seat of a Tasseng, and so there are a few soldiers and police stationed there. Since the Thai border is only a two-day walk away, most of its commerce is with Thailand, rather than within Laos. Goods are transported by elephant, of which there are about one hundred in the village. When villagers are in need of jobs, they usually walk to Thailand instead of coming to Luang Prabang or some other Lao town. When they are finished with their work in the rice fields, they may seek jobs in logging camps or a tobacco factory.

"I worked in Thailand twice," the interviewee said, "once for two years and another time for six months. I think living conditions in my village are better than those in the Luang Prabang area, because in the village there is never a lack of rice. For currency we use baht (Thai currency) and old Indo-Chinese and Burmese silver coins. If a person attempts to buy goods in the village with Lao paper-currency, the merchants will usually say they don't have anything to sell. Very few people from my village have ever visited Luang Prabang."

(The Province of Sayaboury was formerly part of Thailand. Economic orientation towards Thailand occurs in many parts of Laos bordering on that country since trade and commerce are much better developed there than in Laos. This also tends to lessen the cohesion of Laos as a political unit.)
The interviewee is headman of a village located several kilometers off the road, about a half-day’s walk south of Luang Prabang town. It has twenty-two houses and some seventy people. There are several smaller Khmu villages in the vicinity.

When asked what he thought about the people in Luang Prabang, he said that he knew the Tasseng, but that all the (Lao) people who work in the government are bosses. He goes to town once in a while on business. The Khmu also bring vegetables to market, chilis, banana leaves and scallions. They gather the banana leaves from the forest, but they grow the other items in their gardens. Money received is spent on rice or dried meat. The maximum one can earn is 200 kip per trip to the market. If one makes this much money he might buy a piece of cloth. "But," said the chief, "clothing is not very important since even I, the richest man in the village, have only three changes of clothing." He wore an Army shirt which his soldier son had given him last year. He said it was a very good shirt and would serve for at least three years. "Usually," he said, "the young men want to be soldiers because they can have good clothing and enough food, and if an officer likes them, they will be able to get extra clothing and give some to their family." Sometimes the villagers receive old clothes from the Lao. They have no money to buy blankets, so that when it is cold they keep warm around a fire.

When asked if he had any problems, the chief said he had none, but that he would like to have everything that he now lacks. He said the Tasseng has never visited his village, nor has he ever asked the Tasseng for any kind of village help because he would not know how to ask him and is also afraid to do so. He knows nothing of the American aid program and does not recognize any difference between Americans and the French. They are all fahahng (foreigners).