

## THE KUI PEOPLE OF CAMBODIA AND SIAM

By

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The following notes are written partly in appreciation of Monsieur Paul Lévy's outstanding work<sup>1</sup> on prehistoric research which he carried out in the region of Mlu Prei in North Cambodia, and partly based on the writer's personal observations made from contacts with our own *Kui*<sup>2</sup> people in Northeastern Siam during the years of 1908 to 1919 while serving as a Deputy to the Inspector-General of the Provincial Gendarmerie. These observations do not claim to be complete as they were made during our somewhat hasty passages through the *Kui* villages when on inspection tours to outlying gendarmerie stations. Still, as nothing, so far, has been published about the *Kui* people of Siam it may perhaps be worthwhile to publish them, especially as our *Kui* are rapidly changing their language for that of Siamese (Lāo) or *Khmer*, a process which has been going on for a long time, and which eventually may result in the disappearance of their ancient *Môn-Khmer* tongue. The schools are only teaching their children the Siamese language, which is required by the civil administration, and the frequent intercourse with the Thai-speaking people will hasten this process, also changing or strongly modifying the original *Kui* customs and manners. A study of M. Baradat's excellent monograph "*Les Samré ou Péarr, populations primitives de l'ouest du Cambodge*"<sup>3</sup> should prove useful to an understanding of the material and spiritual conditions of the *Kui*, as these and the *Samré* or *Pörr* (*Péarr*) are ethnically, as well as linguistically, identical people.

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1 Recherches préhistoriques dans la région de Mlu prei par Paul Lévy, published by the École Française d'Extrême Orient, Hanoi 1943. 124 pages with 65 plates and 50 figures in the text, a vocabulary and an index.

2 The *Kui* (K to be pronounced as a hard G) of N.E. Siam are by the Siamese called *Soai* (สอ) i.e., those liable to pay taxes.

3 Vide Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, vol. XXXX, reviewed in J.S.S., Vol. XXX by the writer.

M. Paul Lévy, whose activities and work have been mentioned several times in the J.S.S., is a young, energetic and particularly gifted French ethnologist who has also in the domain of prehistory and archaeology contributed considerably to our knowledge of things Indochinese. As will be known to readers in Siam, at least, M. Lévy has now been promoted to the high office of Director of l'École Française d'Extrême Orient. The prehistoric investigations carried out by M. Lévy took place in the region of Mlu Prei which lies to the north of the town of Kampong Thom, on the upper reaches of Stung Sen. The latter is a considerable water course whose sources are found in the Dong Rek range to the southeast of the town of Khukhan in the southernmost part of *changvat* Srisaket, Siam. The Stung Sen flows into Thale Sap. Both sides of the entire valley of the river seem to be occupied by *Kui* villages and a few *Khmer* settlements. M. Lévy's book contains 65 plates depicting stone, bone, bronze and iron implements, potsherds with their various patterns of decorations, as well as archaeological comparative pattern tables of implements and pottery styles, ranging from Indochina to ancient Denmark! Among the plates are also 23 photographs of present-day *Kui* and of their poor primitive dwellings—mere hovels to look at—besides some 50 drawings and diagrams. In spite of the difficult times, it is a publication worthy of the high traditions of the great École Française d'Extrême Orient of which M. Lévy is such a distinguished member. M. Lévy's brilliant study is dedicated to the memory of his late eminent teacher, André Vayson de Pradenne. The country of the *Kui* of Mlu Prei was explored in 1876 by Dr. Harmand, a medical doctor, who finished his career as Governor-General of French Indochina, and, later on, by Dr. Dufossé, both of whom mapped out the country with indications of the habitat of the various *Kui* groups. M. Lévy adds two modern maps showing the prehistoric sites studied by him, and one giving the geological features of that region.

Only a few Europeans have explored the thinly populated *Kui* country in more modern times and it is still insufficiently known; a geological survey may, however, prove it to contain

mineral resources of a certain value. It consists in the main of an ancient plain of quaternary alluvial deposits surrounding a plateau of sandstone. Here are found lignite, jet and petrified wood (the latter is also found in the district of Phimun, *changvat* Ubon, North-east Siam). This plateau is intersected by eruptive or metamorphised rocks composed of granite, rhyolite, porphyrite and other kinds of those stones which were used by the ancient neolithic people for the manufacture of their implements and arms. The *Kui* country round Mlu Prei is a poor country which has been made poorer still by man's wholesale destruction of the forests. Only thin *forêt claireière* (our *lchôk* forest) is now left. This is, however, teeming with wild beasts, among them many wild elephants. Indeed it is a veritable paradise for the big-game hunter.

The author asks himself whether this country, so full of ruins of *Khmer* sanctuaries, was not more densely populated during former times? We should think it must have been in view of these ruins and the several ancient highways, which starting from Yasodharapura (Angkor Thom) almost reached this region. One of them, the great *chaussée* linking the famous old capital with Çambhupura (Champasak) on the Mekhong, skirted its northern limits. It must also be remembered that Sambor Prei Kuk, the great ancient town of primitive Cambodian art and architecture, stands on the banks of the Stîng Sen. The author says that in the days of ancient Cambodia there existed here a social organization based on semi-slavery, and coupled with an intense exploitation of the rich iron mines at Phnom Dek. It is surmised that the arms of the old *Khmer* armies were forged by *Kui* ironsmiths. The sandstone quarries, the hunting for war elephants (the *Kui* of Surin are still accounted among the best elephant hunters of Siam), and the utilization of water reservoirs for irrigation purposes, all tend to show that the country formerly held a much denser population than now. The grand Shivaite Temple, Sikharisvara or Phra Vihar, which, like an eagle's nest, crowns a spur of the Dong Rek hills, was most probably built by *Kui* *corvée* labor, supervised by *Khmer* headmen, architects and sculptors during the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries

A.D. In spite of many hundreds of years of oppression by the *Khmer*, the *Kui* have preserved their own language and customs. They must have occupied vast territories formerly, and it was almost certainly from them that the *Khmers* wrested the land lying to the west of the Mekhong and northeast of the great inland lake (Thale Sap).

The first finds of prehistoric objects were made in 1938 when some bronze bracelets and reddish-brown glass beads were found in some old tombs to the northeast of Mlu Prei. M. Lévy was told by a French jet miner about the discovery of other tombs containing sitting skeletons with bronze bracelets still around their arms, and covered over all with a great wealth of glass beads. M. Lévy vouches for the correctness of this which, of course, is of great importance to our knowledge about ancient burial customs. Local myths and folklore tell much about a hero who fought with a huge monster the skeleton of which is still in evidence. It is perhaps the petrified remains of an extinct species of a huge animal. The myths also connect the megaliths with tales about giants. M. Lévy's own diggings resulted in a rich harvest of potsherds (decorated as well as undecorated), implements (of polished stone as well as of bronze), fragments of stone moulds, and even iron implements, as well as a stone hammer (for beating bark cloth?). In one of the three places explored at a small watercourse, there has existed a whole workshop for making tools and implements with many dwellings and tombs nearby. Among the more interesting finds was a stone bracelet. All the objects found were subjected to close study by the author, and will be mentioned briefly here. The most common stone implements are shaped like adze heads, i.e. one side is convex while the other is almost flat; only a few are bi-convex. This is also our finding after examination of a great number of such implements collected in Siamese Malaya (by the late Danish gentleman, Mr. R. Havmøller). The first-named shape of these implements permits, of course, its use in two ways, both as an adze and as an axe. These Indochinese implements, lenticular or sub-ellipsoid in shape, with asymmetrical faces, are only polished on

one side (the surface of the Hoabinhian pebble); on the other side, the periphery and the part nearest the edge only are polished. This semi-polished implement perpetuates the so-called Sumatra-type which was the same as the Indochinese paleolithic Hoabinhian implement. (We wonder whether such a semi-polished implement should not be classified as mesolithic?) The dimensions thicknesses and shapes of the implements are quite variable, according to the use they are intended for, as hoes, axes, chisels, or fighting and hunting tools. The manner of hafting the stone adze-axes was probably identical to that used by present-day *Khmer*.

There are in M. Lévy's book 25 plates illustrating in a clear and precise manner the various stone, bronze and iron implements, thus facilitating the reading very much. It would take up too much space to go into details so we shall here only point out some of the most important features. It is interesting to note that the type of axe shown on plate II 5, or, a similar one, is still used by the Australians. On many of the adze-or axe-heads are clearly seen the notches made for their hafting. Among the specimens collected by M. Lévy are also a number of the so-called shouldered celts (i.e. adze-or axe-heads) which at their backs are more or less deeply notched, often at right angles, leaving a tenon for the hafting of this kind of tool. It seems, says M. Lévy, that in the world's prehistory Indochina has been the center of the use of this type. (It should be remembered that the shouldered celt is characteristic of the Austro-Asiatics' stone culture. We have ourselves collected a few shouldered celts at Chiangmai and in *changvat* Roi-Et). Among the stone implements are many scrapers, borers and graving tools as well as knives (of flint). The abundance of stone sickles, found in the three places excavated by M. Lévy, testifies to the importance of agriculture among the prehistoric people here. Sickles of exactly the same shape are found in the prehistoric layers in China. Quartz was employed for boring and perforating purposes, or as gimlets, just as in modern Cambodia; quartz was also used for polishing and rough-hewing. Other interesting finds included clay pellets, probably used in slings; stone pearls, bits of a fire-producing

tool (a fire piston), whetting stones; stone bracelets, and moulds for casting bronze. The material used for tool making was flint besides hard sandstone and, sometimes, petrified wood. Other stone tools were grinders or roughly fashioned hammers. The hafting of one of the latter is shown on page 26. (We remember having seen an itinerant Lāo or *Kui* blacksmith using a raw stone as a hammer during his work.) The grinding stones with accompanying slabs were used both for grinding corn and vegetables; a quantity of pounders were also encountered. Among the finds were many reutilized implements.

That the prehistoric *Kui* used bark cloth is proved by the presence of stone beaters. (Such have also been found in Siamese Malaya where the art of beating cloth from the bark of certain trees has not quite died out.) It seems that bone was also used for various implements during the neolithic period of the prehistoric *Kui*. Bone polishers were thus employed in the making of pottery for handles, and especially for arrow heads. Arrow heads of stone have not yet been found in Indochina (but we take it that this does not prove their non-existence during the neolithic age). Teeth of animals were used as instruments for decorating pottery while a piece of a jaw bone with its teeth may have been used as a scratching comb! The *Kui*, still today expert iron miners and ironsmiths (vastly superior to our primitive *Lawa* workers in North Siam), were quite good at bronze casting, to wit their finished products and their stone moulds. Their bronze implements include axe heads, bracelets and artistically wrought armlets, as well as slave arm rings. The *Kui* technique for melting and working iron was no doubt influenced by their Hindu civilizers as they still today use Brahmanical rites and incantations. When the *Kambuja* of *Cambhapura* revolted against Funan in the 4th century A.D., the proximity of the *Kui* iron mines and their blacksmiths may have been of great importance to the *Khmer* for the arming of their troops, says M. Lévy rightly. Lots of stone shuttles and spindles were also found. The prehistoric people knew how to weave, and the late M. Groslier, the distinguished expert on *Khmer* art and material culture, opines

that the *Kui* received both the cotton plant and the loom from ancient India.

The author's three plates with samples of stone and bronze implements and body ornaments (bracelets and torques) comparing their forms and patterns with corresponding ones in Occidental Eurasia is very instructive. To find practically the same form and pattern for stone and bronze implements in such widely separated places as Finland and Cambodia; Denmark and Lāos and Cambodia; Sweden and China and Lāos; Caucasus, Hungary and Cambodia (or take the ancient Danish *rondelle*--a woman's circular spiked breast ornament--which is identical in shape and pattern with those found in Mūang Puan--Upper Lāos), cannot possibly be due to pure coincidence but can only be explained as descending from a common ancestral type (originating perhaps somewhere in Central or Midwestern Asia, from where the art spread west and east through diffusion). A connection between the Nordic culture and the Far East was already thought to exist by the great Danish archaeologist Worsøe. Professor Jansé and Dr. Siren have proved this for Sweden and China. Baron von Heiße-Geldern, the brilliant theoretician on the migration of cultures and peoples, who, crossing the Central Asian steppes, went as far as to the islands of the distant Pacific, makes one believe in the existence, during neolithic times, of a common material and spiritual culture which spread as a wave over the old world.

M. Lévy has also made a minute and profound study of the innumerable potsherds which were encountered during his diggings at Mlu Prei, and he classifies his finds according to the profile of the necks of the earthen vessels, the form of their bodies and the profile of their supports. This examination was carried out both for the debris and the complete vessels which were of many shapes and kinds, such as cooking pots, jars, cups and vases; large, medium or small in size. With regard to the supports of pots and jars these were seldom parts of the vessels themselves but were generally separate. Very interesting, too, is M. Lévy's study of the multitudinous patterns of decoration of the pottery, including the necks as well as the bodies

and supports of the vessels. One of the decorative patterns, called the basket pattern, was produced by applying to the wet clay a cord-rifled wooden beater (as first proved by the late learned Dr. Madeleine Colani). Other decorations were either stamped or painted on the ware. M. Lévy says that the oldest type of pottery in Indochina, used together with dried gourds and the watertight baskets (in Siam called *khũ*) was the so-called basket- or string-marked pottery. Later on, India (for form) and China (for decorations) would have played an important role. Comparative study of the *Kui* pottery with the somewhat superior *Khmer* and the vastly more primitive *Moi* or *Khã* pottery, as has been made by the author, is of much interest in this connection. We would here add that the type of vase (No. 7), on plate XXXIX, is well known in *changvat* Roi-Et where it has been found in no small quantities within or near old *Khmer* temple ruins. This vase is there called *hai khã*.

M. Lévy also makes a comparative study of the patterns of ceramic decorations of the Far East with those of the rest of Eurasia; and though he modestly calls this only a sketch, it is certainly very valuable and interesting. This kind of study has hitherto mainly been undertaken by Scandinavian research workers, such as Gunnar Anderson, Arne, Mrs. Hanna Rhyd, Olov Jansé, etc., and they ought, says M. Lévy, to be co-ordinated with the recent Russian discoveries in central Asia and the Anglo-Indian and International researches in Western Asia. He is also of the opinion that the painted pottery of Kansu, because of its decoration, is closely related to the Indochinese. Mr. Jansé has even wondered whether the polychromic Chinese ceramics have not entered China through Yunnan or Indochina. All this is important for determining from which common source--more or less occidental--the prehistoric cultures of China and Indochina have come. The study of the various patterns of pottery decoration must, as we shall see, necessarily lead to the same conclusion as that reached in the comparative study of stone and bronze implements. A great part, if not all, of the painted pottery was used for funerary purposes. We know, according to the narratives of Chinese travelers, that the ancient *Khmer* had



that custom. The large earthenware jars found in the sand dunes at Sa-huyenh, in South Annam, served the same purpose, and both at the well-known prehistoric site at Samrong Sen, in Cambodia, and at Mlu Prei many tombs have been found. Also the Chinese vases seem to have been mortuary receptacles.

Using no less than seven plates the author next gives a comparative survey of pottery decorations which, though hailing from widely different places in the Far East and other parts of Eurasia, are of identical patterns. To cite a few: South Germany and the Malay Peninsula, Russia and Cambodia, or that of the so-called death pattern in China, Cambodia and Denmark, etc. It is now of historical interest to see the Nazi swastika painted on a prehistoric vase from Kalāt in Western India, the other decorative details of which may be found on a jar from Sa-huyenh. Indeed, the study of ancient potsherds is a very fascinating one. (As Mr. Shipton of the British Museum, himself a pottery expert, said to the writer, when we were visiting the excavations at Megiddo, Palestine, in June 1934, "The knowledge of man's history and culture depends very much on the right study of prehistoric potsherds.")

M. Lévy's description of the *Kui* country is short but to the point. It seems to be much poorer in natural resources, with the exception of iron ore, than the country inhabited by the Siamese *Kui* to the north of Dong Rek range. M. Lévy relates a myth about the Tonlé Mrech--the Pepper lake--lying to the north of Kampong Thom. (This lake is probably an ancient *Khmer* water reservoir and it has the ruins of a sanctuary on an island in its middle, concerning which the local *Kui* have a superstitious fear). Where now lies Tonlé Mrech there stood formerly a rich and prosperous village. However its inhabitants killed and ate a white barking deer and a terrible earthquake destroyed the village and all people with the exception of a widow and her only son. They had not taken part in what evidently was an unholy meal, the animal being a sacred one. We have been told almost exactly the same myth in explanation of the coming into existence of the two large inland lakes, called Nong Hān Yai and Nong Hān Lek, respectively, in Northeast Siam,

*chungvat* Udorn and Sakōn Nakhon. The only difference is that a white squirrel or white eel here takes the place of the white barking deer of Tonlé Mrech. In the Sakōn Nakhon myth it is said that the eel was a son of the Serpent King, Phya Nak. The same myth is told in one of the Northern Thai chronicles explaining the destruction of the oldest Chieng Sen; and in Kashmir a myth tells how the offended Serpent King caused a great earthquake to swallow up a whole district with its sinful inhabitants, leaving the present great inland lake near to Srinagar. The destruction of Vineta in North Germany, and even that of Sodom and Gomorrha belong evidently to the same mythic cycle though in the latter case the Biblical account has been substantiated by actual fact.

M. Lévy's photographs are the least successful of this otherwise very outstanding publication. His description of the *Kui* house is good. As a matter of fact the *Kui* houses are not worthy of the name "house" as they are but rather miserable huts. In this they resemble very much the hovels of the Siamese *Kui* though there are exceptions, as we shall see below. The *Kui* women of Siam also know how to weave, and the large water-tight baskets for storing water or paddy are found in Siam too. From M. Lévy's photographs it will be seen that the *Kui* women in Cambodia still carry their burdens on their heads as in India and the Near East. The *Kui* women in Siam, like their Thai sisters, carry their burdens in a yoke over their shoulders. The custom of carrying burdens on the head has not quite died out in Siam (excepting the Malays of southernmost Siam) at least not until quite recently. In 1919, while inspecting the district of Dān Khun Thot (formerly Phan Ohana) lying to the northwest of the town of Korat, we saw the Thai girls there carrying their water pails, called *khlii nōn*, on their heads, the pails resting on circular cushions. The custom was said to have been adopted from the *Chao Bōn* or *Nia Kuoll* jungle folk who live to the west toward the border of Petchabun, at the outskirts of the large Phya Yen forest.

M. Lévy's photographs of the individual *Kui* are interesting. He remarks on the straight-set, only slightly Mongoloid, eyes of the

*Kui* Women and the sometimes very good straight noses and high foreheads of the men giving them an almost Europoid appearance. Other types, however, with their curly hair, broad and flat noses with deep-set nasal roots, heavy lips and short necks, indicate Negroid blood (see the *P'éarr* or *Pörr* on plate LXIII). We shall treat this "racial" problem later on.

The maps of Drs. Harmand and Dufossé, as well as M. Lévy's own, are of great interest as they show the distribution of the *Kui* groups in the Mlu Prei district. With regard to the *Kui* of Upper Lāos, concerning whom Dr. Dufossé asks himself whether they may be a branch of our *Kui* left behind during their migratory movements, we would remark that there is also a people called *Kui* in India. They may all belong to the same Austro-Asiatic human family? We believe, however, that the *Kui* of Upper Lāos are Mongols of the Tibeto-Burmese branch; this notwithstanding M. Lévy's statement that, as the art of casting bronze is essentially of a northern origin, Dr. Dufossé's idea is not too daring. The name *Nanak*, as given one of the *Kui* clans said to live in Siamese territory, is unknown to us, but we know that in Siam there are many *Kui* clans with various other names. The *Kui* tribes, or clans, living in Cambodia along the bridle path leading from Kampong Thom northward to Ohom Ksan and Phra Vihar are, according to M. Lévy's modern map, the *Kui N'tra*, *Kui Damrei* and *Kui Ô* and again *Kui Damrei* and *Kui N'tur* (the *Damrei* live nearest to the Dong Rek range; *Damrei* is, by the way, elephant in *Khmer*, whereas in *Kui* an elephant is called *chiam*). The tribal names given by the two doctor-explorers differ from M. Lévy's whose *Kui N'tur* seem to be identical with their *Mnoh* and *Malor*, while the doctors' *Kui Hah* or *Dek*, *Ntoh*, *Auk* and *Autor* should be the same as M. Lévy's *Kui Ô* and *N'tra*. The name *Manik* is unknown to us but there are *Kui Mahay* or *M'ai* to the north of the Dong Rek range too. There is a curious feast celebrated by the *Kui Damrei* (elephant-hunting *Kui*) during the months of February and March, called the elephant's feast, which commences with the driving away of the evil spirits and ends with a séance of

spirit possession, a symbolic elephant hunt and much promiscuous intercourse between the two sexes. This feast is, we believe, unknown among our *Kui* elephant hunters of Surin though the latter are zealous spirit worshippers like their *Kui Damrei* brethren. The women seem here to be the provocative element as among the *Péarr* and the *Samré*-vide M. Baradat, op. cit.

In conclusion M. Lévy underlines two facts relating to the prehistoric and protohistoric cultures and their intercommunications. Firstly, that almost the whole coastline of Indochina is bathed by the waters of what he so aptly calls "the Mediterranean Sea of the Far East"; secondly, that this sea made possible the cultural communications between Indochina and India on the one hand, and by China via the Eurasiatic steppes with the Near Orient and the Occident on the other hand. This is worth remembering.

In an additional note on the implements studied M. Lévy treats the principal raw materials from which they were made and the technique used for their manufacture. He also enumerates the various kinds of tools and implements found. He remarks that the archaic cultural relations with the Occident were probably established over land more than by sea routes, and he comes to the conclusion that, due to their nature, the finds made in the three places explored must be classified as belonging to the central part of the neolithic period of Indochina. Between that period and that of the iron age no long time has elapsed. Nowadays the iron mines and the forges of the *Kui* are, more and more, being deserted. They cannot--alas!--compete with the cheap Chinese or Occidental stuff imported in ever increasing quantities. M. Lévy's book ends with a vocabulary of the *N'tra* and *Ô* dialects of the *Kui* language. We have gone through it carefully, and found that the words therein contained differ only slightly from those in our list of the *Kui M'lon* dialect of the Srisaket region. So far M. Lévy. His book is of a great value, a brilliant example of how such work should be carried out. We would recommend that would-be Siamese prehistorians study it carefully and use it as a model when undertaking similar work themselves.

In the subsequent notes we shall try to give a sketch of the *Kui* of Siam. Our *Kui* are worth studying so much the more because, as has already been mentioned, they are now rapidly changing their proper language for either Thai (*Lǎo Viengchan* or *Lǎo Kǎo*) or *Khmer*, and they do so quite voluntarily, thinking that the Thai or *Khmer* language is superior to their own tongue; furthermore after having so changed over they do not like to be reminded of their true origin. Perhaps in a generation's time, or two at the most, there may be no *Kui*-speaking people left in the whole of Northeast Siam! The *Kui*, whether still using their ancestral tongue or that of the Thai or *Khmer*, live in great numbers in all three *changvat* of the former circle or *monthon*, of Ubon, and that both to the north and south of the Mūn river. They are found in all the *amphō* (districts) south of the river perhaps with the exception of that of Phimūn Mangsabān. On the northern side of the Mūn river not much of the former *Kui* population is left by now. Here they have been almost entirely displaced or assimilated by the southward pushing Lǎo or Thai.

The principal area in which the *Kui* live is to the north bordered by the Mūn, to the southeast and south by the mountain range of Dong Rek, and to the west, partly by the Lam Chī and the *changvat* of Buriram, partly by the *Khmer*-peopled *amphō* of Surin. The "*Kui* country" is rolling and generally reaches a height of only about a hundred meters above sea level. A few very low isolated hills are met with not far to the north of the mighty barrier of Dong Rek. A long, low and fairly broad ridge, consisting of red decomposed basalt, called Dong Din Daeng (i.e. the forest of the red earth) runs almost the entire length of this territory, from the northeast in *amphō* Det Udom southwestward into the territory of *amphō* Sangkhā, where it ends. The soil of the remaining territory is sandy on a laterite subsoil, but there is, in places; a tolerably fertile sandy loam. Up to the time when the railway line from Khorat to Ubon was opened (in 1924) the greater part of the surface was covered with thin forest and jungle; since then vast areas have been cleared on both sides of the railway line to make

possible extensive paddy cultivation. The slopes of the Dong Rek hills are clothed in dense virgin forest, which during the rainy season is very unhealthful. Virgin forest is also found here and there along the water courses. Much valuable timber and several kinds of precious wood are found in these forests, such as *Diptherocarpus* (*mai yāng*), *mai takien* (excellent for boat building), *mai bak* and *mai boh*, as well as *mai krayung*, the rose-wood so eagerly sought for use in making Chinese furniture. On the Dong Din Daeng ridge are growing pine trees which in *amphō* Sangkhà take the form of a real forest. The dwarf palm, *ton kracheng*, from the leaves of which rice bags are woven, is another feature of this curious ridge and in the fertile soil grow many giant tubers which in time of bad harvests help the local population to tide over until the next rice harvest. A kind of wild *linchi* (*litchi*) is also found in these forests.

The country-we are still speaking of that part which lies to south of the Mūn River-is intersected by a number of smaller watercourses which are all born on the Dong Rek, run northward and flow into the Mūn. These streams, taken in order of succession from east to west, are as follows: Dōm Noi, Dōm Yai, Krayung (the sources of the latter being at the very foot of the stupendous Phra Vihar temple), Samrān (near whose confluence lies the town of Srisaket) Taptan and Chī, the last one being the border of the provinces of Surin and Buriram. There are also some *Kui* living to the north of the Mūn river; they are thus fairly numerous in the two *amphō* of Khemarat and Suvarnavari, mostly living near the Mekhong river, between this majestic stream and the low jungle-clad mountain range of Phu Phān. The country here is very wild and cut up, trackless and unfertile. *Kui* also live in the flat open country, that vast plain of Suvarnaphum stretching away westward of the Mūn's large northern tributary, Lam Chī or Sī. The *Kui* live here in the following *amphō*, taken from east to west: Kantrarom, Kham Khūan Kao (both east of the Chī), Mahachanachai, Rasrisalai, Suvarnaphum, Chumphonburi, Phakhaphumphisai and Vapiprachum.

The forests along the Mekhong, as well as those to the south are still teeming with all sorts of game. There are wild elephants in the jungle adjoining the Dong Rek hills; in 1917 one might meet them in the great forest to the north of Surin. *Sambhar*, eld deer and the barking deer were plentiful, and wild buffaloes were living near the hills in the Kantrarak districts; Gaur and *banteng* (red cattle) were numerous. In these far stretching forests there were, and still are, many tigers and black panthers, both being very bold and dangerous. Tigers have been known to carry off people from inside their villages. Wild dogs are also numerous and one might meet packs of them hunting the *sambhar* or eld deer. That curious little animal, the flying squirrel (*toa pang*), is also a denizen of these forests, as well as the python and the deadly cobra. Peacocks, jungle fowls and hornbills are very common, as are large swarms of small green parroquets. The *Kui* people are called *Soai* (ส่วย) by the Thai, but they call themselves *Kui* (men). There are pure *Soai*, *Lão Soai* and *Khmer Soai*. During the reign of Phra Nang Klao (1824-1851) a census was taken of this part of Northeast Siam, and the population was divided for taxation (เก็บส่วย) purposes into *Lão*, *Khmer* and *Soai* (*Kui*). Today, or rather already more than forty years ago, the name *Lão Soai* and *Khmer Soai* have come to signify *Kui* who have changed their mother tongue for either that of *Lão* (Thai) or *Khmer*.

While scientific research work, carried out in French Indochina has done much to clear up the various "racial" problems there, very little has been done in Siam, with the exception of exploratory work carried out by Dr. Fritz Sarasin (1931) who found the implements and traces of a former palaeolithic Melanesian population in caves both in Central and Northern Siam. There can, however, hardly be any doubt that the same "racial" complex that obtains for present French Indochina also holds good for the remainder of this subcontinent. This matter will be taken up for further consideration in our concluding paragraph. The prehistory of Northeast Siam has not yet been studied at all. In 1912 stone implements and ancient pottery was dug up at Bān Lamduan Yai, a large old

fortified village lying to the south of Srisaket, but we had not the opportunity of seeing the finds. From the intimate knowledge we possess of the country north of the Dong Rek range we are convinced that digging for prehistoric material would yield a rich harvest.

The broad stretch of country lying to the south of the Mūn River, which we have spoken of as the country of the *Kui*, is far from being uniformly occupied by this people. In all the *amphō* (districts) there are living side by side with the *Kui* either Thai or *Khmer*. This living together of several ethnic elements has led very much to the denationalization of the *Kui* who, in contrast to their countrymen in Cambodia, do not respect their own language or customs. Still, as we shall see, in 1917 there were at least a hundred thousand *Kui*-speaking people left.

Generally speaking, the *Kui* give the impression of being a very decadent, dirty and morally low-standing lot with some few exceptions, and their change to Lāo or *Khmer* language and culture does mean a real advance for them. When well nourished and tolerably well-to-do, as a few *Kui* groups are, they look quite attractive, especially the young girls with their lithe well-shaped bodies and limbs, well-developed busts, large masses of bluish black, often slightly curled, hair, and, sometimes, large expressive eyes. Their skin is generally very dark but fair-skinned individuals are not rare either. As M. Lévy says, the *Kui* have very little of the Mongoloid in their appearance. They are of medium height, and, as far as we have been able to observe, tend to dolicocephaly. From what has been said above concerning the various human groups which, each in its turn, submerged the various preceding populations and settled in this country, one should expect to find some particular inherited characteristics in the present one (i.e., the *Kui*) showing affinities with their predecessors. As M. Lévy and M. Baradat have shown, the Cambodian *Kui* and *Samré* represent a very mixed "race"; so is also the case with our *Kui*. Individuals with almost woolly hair, flat broad noses, thick lips and an almost black skin colour point to a distinct heritage from their Negrito or Melanesian predecessors. Other types may show high, narrow



noses, tall foreheads and small mouths, thus being almost "Aryan" in features. Such individuals, however, are few in number. Features like these with a fair skin colour and longish heads may mean a Weddiid-Indonesian (Europoid) blood component, while a heavy build and square shoulders means the Austro-Asiatic *Môn-Khmer* mixture which represents the majority.

The *Kui* are all agriculturalists and, generally speaking, not very diligent ones, though they understand well the breeding of buffaloes and cattle, as well as pigs and poultry. Some of them are clever and bold elephant hunters, as we shall see further on. Besides paddy some of the *Kui* grow sugar cane, cotton and mulberry bushes (for the silk culture). They take up such activities generally only upon becoming Lāo or *Khmer-Soai*. The *Kui* house, or hut, is in most cases a low, badly constructed building thatched with grass, the walls being of the same material or bamboo wattle. These hovels are very dirty and full of vermin. The girls know how to weave both cotton and silk, and in some villages the men are clever basket makers who not only make the water-tight baskets (*khlu*) for carrying water but also very large ones for holding considerable quantities of paddy. The men dress like the Lāo or *Khmer* but the women all wear short (kneelength) *phū-sin* or skirts. Thirty years ago it was quite a common sight to see women with uncovered breasts, when inside their villages, where young girls might be seen running around quite naked! Still the *Kui* were not particularly lax in their sexual behaviour, much less so than the neighbouring Lāo. The food of the *Kui* consists of rice, both the ordinary and the glutinous kind, dried fish and pepper sauce, and also fresh fish, when obtainable. Meat of game such as deer, wild pig, hare, various birds, and even iguanas, snakes, frogs, toads and larvae are a welcome addition to an otherwise simple fare. The many kinds of edible tubers in the forest have already mentioned. Some of the *Kui* know how to make sugar with which they do a little trade. The canes are crushed between two upright standing cylinders set in motion by a buffalo moving around in a circle. The juice from the crushed cane runs down into wooden troughs,

afterwards to be boiled in large open iron pans. The finished product is made up into small cakes. In some *Kui* villages quite good bullock carts were built. Speaking in general the *Kui* are but mediocre farmers, non-traders and rather primitive artisans and craftsmen. It is our impression, from the experience we had with hundreds of *Kui* gendarmes (privates as well as non-commissioned officers, under our orders) that this human group is far from being unintelligent, and that schools and simple instruction in better house building and personal cleanliness would effect a distinct improvement in their lives. The *Kui* are, however, much prone to drink and illicit gambling, and in many districts they had a bad reputation as thieves and cattle lifters.

In religion the *Kui* are Buddhists, like their Lāo and *Khmer* neighbours, but up to 1919 the great majority of their villages were without temples or monks. Their real religion is animism; they are zealous spirit worshippers, and in their forests and hills dwell many powerful and redoubtable spirits who must be suitably propitiated in order not to call down their anger on the poor *Kui*. *Tabu* exists among the *Kui*. A woman may thus be declared *kamal*, or untouchable, for some time, and we have heard of one case resembling *couvade*, where the father shifts with the mother of the new born babe to lie on the "fire-bed". We have not, however, been able to find out anything about a state of semi-slavery having formerly existed among the Siamese *Kui*, as was the case with the Cambodian *Kui*.

Our Siamese *Kui* are generally divided into four main groups or tribes; the *Kui M'ai* of the east with some scattered clans in the west; the *Kui M'lô* in the east, center and west and the north, the *Kui Yô* of the center and in the north and the *Kui M'loa* in the center and the west. As a matter of fact we shall see that they are divided into several more tribes or clans. It seems that the largest groups were the *M'lô*, the *Yô*, the *M'loa* and the *M'ai*. However many large tribes formerly occupying vast spaces in the former three circles of Ubon, Roi-Et and Udorn may have disappeared long ago, having been assimilated by the southward sweeping

Thai. The consciousness of belonging to this or that tribe seems also to have been on the wane for a long time because of their present intermingled habitats as in the former Ubon circle.

We shall now treat the various *Kui* groups from east to west according to the *amphō* (districts) in which they live, or were living back in the years of 1917-19 when we were in contact with them. In doing so we shall begin with the northeastern part of *changvat* Ubon, with *amphō* Khemarat, which, as will be seen from the accompanying sketch map, comprises a long stretch of country lying between the low forest-clad range of Phu Phān and the mighty Mekhong river. The *Kui* living here are of the *M'lo* tribe, their villages lying in the southern part of the district. in 1917 they numbered about 3,550 souls, and they could still speak their mother tongue besides Lāo. They cultivated *rai* (clearings in the jungle), hunted and fished, but had a bad reputation as cattle thieves and opium smokers. The remainder of the population of this *amphō* were Thai or *Lāo Kao* in the central part, and *Phuthai* in the northern part, where also lived a small colony of *Khā Brao* and *Khā Lova* who had come over from the other side of Mekhong. In our time they had become orderly, settled people though still speaking their own guttural tongue.

South of the district of Khemarat lies the wild mountainous and tiger-infested *amphō* Suvarnāvari that extends right down to the Mūn at its outlet in the great river, and for a short distance below the same. Wild elephants used to abound in district, as well as other big game. The inhabitants, besides *Lāo Kao*, were *Kui M'lo*, numbering about 4,600 individuals, and they seemed to be of quite a good sort. Both sexes are rather tall people, the girls being fair skinned with often almost regular features. They wore their hair long in contrast to most of the other *Kui* women of that time. These *Kui* were of cleanly habits and had frank and attractive manners. Some *Lāo Vieng* were also living here. They seemed superior to the ordinary Lāo, several of their young girls being very handsome. The *Kui* call this *amphō* Khōng Chiam. The latter word means elephant, and the first is part of the name of the great

river Mekhong. At a certain place along the river bank the elephants, both tame and wild, used to swim across the river but as many of the tame elephants were severely bitten by a kind of ferocious river tortoise, called, in Siamese *taphâp nâm*, the big pachyderms are now ferried over on a timber raft. Old people, when questioned, replied that formerly the entire territory of the two *amphō* of Khemarat and Suvarnavari were inhabited solely by *Kui*, probably all of them *M'îlô*. There were also living some 800 *Lão Soai*, former *M'îlô*, in this district and on the small strip of land south of the mouth of river Mûn there was a colony of *Khâ Hinhao* who had crossed over from the French side of Mekhong.

We will now ourselves cross over the Mûn river to the *amphō* of Phimûn Mangsahân. Though at present peopled by numerous *Lão Kào* there can be no doubt that it really is old *Kui* territory, the present Thai inhabitants having dispossessed the former *Kui* owners, and as a matter of fact there were still over 2,300 *Lão Soai*, former *Kui M'ai*, living there. To the west of this *amphō* lies that of Warinchamrap, just opposite the large, prosperous town of Ubonrajadhani, capital of the former circle of the same name (the town lies on the northern bank of the Mûn river). The terminus of the Bangkok-Ubon railway line is in Warinchamrap. In 1917 the population of this *amphō* was made up of *Lão Kào* and Phuthai, besides 11,400 *Lão Soai*, former *Kui M'ai*, and 2,300 pure *Kui M'ai*, still speaking their mother tongue. The *Kui* of this district possess in many cases quite Melanesian features, being dark-skinned and curly-haired. The belief in black magic (*phi pob*) so common among the *Sô* of *changvat* Kalasin, Sakol Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom, is also held by the *Kui* here. Along the cart track leading from Warin to Khukhan, lies a group of large villages: Bân Khilek, Nâ Nôn, Nâ Suang, etc., inhabited by the so-called *Lão Soai* who speak a peculiar singing kind of *Lão*. The whole territory of Warinchamrap, I was told, was formerly *Kui M'ai*. The inhabitants of the said group of villages seemed to be somewhat progressive, their fields being well tilled, and they were the owners of many fat, red cattle. Besides this there were

temples in all their villages, each with a good clean *salā* (rest house).

To the south and southeast of *amphō* Warinchamrap is the extensive *amphō* of Det Udom which includes the sub-*amphō* of Bān Boa Buntharik, the territory of the latter extending right down to the Dong Rek range. *Amphō* Det Udom is a densely forested and very wild district, ill-reputed for its savage man-eating tigers and its aggressive wild elephants which have been known to enter and attack the miserable collections of hovels, which the *Kui* call villages, making much havoc. The whole district is moreover considered very unhealthful and fever-ridden. Its population consisted in 1917, besides Lāo and *Phuthai*, of some 6,700 *Lāo Soai*, former *Kui M'ai* and *Yö* and 3,800 pure *Kui M'ai*. Some of the *Kui M'ai* lived to the northeast of the *amphō* headquarters right on the border of *amphō* Phimūn in Bān Nōn Kham and also Bān Sōm Sa-at to the southwest; to the south the *Kui M'ai* are mixed with the *Phuthai* settlers of Bān Buntharik, and a lot of intermarriage between these two groups has taken place. The *Kui M'ai* are often as black as chimney sweeps, ugly and negroid looking, but individuals with fine regular features do also occur, especially among the women. There seems to be a slight difference between the dialects of the *M'ai* and *M'lo*.

The *amphō* of Kantraraks (formerly Uthumphornphisai and more recently called Nām Ōm) lies to the southwest of Det Udom. It is a wild rugged country, covered with virgin forest or jungle and extends right down to the Dong Rek range (which is the border of the Kingdom of Cambodia). Near the hills, in some places, is rolling grass-covered land deeply intersected by many small rushing water courses that descend from the slopes of the hills. The district used to teem with big game such as wild buffaloes, gaur, *banteng*, *sambhar* eld deer, bears and tigers; there were also many wild elephants. The population consisted in 1917 of 15,000 *Khmer*, 14,800 *Kui M'lo*, 850 *Kui Kantoa* and 1,000 *Lāo Viengchan* colonists, the latter living in a large well-built village surrounded by a broad natural moat, whence comes the name, Nām Ōm. The *Kui* here looked very decadent, living in miserable hovels, and the

cultivation of their fields and *rai* being most primitive. They had, like their *Khmer* neighbours, a very bad name as cattle lifters. They are an unhealthy people too, suffering much from skin diseases, especially the children, some of whom were covered from neck to feet with what in the sunshine resembled silvery scales! This kind of skin disease is very common among the *Sakai* of the Malay Peninsula. The *Kui* possessed many humped cattle of which they seemed to be quite fond. Living among the *Khmer* were some *Khmer Soai*, former *Kui M'ai*.

To the north of *amphö* Kantraraks, lying between the *amphö* of Warinchamrap and Srisaket, is the *amphö* of Kantrarom which has territory on both sides of the Mūn river. Its southern part is covered with dense forest with only a few habitations; it includes a portion of the Dong Din Daeng ridge, as also does *amphö* Kantraraks. There use to be many ferocious black panthers living in the big forest which did much harm to the *Kui*'s cattle, and at time attacked people too. (We had once a black panther inside our camp, but he was scared away by the blazing camp fire). The population consisted of Thai people and *Kui*, the latter being in the majority. There were 3,530 *M'lo*, 2,600 *M'loa*, 2,500 *M'ai*, 1,630 *Höt* and 1,120 *Yö*, besides 7,600 *Lão Soai*, former *Kui M'lo*, *Yö* and *Höt*; the Thai element numbered some 5,300 persons, *Lão Kao* and *Vieng*, *Thai Korat* and *Phuthai* (4,400). The *Kui M'loa* here, whose dialect differs slightly from that of their southern and southeastern brethren, the *M'ai* and the *M'lo*, seemed more progressive than these. A good example is seen in the large *Kui M'loa* village, Ban Döm, where the houses are well built and solid, and the inhabitants look clean and orderly. During the cold season when the northern monsoon is steadily blowing, this vicinity is recognizable from far away by the humming sound of the multitude of kites flying high up in the air; the humming sound, not disagreeable to one's ears, is produced by a musical bow attached to the forepart of the kite.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Lord Raglan, in his excellent "How Came Civilization?" says that the origin of this humming instrument is, to some primitives, the sacred bull roarer (op. cit. pp. 129-130). Did the *Kui* inherit it from the Melanesians?

The *amphö* of Srisaket is the head district of the *changvat* of the same name, and the town is, today, quite prosperous because of its trade in paddy and timber, for which it finds an outlet through the railway connection with Bangkok. The *amphö* of Srisaket was formerly all *Kui*. Even today, when all the inhabitants speak Thai or *Lāo* (with a peculiar accent) they are commonly called *Soai Srisaket*. The Srisaket girls are known for their good looks and fair skin, and many of them used to marry Siamese officials. Already as far back as in 1911 most of the so-called *Lāo Soai* did not know to what *Kui* tribe their parents belonged. The population in 1917 numbered over 27,000, of which only one-seventh were of pure Thai blood: there were approximately 17,000 *Lāo Soai*, former *Yö* and *M'wô*, with a sprinkling of *Khmer* who now all speak the *Lāo Kao* dialect, furthermore 5,850 *Kui M'wô*, 110 *M'ai* and 300 *Khmer*. To the east of *möang* Srisaket, in *Bān Phônσαι* and *Dôn* there lived *Kui Yö* mixed with *Phuthai* settlers. *Bān Nôn Kwaui* and four more villages were also said to be *Kui Yö*, though some thought the villagers were rather *Thai Yüai* come down from the north (*amphö Akāt Amnuey* in *changvat* Nakhon Phanom is peopled by *Thai Yüai*). The large old fortified village called *Bān Lamduan Yai*, south of *möang* Srisaket, on the road to *Khukhan*, is inhabited by *Lāo Soai*, former *Kui M'wô*, though we suppose them rather to be former *Yö* as they possess the old *Yö* tradition about which more anon. Another *Lāo Soai* village is lying south of this old fortress, but further south all is *Khmer*, right down to the border hills. The Srisaket people, whether *Lāo*, *Soai*, *Kui* or *Khmer*, did not seem to be the best material for a conscripted gendarmerie as they had, at least formerly, a bad reputation as cattle thieves and gamblers. From the point of view of intelligence, however, they do not lack anything, and we have had very good gendarmerie officers who were *Soai* born at Srisaket.

The *amphö* of *möang Khukhan*, which formerly gave its name to the present province of Srisaket (due to its being the provincial headquarters), lies almost due south of Srisaket with its

territory extending down to the Dong Rek hills. It is, especially to the south of the town of Khukhan, a wild forest and jungle-covered country full of wild animals, and much feared for its malignant fevers. The population consisted in 1917 of 32,000 *Khmer*, 6,260 *Lào Vieng* settlers and 17,800 *Kui*, divided in 12,450 *M'lo*, 2,250 *M'ai*, 1,240 *Yö* and 470 *Pörr*, besides 1,400 *Lào Soai* (formerly *Kui M'lo*). The *Khmer* living to the east of the town included some *Khmer Soai*. To the northeast of Khukhan town lie the villages of Bân Damyae and Boa Ralum from which came the leader of the fanatical Phu-mi-bân uprising in 1903. A much smaller and less dangerous movement broke out in *amphö* Kantra-raks in 1916, the leader of this movement also declaring himself to be the possessor of supernatural powers. Such ideas are very characteristic of the--in a spiritual sense--somewhat unbalanced *Khö* or *Möi* population of the wild back lands of Cambodia, Annam and Laos. There are both *Kui M'loa* and *M'lo* villages west of Khukhan on the way to Sangkha.

The *amphö* of Rasrisalai, sometimes called *möang Khöng*, after a large, old fortified place (now deserted) lies to the northwest of Srisaket, on the northern bank of the river Mûn. It is an open fertile country dotted over with villages which are situated amidst groves of tamarind and mango trees, bamboos, cocoa palms and banana plantations. The population consisted in 1917 of some 2,700 *Kui Yö* and 23,000 *Lào Soai* (formerly *Yö*) who had changed their language to that of *Lào Kào*, but even the "pure" *Yö* were 30 years ago quickly forgetting their ancestral tongue, and now, in 1948, there are probably none left speaking the *Kui Yö* language. We remember that already in 1913 the so-called pure *Yö* could often only remember a few hundred words of their proper language and were unable to count to more than ten in *Yö*.

The *Kui Yö* of Rasrisalai and elsewhere have a curious tradition (also known in Bân Lamduan Yai) the literal authenticity of which seems doubtful. According to this tradition--or myth--a certain Phya Takaxila left Burma about the year 1810 A. D. with 500 *Yö* followers of both sexes due to the oppression of the



Burmese king. He emigrated to Vieng' chand, then governed by King Anu. However, not being treated well by him the Yö people left again and went down the Mekhong river to settle at Champasak on the island of Khong. Again suffering oppression here the Yö wanderers moved up to Khukhan and from there to their present habitat. In the Khukhan district there are still a number of Yö villages, and in Rasrisalai there were twenty of their villages in 1917. However, old men in that year estimated the total number of *Kui* Yö-speaking individuals to be about 4,000 souls only. Their dialect resembles that of the *Kui* Ö and *N'tra* at *Mlu Prei* but with some important differences. A detailed study of the various dialects of the *Kui* language would probably show that *Kui* Yö, together with the language of the *Chao Bön* or *Nia Kuoll*, comes nearer to the *Môn* language than most of the other *Môn-Khmer* languages. Is the above tradition not a rather confused recollection (these people forget quickly) of the *Kui* tribe's emigration from India more than 3,000 years ago, when the Aryan conquest drove so many Austro-Asiatic peoples out of India? The connection with the name of (Ta) kaxila might be a hint in that direction. A large Yö family has taken Takaxila for a family name.

The Yö are well and strongly built with a yellowish-brown or even copper-red skin colour. Their gay women went often with their breasts uncovered, smoking large cigarettes (like the Burmese women). It seems that the morals of the Yö suffer when they change over to Lāo, witness the daring proposals exchanged (in song) between the two sexes, which is strongly in contrast to the decent and timid behaviour of the *Khmer* girls. Still the change-over to the Lāo culture does mean a considerable gain from the material point of view. In 1917 the pure Thai elements in this *amphö* were only about 2,200 *Lào Kào*, 300 *Thai Khorat*, and a thousand *Phuthai* settlers. That the Yö language was formerly spoken further north is proved by the existence of the *Lào Soai* in the *amphö* of Mahā Chanachai, which lies to the northeast of Rasrisalai on the western bank of Lam Chī, and also

*amphō* Kham Khūan Kaeo, lying to the northeast of the latter and on the eastern bank of Lam Chī. In the Mahā Chanachai district there were in 1917 some 1800 *Lāo Soai* to 30,000 *Lāo Kāo*, while in the Kham Khūan Kaeo district there were 37,500 *Lāo Kāo* to 900 *Lāo Soai*, who lived in its southwestern part. These *Lāo Soai* were all former *Kui Yō*.

*Amphō* Uthumphornphisai (formerly Pachin Srisaket, i.e. Western Srisaket) lying to the southwest of Srisaket and thus south of Rasrisalai is a fertile, well-cultivated and densely populated plain with already in 1917 over 56,000 inhabitants. Of the 29 tambons (village groups) 22 were *Lāo Soai* with 38,380 former *Kui Yō*, *M'ō* and *M'loa*; 3 were pure *Kui*, 2 were *Khmer Soai*, and 2 were *Khmer* mixed with *Lāo* and *Phuthai*. The *Khmer Soai* were former *Kui M'loa*; the pure *Kui* were divided into 5,780 *M'loa*, 2,090 *M'ō*, 1,720 *Kandrau*, 900 *M'ai* and only 100 *Yō*. Thai people included 1,450 *Phuthai* and 1,200 *Lāo Vieng*. The *Soai* of this large district were an industrious and not unattractive people who had rapidly adopted Thai culture and language. In ancient days this district may have played an important role. The large old fortified village, called Bān Srā Kampheng Yai with its *Khmer* temple ruins and Brahmanic sculptures, may have been the chief Cambodian town north of the Dong Rek range, perhaps next to Phimai. Such a conclusion seems valid in view of inscriptions in the Phra Vihar mountain temple dating back to the 9th-11th century A.D.

The *Kui* girls, like their *Khmer* and Siamese sisters thresh the paddy by pounding it in a mortar (a hollowed-out piece of a tree trunk) while the *Lāo* girls all use the *kruk kradiuang*, a sort of tipping hammer or pounder which is moved upward by a pressure of the foot whereafter it is left to fall down by its own weight into the mortar containing the paddy which is thereby threshed. When the *Kui* change over to be *Lāo* they adopt their manner of threshing the paddy also, whereas, if they become *Khmer* they stick to the accustomed one. As the *Soai* of Uthumphornphisai are very prolific their numbers may now, more than 30

years later, have doubled. They are essentially a paddy-growing people and should by selling their grain gain a handsome return, if not tricked by the all-pervading foreign middlemen who, today, seem to have become the economic masters of Northeastern Siam too. The trunk railway from Ubon to Bangkok passes right through the center of this *amphö*.

*Amphö* Ratanaburi is situated to the northwest of Uthumphornphisai, having for its northern border the river of Män. It was formerly a densely wooded district full of wild animals, among them many elephants, but its thrifty population has, by clearing the jungle, changed most of it into fertile fields. The population in 1917 numbered 24,000-odd persons; viz: 21,780 *Lào Soai*, former *Kui M'lo*, 2,440 *Kui M'lo*, 130 *Khmer Soai*, also former *M'lo* and 420 *Khmer*, besides a sprinkling of *Thai Khorat* traders. The people of Ratanaburi produced much sugar and probably still do so. It is to be noted that the physiognomy of the *Kui* of Ratanaburi is absolutely different from that of the *Lào*, the girls often being fair-complexioned and very handsome. Facing the district of Ratanaburi, to the north of the Män, lies the extensive Suvarnaphum plain, partly included in the *amphö* of the same name (*changvat Roi-Et*). In 1918 the population consisted of 44,000 *Lào Vieng*, 150 *Lào Soai*, former *Kui Yö*, 540 *Yö* and 400 *Khmer*. The *Yö* may by now have become quite assimilated by the large Thai population.

To the south of *amphö* Ratanaburi is the *amphö* of Sikharaphum with its civil headquarters at Bän Anan. Thirty years ago its extensive plains were already fairly well cultivated. The numbers for the various ethnic groups were then given as follows: 13,000 *Kui M'loa*, 4,300 *Kui M'lo*, 5,900 *Lào Soai*, former *M'loa*, 4,300 *Khmer Soai*, former *M'lo* and 3,200 *Lào Vieng*, the latter being newcomers; there were also 3,900 *Khmer*. The *Kui M'lo* (some say they really are *M'ai*) living in the large prosperous village of Bän Samrongtap were very attractive people, being clean, honest and industrious. Their fine strapping girls were nice, gay, but modest persons. The *Kui* of Samrongtap were well

known for their huge watertight baskets for storing paddy and rice, some of them being breast high and holding considerable quantities. In the *Kui M'loa tamboñ* at Bân Prasat is situated the fine old *Khmer* sanctuary, called Prasat Rngai, with its five towers, one of the best preserved *Khmer* monuments in Siam.

*Amphö* Suraphinikhom lies to the northwest of *amphö* Ratanaburi and north of *amphö* Sikharaphum and *amphö* Surin. Its territory is partly covered by forest, the extensive and high-lying *Khök*, the western part of which grows on the tall clay-ish ridge on the bank of the broad Mũn river plain, called Phu Din and Phu Dong Salā. The population numbered in 1917 some 45,000 individuals, mostly *Môn-Khmer* people. The figures given were 11,200 *Kui M'lo*, 1,560 *Kui M'ai*, 12,600 *Khmer Soai*, 8,250 *Lào Soai* and 1,500 *Khmer*. The Thai elements included 8,250 *Lào Kào*, 420 *Lào Vieng* and 400 *Thai Korat*. The *Khmer* live in the three Mũn river villages Bân Dòm, Bân Dai and Bân Prasat where the *amphö* headquarters are.

Though these *Kui* are not very good at house building or farming they still seem to be somewhat superior to their kinsmen in the neighbouring *amphö*. Quite a lot of them are bold and successful elephant hunters, for instance those in Bân Chôm Phra, and especially their *Kui M'ai* or *Kui Eng* brethren from the three large palisaded villages, Bân Taklāng, Chandā and Kachau, standing on the western spur of the Phu Din-Phu Dong Salā ridge. In 1917 the villagers here were the owners of more than 90 big hunting elephants. The *Kui* hunters used to go down into the Champasak territory every rainy season, and they generally returned with 20-25 wild elephants caught there. In 1916-17 *Kui* hunters caught 30 of these huge pachyderms on the Thung Kan-hōng in Champasak. *Thai Yuan* (North Siamese), Shans and Burmese came from far away to buy elephants from the *Kui* to sell to the European timber companies for work in their teak forest concessions. Prices were not high and some few years before (in 1914) the *Kui* sold 10 elephants for 20,000 Baht only. The *Kui* are a gay and thoughtless lot. When they have received money

they spend it quickly. There are *tam buns* (merit-making ceremonies) to be held in the temples, gifts to be presented to monks, and their own *gatóe* girls to be given golden and silver ornaments, necklaces and bracelets; much feasting and drinking goes on in their villages. Sometimes one might meet a long file of elephants walking south to Surin; in the howdahs sat smiling *Kui* men and their women; they were on their way to make purchases in the market of the provincial capital. We remember meeting, just at the beginning of the rainy season many years ago, a whole procession of 13 elephants, garlanded and decked with flowers and coloured paper tinsel, and manned by a not quite sober but very jovial company. They were *Kui* underway from Bân Kachau to the *wat* or temple in Bân Tako with several young *nak buot*-candidates for entry into the Buddhist priesthood. At Bân Dong Krapô there used to be held an annual thanksgiving feast in honor of the powerful local guardian spirit. Several hundreds of festal-clad people of both sexes gathered there (this was in February 1917). Alcohol and a fish were placed in the *sân tabu chao bân* or spirit house, a simple wooden construction outside the village, without any kind of an image. An old man officiated at the ceremony, leading the prayers to the *thepharaks* (spirit); wax candles were lit, alcohol was drunk, while the assembled people saluted the spirit with mighty roars of shouting. Soon everyone was rather tipsy.

The young *Kui* girls of these elephant hunters' villages are rather tall and fairer than the *Khmer* or *Lão* girls whom they are quite unlike in physiognomy. They look very attractive in their vertically striped silken *pha sin* (skirts) yellow and pink silken scarves round their prominent breasts, and arms and necks adorned with their gold or silver trinkets, not to speak of the white or red flowers stuck coquettishly behind their ears. We wonder from whom these *Kui* girls could have inherited their good looks? Could it be from the "Europoid" Indonesians or the Weddahs? (The young *Sakai* girls are often very pretty). Everything pertaining to the hunting of elephants in Siam (also by the *Kui* and *Khmer*) has of course been minutely treated in a most scholarly

manner by His Excellency Phya Indra Montri Sri Chandra Kumara (Mr. F.H. Giles) in his well-known paper in the *Journal of the Siam Society*, which has forever become a classic.<sup>5</sup> At the big elephant drive at Lopburi in May 1938 there were among others a batch of *Kui* elephant hunters with their well-trained animals.

*Amphö* Champonburi lies on the northern bank of the Mūn river, to the west of Suraphinikōm. It is open country consisting of rolling plains almost devoid of forest or trees; the villages are nearly all built on the tops of hillocks in order to avoid the annual inundations caused by the river Mūn. Many of these hillocks were fortified places in olden days. In 1917 there were living in this district about 13,000 *Khmer Soai*, former *Kui M'lo*, as were also the 1,900 *Lāo Soai*, some 400 *Thai Khorat* and about 6,000 *Lāo Kāo*. They were mostly a rather lowly lot living in miserable hovels; they were furthermore lazy and had a bad name in the records of the authorities. The thieves of three circles (Nakhon Rajasima, Ubon and Roi-Et) were said to find an asylum here. The tilling of the fields here was very primitive, and often, after the end of the harvest and the threshing of the rice, these *Soai* used to brew much liquor with the sad result that during the months of December-January one might find whole villages happily drunk--and that from the early morning. The *Soai* (and *Khmer*) here are a polyglot lot, many of them speaking both *Khmer* and Thai besides *Kui*. At their spirit festivals much dancing, shouting and drinking go on, during which the girls are very daring.

*Amphö* Phakhaphumphisai is the most southwestern of the *amphö* of *changvat* Roi-Et. It is a country of rolling plains with low ridges and numerous hillocks, generally but sparsely wooded. It borders to the south on *amphö* Champonburi and to the west on Phutthaisong, *changvat* Buriram. Its population in 1917 consisted of 2,000 *Kui M'lo*, 1,100 *Kui Yö*, 400 *Lāo Soai*, former *M'lo*. There were 1,350 *Khmer* and many Thai; viz: 14,500 *Lāo Kāo* and 1,350 *Thai Khorat*. This population had formerly a very bad name as cattle thieves, gamblers and vagabonds. The *amphö*

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5. Vide J.S.S. Vol. XXIII, part 2.

headquarters lie inside a large old fortified place with tall ramparts and broad water-filled moats. *Môang Súa* is another old fortified place in this district. Remains of a former *Kui* population are also found in *ampho* Wapiprachum, lying to the north of Phakhaphumphisai, where in 1917 lived some 2,700 *Kui M'ô*, besides 5,700 *Khmer* and numerous Thai population; in the *amphö* of Kasetvisai (also in *changvat* Roi-Et) there were no *Kui* left but still some 1,150 *Khmer*.

From this northern excursion we will go south to the *amphö* of Surin, which is westernmost of the *amphö* of the *changvat* of the same name; it is generally accounted to be a *Khmer* district *par excellence*, as all the inhabitants of its 15 tambols are *Khmer*. In the middle of the district are vast fertile paddy fields, while to the north and south extensive forests cover the ground. *Môang* Surin is an important railway station for the export of paddy. In 1917 the *Khmer* population numbered some 47,000 individuals; they are decent and industrious people. The *Khmer* of Battambang and Phnompenh used, however, to talk somewhat disparagingly about them, calling them Northern *Soai* because of their dialect. The language spoken by the *Khmer* north of the Dong Rek range is real *Khmer* and not *Kui* though with a dialectical difference from the tongue spoken in the central part of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

*Amphö* Sangkhà is the last *Kui*-peopled district to be treated. It is situated to the south of *amphö* Surin and Sikhaphum and thus west of Khukhan; its western border adjoins the territory of *amphö* Prakhonchai of *changvat* Buriram while to the south it borders on Cambodia. The Dong Rek range here peters out into low earthen ridges. The long Dong Din Daeng ridge ends in this *amphö* too in a broad sandy pine-wooded spur. In 1917 the wild elephants used to frequent the Sangkhà district, and their deep foot prints often made riding and walking difficult along the cart tracks. *Amphö* Sangkhà must have been an important part of the old Cambodian empire, witness the many brick or stone sanctuaries which are found here. The population in 1917 numbered

altogether 23,400 individuals, of which number 13,200 were *Khmer* and 10,200 *Kui M'ô*. The southeastern portion of the district, that nearest to the frontier, was not well known in our time, and was said to contain many interesting things. Among them was a lone peaked hill, called Phu Salā, on the top of which, we were told, was a cave wherein stood the image of a goddess with buffalo horns jutting out from her temples! She was mistakenly called Phra Phikuni. Near the border, as well as further east, south of Khukhan, we were told that there lived *Khā* people--others said *Chām*. We suppose they were simply *Kui Pôrr*. It may be added that the *Khmer* living along the frontier, the so-called *Khmer Dong* or *Khmer Pā* are in general not culturally superior to the *Kui* at all. The *Kui M'ô* girls of Sangkhū are rather tall, swarthy complexioned and full breasted with strong limbs but ugly faces, having flat noses, coarse mouths and often high cheek bones. They cut their hair short and dressed only in a very short, knee-length skirt. They were, however, modest, a little shy and very soft-speaking creatures. Also among these *Kui* a few individuals with almost regular features are met with. The *Kui* men, tall, ugly fellows, are good walkers, striding along for hours at six kilometres an hour.

Before concluding these notes on the Siamese *Kui* a few words might be said about the so-called *Soai* of *amphō* Mukdahān, *changwat* Nakhon Phanom. These people are in reality a mixture of *Phuthai* and *S'ô*, and are thus distinct from our *Kui* or *Soai* of the former circles of Ubon and Roi-Et though the *S'ô* also belong to the *Môn Khmer* group. We regret never having had the opportunity of visiting the *Soai* of Mukdahān, and are thus unable to give any information as to their numbers or distribution.

### CONCLUSION

What are the *Kui*, ethnologically speaking? According to Professor H.J. Fleure's thoughtful and rather convincing theories, as set forth in the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland,<sup>6</sup> man (i.e. *homo sapiens*) most probably

6. Vide J.R.A.I. Vol. LXIII, 1937.



evolved in North Africa or Southwest or West Asia. Sahara, which in late Pliocene was a richly watered and fertile country, should be the ideal place for the cradle of modern man, and from here he emigrated to all the four corners of our earth. (Because of the ice then covering Central Asia this part of the earth must be considered as unfit for the development of *homo sapiens*). Both *Pithecanthropus Erectus* (Java man) and *Homo Pekinensis* were drifts from the west. The earliest drifts from the west (after these pre-men) were the Negritoes (who wandered as far as Southeast Asia and New Guinea); the Proto-Australians and the Weddahs. The latter two groups are dolicocephalics and this head form is also found among the Indonesians, Melanesians and the *Ainu* of Japan. From what Dr. Fromaget<sup>7</sup> has discovered of skeletal remains in Tham Hang (Lāos) one might hazard the following chronological order as regards the migratory movements to this country: first (when exception is taken to a possible cross between *P. Erectus* and *H. Pekinensis*) came the Negritoes, followed by the Proto-Australians, next the Weddid and the Papuan drifts, and thereafter the Melanesians. The pre-men may already have arrived in the Far East some 400,000 years ago, when Insulinde was still connected with the rest of Southeast Asia. The Melanesians, who, like their predecessors, came from India, were followed by the Indonesians coming down from the north. The result of all these crossings and recrossings of those human groups produced, says Dr. Fromaget, a primitive neolithic man who united in himself Europoid (*Ainu*, Polynesian and Indonesian) with his Negroid, Papuan, Weddid, Australoid and, especially, *Sakai* traits.

Then about 1,200 years B.C. would the *Môn-Khmer* peoples have come over from India, and they in their turn superimposed themselves on the now strongly Melanesian-Indonesian marked population. That this overlying was not complete is seen from the several Indonesian *Khô* or *Môl* tribes, as well as the *Châms*, who do not seem either physically or linguistically to have been influenced to any considerable extent by the *Môn-Khmer* wave. The latter consisted

7. Vide proceedings of the Third Congress of Prehistorians of the Far East (Singapore, January 1938).

of various *Khû* or *Moi* tribes in French Indochina and of the *Kui*, the *Chao Bôn*, or *Nia Kuoll*, the *Lavâ* besides the *Môn* and *Khmer* proper, all in Siam. The *Kui* preceded the *Khmer*, who, to begin with, may only have been represented by a warrior class. By and by the *Khmer* immigrants probably wrested from the *Kui* the Mekhong valley and most of the Khorat plateau, as well as Central and Eastern Cambodia. In our particular case we should think it reasonable to suppose that prior to the coming of the *Khmer* the former circles of Ubon, Roi-Et and Udorn were populated by *Kui* of various tribes, while the former circles of Nakhon Rajasima, or Khorat, and Phetchabun were inhabited by *Chao Bôn* and perhaps some *Phî Tong Luang* or *Yumbri*. During historical times, from the 9th or 10th century A.D. and onwards, we are witness to the continuous strong southward push of the Thai along the Mekhong river. This movement of conquest was intensified and quickened during the reign of the energetic and warlike Lāo king, Phra Chao Fa Ngôm (1353-1373), who enlarged the kingdom of Lān Chang (Luang Phrabang) to embrace the whole of Northeast Siam. As we have seen from the foregoing this conquest of the Thai is still going on by peaceful means, culturally as well as linguistically.

From the description of the physical traits of our *Kui* it will be seen that not a few distinct traits characteristic of their forerunners may be recognized in the present-day *Kui*. Thus we find the Melanesians' and Negritoes' curly hair, broad flat noses, thick lips and swarthy complexions in numerous individuals and perhaps also in a few cases the Australians' heavy orbital ridges coupled with a wavy-curly hair; but we also encounter the finer features of the Indonesians *cum Sakai* (Weddid) with the fairer skin colour accompanied by the *Môn Khmer* square-shouldered build. It may be added that besides the real dwarf population represented by the few hundreds of *Semang* living on the divide between Patalung and Trang, and perhaps a few in Patani in Siamese Malaya, there are said to live some other small or smallish folk in the depths of the extensive forest of Bang Ee that covers large tracts of Northeastern Ubon and Roi-Et. These people

are called *But Daeng* (i.e. the red children) by reason of the short red hair that covers their bodies. This kind of hair is, of course, characteristic of the Pygmies of Asia and Africa. We regret very much that due to pressure of our duties we never had time to visit these interesting small folk.

When adding up the figures given for the individual *ampho* of Roi-Et and Ubon we arrive at the following numbers for the *Kui* population some thirty years ago.

<i>Kui M'lo</i>	72,000	<i>Soai (Lao &amp; Khmer)</i>	82,900
<i>Kui Yö</i>	6,800	" "	58,250
<i>Kui M'loa</i>	23,620	" "	18,300
<i>Kui M'ai &amp; Eng</i>	11,170	" "	17,050
<i>Kui Höt</i>	1,630	" "	2,530
<i>Kui Kandrau</i>	1,720		
<i>Kui Kantoa</i>	880		
<i>Kui Pörr</i>	470.		
<i>Kui Mann</i>	370		
<i>Kui Bai</i>	100		
<b>TOTAL KUI</b>	<b>118,760</b>	<b>TOTAL SOAI</b>	<b>179,030</b>

Based on above figures the biggest *Kui* tribe was that of the *M'lo* which, on the other hand, had lost more than half of its original numbers, as far as these can be ascertained. The *Yö* seem rapidly to lose their language and only about one-eighth to one-ninth of their original number spoke their proper language as far back as in 1917. There may now, a generation later, be none left talking *Yö*! The *M'loa* had lost nearly half of their *Kui*-speaking numbers, while the *M'ai* were down to two-fifths of the original number speaking their old tongue. The *Kui Höt* had lost three-fifths of the already small number who spoke *Kui*. By the way, *Höt* is really a nickname--the word meaning asthma--and these *Kui* really speak in an asthmatic manner. Whether they were *Kui M'lo*, *M'loa*, *M'ai* or *Yö* we were not able to find out. Say that, as late as 1919, there were still 118,000--odd *Kui* speaking their ancestral tongue how many would there be left now (30 years later) who can speak their old

language? Considerably fewer, no doubt. Of the 179,000 "*Soai*" the greater number were speaking *Lão* (146,000-odd) and only about 33,000 had adopted *Khmer* as their new language. The gain from the *Kui* since then will surely be in favour of the Thai language. The *Khmer*, unlike their *Kui* cousins, do not give up their proper language. It would certainly be interesting from the purely scientific point of view if an up-to-date linguistic census could be taken now before it becomes too late.

In the year 1947 the Kingdom of Siam had a population of 17 million. (Experts think that the true figure comes nearer to the 18 million mark.) Of this number, 6.3 million lived in the four former *monthon* or circles of Northeast Siam. As far as we have been able to analyze this figure, as regards ethnic origins, the result should be as follows:

Monthon Nakhon Rajasima	1,276,000 Thai	80,000 <i>Môn-Khmer</i>
Udon	1,772,000 "	60,000 "
Roi-Et	1,264,000 "	40,000 "
Ubon	1,068,000 "	740,000 "

or a total of 5,380,000 Thai and 920,000 *Môn-Khmer*. In the first figure are included the numerous Annamite and Chinese immigrants whose exact numbers are unknown to us. With regard to the Thai of Nakhon Rajasima (besides the *Lão Vieng*) these people were formerly classified as *Lão Klang* (Middle *Lão*) though they are *not* *Lão* at all. As a matter of fact the *Thai Khorat* are former *Khmer* who long ago changed their original language for that of Thai of the central provinces though their speech is still dialectical as regards intonation and certain mannerisms. Estimating their numbers roughly at three quarters of a million one may say without exaggeration that at least one and a half million of the inhabitants of Northeast Siam are of Austro-Asiatic origin. The number conscious of being so, or speaking their original tongue, is, as will have been seen from the foregoing, considerably smaller.

Although this paper intended only to treat of the *Kui* people a little information as to the numbers of the other *Mon-Khmer* elements in Northeast Siam may be found useful. In 1917

the *Khmer* in the former circle of Ubon numbered 115,800; today, a little more than 30 years later, their number would be double that. In 1917 there were about 40-45,000 *Khmer* in the former circle of Nakhon Rajasima; today there would not be less than 80-85,000. In the same year there were about 11-12,000 *Khmer* and *S<sup>4</sup>* in Roi-Et; their number today would be, say, 24,000 (to about 16,000 *Kui*). Finally in the former circle of Udorn there were in 1915 some 30,000 *Khalong*, *Sô*, *Soui*, *Saek* and *Khamut* (*Phu Thung*); their actual number would today not be less than about 60,000. But--do they all speak their original tongue? We should say: far from it. They are fast becoming Thai in language and culture.

*Sorgenfri, Denmark*

*6th October 1948.*



