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 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 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 (Lào) or Khmer, a process which has been going on for a long time, and which eventually may result in the disappearance of their ancient Mon-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 Pеаrr, populations primitives de l’ouest du Cambodge” should prove useful to an understanding of the material and spiritual conditions of the Kui as these and the Samré or Pòrr (Pеаrr) are ethnically, as well as linguistically, identical people.

1 Recherches préhistoriques dans la région de Mlu prei par Paul Lévy, published by the Ecole 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 Soui (§ou) i.e., those liable to pay taxes.

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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 Stüng 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 Stüng 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, Northeast 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 Muu Prei is a poor country which has been made poorer still by man's wholesale destruction of the forests. Only thin forêt clairière (our khôk 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 Cambodia (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 Stung 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.
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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 Chiengmai 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 Lao 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 re-utilized 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 iron smiths (vastly superior to our primitive Lao 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 K'ui 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 Làoś and Cambodia; Sweden and China and Làoś; 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 Müang Puan—Upper Làoś), 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 Heine-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 khlu) 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 Khâ 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 khâ.

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 Kalât 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 Hän Yai and Nong Hän Lek, respectively, in Northeast Siam,
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chungrat Udorn and Sakôn 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 Sakôn 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 Gomorrah 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 Dùn Khwot Thot (formerly Phan Chana) lying to the northwest of the town of Korat, we saw the Thai girls there carrying their water pails, called khleh mon, on their heads, the pails resting on circular cushions. The custom was said to have been adopted from the Chao Bôn 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 Pöarr 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 Làoos, 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 Làoos 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 Chom Ksan and Phra Vihar are, according to M. Lévy's modern map, the Kui N'tra, Kui Damrei and Kui Ó and again Kui Damrei and Kui N'ur (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'ur seem to be identical with their M'ni and M'lor, while the doctors' Kui Hah or Dek, Ntoh, Auk and Autor should be the same as M. Lévy's Kui Ó 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 Pénarv 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 Eurasian 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'ira and Ob 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 (Lao Viengchan or Lao Kao) 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 Mun river. They are found in all the ampho (districts) south of the river perhaps with the exception of that of Phimun Mangsahan. On the northern side of the Mun 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 Lao or Thai.

The principal area in which the Kui live is to the north bordered by the Mun, to the southeast and south by the mountain range of Dong Rek, and to the west, partly by the Lam Chi and the changvat of Buriram, partly by the Khmer-peopled ampho 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 ampho Det Udom southwestward into the territory of ampho Sangkhà, 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 yâng), mai takien (excellent for boat building), mai bak and mai bok, 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 amphô Sangkhâ take the form of a real forest. The dwarf palm, ton krucheng, 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 Mûn River—is intersected by a number of smaller watercourses which are all born on the Dong Rek, run northward and flow into the Mûn. These streams, taken in order of succession from east to west, are as follows: Dôm Noi, Dôm Yai, Krayung (the sources of the latter being at the very foot of the stupendous Phra Vihar temple), Samrân (near whose confluence lies the town of Srisaket) Taptan and Chî, the last one being the border of the provinces of Surin and Buîrâm. There are also some Kui living to the north of the Mûn river; they are thus fairly numerous in the two amphô of Khemarat and Suvarnavari, mostly living near the Mekhong river, between this majestic stream and the low jungle-clad mountain range of Phu Phân. 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 Mûn's large northern tributary, Lam Chî or Si. The Kui live here in the following amphô, taken from east to west: Kantram, Kham Khûan Kaeo (both east of the Chî), 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. *Sambar*, eld deer and the barking deer were plentiful, and wild buffaloes were living near the hills in the Kantraraks 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 *sambar* or eld deer. That curious little animal, the flying squirrel (*too 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 parrots. The *Kui* people are called *Soai* (.sorted) by the Thai, but they call themselves *Kui* (men). There are pure *Soai*, Lao *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 (.*mumu*) purposes into Lao, Khmer and Soai (Kui). Today, or rather already more than forty years ago, the name Lao-Soai and Khmer Soai have come to signify *Kui* who have changed their mother tongue for either that of Lao (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 Ban 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 Mīn River, which we have spoken of as the country of the Kui, is far from being uniformly occupied by this people. In all the amphô (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 Lào 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 Weddian-Indonesian (Europoid) blood component, while a heavy build and square shoulders means the Austro-Asiatic Mon-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 Lào 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 Lào or Khmer but the women all wear short (kneelength) phâ-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 Lào. 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,
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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 Lao 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. Talmi 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 newborn 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 amphi (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 amphi 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 Phän 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 Lao. 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 amphi were Thai or Lao Kao in the central part, and Phu thai in the northern part, where also lived a small colony of Khao Brao and Khao Louae 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 amphi Suvarnāvāri 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 Lao 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 Lao Vieng were also living here. They seemed superior to the ordinary Lao, several of their young girls being very handsome. The Kui call this amphi Khong 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 *taphāp nām*, 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 *Kuí*, probably all of them *M'ai*. There were also living some 800 *Lāo Soaī*, former *M'ai*, in this district and on the small strip of land south of the mouth of river Mūn there was a colony of *Khū Hinhāo* who had crossed over from the French side of Mekhong.

We will now ourselves cross over the Mūn river to the amphō of Phimūn Mangsahān. Though at present peopled by numerous *Lāo Kāo* there can be no doubt that it really is old *Kuí* territory, the present Thai inhabitants having dispossessed the former *Kuí* owners, and as a matter of fact there were still over 2,300 *Lāo Soaī*, former *Kuí M'ai*, living there. To the west of this amphō lies that of Warinchamrap, just opposite the large, prosperous town of Ubonrajadhāni, capital of the former circle of the same name (the town lies on the northern bank of the Mūn river). The terminus of the Bangkok-Ubon railway line is in Warinchamrap. In 1917 the population of this amphō was made up of *Lāo Kāo* and Phūthai, besides 11,400 *Lāo Soaī*, former *Kuí M'ai*, and 2,300 pure *Kuí M'ai*, still speaking their mother tongue. The *Kuí* 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 Sū of *changvat* Kalasin, Sakol Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom, is also held by the *Kuí* here. Along the cart track leading from Warin to Khukhan, lies a group of large villages: Bān Khilek, Nā Nōn, Nā Suang, etc., inhabited by the so-called *Lāo Soaī* who speak a peculiar singing kind of Lāo. The whole territory of Warinchamrap, I was told, was formerly *Kuí 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 salâ (rest house).

To the south and southeast of *amphô* Warin Chamrap is the extensive *amphô* of Det Udom which includes the sub-*amphô* of Bân Boa Buntharik, the territory of the latter extending right down to the Dong Rek range. *Amphô* 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 Kûi call villages, making much havoc. The whole district is moreover considered very unhealthful and fever-ridden. Its population consisted in 1917, besides Lâo and Phuthai, of some 6,700 Lâo Souai, former Kûi M'ai and Yô and 3,800 pure Kûi M'ai. Some of the Kûi M'ai lived to the northeast of the *amphô* headquarters right on the border of *amphô* Phimûn in Bân Nôn Khâm and also Bân Sôm Sa-at to the southwest; to the south the Kûi M'ai are mixed with the Phuthai settlers of Bân Buntharik, and a lot of intermarriage between these two groups has taken place. The Kûi 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 Mûô.

The *amphô* of Kantraraks (formerly Uthumphornphisai and more recently called Nam Om) 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 Kûi Mûô, 850 Kûi Kantoa and 1,000 Lâo Viengchan colonists, the latter living in a large well-built village surrounded by a broad natural moat, whence comes the name, Nam Om. The Kûi 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 foot 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 ampʰò Kantraraks, lying between the ampʰò of Warinchemarap and Srisaket, is the ampʰò of Kantrarom which has territory on both sides of the Mâu 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 ampʰò Kantraraks. There used 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 Hôt and 1,120 Yô, besides 7,600 Lao Soai, former Kui M'lo, Yô and Hôt; the Thai element numbered some 5,300 persons, Lao Kûo 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 Dôm, 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.4

4 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 amphô of Srisaket is the head district of the changevat 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 amphô of Srisaket was formerly all Kui. Even today, when all the inhabitants speak Thai or Lao (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 Lao 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 Lao Soai, former Yö and M'lo, with a sprinkling of Khmer who now all speak the Lao Kân dialect, furthermore 5,850 Kui M'lo, 110 M'ai and 300 Khmer. To the east of mông Srisaket, in Bân Phônsai and Đôn there lived Kui Yö mixed with Phuthai settlers. Bân Nôn Kwaő and four more villages were also said to be Kui Yö, though some thought the villagers were rather Thai Yuaï come down from the north (amphô Akât Amnuey in changevat Nakhon Phanom is peopled by Thai Yuaï). The large old fortified village called Bân Lamduan Yai, south of mông Srisaket, on the road to Khukhan, is inhabited by Lao Soai, former Kui M'lo, though we suppose them rather to be former Yö as they possess the old Yö tradition about which more anon. Another Lao 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 Lao, 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 amphô of mông 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 Lao Vieng settlers and 17,800 Kui, divided in 12,450 M'lo, 2,250 M'ai, 1,240 Y'o and 470 P'orr, besides 1,400 Lao 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 Ban Damyae and Boa Ralum from which came the leader of the fanatical Phu-mi-bun uprising in 1903. A much smaller and less dangerous movement broke out in ampho Kantraraks 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 Kh or Mol 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 ampho of Rasrisalai, sometimes called mœang Không, after a large, old fortified place (now deserted) lies to the northwest of Srisaket, on the northern bank of the river Mūn. 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 Y'o and 23,000 Lao Soai (formerly Y'o) who had changed their language to that of Lao Kào, but even the "pure" Y'o were 30 years ago quickly forgetting their ancestral tongue, and now, in 1948, there are probably none left speaking the Khi Y'o language. We remember that already in 1913 the so-called pure Y'o could often only remember a few hundred words of their proper language and were unable to count to more than ten in Y'o.

The Kui Y'o of Rasrisalai and elsewhere have a curious tradition (also known in Bān 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 Y'o 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 O and N'ira at Miu 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 Bôn 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 Lào, 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 Lào culture does mean a considerable gain from the material point of view. In 1917 the pure Thai elements in this amphô were only about 2,200 Lào Kio, 300 Thai Khoral, and a thousand Phithhai settlers. That the Yö language was formerly spoken further north is proved by the existence of the Lào Sout in the amphô of Mahā Chanachai, which lies to the northeast of Rasrisalai on the western bank of Lam Chũ, and also
amphō Kham Khün Kao, lying to the northeast of the latter and on the eastern bank of Lão Chí. In the Maha Chamachai district there were in 1917 some 1800 Lão Soai to 30,000 Lão Kao, while in the Kham Khün Kao district there were 37,500 Lão Kao to 900 Lão Soai, who lived in its southwestern part. These Lão Soai were all former Kui Yō.

Amphō Uthumphonphaisal (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 Lão Soai with 38,380 former Kui Yō, M'kö and M'lan; 3 were pure Kui, 2 were Khmer Soai, and 2 were Khmer mixed with Lão and Phu-thai. The Khmer Soai were former Kui M'lan; the pure Kui were divided into 5,780 M'lan, 2,090 M'kö, 1,720 Kandran, 900 M'ai and only 100 Yō. Thai people included 1,450 Phu-thai and 1,200 Lão Vien. 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 Sar 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 Lão girls all use the krâuk krâdiâng, 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 Lão they adopt their manner of threshing the paddy also, whereas if they become Khmer they stick to the accustomed one. As the Soai of Uthumphonphisai 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 Ubond to Bangkok passes right through the center of this amphô.

Amphô Ratanaburi is situated to the northwest of Uthumphornphisai, having for its northern border the river of Mûn. 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 Lão Soai, former Kui M’lo, 2,440 Kui M’lô, 130 Khmer Soai, also former M’tô 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 Lão, the girls often being fair-complexioned and very handsome. Facing the district of Ratanaburi, to the north of the Mûn, lies the extensive Suvarnaphum plain, partly included in the amphô of the same name (changvat Roi-Êi). In 1918 the population consisted of 44,000 Lão Vieng, 150 Lão Soai, former Kui Yô, 540 Yô and 400 Khmer. The Yô may by now have become quite assimilated by the large Thai population.

To the south of amphô Ratanaburi is the amphô of Sikharaphum with its civil headquarters at Băn 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’lôa, 4,300 Kui M’lô, 5,900 Lão Soai, former M’lôa, 4,300 Khmer Soai, former M’tô and 3,200 Lão Vieng, the latter being newcomers; there were also 3,900 Khmer. The Kui M’tô (some say they really are M’nai) living in the large prosperous village of Băn 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'lon tambon at Bān Prasat is situated the fine old Khmer sanctuary, called Prasat Rngai, with its five towers, one of the best preserved Khmer monuments in Siam.

Amphō Suraphinikhom lies to the northwest of amphō Ratanaburi and north of amphō Sikharaphum and amphō Surin. Its territory is partly covered by forest, the extensive and high-lying Khōk, the western part of which grows on the tall clay-ish ridge on the bank of the broad Mūn river plain, called Phu Din and Phu Dong Salā. The population numbered in 1917 some 45,000 individuals, mostly Mōn-Khmer people. The figures given were 11,200 Kui M'lō, 1,560 Kui M'ai, 12,600 Khmer Soai, 8,250 Lào Soai and 1,500 Khmer. The Thai elements included 8,250 Lào Kao, 420 Lào Vieng and 400 Thai Korat. The Khmer live in the three Mūn river villages Bān Dom, Bān Dai and Bān Prasat where the amphō 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 amphō. Quite a lot of them are bold and successful elephant hunters, for instance those in Bān Chōm Phāra, and especially their Kui M'ai or Kui Eng brethren from the three large palisaded villages, Bān Taklāng, Chanda 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 Kanhōng 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 *lam buns* (merit-making ceremonies) to be held in the temples, gifts to be presented to monks, and their own *gatie* 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 Bān Kachau to the *wat* or temple in Bān Tako with several young *nak bual*—candidates for entry into the Buddhist priesthood. At Bān Dong Krapō 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 *sin labu chuo bān* 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 *thepharāks* (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 Lào 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 Weddhahs? (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
THE KUI PEOPLE OF CAMBODIA AND SIAM

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. 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.

Amphô Chumphonburi lies on the northern bank of the Mûn river, to the west of Suraphinîkâm. 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 Mûn. Many of these hillocks were fortified places in olden days. In 1917 there were living in this district about 13,000 Khmer Sôai, former Kui M'tô. as were also the 1,900 Lôî Sôai, some 400 Thai Khorat and about 6,000 Lôî Kào. 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 Rajasîma, Ubon and Roi-Eti) 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 Sôai 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 Sôai (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.

Amphô Phakhaphumphhisai is the most southwestern of the amphô of changvat Roi-Èt. It is a country of rolling plains with low ridges and numerous hillocks, generally but sparsely wooded. It borders to the south on amphô Chumphonburi and to the west on Phutthaisong, changvat Buriram. Its population in 1917 consisted of 2,000 Kui M'tô, 1,100 Kui Yû, 400 Lôô Sôai, former M'tô. There were 1,350 Khmer and many Thai; viz: 14,500 Lôî Kào and 1,350 Thai Khorat. This population had formerly a very bad name as cattle thieves, gamblers and vagabonds. The amphô

headquarters lie inside a large old fortified place with tall ramparts and broad water-filled moats. *Moang Sua* 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 Mlō*, besides 5,700 *Khmer* and numerous Thai population; in the *amphō* of Kasetvisai (also in *changvat* Roi-Ét) there were no *Kui* left but still some 1,150 *Khmer*.

From this northern excursion we will go south to the *amphō* of Surin, which is westernmost of the *amphō* 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. *Moang* 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 Battambong 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.

*Amphō* Sangkhā is the last *Kui*-peopled district to be treated. It is situated to the south of *amphō* Surin and Sikharpum and thus west of Khokhan; its western border adjoins the territory of *amphō* 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 Dueng ridge ends in this *amphō* too in a broad sandy pine-wooded spur. In 1917 the wild elephants used to frequent the Sangkhā district, and their deep foot prints often made riding and walking difficult along the cart tracks. *Amphō* Sangkhā 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'ñò. 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 Chăm. We suppose they were simply Kui Pōrr. It may be added that the Khmer living along the frontier, the so-called Khmer Dong or Khmer Pà are in general not culturally superior to the Kui at all. The Kui M'ñò girls of Sangkhā 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 Souri of amphùò Mukdahān, changvut Nakhon Phanom. These people are in reality a mixture of Phuthrai and Sō, and are thus distinct from our Kui or Souri of the former circles of Ubon and Roi-Èt though the Sō also belong to the Môn Khmer group. We regret never having had the opportunity of visiting the Souri 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,6 man (i.e. homo sapiens) most probably

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 Pekinesis were drifts from the west. The earliest drifts from the west (after these pre-men) were the Negritos (who wandered as far as Southeast Asia and New Guinea); the Proto-Australians and the Weddas. 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 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. Pekinesis) came the Negritos, followed by the Proto-Australians, next the Weddi 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 Insulindie 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, Weddi, 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 Khû or Mol 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 Khâ or Môi tribes in French Indochina and of the Kui, the Chao Bôn, or Nîu Knoll, the Lawû 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 Mekong 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-Êt 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 Phâ Tong Luang or Yambri. 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 Lào king, Phra Chao Fa Ngâm (1353-1373), who enlarged the kingdom of Lán 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 Negritoens' 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 Patâlung 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 Êe that covers large tracts of Northeastern Ubon and Roi-Êt. These people
are called *Bui Dauy* (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 *amphó* of Roi-Ét and Ubon we arrive at the following numbers for the *Kui* population some thirty years ago.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kui M'lo</td>
<td>72,000</td>
<td>Soai (Lao &amp; Khmer)</td>
<td>82,900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kui Yö</td>
<td>6,800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui M'loa</td>
<td>23,620</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui M'ài &amp; Eng</td>
<td>11,170</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui Hôt</td>
<td>1,630</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui Kandran</td>
<td>1,720</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui Kanton</td>
<td>880</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui Förr</td>
<td>470</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui Mann</td>
<td>370</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kui Bai</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL KUI</strong></td>
<td><strong>118,760</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL SOAI</strong></td>
<td><strong>179,030</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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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 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 numbers speaking their old tongue. The *Kui Hôt* had lost three-fifths of the already small number who spoke *Kui*. By the way, *Hôt* 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 would there be left now (30 years later) who can speak the
language? Considerably fewer, no doubt. Of the 179,000 "Soui" the greater number were speaking Lao (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 thing that the true figure comes nearer to the 18 million mark.) Of this number, 6.3 million lived in the four former Monthion 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montthon Nakhon Rajasima</td>
<td>1,276,000 Thai 80,000 Mon-Khmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udorn</td>
<td>1,772,000 &quot; 60,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roi-Et</td>
<td>1,264,000 &quot; 40,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubon</td>
<td>1,068,000 &quot; 740,000 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or a total of 5,380,000 Thai and 920,000 Mon-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 Lao Vieng) these people were formerly classified as Lao Klang (Middle Lao) though they are not Lao 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 Sô 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 Khâlông, Sô, Sonî, Suk and Khamu (Phu Thûng); 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.