

## **City Life Adaptation of Meuy People Living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R., in Response to Globalization**

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**Abstract:** This dissertation is about city life adaptation of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R., in response to Globalization. This study was done by using a qualitative research method study of Meuy people living in Vientiane City. My purpose consists of 3 parts: study of the history of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R., in response to globalization. Study of the current situation of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R. study of city life adaptation of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R., in response to globalization Laos is a country with 49 ethnic groups in 4 language speaking groups. Viengchan is the capital of Laos and gateway to Thailand. After a period of relative isolation, Laos is now preparing for ASEAN membership and the population is exposed to global culture. Before, the Meuy used natural resources from their living areas near rivers for non durable housing, weaving and food gathering. They also raised livestock and grew crop using slash and burn techniques. They had animistic (spirit) beliefs and did not have temples. Living conditions and habits changed. Today, the residency of Meuy people consists mainly of modern style Lao building. Old traditional Meuy style buildings are few. Meuy clothing is standard Lao style. Cross tribal/cultural marriage is accepted. Spoken Meuy language is often mixed with Lao vocabulary. Storytelling is focused on Buddhism. The adaptation of Meuy housing has changed and modern materials are being used, instead of traditional materials like wood. Some have changed the spirit room, called “Hong Hon”, to Buddhist imagery and call themselves “Tham people”, others still respect ancestral spirits, the “Phijare” and call themselves “spirit people”. Building the house doesn’t focus on faith. The Meuy have adapted to Lao and International style clothing and accept clothing that indicates class and social position in Lao society. The women preserve and remake Meuy traditional clothing and present them on special occasions in the village or at Meuy group festivals. Wedding ritual format has changed, it is shorter, and in Lao standard style but traditional parts like “Kob Pe Huan” and “Somma” are still important to them. Interdependence has changed from the whole Meuy community to family members or close relatives. They follow Lao law. Norms and values in the Meuy community are taught by the monks and focused on Buddhism. Knowledge of the Meuy language is dissipating in the generations.

**Key words:** Meuy people, adaptation, globalization, residency, wedding customs, language and story telling

### **INTRODUCTION**

**History of ethnicity in Laos:** In Lao PDR there are many different ethnic tribes located from the high north up all the way to the south, which makes Laos an ethnically diverse country. All of them have their own specific economic, social and cultural identity (Laos National Academy Social Sciences Institute, 2009). There are many organizations that have tried to explore, identify, classify and register tribal groups in Laos. In 1973, the government of the Kingdom of Laos (Vientiane Department) identified

a number of tribal groups in Laos, classifying 58 tribal groups, divided in 3 language families. There are 35 ethnic groups speaking Austro Asiatic, 12 speaking Tai Kadai and 11 ethnic groups speaking Shino-Tibetan or Chinese-Tibetan and Miao-Yao/Yao. After the revolution, the new government of Laos (Revolutionary Party) divided ethnic groups in Laos into three groups based on geography. To create unity in the state of Laos, it was decided to use the prefix “Lao” and so the three groups were named “LaoLum”, “Lao theng” and “Lao Sung” (Champa, 2005). In 1980 Le Cu Nam collected detailed information on the

number and names of the tribes in Laos. He found a total of 820 ethnic tribes (This number is very high because he counted all the subgroups which all have different tribe names). By using this data and organizing tribes with similar characteristics into groups, Lao National Frontier finally classified 68 different tribes. (Joachim, 2003). In 2000, National Lao Frontier held a meeting about the ethnic groups in Laos. This meeting agreed to distinguish 49 different tribes, using four family languages (Laos National Academy Social Sciences Institute, 2009). Lao-Tai language family, holding 8 tribes: Lao, PhouTai, Sheng, Tai (Tai Dam, Tai Deang, Tai Kao, Tai Meuy) Yuan, Yang, Tai Neu and Tai Lue 2. Mon-Khmer language family, holding 32 tribes: Kmu, Katank, Katu, Kreng, Kri, Kamre, Ghuan, Jeng, Samtao, Sadang, Sheou, Singmoon, Yaheoun, Taouy, Treang, Tri, Tum, Thanthen, Bith, Brow, Pako, Prie, Phong, Mahkong, Moiu, Yrou, Yair, Ramad, Lavi, Ouy, Eadou, Harak.3. Shines-Tibetan language family, holding 7 tribes: Singsiri, Shila, Lahou, Lolo, Ho, Akha, Hayi.4. Hmong-EayuMien language family, holding 2 tribes: the Hmong and Mien's/Lu Mien/Yao.

**History of the Meuy:** The Tai Meuy or Meuy are a minority group living in Laos and belonging to the Tai-Lao group language family, that also includes Tai Dam, Tai Deang, Tai Kao (Fred, 2001; Evans, 2001). There are seven main Meui families: the clan Cha, The Clan Cheewa, the clan Elwa, The clan Shanwa, the clan Katipnoi, the clan Dawa and The Clan Anni. The word Meuy is used as a prefix to name the clans, so the clan Cha is called Meuy Cha. The Clan Cheewa is called the Meuy Cheewa and so on (Sourri, 2010) Meuy original culture, rituals and beliefs are similar to other tribes belonging to the Tai-Lao group, including craftsmanship like making farming and gardening tools, use of animals like horses and buffaloes for farming and transport, structure of the house, food and drink, smoking, clothes. They believe in ancestral and animistic spirits.

Tai Meuy has expertise in using plants, trees and herbs for medicinal use and mixing herbs to prepare medicine. This knowledge is transferred to the younger generations by demonstration and oral tradition. Meuy medicine has four categories: using tree bark, using roots, using wood from trees and using tubers. Herbal medicine is prepared in many different ways: by boiling, steaming, fuming, grinding (to mix with water and drink as a potion) and by making infusions (for bathing). Ethnic groups including Thai Meuy living in the Bolikhamxai, Khammouane, Xiang Khouang and Houaphan area are living from nature, by farming, gardening, holding and hunting animals, slash and burn agriculture to provide

food and using mulberry trees, silkworm, cotton and indigo blue for weaving (Laurent, 2002). Building is not durable because they have to move around because of slash and burn. Tai Meuy ancestors migrated from China, then settled as a village or a large community spread in the north of Vietnam. The Meuy then migrated from the Vietnamese area around Theng city together with the Tai Dam, Tai Deang and Tai Kao. The Meuy moved to the area close to the Lao border with Houaphan and Xieng Khouang and some migrated further into Laos to the Bolikhamxai area, using the downstream river flows as a means of transport, staying close to the Vietnamese-Lao border. The lowland area along the river was plentiful and fertile, so they settled there and more followed. For several reasons, Meuy migrated deeper into Bolikhamxai, searching to escape the hostilities from the war between North and South Vietnam and looking for better natural resources and infrastructure (roads, electricity). They finally relocated is in Vientiane City. Meuy that had migrated to Viengchan (James, 2005) used modern means of communication to exchange information about better living conditions in the city to those who stayed behind, and so more Meuy migrated to Viengchan.

**Objective and motivation:** The process of adaptation of the Meuy in the three villages Phontong, Paksapmai and Baan Thaxang, where today Meuy people have adapted to a new life style, is very interesting. They use consumer goods from the shopping malls, restaurants, markets; every village has a Buddhist temple. Modern style building using materials like concrete and brick has replaced traditional-style building. The younger generation has very limited knowledge of the Meuy culture, traditions, language and religion. For the Meuy, life conditions have improved with better housing, access to knowledge and modern technologies. But cultural identity is dissipating. Customs, beliefs and knowledge should be registered before they are gone forever. By registering and analyzing the effects of globalization on the Meuy I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the process and leave a recording for future generations of an unique way of life. Loss of cultural identity is material and non-material. Because of that, I have focused my studies on 4 aspects of Meuy culture material aspects: residency costumes and the non-material aspects: wedding customs and rituals language and story telling. My objective and motivation for doing this research is analyzing the changes in the social and cultural life of these three villages from past to present, and the effect of globalization to social systems and lifestyle of the Meuy people (non-material and material).

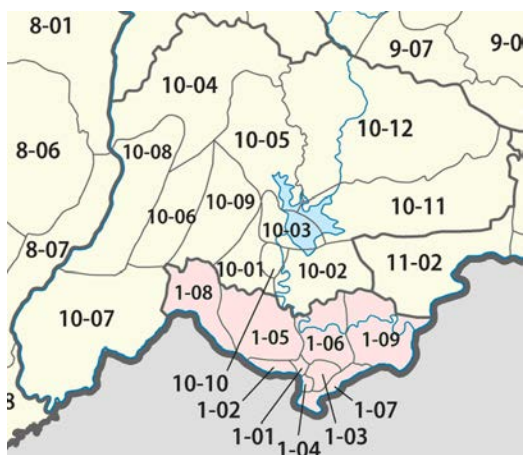


Fig. 1: Geographical area of the research ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vientiane\\_Prefecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vientiane_Prefecture), 25-6-2016)

**Geographical area of the research:** In this article, when referring to ‘Vientiane City’, this includes the whole area of the Viengchan prefecture which consists of 9 districts of urban and rural areas. Research data has been collected in the districts 1.3 (Raythany) and 1.9 (Pakngum) (Fig. 1).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used qualitative research methods to collect data and interview the Meuy group people, who live in the three villages of Baan Thaxang in the Pakghum District and Baan Phontong and Baan PaksapMai in the Xaythany District, using participant observation, non-participant observation, structured interviews and non-structured interviews, using purposive sampling in 24 key informants, 45 casual informants and 10 general informants. Also, data was collected from governmental institutes, NGOs and from academic research. The study compares the culture and living conditions of the Meuy that are living in Vientiane with culture and living conditions of Meuy communities in other locations, before migration. Adaptation processes that have been researched: material aspects: residency costumes non-material aspects: wedding customs and rituals language and storytelling Registering and analyzing effects of globalization on the Meuy customs, beliefs and knowledge contribute to a better understanding of the adaptation process and leaves a recording for future generations of an unique way of life.

My study purpose consists of 3 parts: study of the history of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R. Study of the current situation of Meuy people

living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R. Study of city life adaptation of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R., in response to globalization.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### History of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R:

The research found that Meuy people now living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R. originate from the South of China then migrated to the North of Vietnam and from there to the North of Laos. Their final migrating point is Vientiane City. They moved in groups at different intervals. In the years from 1970-1972, the Meuy were relocated by the old Lao government, using US airplanes to bring them to Vientiane. The USA not only carried the Meuy out of the Bolikhamxay Province to an empty area in Viengchan but also supported them with food and rice. The migrated group consisted of children, women and the elderly. This group moved to the safety to Vientiane but the men were conscripted for the war. For example: Mrs. Van, a widow from BaanPaksapmai. She and her children moved from Bolikhamxay to Viengchan by US airplanes, but her husband was conscripted in the army and later he died.

In the years from 1973-1975, complete families migrated from the war zones to escape the hostilities between the “Lao hag shad” and the old government supported by the US and ensure that they could survive the war, without knowing where it was safe. It was very difficult to live in the jungle and they were forced to hide in the daytime and travel by night. Also at times there was heavy bombing and there were outbreaks of malaria, there were many deaths while travelling, for example: Mrs. Eld from Baan Phonetong, she is an orphan, her parents both died when she was 4 years old (Her father died from a bomb attack, her mother from malaria during the time the family was moving away from the war in Bolikhamxay).

In the years from 1980-1990, small groups followed their relatives, who had a better life in Vientiane City, to escape bad living conditions, hunger, poverty and lack of electricity and water supply. When they moved to Viengchan they did not get support from the Lao government like those that came before them. Some had relatives who shared their land with them. Sometimes their relatives sold their land to the newcomers, and moved further away from Viengchan themselves to procure new land. In the years from 1991-2009, there are still a few families who migrate to Vientiane, on the other hand some do not succeed in building a life in the city, so they return to the town where they came from. Time line of the three villages of my case study that moved to Vientiane Table 1-3.

Table 1: Population of Baan Thaxang and the Pakghum District, migrated between 1972 and 2009

Name people and/or group	Originally from	With group	Year moved
Mr. Thongtip 88 year (Meuy)	Khamkert Bolikhamxai	Family and relatives	1972
Mr. XiengMun 84 year old (Meuy)	Pakading Bolikhamxai	Family and relatives	1972
Mr. Kham 78 year old (Meuy)	Pakadin Bolikhamxai	Family and relatives	1972
Mrs. Gnean 78 year old (Meuy)	Khamkert Bolikhamxai	Family	1974
Tai Poun group people	Xienglai Viengchan	10 families	2000
Tai Poun group people	Xiengkouang	7 families	2000
Mrs Mai 65 years old (Meuy)	Khamkert Bolikhamxai	Family	2009

Table 2: Baanphonthon Xaythany District migrated between 1970 and 2000

Name people and/or group	Originally from	With group	Year moved
Tai Poun group people	Dam reservoir Viengchan	120 families	1970
Meuy group people	Venkham	?	1971
Mr. Xieng Lai (Meuy)	Khammouan Bolikhamxai	120 families	1973
Mrs. Bouason and Mrs Eld (Meuy)	Khamkert	Family and relatives	1978
Mr. Kham Sing Nuntavong (Meuy)	Paksan	Family	1996
Mr. Don Lovanxay (Meuy)	Viengchan	Family	2000

Table 3: BaanPaksapmai Xaythany District migrated between 1970 and 1988 (only Meuy)

Name people and/or group	Originally from	With group	Year moved
Ms. Van 88 year old (Meuy)	Khamkert Bolikhamxai	Family and relatives	1970
Mr. InTha 58 year old	Pakading Bolikhamxai	Family and relatives	1972
Mrs. Nang 74 year old	Pakadin Bolikhamxai	Family and relatives	1973
Mrs. Nang 74 year old ( second time )	Khamkert Bolikhamxai	Family	1984
Tai Poun group	Agriculture group	?	1988

**Current situation of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R:**

Today in Vientiane City there are 7 villages with Meuy communities: Baan Phonthong Baan Thadok Kham Baan Paksapmai Baan SenUdom Baan Hatvieng Kham Baan Somsamai Xaythany District and Baan Tha Xang Pakghum District. Before the migration, the Meuy did not mix with other ethnic groups but at present, in the seven tribal villages there is a mix of different ethnic groups, the percentage of Meuy varies in each village. There are a total of 996 families and 6311 Meuy people, male 2,891 and female 3,420 people. In the villages in my case study, there are 458 families, a total of 2,738 people, Meuy and other ethnicities together.

**Baan thaxang:** In Thaxang the Meuy and Tai Poun people live together. The head of village is Meuy. Thaxang is located near NamGnum village. It doesn't have a market, any stores, few facilities and bad infrastructure. Baan Thaxang is the only Meuy village in the Pakghum District of Vientiane City and is located on the border of Bolikhamxay and Vientiane City. Thaxang was still designed in the traditional Meuy way, using the Baan map drawn by a spirit man (called Mosud in the Meuy language): domestic dwellings in the middle, the temple in the North and the graveyard in the South. This village has 135 family houses; 115 Meuy family houses and 20 Tai Poun family houses, with the total population amounting to 848 people, of whom 421 are male and 427 are female. They believe ancestral spirits but don't have a communal place of worship for them, instead they worship the ancestral spirits at home. There is one Buddhist

temple in the town. The residency consists of many types and styles of Lao building. There is only one old traditional Meuy style house left which is in bad repair. Meuy clothing has adapted completely to the standard Lao style. In Baan Thaxang traditional clothing is being remade, using modern materials and techniques, for commercial purposes or demonstrations on special occasions. The people of village still are weaving textiles, but not for themselves, but for commercial purposes only. Production is based on patterns provided by traders and/or custom orders from clients. So, although there is still knowledge of pattern design among the elders, this knowledge is not transferred to the younger generation. It is difficult to gather data about story-telling and language because only the elderly, like the Mosud, and the monks can remember the old ways and often only partial. Baan Thaxang people marry before they live together. Cross tribal/cultural marriage is accepted. Marital customs follow Lao country law. The village uses 'Meuy Mophon' family naming: when a married couple gets its firstborn, from then on the name of the firstborn will be used to identify the parents. So, the family name in the official records from then on is different from the family name used in the Meuy community, for instance: the people call them by the first name of their son or daughter such as "Mei tou Don" while the official family name is Bounghayn. Figure 2 shows that these are remade clothes, shirt and skirt (called 'sin' in Lao) Copied from original Meuy clothes, using color and silk bought at the market.



Fig. 2: Baan Thoxang

**Baan Phontong:** The village of Baan Phontong is close to Viengchan centre and connecting roads are in good repair. This village has 106 family houses; 102 Meuy family houses and 4 Tai Poun family houses, with the total population amounting to 598 people, of whom 298 are male and 300 are female. The Meuy living here can actively communicate with other Meuy communities, using modern means of communication or by visiting each other. The head of village is Tai Poun. There are differences in language and culture but they can communicate by speaking Lao. In the vicinity of Baan Phontong there is a market and many restaurants, guesthouses and bars. People in Baan Phontong also believe in ancestral spirits but don't have a communal place of worship for them, instead they worship the ancestral spirits at home. There is one Buddhist temple in the town. It is not designed in the traditional Meuy way, using the Baan map drawn by a spirit man; instead the graveyard is shared, not only by the Tai Poun but with many neighboring villages consisting of Tai Dam and Mhong people. The residency consists of many types and styles of Lao building. Like in Baan Thaxang, there is only one old traditional Meuy style house left which is in bad repair. The Meuy clothing has adapted completely to the standard Lao style but they preserve the old Meuy clothes obtained from family members and wear it only on special occasions like on the Meuy New Year's party.

A few of the people in this village still are weaving textiles, but not for themselves but for commercial purposes only. Production is also based on patterns provided by traders and/or custom orders from clients. Knowledge about pattern design is not transferred to the younger generation. In this village, they remember more about tradition, language and storytelling but there is no more 'Mosud'. If one is needed, they have to bring him from the neighboring village Baan PhonGham. The Meuy language is only spoken in the Meuy community of the village when they are together and often mixed with Lao vocabulary. Baan Phontong people marry before they live together. Cross tribal/cultural marriage is accepted.



Fig. 3: Baan Phontong

Marital customs follow Lao country law. The village does not use 'Meuy Mophon' family naming anymore. Meuy traditional music, brought from the original Meuy villages, is sold at the market of Bolikhamxay Province for entertainment purposes only; they don't use it for traditional Meuy occasions and ceremonies anymore. Figure 3 represent this old style cloth from Baan Phonthon was handmade in the Bolikhamxay province, and was transferred from the mother to the daughter.

**Baan Pasapmai:** The village Paksapmai has a mixed population of Meuy and many other ethnicities; Lao Lum, Tai Pao, Tai Aer, Tai Kuan Tai Poun, Tai Man and Mong. Total population amounts to 1300 people, of which 644 are male and 656 are female. On a total of 222 family houses, 30 are Meuy. The mixed population makes Baan Paksapmai a very good example of how Meuy adapt to their new environment. The Meuy live together with other relatives in the same area, for example, Mr. Intha, around his house we find his elder brother's and younger sister's house as well as his son's and daughter's house. Is The village of Baan Paksabmai is also close to Viengchan centre and connecting roads to Viengchan and other villages in the vicinity are in good repair. Facilities include a market, restaurants, student apartments, guesthouses, bars, and there are good public services available. The faculty of Agriculture of the National University of Laos is located at Baan Paksapmai. Students receive lectures by teachers from different countries, not only from Laos but also for instance from France, Germany, India.

In Baan Paksapmai, the people believe ancestral spirits and have a communal house to worship them. There also are two Buddhist temples in Baan Paksabmai.



Fig. 4: Phijare in the Hong Hon of Mrs. Van Baan Pasapmai

Because many ethnic groups live together in Baan Paksabmai, the Meuy have adapted, they share the graveyard with the other groups, and the village design does not follow the Meuy tradition. Their residency consists of many types and styles of Lao building. There are only two old traditional Meuy style houses left which are in bad repair. All Meuy houses here still have a Hong Hon (spirit room) where the spirits of the ancestors live. In order to bring the ancestral spirits or Phijare to the Hon Hong, the ashes of the deceased need to be brought there, and a ceremony is performed. Then the people call themselves ‘Phi’. Those who do not bring the ashes and perform the ceremony and because of that have a Hon Hong without Phijare, call themselves ‘Tham’. Figure 4 shows the Phijare in the Hong Hon of Mrs. Van Baan Pasapmai

In Baan Pasapmai, Meuy clothing has adapted completely to the standard Lao style. Lao clothing has not been preserved but was sold by the elders to provide for family expenses. Agricultural tools that were used before were destroyed to make room for other things. Mrs Ohn told me: “5 years ago our family sold the farm and we became traders with a shop in the Paksapmai Market, so we burned all agricultural tools.” The Meuy language is only spoken in the Meuy community of the village when they are together and often mixed with Lao vocabulary. Baan Phontong people marry before they live together. Cross tribal/cultural marriage is accepted. Marital customs follow Lao country law. Baan Paksabmai is the only of the three villages where only family members and relatives are automatically invited to a wedding, the other guests receive a written invitation (In Baan Thaxang and Baan Phontong, all villagers are still invited to weddings).

### **Study of city life adaptation of Meuy people living in Vientiane City, Lao P.D.R., in response to globalization**

**Housing:** In my case study, I found that the residences in Meuy villages are of two types: the “original house”, built in traditional style, using materials from nature and the “modern house”, built from modern materials, using concrete, bricks and cement. The original houses were built when the Meuy moved to live in Viengchan but the original houses built in the year 1970-1972 are gone, the houses now called “original house” that remain ( which are only four in the villages of my case study) were built in the years 1973, 1978 and 2000. The original houses have the following basic layout, following faith and the position of the family members: they are mounted on poles, with stairs on the front, and a secondary stair that gives access to the kitchen which isn’t part of the house but is directly attached to it. At the front side of the house, there is a communal area called Kuang Non, in the back are the Hong Hon and the sleeping quarters. There are separate bedrooms for the parents, the unmarried children, and the married son, who lives next to the kitchen. Before, his wife, the daughter in law was only allowed to enter the house through the kitchen stairs and she still is forbidden to enter the Hong Hon. As mentioned earlier, The Meuy communities are divided in “Tham”, who have no Phijare and “Phi” who still have Phijare in their Hong Hon. Both groups now also use the Hong Hon for unmarried children to sleep in. There are two types of old style houses: with the “ Pern-huan” (where the people take a rest and eat) outside and the main stairs on the side, these houses are called “Huan Ton” and another type with the “ Pern-huan” inside and the main stairs in the front which are called “Huan Theb. The “Huan-Ton” has one big window, the “Huan Theb” has a few small ones and next to the Hong Hon. They are high platform houses on poles, made of wood mixed with bamboo, with a roof cover from corrugated metal or grass. The Kuang Non area is higher than “Pern-huan” area which in turn is higher than the kitchen area and water area which is called “Shan-Nam”, where families use water to cook and take a bath. To build these houses, the Meuy used materials they brought from Bolikhamxay or cut from the nature around the village without asking permission. The whole community helped with building a new ‘original house’ so that it was finished and ready to live in in one day (Fig. 5 and Table 4).

Meuy modern houses are built similar to the houses of their neighboring groups Lao Lum and Tai Poun. These houses were built by the younger generation. Some original houses were sold to city people, who would break them down and use the wooden parts for building and



Table 4: Similarities and differences between original houses in Vientiane City and Bolikhamxay Province

Original house in Vientiane City	Original house in Bolikhamxay Province
Wood house	Wood house and Bamboo house
Metal roof (Sangkasi)	Metal roof or grass (ghakha)
On poles	On poles
Kuan Non and kitchen are on a different level	Kuan Non and kitchen are on a different level
Kitchen is outside, no special stairs for the daughter in law	Kitchen is inside and there is a special stairs for the daughter in law
Handmade poles	Handmade poles
No restroom inside the house, there is an outhouse at the back or on the side of the house	No restroom inside the house, there is an outhouse at the back or on the side of the house
Has “Hong Hong”	Has “Hong Hong”
Stairs to the house are in the front or on the side (called “Kuie” or “Theab”)	Two stairs: main stairs to the house are in the front or on the side (called “Kuie” or “Theab”) and kitchen stairs
The area under the house is used for weaving, relaxing in the daytime and/or to store agricultural tools	The area under the house is used for weaving and processing rice (“Khok Tamkao”)



Fig. 5: Picture of Meuy modern house

decoration because the original houses were partly made of high quality wood such as Mai Du, Mai Deng and Man Pa. Modern style Meuy houses have either one floor or two floors and are made durable by using brick, cement and concrete and using tiles for the roof. Some houses



Fig. 6: Original house in Vientiane City

are built using a mix of wood and concrete, and all materials are bought from the market or store. The construction is done by workers, for fixed price, or by daily cash. Workers are hired from the village community, or from outside (Fig. 6). This group still respects the



Fig. 7: Buddhist imagery “Khanhana”

ancestral spirits, but they don't have the “Phijare”. The basic layout of the modern house is similar to that of the original house, but it is not focused on faith anymore, but still focused on the position of family members. This group focuses on Buddhist imagery and “Khanha”, a small altar with flowers and candles (Fig. 7).

The Hong Hon is still used for spirit ceremonies, but is also used for other purposes, such as storage, sleeping room for the children, or for meditation, and can be decorated with Buddhist imagery. The daughter in law, however is still not allowed to enter this room.

**Clothing:** In my case study I found that Meuy people have adapted to Lao and International style costumes and have accepted clothing that indicate class and social position in Lao society, original costumes were sold to traders for cash or traded for Lao skirt (Sin) of commercially and cheap design, available at markets. Mrs. Gneng 70 years: “After moving to live in Vientiane, I sold all my jewelry and traditional Meuy costumes to traders in exchange for cash or food. Later I gave away or sold all of my utensils for cooking, weaving, etc.” Mr. Kham 78 years old: “I feel disappointed that we sold all valuables to foreigners and traders who offered good prices. Some neighbors exchanged Meuy Sin to Lao Sin, one Meuy handmade Sin was traded for 5 Lao market Sin.”

Mr. Somenuk, 2557 from Thaxang village: “We don't have the original costumes for the men anymore but I would like my wife and daughter to wear our clothes but they refuse to do so because they feel embarrassed and shy when they look different from the neighbors and tried to hide and cover them when they went out of the village wearing them. Today in Baan Thaxang, villagers preserve traditional Meuy women costumes by emulating the old patterns, using modern machine-made textiles, or in Baan Phonthong they preserve the clothes they inherited from their parents. They use them to present on special occasions in the village or at Meuy group festivals as a means to preserve their own culture, exchange with each other and present them to outsiders.

Figure 8 represent the Meuy original Costume used for general and Fig. 9 Meuy original costume used for weddings.



Fig. 8: The Meuy original costume used for general



Fig. 9: Meuy original costume used for weddings

**Marriage rituals:** in my case study I found that before, Meuy people only married within their own group and depended on the services of a “Pholam”, somebody who had knowledge of the rituals and was selected by the parents of the groom. Now wedding rituals have changed format, by shortening parts like the “HaiKeu” (bring the man to the woman's house) the “HaiPhai” (bring the woman to the man's house) “Somma”, (the married couple gives presents to both parents) and “Kuan Houa” (the couple have to go back to the woman's parental house after the woman has stayed in the man's house for



3 days). Responsible for the ceremony are the head of village (Nai Baan) who registers the marriage in order for it to have legal status, and the Spirit Man (Mosud). Weddings are held Lao style without “KabMeuy” (traditional style music) but with popular songs and music from an outside paid service. The host serves beer and Lao alcohol. The amount of participation in the wedding varies in three Meuy communities: in Baan Thaxang the whole village participates in the wedding and the preparations, in Baan Phontong and Baan Paksapmai only family members or close relatives participate in the preparation and are automatically invited, the other villagers receive a written invitation. Nowadays cross tribal/cultural marriage is accepted. The Mosud still plays an important part in the weddings; he will give his blessings and advice to the married couple by praying and speaking some words in his own style. Mr. Xieng Kai, 63 years old, from Baan Paksapmai, who is a Mosud, told me he always first spoke the words: “Xaya mha munkrun muni pen van dee van thithi amuthaso” which means: “today is a good day, and a blessed day for the married couple”, followed by advice to the bride that from now on she has to love her parents in law and be faithful to her husband, and take good care of the house. Also: “If you have a big jar (of alcohol), share it with neighbours.” The groom would be warned that he should be modest and love only his wife. And to both of them: “If you have a big fish, (special food) share it. (With the parents)”. The whole blessing by the Mosud takes about 20 min.

**Language and storytelling:** In my case study I found that before, children were told traditional stories and local folklore (Tamnan) by their elders in the family after dinner, and thus oral traditions were passed on to the younger generation but today, people, elders and the young, join at the temple, so norms and values are taught by the monks and are focused on Buddhism. Written Meuy language is lost and oral traditions are not passed on anymore. An example of Tamnan was told to me by Mr. Janpai, 75 years old and Mr. Thongtip, 88 years old, from Baan Thaxang. The name of the story is “Khu Ba Sithat” and it is from Bolikamxai. “One day there was a flooding, and the whole village and the surrounding rice fields were filled with water and all the rice plants died. After the water had retreated, the people replanted the rice but when it started to grow, locusts came and began to eat it all. The people were afraid and called the spirits and then black ants came and ate the locusts. Later, many people got ill and they called the spirits again to find the reason why there was illness. Then, a spirit possessed the body of a villager and told them that if they wanted to be happy and healthy, they would have to take good care of all the

spirits. After that, many people were possessed by spirits who spoke through them and told them their names, and which areas they belonged to, and the possessed people would wear clothes in the color of the spirit. (red, yellow, or black). Now the people knew the names of the spirits, and their location and would have a ceremony every 3 months and offer them food, clothing, etc. Also they built a spirit house in the village. Every year there would be a big celebration, where they would offer a cow or buffalo to the spirits and make KabMeuy (local music).

This was done for 10 years, after that somebody was possessed again, and the spirit spoke to them and told them to stop, they did enough, he would go away before the Buddhist monks came. And then the people stopped giving ceremonies for the spirits (Table 5).

Examples of Meuy word spelling with Thai Lao English language: In Meuy community we can divide people who can speak Meuy in three groups: grandparents, who speak Meuy fluently and know their own culture well. The group born outside of Viengchan, these speak Meuy with a limited vocabulary and have some knowledge about their own culture, and often use a mixture of Meuy and Lao words in their conversation. The group born in Viengchan, these don't know about their own language and culture but speak Lao very well; some of them have high academic degrees. Today, story-telling refers to modern Lao history in which Meuy people also play a part. Examples of Meuy proverbs and KabMeuy: (PEN MEUI SAMKUOUL AUR KOTHAI PENHANG PAYAN LAEKOU) “If I marry a widow, I will give her three buffaloes but if she is divorced I don't even give a dry fish.” According to the proverb, a widow is valued more in Meuy society than a divorced woman. (PENMAIU PENKOY PHOU) “When a woman marries, she should become the husband's servant, (KINTAMLANG NONTANMLAN) the husband will eat first, then his wife, the husband will sleep first, then his wife” (SAAM KEAU BOTHO LUKSAUIA KHA-DIEN, KAOW LUKEAU BOTHO LUKSUIA KHA-HAN): “Three sons in law don't equal one leg of my own son, 9 sons in law don't equal the broken leg of my own son” which means they don't trust a son in law as much as their own son.

**Kab meuy:** Kab Meuy they use to enjoying when they take a rest. Before they use on the purpose as married party, Meuy new year, party in the new house, ceremony become the monk (Ngan Boaud) but Kab Meuy has taboo as the burial day and the childbirth day This example kab Meuy got from Mrs. Ghen Baan PhongThon kab Meuy use the proverb and the word point direct meaning (Table 6).

Table 5: Examples of Meuy word spelling with Thai Lao English language

Thai language	Lao language	Meuy language	The words pelling	English language
ห้องนอน	ຫ້ອງນອນ	กวางนอน	KUAN GNON	
เอาไปซ่อน	ເອົາໄປເສັຍ	เอาไปซ่อน	AO PAI SON	Hide
เอาไม่เก็บ	ເອົາບໍ່ຮອບ	เหน้อย	NOUAI	Tied
ว่ายน้ำ	ລອນນ້ຳ	ว่ายน้ำ	WAY NAM	Swimming
ดำน้ำ	ລຸ່ມນ້ຳ	ดำน้ำ	DAM NAM	Diving
ทาน	ກິນ	กิน	KI	Eat
เอาไปเก็บ	ເອົາໄປເກັບ	เอากี้	EOU KI	Take away
เตียงนอน	ຕັ້ງນອນ	จ้อง	JONK	Sleeping bed
กินเปล่า	ກິນລົງ	กินตาย	KIN DAI	Eat with out rice
พูดตรงกันข้าม	ເວົ້າກົງກັບຂ້າງ	ป็นแม่	PIN PAE	Tell a lie
ไม่สวย	ຂໍ້ລົງ	ขี้อวย	KHI OAI	Un beautiful
พ่อ	ພໍ່	อู่	OUA	Father
แม่	ແມ່	แม่	MAI	Mother
ลูกสาว	ລູກໄມ້	ลูกเป็	LUK PER	Daughter in low
พลาวคนเต	ເອົາບໍ່ຮອບ	เอียงหง	AUI HONG	Elder sister
พี่ชายคนโต	ຮ້ອຍ	อ้ายกำ	EAIU KHA	Elder brother
น้องชายคนกลาง	ນ້ອງຊາຍຄົນກາງ	อ้ายอ้อด	EAIU OUD	Second brother
น้องชายคนเล็ก	ນ້ອງຊາຍຫນ້າ	อ้ายหล้า	EAIU LA	Youngest brother
ดิฉัน	ຂ້າຍ	เอ็ม	EM	I
เธิ	ເຈົ້າ	เทา	THOUA	You

Table 6: Using the proverb and the word point direct meaning

In proverb sentences	Meaning
<b>Man</b>	
KHAN TOK KA TURN DAI VAO	If I like you
BODAI NONG	Not get in your hard
SITON EARD MAN BOYOM	I don't give up
<b>Woman</b>	
NONG ME SUE TAI BODAI YOU PENG	Don't have boy friend
NONG ME PHOUR TAI BODAI YOUYOUN	I still single
PAPOU TIM LAI LEAL TAI HEAN	I have devoice
<b>In word point direct to the meaning</b>	
<b>Man</b>	
NANG MEUI PEN MEA EARD	If you are my wife
NANE MAN HEAUN MEA PA	That house is my Ant house
LANG HEAUN TOPAI MAN HEAUN XAI VANA	Next to that house is my house
<b>Woman</b>	
NON NI NA BO ME KOU JIANG DOUAN MHA THONG	I don't have the dig(?)
BO ME SAID THEAM SONG JIANG MA HA EARD	I don't chare the life with nobody

CONCLUSION

History of the three Meuy villages: The population of the Meuy villages that were the subject of my research,

originates from the south China, and migrated first to the north of Vietnam, then to the Bolikamxai and Khammon provinces in Laos, and finally they moved into the Viengchan area during the period of 1970-2009. Nowadays

in the Vientiane City, they have 7 villages including the three villages of my case study. The residencies of the Meuy are of two kinds: original and modern style. Modern house layout does not focus on faith anymore. Meuy clothing follows standard Lao fashion but traditional clothes are still being remade for commercial purposes, demonstrations and special occasions. In some villages the original clothes are preserved, in others they have been sold to outsiders. Meuy marry before they live together but cross cultural marriage is accepted nowadays. They follow Lao law. Written Meuy language is lost. Typical Meuy stories and proverbs do still exist, but are fragmented. In Conclusions about adaptation of the Meuy.

Comparing useful abilities and skills of Meuy people in past and present: past useful abilities and skills: Agricultural skills Fishing and hunting skills Military skills. Present useful abilities and skills: commercial skills (trading), learning skills (education management skills communicative skills). Other reasons why the Meuy people adapted: stable economy (sufficient funds or even wealth; they don't value their own cultural identity as much as before; connections to the main culture (cross culture; social role or education good infrastructure.

Reasons why the Meuy people didn't adapt relocation areas are similar to the areas where they came from originally respect and sentiments of the younger generation toward the older generation and cultural identity cultural values are still important for some of them problems with infrastructure and mobility.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The research is recommended as a source of information and a base for further research. The result applies to the Institutions that work with ethnic minorities, such as Laos National Frontier, The Travel Institute and National Social Science. Add Muey to the population list of Vientiane City. Apply a policy of sustainable development for the tribes. Create a project learning Center to gain knowledge about the cultural aspects of Meuy life such as: material: residency, costumes and the non-material, wedding customs and rituals language. To develop broadcasts to educate the young generation and preserve cultural identities. Meuy people lose own

culture because of their lifestyle but still value blood ties and family values. The result applies to the tourist organizations which can take the information from the research to be presented to the tourists who wish to travel to experience the tribal culture. Because this group has adapted to city life and developed new skills to succeed in life, cultural identity has changed. How to protect their subculture? Laos is now preparing for ASEAN membership and the population is exposed to global culture. The result applies to educational institutions to be used in anthropology for students. Compare the link between beliefs/traditions of Meuy people and science. From peer review of knowledge in my thesis next research should investigate into the relationship between lifestyle and livelihood and natural environment of the Meuy.

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