



Hill Tribes Thailand



HAVE FUN.

HELP PEOPLE.

Introduction to Thailand

Thailand's enchanting people, culture, and landscape have long beckoned travelers to Southeast Asia's most popular destination. There is much more to this ancient country than exotic beaches and the colorful chaos of Bangkok. Stepping outside of the beaten path will reveal the true charm of Thailand, and the warm people you will meet on your Globe Aware adventure will leave a lasting impression.

Buddhism reigns supreme in Thailand. The country is steeped with gorgeous temples and shrines. The monarchy is also extremely revered here, and the king's picture is displayed prominently throughout the country.

Thailand is not as poverty stricken as many of its surrounding countries. However, in rural areas, resources are much more limited than what the typical volunteer has. In fact, Buddhists usually take pride in living with less material needs.



Community

Tourists have been flocking to the beautiful hills of Chiang Mai for decades to observe the beautiful historic temples, enjoy the famous lanna food and markets, see the elephants, and enjoy a bit of a respite from the heat of Bangkok and the beaches. Lying a couple of hours north and east of the city center, in the foothills of Myanmar, beyond where most tourists and visitors ever go, hill tribe people vulnerable to myriad exploitations live full of heart and hope. Please come and volunteer with us and see what a difference you can make. The hill tribe people are welcoming and respectful. A trip to the hill tribe communities is likely to be the experience of your life and we guarantee it will be life-changing.

Projects and Expectations

The hill tribe people live in remote areas scattered across Northern Thailand with little or no access to education. Many fled from conflict in Myanmar or other surrounding countries. This lack of education makes the hill tribe children prone to poverty and vulnerable to exploitation within Thailand's ubiquitous sex and drug trade. Those who can get an education grow up able to take much better care of themselves, their families and their community. At this program location, we are working with 350-400 rural communities that cross to Sub Mekong region countries. Hill tribe communities we work with include Lahu, Akha, and Karen.

Globe Aware works with local and international organizations to support community health, education, sexuality and relationship education. UNICEF estimates that the number of children under the age of 16 working in the sex industry in Thailand



is in excess of 50,000. Many of these children come from impoverished hill tribe communities. It is rare for hill tribe people to attend school, and even rarer for them to continue at secondary school. Education is vital and every child in our care goes to school every day. We support young hill tribe people who live in rural areas far from schools by helping housing in various locations during school semesters (ten months of the year). We ensure that these young people have access to education at the local school and that they have a safe place to stay, with access to food and healthcare.

The primary issues Hill tribe children face:

- They are often stateless. No birth certificate or ID means the Thai government won't easily grant citizenship.
- Sex trafficking of young females
- Extreme poverty
- Orphans due to parents dying young, often from AIDS
- Lack of education because of the reasons above means that it is very hard for young people to get the start needed to break the cycle.

At our primary work project site, volunteers will have a variety of project options to work on to support these kids. We are currently building chicken coops and a fish pond and setting up new vegetable gardens alongside the students. At the start of 2016 together with various individual donors and organizations, the Leadership Home was established. This first stage provides a home with 40 beds for children who are ready to go on to secondary school. Most would simply not be able to attend secondary school if it were not for this new hostel. For the young people at Leadership Home, life skills are a priority. The children are carefully chosen and they are incredibly proud and excited to be given this opportunity. In January 2018, Stage 2 of the home opened, and by 2018, more than 40 young people were living there. Many thanks to all the supporters who contributed. This is the primary source of food for the 73 kids on site (housed separate and apart from volunteers). We have a constant list of related projects, from harvesting mushrooms, gathering eggs, helping cook in the kitchen, making repairs to the accommodation, helping teach English pronunciation and colloquialisms for those interested in tourism as an occupation.



Our mission is to enhance the lives of children, youth, women and vulnerable people and to strengthen culture, family involvement and community engagement.

OBJECTIVES

1. To promote sustainable community development by focusing on agriculture, and the establishment of saving groups and cooperatives.
2. To promote moral and ethical related activities for families and local communities.
3. To promote education and human rights for local people regardless of age, race, gender or geographical areas.
4. To promote local wisdom about preserving the environment and natural resources.
5. To engage local farmers in passing on knowledge and resources to other vulnerable people.
6. To partner with national and international organizations.

Working with donors, local community members and NGOS, we are seeking to ensure that the hill tribe children in our care, mostly of whom are stateless, have a safe place to live, with food and clothing, and access to health care and education. We do this through supporting 7 hostels that house approximately 400 hill tribe children in total. Some do have parents who may be too poor to look after their children, or they may live too far away to access school.



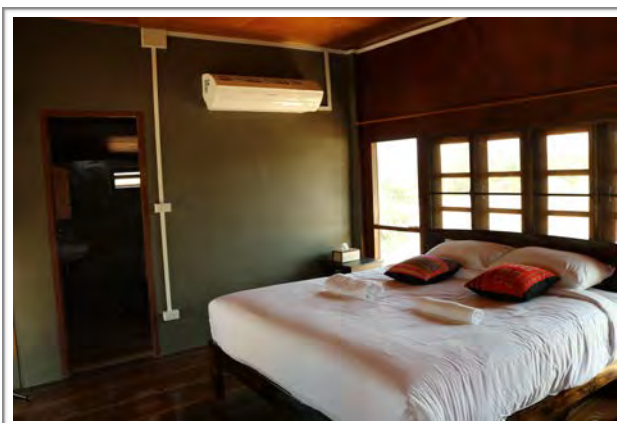
Most do not have parents – they may have died from AIDS or because of no access to health.

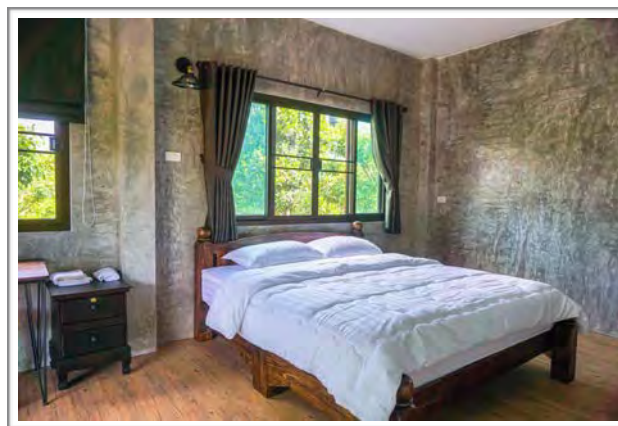
Attending school provides them with the opportunity to move from being stateless to having an official identity in Thailand. This will then enable the young people to gain an education and to have the chance to gain legitimate, fulfilling job opportunities rather than a horrific life in the drug trade or sex industry. UNICEF estimates that the number of children under the age of 16 working in the sex industry in Thailand is in excess of 50,000, and many of those are hill-tribe children. Because most hill tribe people do not have ID, children can ‘disappear’ – this is a complex issue with multi-faceted solutions.

You will also see the self-sufficiency we promote as you see the kids learning about irrigation and helping grow and harvest fruit, vegetables, raising pigs, chicken, and rice. As many of these children do not have **Thai citizenship**, we assist in this regard too. Gaining citizenship means they will be able to have access to basic services such as medical treatment, and being able to travel freely. Your participation fee goes toward funding all of these programs, from providing housing, food, education to help in getting citizenship.

Food and Lodging

Volunteers are housed in pairs (you can pay a single occupancy supplement of \$265 per week if desired) in newly built, Thai style accommodations with air-conditioning, hot running water and flushing toilets. Most have stunning views of the twin mountains. This will be your home away from home and where most of your meals are taken. Traditional and absolutely delicious Thai style noodle and rice dishes, lots of veggies and local fruits, bottled water and regular tea and coffee is provided. You can purchase alcohol or fancy cappuccino style coffee at extra cost. Free wi-fi is available and accessible at your program accommodations.





Leisure Activities

During the week you will be presented with 3 to 4 planned but optional cultural/leisure activities: watch (and participate if you like) as the girls do a traditional hill tribe dance and musical performance, visit natural nearby hot springs, learn a bit of Thai cooking, visit local temples, get a Thai massage, see local waterfalls, give alms to monks and hear them chant, visiting local markets; amongst other possibilities that will require extra booking after arrival (such as rafting or visiting the elephant conservation center.)



Giving alms to monks is a very normal part of Thai life. Every morning, except Buddhist day, several monks will walk by and receive any gifts of food anyone gives them. Monks are not allowed to touch money. They do not eat after noon. They will eat anything put in their alms bowls. Traditionally people will put cooked rice or give juices boxes. Ask your coordinator for the best location and time to give out alms.



Arrival into Chiang Mai

The Chiang Mai airport is modern and well equipped. You will see safe ATMs, cafes, stores and the like. Taking a licensed taxi from the airport to the meet up location is a simple, straightforward and affordable thing to do. You can also take a tuk-tuk. They are open air, definitely more unique, but less safe and usually a bit more expensive as the drivers up charge for the novelty of the experience.

Meet-up

Most volunteers will choose to fly into Chiang Mai airport. You are then responsible for getting yourself to our dedicated meet up location. Volunteers will be met by your coordinator at **3:00 pm** at the lobby of the Centara Duangtawan Hotel in Chiang Mai. This is a centrally located, safe hotel that is easily reached with the licensed taxis or tuk-tuks lined up outside the airport. It should cost less than \$10.



Electricity

There is electricity: enough to recharge digital batteries, but not heavy-duty hair drying risks blowing a fuse. Voltage is 220, and most chargers, etc. are equipped to deal with this. Read the label near the plug on your device to make sure it can handle this voltage. Electrical outlets will generally accept European plugs with two circular metal pins or 2 flat pins.

Weather

The wet season starts in May and continues until early November. The wettest months are September and October. The rainy season is not necessarily the worst time to visit the country, as downpours are usually strong but short, with the sun returning within a few hours. The climate is 5 to 10 degrees cooler in this part of Thailand, relative to Bangkok. Expect temperatures between mid 90s and low 90s during the day and 60s to 70s at night without much variation at all throughout the year.

Money

Unless you plan on buying a lot of souvenirs or extending your trip, you should not need an enormous amount of extra cash. Items such as phone calls, souvenirs, fare to get to the meet up point, alcohol, and departure tax are not covered by your program fee. Many people will



take American dollars at the going exchange rate and give you change in their local currency, if requested (though this is not 100% reliable in every case). About \$250 should be ample to cover the above expenses during the program week. Primary expenditures are for extras like a Thai massage, fancy coffee, alcohol, extra excursions or souvenirs.

****Also, a note for all program locations—it is a good idea that you call your bank and credit card companies before you depart and notify them of the country you will be**

traveling to and the dates of your travel so that they will allow charges and/or withdrawals internationally.**

Communication

You will be staying in a rural village and access to phone and internet is available in several locations though sometimes limited. In the case of an emergency the coordinator will help you to be able to find a phone or computer to use.

There is usually cell phone reception at the program accommodations though the signal is not always strong. If you plan on making frequent phone calls, you may want to purchase a Thai phone and/or SIM card in Bangkok before the project starts, or sign up for a special global plan with your home cell phone provider.

There is wifi service at the local market from 7am-10pm every Monday through Saturday and at quite a variety of other locations within walking distance throughout the village.



Packing Information

Remember that you are coming to volunteer to help the children and people in the village as well. Please respect their culture, which involves dressing conservatively. Do dress for the hot climate: loose light clothing that covers your skin that you don't mind getting dirty. Remember that modesty is essential. Short shorts or skirts and skimpy tank tops or spaghetti straps are never appropriate, particularly when visiting the village or any of the 6 temples. Please do not expose your thighs or shoulders. If you get the opportunity to bathe with the elephants, please

bring clothes that you can wear over your swimsuit that won't be see-through.

Make sure to pack enough clothes to be comfortable, considering that you may get dirty doing volunteer work. Volunteers can have their clothes washed by a local woman for a small fee.

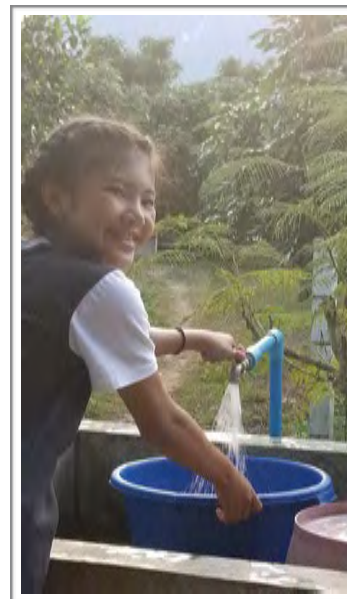
This should keep you from having to worry about bringing too many clothes, and is another way to support the community.

This packing list is meant as a guideline. There is no single item that you can't live without for one week. Pack what you think you will need to be comfortable, but do not get preoccupied about items that you didn't bring, weren't on the list, etc. Everyone has different opinions about essential items!



Suggested Items

- Bug Repellent with at least 20% deet
- Sunscreen and hat
- Your own water bottle.
- Rain gear
- Swimsuit (for hot springs)
- Ear plugs – roosters on site can bother some
- Towel
- Toiletries
- Electrical prong adapter
- Comfortable clothes that can get dirty (including long sleeved shirts and long pants, close toed shoes; knee-length shorts)
- Some people get chilly at night, so a light sweater or jacket is recommended
- Work gloves for gardening recommended but not required



Your Coordinator - Thak

Hi. I'm Thak. It is my pleasure to welcome you to our Hill Tribe community and I look forward to the opportunity to share my local knowledge of our region with you. I attended Prince Royal's College where I studied Faculty of Humanity at English. I also attended Payap University and am a member of Rotary International. My primary home is now Chiang Mai, though my family heritage is from the Hill Tribes. I speak Thai, English and Lahu. My father has been a leader to the Hill Tribe people for several decades and I have been inspired by his example.

Sample Itinerary

Please note that this only a sample itinerary and is subject to change. The week specific projects you will be working on are dependent on a variety of factors such as number of volunteers, availability of supplies, what previous volunteers have completed and even weather. Your coordinator will go over your week specific itinerary with you during orientation.



DAY 1 (Saturday)

Pick up volunteer from airport to Program location (1.30 hour drive)

Mid Afternoon Check in, rest

Late afternoon Orientation, tour

Evening Dinner and welcome by Lahu culture dance.
(Camp fire/ live music)

DAY 2 (Sunday)

7.30-8.30 – Breakfast

8.30-10.00 – Work project

10.00-10.30 – Break

10.30-12.00 – Briefing over all about Thai and Hill tribe people's culture, society and environment issues. Explain details of day by day activities for volunteers + Visiting Hill-tribe children home

12.00-13.30 – Lunch

13.30-16.30 – work project

16.30-18.00- Optional No.3,4 and/or Continue activities

19.00-20.00- Dinner

**DAY 3 (Monday)**

7.30-8.30- Breakfast

8.30-10.30- Optional : No.6 go to the temple. Note: Need to start since early morning.

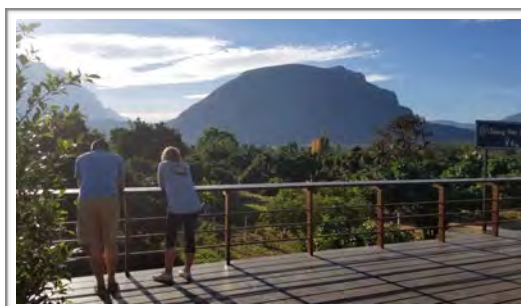
10.30-12.30 – Work Project

12.30-13.30- Lunch

13.30-15.30- Work Project

15.30-18.00- Optional No.3 and/or Continue activities

19.00-20.00- Dinner

**DAY 4 (Tuesday)**

7.30-8.30-Breakfast

8.30-12.30-Optional : No.5 Practicing in real paddy field and No.4 water fall and hot spring

12.30-13.30 – Lunch

13.30-16.30- Work project

16.30-18.00- Optional: No.3 and /or Continue activities

19.00-20.00- Dinner

**DAY 5 (Thursday)**

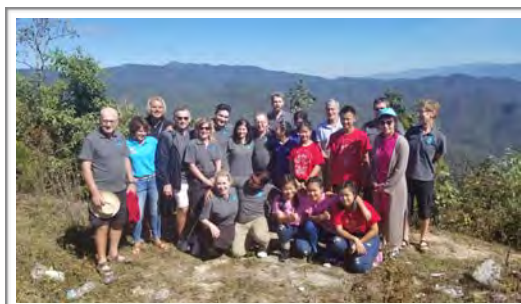
7.30-8.30 – Breakfast

8.30-12.30 – Work Project

12.30-13.30- Lunch

13.30-17.30- Optional : No.2 Cooking class and feed the students /or Continue activities.

18.00-20.00- Dinner

**DAY 6 (Friday)**

7.30-8.30 – Breakfast

8.30-12.00 – Optional : No.1 visit to elephant and rafting and/or continue activities.

13.30-14.30- Finishing work
 14.30-18.0 – Optional No.3,4
 19.00-20.00 – Dinner
 20.00-22.00- Farewell party with big camp fire. (Dancing and Karaoke)

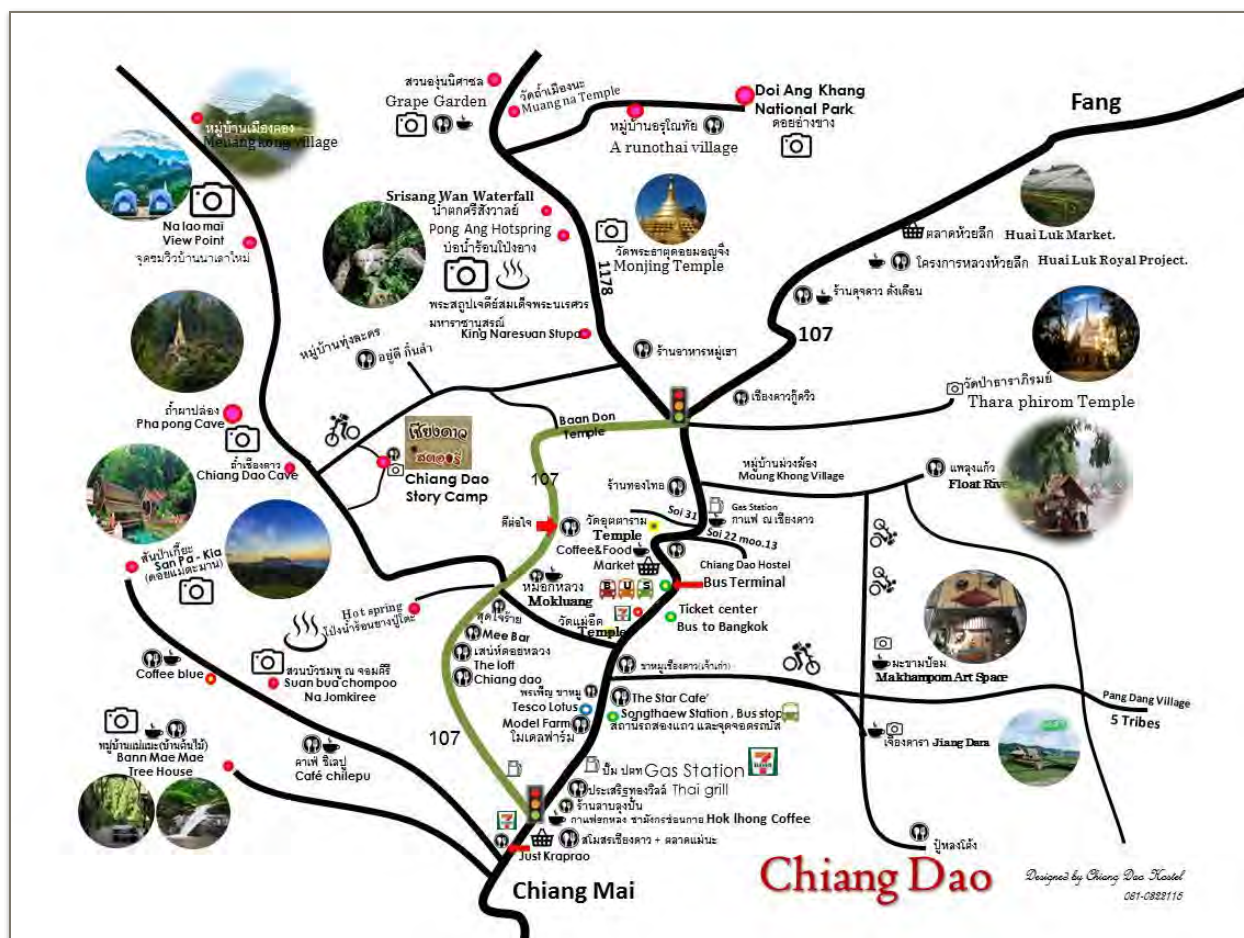
DAY 7 (Saturday) Departure

7.30-8.30 – Breakfast

8.30- 9.30 – Drop off at Chiang Mai city center or Chiang Mai airport

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Visiting elephant conservation center
 2. Cooking class
- Optional 6.30-7.30 buying food stuff at Chiang Dao fresh market for cooking lessons
 -Practicing 3 signature Thai food: 1. Green curry, 2.Pad-Thai, 3.Keang Hangle OR cooking 2 signature hill-tribe food: Sahjoy and Pumpkin chicken with lemon grass
3. Massage, laundry, hot spring nearby. Massage and laundry are at additional cost
 4. Hot spring + Water fall
 5. Visiting paddy field and practice



***Note: we have all year round activities upon the time periods that volunteer come.
 May-June: Preparation period of nursing the seed and planting rice
 July-October: Weeding and water control periods

November-December: Harvesting and thrashing rice and carry on sacks

6. Visiting temples
 - Optional 6.30-7.30 go buy the food at market and offer food to the monk
 - Meditation and listening to sermon of Buddha
 - Volunteer to work around temple campus such as cleaning
7. Play sports with hill-tribe kids (needs to be during 5 pm – 7 pm on week day)
8. Visit hill-tribe village and attend their important ceremony (depending on the season)
9. Visit the Pabong school and provide lunch (one of poor school that we are working with total students about 88, about 20 minutes drive)

Insurance

As part of your Globe Aware program you are provided with insurance. This covers medical and even travel insurance in the event you need to cancel due to a medical related issue. You can access your account at www.coretravelinsurance.com to see the exact coverage and optional extensions. If you have any problems accessing your account, please give us a call at 877-588-4562.



If you just can't get enough background reading . . . here's more on the Hill Tribes

The Term "hill tribe" (*Chao Khao* in Thai) came about in the 1960s and collectively refers to the groups of ethnic minorities living in Northern Thailand.

Many of the hill tribe people crossed over into Thailand from Myanmar/Burma and Laos. The Karen hill tribe, made up of many subgroups, is assumed to be the largest; they number in the millions.

Although some festivals are shared between different hill tribes, each have their own unique language, customs, and culture. The hill dwelling peoples have traditionally been primarily subsistence farmers who use slash-and-burn agricultural techniques to farm their heavily forested communities. Popular perceptions that slash and burn practices are environmentally destructive, government concerns over borderland security, and

population pressure has caused the government to forcibly relocate many hill tribe peoples. Traditionally, hill tribes were also a migratory people, leaving land as it became depleted of natural resources or when trouble arose.

There are seven main hill tribe groups in Thailand:

- Akha
- Lahu
- Karen
- Hmong (or Miao)
- Mien (or Yao)
- Lisu
- Palaung

The Long-Neck Paduang

The biggest tourist attraction among the hill tribes tends to be the long-neck Paduang (Kayan Lahwi) subgroup of the Karen people.

Seeing women wearing stacks of metal rings — placed there since birth — on their necks is quite shocking and fascinating. The rings distort and elongate their necks.

Unfortunately, it's nearly impossible to find a tour that allows you to visit “authentic”

Paduang (long neck) people (i.e., Paduang women who aren't just wearing the rings because they've been compelled to or because they know they'll be able to make money from tourists by doing so. Even if visiting independently, you'll be charged a relatively steep entrance fee to enter a "long neck" village in Northern Thailand. Very little of this entrance fee seems to get put back into the village. Don't expect a cultural, *National Geographic* moment: the part of the village tourists can access is essentially one big market with the residents peddling handicrafts and photo opportunities.

The hill tribes in Thailand fall into three main linguistic groups: 1) Tibeto-Burman (Lisu, Lahu, Akha); 2) Karenic (Karen, Kayah) and 3) Austro-Thai (Hmong, Mien). Within each group are divisions such as Blue Hmong, White Hmog and Striped Hmong, whose names are linked to the clothes they wear. The Shan and Lao are generally not considered hill tribes because they are permanently settled, practice Theravada Buddhism and speak a language similar to Thai.

The languages spoken by the hill peoples falls into three broad categories: 1) Tibeto-Burman (a subfamily of the larger Sino-Tibetan language family); 2) Mon-Khmer (a subfamily of the Austro-Asiatic language family); and 3) the small Miao-Yao language family. The language of the most numerous of these hill peoples, the Karen, is generally considered Sino-Tibetan, but some authorities include it in the subset Tibeto-Burman, or placed it in a category of its own. The other languages included in the Tibeto-Burman category—Akha, Lisu, Lahu, and Jinghpaw (Kachin)—have been estimated as ranging from a few hundred speakers (Jinghpaw) to about 25,000 speakers (Akha). [Source: Library of Congress]

Akha in Thailand fled civil wars in Burma in the 1960s. Some ethnic Karen fighters fled to Thailand from Myanmar and live in refugee camps in Thailand along with genuine Karen

refugees. It is estimated that there are approximately 30,000 Hmong living in the mountains of Thailand. Until recently there were several thousand more, originally from Laos, living in refugee camps but they have largely been repatriated now. Most of the Hmong in Thailand fall into two groups: the blue and the white.

The category of Mon-Khmer included a number of highland groups: the Kui (called Soai by the Thai), which totaled between 100,000 and 150,000 in the mid-1960s; the Tin, about 20,000; and several smaller groups, including the Lua (also called Lawa), about 9,000; the Khmu, about 7,600; and the Chaobon, about 2,000. The Kui were said to be largely assimilated into Thai society. The figure for the Khmu pertained only to those presumably living in the highlands in a more or less traditional setting. Substantial numbers were said to be pursuing a Thai way of life.

The Miao-Yao languages were spoken by two peoples, the Hmong and Mien, both originally from China (the terms Miao and Yao are Chinese). There were Hmong and Mien still living in China as well as other Southeast Asian countries. Called Meo by the Thai, the Hmong began to arrive in Thailand in the late nineteenth century, and some continued to migrate directly from China or other neighboring states, particularly Laos. Numbering about 50,000 in 1970, the Hmong were one of the largest groups of hill peoples. An additional 40,000 Hmong fled from Laos to Thailand in 1975, but by the late 1980s many of these had migrated elsewhere, some going to the United States. The Mien were even more recent arrivals, most of them having come from Laos after 1945. Their numbers were estimated at 30,000 in the 1980s. These two groups, particularly the Hmong, were among those affected by the security operations of the Thai government that began in the mid-1960s. These actions occurred in part because the Hmong, like other mountain groups, were said to be destroying forests in the course of practicing their traditional shifting cultivation, and in part because their chief cash crop was the opium poppy.

See Separate Articles on the Akha, Karen, Hmong (for the Meo), Yao, Lahu, Shan, and Lisu Under the Hill Tribes and Famous Ethnic Groups Category Under Hill Tribes and Ethnic Groups

Hill Tribes, the Thai Government and Development

Until the 1970s, the Thai central government tended to regard the hill tribe groups chiefly as opium cultivators engaged in illegal activities. Since that time the highland minorities, through their own efforts and government-organized crop substitution projects, have become involved in the legal market economy of the country. [Source: Library of Congress]

The Thai government has made an effort to bring the hill tribe groups into the mainstream by giving them access to decent medical care and educating them in nikorn or settlement schools. The government, the United Nations and various aid organizations have been working hard to replace opium as their major source of income, by encouraging the hill tribes to grow other cash crops such as coffee or beans, and finding markets for their colorful and distinctive crafts, jewelry and textiles.

Many hill tribe villages now have electricity, cell phones, and decent roads. Some have paved roads with storm drains. Television antennas and satellite dishes have sprouted from some huts. Children in the hill tribe schools are taught Thai, some English and their native language. Still

many hill tribe members, refugees and migrants are undocumented and have no legal status, Many are taken advantage by human traffickers who force them into prostitution or slave labor.

A typical hill tribe family gets by on an income of less than \$500 a year and struggles to come up with money for medical care and their children's education . Many end up in the cities in low-paying jobs such as peeling fruit or doing heavy labor at construction sites.

Joshua Kurlantzick wrote in the New York Times: "Population and Development Association's Alberto de la Paz had worried that modernization was pulling too many tribes out of the hills, into urban lives they were not equipped to handle. But some hill-tribe people I met in Chiang Rai city disagreed. I spent the morning with A-Je Chaiyot Kukaewkasem, an Akha man who grew up in a traditional animist village and was put through school and university by a local missionary group. At a dormitory complex A-Je had built, Akha orphans received both a modern and a traditional education. The children seemed to be prospering: Bursting with energy, they spent the morning chasing each other around a soccer field. [Source: Joshua Kurlantzick, New York Times, April 25, 2004]

King Bhumibol's Effort to Stop Opium Growing Among Thailand's Hill Tribes

The Royal Project is an initiative of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej to help develop highlands in northern Thailand on a sustainable basis. It has gained recognition worldwide for its success in eradicating opium poppies and improving the well-being of the people. The Royal Project involves the growing of a wide variety of cash crops, especially temperate plants, to replace opium cultivation, improve the living conditions of hill tribe people, and eliminate the slash-and-burn technique of clearing land. It began operations in 1969 and has now expanded significantly, with more than 100,000 people benefiting from it.

The program began in the late 1960s, when His Majesty stayed at the royal palace in Chiang Mai Province, and visited and talked to hill tribe villagers living in the mountainous area about their needs. He asked them about their source of income. They said that their income came from growing opium and peaches, with the the income from opium and peaches being about the same. At that time, tribal people living on highlands had become a problem to the government, partly because of their destructive slash-and-burn technique of clearing land, as well as opium production.

In a speech at Chiang Mai University in 1969, His Majesty said that he intended to help hill tribe people grow useful crops that would give higher income than growing opium, so that they would switch from opium cultivation to other crops. The project would also support the government's policy of banning opium cultivation and trade. He pointed out that the traditional farming method of cutting down and burning the forest conducted by hill tribe villagers would lead to forest destruction and deterioration of soil quality. That was how the Royal Project was launched. His Serene Highness Prince Bhisatej Rajani was assigned by His Majesty to carry out his initiative for the establishment of the project.

Originally, the project was called the Royal-sponsored Hilltribe Project. Later, it was changed to the Royal Hilltribe Development Project and then the Royal Northern Project. Now, it is called the Royal Project. The Royal Project was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for

International Understanding in 1988. In the same year, it also received the Thai Export Award 1988 for its outstanding activities to promote Thai exports of fresh vegetables and fruit and canned fruit. The Royal Project won an award from the Drug Advisory Program of the Colombo Plan in Sri Lanka in December 2003 on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Drug Advisory Program.

King Bhumibol founded the Royal Project in part to make ethnic minorities in northern Thailand part of Thai society. In the 1960s he ventured often to northern Thailand, where he established a special relationship with the Hmong, Akha, Lahu and other hill tribes. He often used the medium of pigs to communicate with the Hmong. Pigs are the centerpiece of many Hmong ceremonies. In addition to helping farmers find replacements for opium, the King has helped hill tribes to build irrigation dams, increase crop yields and cover denuded hills to prevent soil erosion.

The Thai king told an interviewer that once a man came to him to complain that his wife had left him for another man after he paid two pigs and some money for her. After deliberating with the two parties involved the king reached into his wallet and paid the man compensation, something which made both parties happy. "The only trouble was I gave the money. So the woman belonged to me," the king said. He solved this problem by "bestowing" the woman to his cousin Prince Bhisatej Rajani, an important advisor for the king in the northern highlands.

From its humble start, the Royal Project has expanded significantly. Royal Project farmers now grow more than 300 crops, thanks to their training in the methods of growing new crops. The Royal Project helps them collect, distribute, and sell highland produce, while improving their quality of life through education, health care, and environmental preservation.

The dowager queen, Princess Sri Nakarindra Borom, who died in July 1995, is revered by hill tribes for the work she did to improve their lives.

Small Ethnic Groups That Live in Laos and Thailand

The Sek Noi is a group with about 30,000 members that live on both sides of the Mekong in northeastern Thailand and central Laos. They have largely been assimilated into Lao society. The So is a group with about 160,000 or so members that live on both sides of the Mekong in northeastern Thailand and central Laos. They have largely been assimilated into Lao society.

The Kui is a group with about 100,000 members that lives in east-central Thailand, northeast Cambodia and Laos. They are closely related to the Chaobon, Chomg, Pear and similar groups and are believed to have lived in the region before the Lao and Thais. They practice wet rice agriculture and have largely been assimilated by local groups.

The Chaobon is a small ethnic group that lives in central and northern Thailand. There are only about 16,000 of them. They are wet-rice farmers and have largely been assimilated into Thai culture. Their villages look like Thai villages and Buddhism has largely replaced their traditional animist beliefs. They are sometimes erroneously called the "Lawa." They call themselves "Niakuoll." "Chaebon," meaning "hill people," is what the Thais call them.

The Khamu live mostly in Nan Province. They live in houses with dirt floors and roofs with crossed beams. They are regarded as skilled metal workers and make regular offerings to Salok, the god of the forge.

Lua

The Lua are a small tribe with about 10,000 members that live mainly on the Bo Luang Plateau area in northern Thailand, near the towns of Chiang Mai, Pai and Ban Mae Sariang Thailand. Also known as the Lawa, Luwa or Lava, they speak a distinctive language, either in the Palaung-Wa or Mon-Khmer group of Austroasiatic languages, and practice Buddhism and animism. [Source: Peter Kundstadter, National Geographic July 1966]

Unlike other Southeast Asian hill tribes, the Lawa have Melanesian features similar to those of black people living in Papua New Guinea and on islands in the western Pacific. Some have assimilated into Thai culture and practice wet rice agriculture. Others live in small mountain villages and raise corn, dry-land rice and vegetables.

According to some anthropologist and scholars, the Lua have lived in Thailand longer than any other hill tribe (900 years). They probably emigrated to Thailand from Burma, and they are probably related to the Wa tribe, a fierce group of former-head-hunters who now controls some of the major opium growing areas in Myanmar.

According to legend the Lawa were chased into the mountains by a gigantic rolling stone. Some Lawa believe that a massive boulder lying in the small river valley of Mae La Noi, Thailand is the infamous rolling stone. When the Lawa walk past this boulder they are not supposed to speak their own language out of fear that the stone will recognize them and begin rolling again.

The Karen have been the traditional enemy of the Lua. Karens migrating into Thailand from their homeland in Myanmar have pushed the Lua off their land in Thailand. The Lua use to warn each other of Karen raids by beating on drums.

A Lawa tribe in northern Thailand received Bible training for 12 years from Christian missionaries and then suddenly forbade the missionaries from entering their homes.

Lua Life and Marriages

Lua sometimes eat dog but they also have a great love of animals. Anthropologist Peter Kundstadter observed one old woman nurse a puppy back to health after it broke its neck in a rice pounding machine. Lawa women smoke tobacco and marijuana from curved pipes decorated with silver.

If someone gets sick sometimes the gall bladder of a chicken is examined for omens—shiny ones filled with liquid, for example, are good. Kundstadter observed a patient whose illness was diagnosed by counting the number of grains in the bowl of rice he just ate. The treatment—sacrificing a black dog and a white chicken—didn't work so a specialist was called in to capture the disease-causing evil spirits and implant them into a hard boiled egg. The treatment was called a success when the hard boiled egg was balanced on a stick.

The Lua have traditionally gotten married when they were in their mid- to late-teens. Before a Lua wedding, the "crying and whimpering" bride is kidnapped from her hut by the grooms friends or family. The bride was often carried away on horseback and was expected to cry for help and her family gave chase in half hearted manner. Most of the time, but not always, the bride knows the abduction is coming and usually it is by friends of a boy she likes. Afterwards

the groom's family visits the family of the bride to discuss the bride price. In the 1960s the going rate was several pieces of silver and couple of pigs. After the wedding ceremony, in which the couple's wrists are tied, the women form a procession and carry the brides' weaving equipment and pots and pans to her husband's house.

Lua Rituals

Animal sacrifices are held by hill tribes to help sick relatives, assure that good spirits watch over their children, and appease the spirits at healing ceremonies, weddings, house christening and births. In ascending order of importance, chickens, dogs, pigs and water buffalo are all sacrificed. A small ceremony to cure a cold may require only one chicken while the wedding of the son of a chief might result in the sacrifice of many water buffalos. Occasionally, a pig is sacrificed for no other reason than because people are hungry for meat.

In a sacrifice, the spirits only take the spirit of the dead animal, which means that animal itself, including the meat, the ears, nose and tail, eyelashes and hoof slivers, are divided among the villagers. The Thai government used to have a tax on sacrificed animals which the Lua tribes skirted by claiming the animal accidentally hung itself, and they had no other choice but to slaughter it.

Wrist-tying is a custom performed by many hill tribes to keep an individual's 64 souls within the body and ward off evil spirits. At weddings tying cotton strings around their wrists is the equivalent of exchanging rings. Some tribes place brass rings around the wrist as a welcoming gesture to new initiates. Even elephants are rewarded with wrist-tying ceremonies for working particularly hard. One villager told Kundstadter that he realized elephants don't have wrists, "but they have souls and that is the important thing."

Lua Villages and Homes

Most Lua live in small villages ruled by a "big samang," a combination headman, shaman and religious leader. One Lua villager told anthropologist Peter Kundstadter in National Geographic: "If we didn't have a samang, we would have to live like apes and monkeys in the jungle." The samang presides over all religious ceremonies except for funerals (the Lua believe that a samang who sets foot in a cemetery loses his powers). Any time an animal is sacrificed or a wild animal is killed in the jungle a leg is given to the samang.

Lua houses are purposely arranged in a haphazard way. The Lua believe that aligned houses are bad luck, and if rain from one house drips into rain from another house it may cause sickness. Villagers told Kundstadter that it is also bad luck to build a house next to a trail...Why?... "Because if an elephant bumps into your house, that is very bad luck."

Lua houses traditionally have been built with thatched roofs (cool in hot weather and warm in cool weather) and set on stilts (which prevent the house from being flooded during the wet season). In the 1960s it cost about \$35 to build such a house. This price included timber stilts and beams, bamboo poles for the walls, bamboo mats for floors, labor, two pigs for a feast and a dog and two chickens for a sacrifice. Gathering the materials from the forest and preparing them took about three days; building the house took only a day. The hardest task is setting the timber stilts

and building the frame. The construction of the fireplace (a wooden frame filled with sand) is "entrusted only to older men."

Lua Clothes

Traditionally dressed Lua women wear plain smock-like dresses or long white or grey tunics and black skirts with horizontal red and white lines. They adorn themselves with less jewelry than other hill tribes (some beads and bracelets); smear their faces with rice powder to keep their skin young and fresh; and don black tunics during special ceremonies.

Lua men usually wear baggy pants or sarongs and western-style shirts, or traditional Thai short-sleeve smock shirts made from white homespun cotton. Some Lawa men also tattoo themselves between their waist and knees with tiger and ape designs as a sign of manhood and for protection from evil spirits and wild animals. Lawa shaman wear shirts decorated with spirals of red chord.

The Lua sometimes still make their own cotton cloth. First the seeds are removed from the cotton with a machine consisting of hand-cranked rollers. Then the fluffy balls of cotton are turned into thread with a hand-turned spinning wheel. After the thread is sorted, dyed and washed it is made into cloth with a bamboo belt loom with foot-operated bamboo pedals, a hand-operated wooden carding system and poles for the yarn.

Thai Lu

The Tai Lue are an ethnic group associated mostly with the Xishuabgbanna region in the Yunnan Province in China but who have some members that live in Burma and Thailand. They are a subgroup of the Dai and are similar to the Thai and Lao. They have traditionally been rice cultivators and lived in tropical and semitropical monsoon forests along river valleys and in pockets of level land in the hill country of northeast Burma, northwest Thailand and southern China. See Dai, Minorities, China

The Tai Lue are also known as Bai-yi, Dai, Lawam Lu, Luam Lue, Pai-I, Pai-yi, Shui Bai-yi, Shui Dai, Tai. Thais sometimes call them Lua or Lawa. They migrated to the Nan area of northern Thailand from China's Xishuangbann region in Yunnan Province about 200 years ago. There is no good information on Tai Lue numbers in Myanmar. In Thailand, there are maybe 100,000 of them and they live in communities scattered throughout northern Thailand.

The Tai Lue live mostly in Nan Province near the Laos border. Nearly all are Theravada Buddhists. The Tai Lue language is very similar to the Lao and Thai languages. The written languages resembles Burmese. They have traditionally lived in wooden or bamboo thatched houses supported on thick wooden stilts. Beneath the house they placed their kitchens and weaving looms. Many still make their own cloth, often dyed with indigo. Their traditions remain strong. Many villages are under the leadership of a headman and astrologer. Tai Lue fabric is regarded as among the best in northern Thailand and their temple architecture—featuring thick walls, small windows, nanga lintels and two- or three-tiered roofs—have had a strong influence on temples in Nan and Phrae Provinces.

T'in

The T'in are an ethnic minority that lives in northern Thailand and northern Laos. Similar to the Kmhmu, Lamet and other Mon-Khmer hill people in Thailand and Laos, they are short, stocky with black hair and have a complexion that is darker than their lowland neighbors. They have traditionally lived among Hmong, Yuan, Lue and Lao and have been involved in the opium trade

The T'in are also known as the Chao Dol, Htin, Kati, Kha Che, Kha Pai, Kha T'in, Lawa, Lua, Kwa, Mai, Pai, P'ai, Pra, P'u, Pai, Thin, Toe, Tin. They live in Nan Province in Thailand and Xagnabouri (Sayaboury) Province in Laos to the southwest of Luang Prabang. They have traditionally lived in the mountain ranges between the Mekong River and Mae Nam Nan Rivers. There are perhaps 40,000 T'in, with about three fourths of them in Thailand. Most live in Nan Province in northern Thailand and Sayaburi Province in Laos.

The T'in are mostly animist and shamanists. They speak a Mon-Khmer language, closely related to Kmhmu and have many borrowed words from Lao and Yuan. They have no written language. They are believed to have lived in the Mekong area of northern Laos for centuries and migrated into Thailand in the 19th and 20th centuries to escape internecine warfare between lowlanders and highlanders and find better farmland.

T'in Religion

The T'in have traditionally believed in spirits associated with natural phenomena and deceased human beings. There are village guardian spirits, mountain and water spirits, and jungle spirits. Most spirits are regarded as overly sensitive and capricious. Great care must be taken not to offend them. Offended spirits are believed to be the cause illnesses and natural disasters.

Most traditional villages have a part time spirit specialist selected by the village elders. He presides over rituals, weddings and funeral communicates with the spirits, and performs sacrifices. The T'in observe a 10-day work week with a holy day of rest. During the New Year festival in mid-April villagers drink lots of rice liquor through straws and the village priest goes into a trance and communicates with the spirits. Many festivals are often tied to the agriculture cycle and involve the sacrifices of a pig or a dog.

The T'in believe that people have 32 souls. The loss of one or more souls can cause illnesses of varying degrees. Poor health caused by souls by spirits can be restored if the spirits are convinced through rituals to return the souls to the body. Loss of all the souls results in death.

The dead are usually wrapped in bamboo mat and blanket and buried in the jungle with some possessions. The funeral is a loud affair, with singing, drinking and wailing by family members and friends. The house of the deceased is purified and cleansed of evil spirits. On the 10th day after death some ashes are placed on winnowing tray and the dead are asked to walk over them. If no patterns appear the deceased has become an ancestral spirit. If markings do appear they may indicate the dead has been reborn as a dog, pig or chicken.

T'in Marriage and Family

Traditionally, boys marry when they are in their late teens and girls marry when they are in their mid teens. Courting is carried out in groups and sometimes involves singing love songs, and giving small gifts. If a boy is interested in a girl he informs his parents and they contact the girl's

parents. Groom's provide a bride-price or do a bride service. Premarital sex is a serious taboo. Violators have to make an expensive sacrifice.

Most marriages are monogamous. First cousin marriages are encouraged. The wedding ceremony often takes place at a village-wide feast after the couple has begun living together and involves a ritual in which a village priest calls on the groom's ancestor spirits and ask for their blessing. There is usually a feast at the house of the bride's family in which the groom is introduced to the bride's ancestors.

Afterward the couple often lives with the bride's family until the groom finishes his bride service. The couple forms their own household after they have their own children. Divorces are common and easy to get .

Both nuclear and extended families are common. The youngest child usually lives with the parents permanently and takes care of them in their old age. Both parents, grandparents and sibling take part in child rearing. Young children are rarely disciplined. When boys and girls are still young they begin working in the fields, looking after younger siblings and taking on other responsibilities.

T'in Society

Men tend to hunt, do heavy work such as plowing, slashing and burning, trade with lowlanders and brew liquor. Women—with the help of their children—do weeding, harvesting, carrying and processing crops, gathering wild fruits, collecting water, feeding the pigs, growing vegetables, cooking and household chores.

T'in villages are very egalitarian. When there is rank it is based more on age, wisdom and experience than wealth or ancestry. Although some patrilineage organization is found, T'in society seems to be rooted more in village bonds and friendship. Villagers are led by and disputes are settled by villages elders, a headman and a village priest. The headman position seems to be a fairly recent innovation, created primarily as a response to pressures from lowlanders. There is a strong social code against violence and displays of anger. Threats of supernatural punishment are used to maintain social control.

T'in Villages and Homes

The T'in generally live in hilly areas that were once and still are covered by tropical rain forests, and often live in village interspersed with Hmong, Yuan, Lue, Lao and Mien villages. Their villages, made up of between four and 100 households, are often situated on the slopes of mountains at an elevation between 300 and 1,300 meters. Many of their villages have village gates and carved wooden spirit posts.

Houses are raised off the ground on stilts or piles and have a wood frame, bamboo walls and roofs thatched with grass. Their house has no nails or other metal because of Tin taboo. The entrance faces west and is reached by a wooden ladder or a notched log. Flimsy bamboo partitions divide the rooms, Rattan mats are used for sleeping and sitting. Rice is stored in a separate raised granary. Every household has rice pounder. The houses are not built to last in part because the T'in have traditionally moved every few years when the soil was exhausted or there was some sort of bad omen.

T'in Agriculture and Economics

The T'in practice mostly slash and burn agriculture and grow glutinous (sticky) dry rice as their main crop. They also grow betel, tobacco, and opium mostly for their own consumption, and maize, millet, root vegetables, herbs, melons, pumpkins, gourds, and cucumbers for food. Pig and chicken are the primary source of meat and protein. They are kept for sacrifices and food. Some times they are sold to lowlanders.

The T'in earn money from selling salt collected from salt wells and miang (fermented tea leaves chewed as a mild stimulant). They collect medical herbs, wild fruit and foods and in the forest and hunt deer, wild pigs, wild fowl, rabbits and bears with crossbows and rifles. Some fishing is done with nets and poison.

The T'in sell, trade and peddle miang and sell pigs cattle and wild animals to lowlanders. With the money they buy rice, medicine, blankets, clothes, pots, flashlights, matches, beads, earrings and manufactured goods. They are very skilled at manipulating bamboo into useful things like floor mats and baskets as well artistic creations like musical instruments and bold geometric patterns made by weaving black grass into woven bamboo. They also extract salt from salt wells.

The T'in are primarily subsistence farmers. They are not known as being traders or craftsmen. Slash and burn agricultural land is not owned and is cultivated by whoever clears it. Disputes over land are settled by headmen. Irrigated wet rice land is often privately owned and is inheritable.

Mlabri (Yumbri, Yellow Leaves)

The Mlabri (also spelled Mrabri and Mabri) is an ethnic minority in northern Thailand made up of perhaps 200 or so former hunter gatherers. They live near borders of Phrae and Nan Provinces near Hahn Boon Yeun in Phrae Province . They have traditionally used stone tools and collected wild fruits and roots and hunted small animals. They were once strictly hunter-gatherers. By the 1990s some were working as field laborers for the Thais or other hill tribes such as the Hmong in exchange for pigs and cloth.

The Mlabri are also known as the Yumbri (Yellow Leaves) and Ma Ku. Thais call them the *Phil Thong Leung* ("Spirits of the Yellow Leaves"). Laos call them the *Kha Tong Luang* ("Slaves of the Yellow Leaves"). They refer to themselves as the Mlabri (Forest People). They appear to be a remnant of an Australoid tribe that lived in Southeast Asia before the arrival of Thais and hill tribes. Ethnically, the Mabri are part of the Mon-Khmer family, unrelated to the forest dwelling Semang (Orang Asli), people of southern Thailand, who are a Negrito tribe. (The commonly-used term Sakai is pejorative.) They are a relic population of the Mon-Khmer who occupied much of Southeast Asia prior to the migrations of Tai groups into Laos and northern Thailand

According to the Joshua Project approximately 300 Mlabri live in Nan and Phrae provinces of Thailand, and 22 Mlabri people, in four families, live in the Phiang District of Xaignabouri Province of Laos. The group in Laos had 24 members in 1985. Epidemics and a decrease of their resources has almost wiped them out. There is another group of about 300 people called Kha Tong Luang in Laos, who practice the same customs. They live in remote mountains on the Laos-Vietnam border. The Mlabri and this later group are not linguistically related, and are

separated by a considerable distance. To complicate matters, the Pakatan in Laos are also labeled Kha Tong Luang by the Lao. [Source: Joshua Project]

The Mlabri were called the Yellow Leaves because that is what their crude soot-stained shelters looked like after they left. In the past they were exterminated as vermin by Thais and used as forced labor by the Hmong to repay "pork debts" for gifts of pigs. Today, deforestation has made their traditional way of life impossible. Some women make a living by taking off their blouses and posing as bare-breasted savages for Thai and foreign tourists.

Mlabri Culture and Life

Many Yellow Leaves are animists. Little is known about their belief system other than that they believe they can not cultivate land themselves; tigers are angry souls of the dead; and heavy rains, which they call "monster farts," can swallow up people whole. They also believe evil spirits inhabit trees, fear rainbows, which they believe are monsters who devour human flesh, and are afraid to talk about unpleasant things out of fear that talking about them may cause them to happen. Mothers don't like their children to be complemented out of fear that the complements will attract the attention of disease-causing evil spirits. Few will reveal their real names out of fear of attracting evil spirits.

Many Yellow Leaves practice multiple-monogamy, with a woman changing husbands every five or six years or so and bringing her children to the next union. Men have traditionally worn a small piece of cloth to cover their groin while women often wore clothes cast off by other tribes. The Mlabri live in temporary ground-level shelters made of a wooden frame and covered with banana leaves. When the leaves wither and turn yellow the Mlabri abandon their homes and move to a different area to hunt for food. This cycle usually repeats itself every 5-15 days. Many can't recognize their own faces in photographs or mirrors.

The Mlabri reportedly have extensive knowledge of the medicinal properties of plants and herbs. They can reportedly treat poisonous snake bites and poisonous centipede bites and promote fertility with herbs. They reportedly have also developed effective herbal medicine that works as a contraceptive. When a member dies they are placed in a tree to be eaten by birds.

Mlabri Today

In 1991 some groups still lived in forest shelters in Nan although it is now believed that all populations have moved or been relocated to villages with at least minimal access to schools and health care. The once vast forest that was once largely deforested due to agriculture and logging and game is scarce. The hunter-gather life has all but disappeared. Many Yellow Leaves do some gathering and hunt sometimes with archaic rifles and spears but few migrate in a traditional fashion anymore. Most wear ragged clothes. Many work for other tribes. Because they have traditionally frowned upon material possessions sometimes they are not compensated for their work.

As few as 150 Mlabri were left in the late 1990s. At that time about 40 lived in the Rong Khwang district of Phrae under the control of American missionary Eugene Long, who called himself Boonyuen Suksaneh, in a village the Mlabri call Ban Boonyuen. In 1992 some Mlabri families abandoned Ban Boonyuen and settled in Hmong villages in Phrae and Nan. Another 100

or so lived in Nan. The Thai government set up the “Pre-Agricultural Development of Mlabri Society Project” to help them adapt to rural life without losing their culture. But as of late 1990s some of them were living in near slave-like conditions, their anti-materialistic leanings exploited by other peoples who exploited them for work and gave them little compensation. Some anthropologist believe some may still migrate in the traditional way. But most agree they will become assimilated into Thai society within one or two generations. [Source: Joe Cummings, Lonely Planet]

The greatest threat to Mlabri culture comes from the New Tribe Mission (NTB), a born-again Christian missionary group run by Eugene and Mary Long that has provided the tribe with health care, food and education but is also determined to convert them to Christianity. NTB has instructed the Mlabri how to raise crops; requires children who attend school to bath daily; conducts Bible lessons; and limits television watching time to 90 minutes in the evenings. Despite all this there has never been a known Christian among the Mlabri in either Laos or Thailand. NTB has worked among the Mlabri for more than 20 years in Thailand.

