

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PHENOMENON OF THE
LITERACY SKILLS OF UNSCHOOLED
MALES IN LAOS

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This is to certify that the

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ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PHENOMENON OF THE LITERACY SKILLS OF UNSCHOOLED MALES IN LAOS

By

Bernard D. Wilder

The Study

The study was made of a previously identified group of Lao males residing in the rural areas of northern Laos. This group, who could all read and write at the fourth grade level or higher as determined by a written test, had never attended school or, as in the case of 12 percent of the sample, had attended school for two years or less. Three types of information were sought.

1. Motivational--what were the factors that influenced individuals to become literate or to improve their literacy skills through means other than the formal school system;
2. Means--what were the means that were utilized to obtain the literacy skills equivalent to those of the fourth grade; and
3. Manifestations--what were the manifestations of the state of being literate in terms of the commonly-used variables to measure modernization tendencies present in "schooling" literate people?

The Method

The interview technique was used to obtain the quantitative data upon which the analysis of the manifestations of literacy skills was conducted. These same interviews contained information necessary to ascertain the motivation and the means for becoming literate. A comparison group was selected from the same villages to determine if differences existed between the literate unschooled group and the general population of the same area. The data pertaining to manifestations was quantified and analyzed through the use of computer techniques.

The Findings

Motivations

The motivations for becoming literate fell into three categories. The motivations for 23 percent of the group were oriented in the future. Half of these motivations were stated specifically in terms of a job that the respondent hoped to obtain. Half were vague as to the application that they had in mind but did specifically state that it was in the future. The motivations for 29 percent of the group were oriented in some function or specific use that did not contain any aspect of the future. The largest group 42 percent, had motivations that were social in nature. The social motivations were usually stated in terms of other members of society. A portion,

however, saw the skills of literacy as improving their social position without any reference to "others."

Means

The means by which the group became literate also fell into three categories. The largest group became literate through contact with the Buddhist wat. They first learned the writing system used to record the religious writings and then learned the Lao writing system. This group made up 62 percent of the sample. A portion of the group, 20 percent, attended government schools for two years or less and continued to improve their skills mainly through use until they could read at the fourth grade level or above. The smallest portion, 12 percent, learned completely on their own with only occasional help from friends.

Manifestations

Manifestations of the literacy skills were measured in terms of:

1. Attitude toward children's schooling
2. Economic level
3. Mass media exposure
4. Cosmopoliteness
5. Empathy
6. Political awareness
7. Achievement motivation

When all variables were considered, significant difference between the unschooled literate group and the comparison group was indicated. When the two groups were compared

in terms of the seven variables individually, a significant difference was indicated in only three of the seven comparisons. The unschooled literate group scored higher on all measures where significant differences were indicated.

It was hypothesized that the seven variables would correlate positively and significantly with each other and with the score on the literacy test. Of the 28 possible correlations, only eight were significant. All of these were positive.

The composition of the comparison group was utilized to obtain a schooled literate comparison group and an illiterate comparison group. The findings obtained by analyzing the means and correlations of those groups with the literate unschooled group led to several recommendations concerning the promotion of literacy and the role of literacy in development.

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Bernard D. Wilder

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To my wife, Shirley, and to the Lao
people, whom I hope this study
helps in some small way.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is an investigation of a group of Lao men who are literate. A significant factor in the attainment of their literacy skills is that they were not obtained in regular government schools. In fact, for the most part, they did not attend any school. This investigation sought to discover why they became literate, how they became literate and what, if any, difference the literacy skills have made in them as compared to other Lao males.

The first section of this chapter attempts to clarify the question, "What is literacy?" The second section is a brief discussion of the importance of literacy that will be expanded later. The final section is an introduction to the study itself.

What is Literacy?

Literacy is not easily defined. The task is further complicated because the meaning of literacy is influenced by the person considering it. Like the image in a mirror, which is a reflection of the viewer, the definition of literacy reflects the point of view and training of the viewer. To gain a more complete grasp of

its meaning, then literacy must be approached from several points of view.

Literacy and the Transmission
of Culture

In any society, three separate types of items are involved in transferring the cultural heritage from one generation to the next. These are (1) the physical and material items, such as agricultural tools and implements and cooking utensils, (2) the standardized ways of acting and behaving, such as handling children, ways of cooking and growing crops (which are only partially transmitted verbally, and (3) the most significant, which is the element transmitted entirely through words, ". . . and resides in the particular range of meanings and attitudes which members of any society attach to their verbal symbols, such as ones concept of time, distance, right and wrong and attitudes toward wealth."¹ In a non-literate society, one in which the language has not been committed to writing, the transmittal of the third element is done entirely through face to face contact, primarily by oral communication.

The process of passing the culture from generation to generation through oral means allows continuous

¹Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in Literacy in Traditional Societies, ed. by Jack Goody (Cambridge: University Printing House, 1968), p. 28.

modification to take place. Changes in its content are accompanied by the process of discarding, by forgetting, those aspects which are no longer relevant or necessary. Literate societies, on the other hand, cannot discard, absorb or change the past as easily as it has a permanent written record of its past. The presence of this record separates the past from the present and historical inquiry becomes possible. This makes possible the recognition of a difference between what was and what is, between what is supposed to be and what actually exists. A concept of change can emerge along with skepticism about the past and, more importantly, about the totality of the ideas received.²

In a society where the dominant cultural tradition is a literate one, the third aspect of cultural transmission referred to above is transmitted mostly through the printed word. The scale and complexity of the literate tradition often poses difficulties in transmission of the culture. But beyond the difficulties of scale and complexity, the fact that reading and writing are normally solitary pursuits means that, to the extent that the dominant cultural tradition is a literate one, the culture can be avoided. On the other hand, the oral transmission of culture is difficult to avoid, as illustrated by Goody

²Ibid., p. 68.

and Watt, who quote Bertha Philpott's 1931 work concerning Icelandic literature:

Printing so obviously makes knowledge accessible to all that we are inclined to forget that it also makes knowledge very easy to avoid A shepherd in an Icelandic homestead, on the other hand, could not avoid spending his evenings in listening to the kind of literature which interested the father. The result was a degree of really national culture such as no nation of today has been able to achieve.³

The literate culture, though more perfectly preserved, is also more easily avoided than the oral one. Goody maintains that, even when the literate culture is not avoided, its effects may be relatively shallow.⁴ The impact of a culture transmitted face to face is undoubtedly greater than that of one passed through literature. Laos is not a non-literate society, however, the impact of the orally transmitted culture is undoubtedly greater than that transmitted by its literature.

In actual fact, the majority of the peoples of the world have lived in neither a wholly literate nor a wholly non-literate situation, rather, during at least the past 2,000 years, have lived in cultures that have been influenced to some extent by the written word and by individuals who could read and write. The distinction must be made then between a society in which the population is largely illiterate, even though there is influence

³Ibid., p. 60.

⁴Ibid., p. 60.



present from the written word and a literate minority, and a society that is non-literate in which there is no influence from the written word.⁵

Laos has a literary tradition and is influenced by a literate minority as are most countries of the developing world which have been influenced by major religions-- Buddhism, Hinduism, Mohammedanism or Christianity. Laos, though the population is largely illiterate, has been influenced by a "literate" religion, by a Buddhist clergy that is itself largely literate and who, through the Buddhist hierarchy, the Sangha, have contact with neighboring villages, provinces and countries.

Literacy and the Individual

Literacy, basically the ability to read and write, provides a means or the capacity to process information. It provides ways to reach people through other than oral means. In fact, literacy is seen as a requisite to the efficient functioning of the mass media. Conversely, literacy skills have lost a very important application when they are possessed by people living in areas where print mass media is absent.

Lerner views literacy as a means of training for, or providing practice in, "vicarious thinking."⁶ This

⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶ Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society (New York: Free Press, 1958), p. 64.

ability is viewed as necessary to individual change. If one cannot rethink his own role, imagine himself doing something other than what he is presently doing, he will have difficulty in changing or innovating.

Doob in Communications in Africa, describes literacy as a means to:

1. Remove the disadvantages the illiterate has in dealing with a modern, literate world.
2. Improve the individual's morale when he discovers that he can learn to read and write.
3. Improve the individual's social status in the community by virtue of his having obtained the literacy skills.⁷

All three of these objectives presented by Doob are concerned with the condition of the individual illiterate who finds himself in a society that is either literate or, if not largely literate, then values the skills of literacy highly.

In a study published in 1964, Waisanen and Mendez found positive relationships between literacy skills and an understanding of the value of time, change orientation, levels of aspiration, ability to generalize, and attitude toward modernity. Though the relationships were established by correlational techniques and causality cannot be implied, the fact that literacy is found in association with these factors has been an indication that more than

⁷Leonard W. Doob, Communication in Africa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

the skills of reading and writing are associated with literacy.

Rogers and Herzog (1966) also found positive relationships between literacy and several individual modernization variables. The variables found in association with literacy were mass media exposure, empathy, cosmopolitiness, and agricultural innovation.

Literacy as a Continuous Variable

Literacy is a continuous variable. A person can possess the skills of literacy in any amount, from none at all to a complete command of the written form of the language. The term, however, has taken on the nature of a dichotomy. An individual is considered to be either literate or he is considered illiterate. In a population, a certain percentage as a whole is considered literate, the remainder illiterate. This is by no means the case.

The manner in which literacy has been measured and the standard by which a person has been determined literate has varied throughout the years and still varies from country to country. These measures themselves have tended to foster the notion that literacy is a dichotomous variable rather than a continuous one. The simplest method, often employed by census takers, is that of self-determination. A person is simply asked if he can read and write. If he says yes, he is recorded as literate.

If he says no, he is recorded as illiterate. Another method used to determine the presence of literacy skills is to ask the person to read and define a few words. A further refinement of this method of classification has been to substitute a sentence in place of the word list. Seldom has a test been used that provided a continuous literacy "scale" where the scale had any magnitude.

A General Definition Of Literacy

Attempts to establish a widely accepted standard or criterion of literacy originated with the United Nations. The Population Commission of the U.N. recommended in 1948 that literacy should be defined as the ability to read and to write a simple message in any language.⁸

An Expert Commission on the Standardization of Educational Statistics convened by UNESCO in 1951 defined literacy more in terms of the application of the skill, namely: ". . . a person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his everyday life."⁹ The stipulation that the simple statement should concern his "everyday life" introduces the elements of functionality and relativity. It

⁸United Nations, Population Commission, Third Session, 1948, Report (UN Doc. E/805), Lake Success, 1948 (mimeographed), p. 18.

⁹UNESCO, Expert Committee on the Standardization of Educational Statistics Report, 1951.

introduces functionality as the statement to be used in the test must concern his life--it therefore has some use to him. Relativity is introduced because what concerns the life of a subsistence farmer in the rural areas will not concern the life of an urban blue collar worker. Literacy, then, is not the same for all people.

The idea of literacy being a relative thing was expanded upon by William S. Gray in 1956. In his book, The Teaching of Reading and Writing, a UNESCO publication in their Fundamental Education Series, functional literacy is defined as follows:

. . . a person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group.¹⁰

This definition more explicitly states that literacy is a relative concept.

At the meeting of Experts on Literacy, convened in June, 1962 by UNESCO, it was unanimously agreed that:

. . . a person is literate when he has acquired the essential skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills toward his own and his communities development and for active participation in the life of the country.

¹⁰William S. Gray, The Teaching of Reading and Writing, An International Survey (Paris: UNESCO, 1956), p. 24.

In quantitative terms, the standard of attainment in functional literacy may be equated to the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic achieved after a set number of years of primary or elementary schooling.¹¹

This definition was accepted by the Ministers of Education attending the 1965 Teheran conference on the eradication of illiteracy.

The "set number of years of schooling" referred to in the 1962 definition was, and still is, generally considered to be four years. Four years was chosen more because it seems to be the number of years of schooling necessary to obtain permanent literacy than because it is the number of years needed to obtain functional literacy.

Literacy as Defined for this Study

The definition of literacy used in this study is based on the 1962 UNESCO definition. The definition was operationalized through the test used to measure the level of literacy skills. A reading comprehension test based on information that could be used to improve the villagers' everyday life provided the "functional" aspect. An average fourth grade attainment level on this test was determined by the performance on the test by students who had just completed the fourth grade. Their average level of

¹¹UNESCO, World Campaign for Universal Literacy, A report submitted to the UN Economic and Social Council, May 15, 1963, p. 39.



performance was taken as the level to which a person must perform before he is considered to be "functionally literate."

The Importance of Literacy

The importance of literacy in development will be discussed in detail in Chapter II. A brief introduction to the topic is given here to point up the importance of the topic studied.

The General Importance of Literacy

Broadly speaking, literacy has been considered to be essential to any country, regardless of the degree of development. It has gained most attention in those countries where the literacy rates are low and efforts to increase literacy rates are justified in terms of the development needs of the country. The necessity for widespread literacy skills among any population can be grouped under four main headings:

1. Literacy skills are necessary in the political sense to facilitate the integration of the population into a viable nation state where the government can carry out its program.
2. Economically, literacy skills are necessary to improve the quality of the human resources of the nation.
3. Socially, literacy skills are necessary to build a just, integrated social order.

4. Literacy skills are a necessary part of the guarantees to ensure human dignity. Literacy skills are a human right and literacy itself is a necessary condition for basic dignity.

The Importance of Literacy in Laos

The Government of Laos has become concerned with its problem of illiteracy. The solution of the literacy problem is believed to aid in the solution of other problems. For example, Laos has been fighting a civil war since 1954. It would be easier for the Royal Lao Government to communicate with and enlist support from the population if it were literate. Laos has a per capita income of something less than \$50 U.S. a year. The attainment of literacy skills among a sizeable proportion of the population is accepted as a prerequisite for economic development. Less than 50 percent of the population of Laos are ethnic Lao who speak the national language as a first language. Spreading literacy skills in the Lao language in this portion of the population is seen as a first step to the effective integration of the group into the mainstream of the national life. Laos has one of the highest malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, and infant mortality rates in the world. The improvement of health levels could be greatly facilitated through the use of printed media directed at a literate population.

Laos must find ways to change, adopt, and modify many of her practices and beliefs. Adult education, of which literacy is the base, is seen by many as the key that can begin this transformation. It is seen as axiomatic that literates will better understand and more effectively participate in development programs.

The Study

The government of Laos, like the governments of most of the developing countries, finds that it cannot provide universal education to her people at any level of schooling due to a lack of physical and personnel resources, to say nothing of finances. Although Laos spends approximately 15 percent of her national budget on formal education, far less than half of the elementary school-age children attend school. The enrollment in the first grade totals 40 percent of the total school enrollment at all levels. Sixth-grade enrollment is only 6.5 percent of the total enrollment and only .16 percent (361 students in 1969) are in the final year of secondary school.¹²

Introduction to the Study

In Laos, the literacy rate, as a percentage of the population, is increasing. However, the absolute number

¹²Royaume du Laos, "Bulletin de Statistique," 18^{eme} Annee Nos. 1 and 2.



of illiterates is probably also increasing.¹³ If a country wants high literacy rates but cannot afford universal education, it must look for other ways to make literacy skills available to those who do not have the opportunity to attend school.

Through a literacy study this researcher conducted in Laos in 1968, it was discovered that a relatively large percentage of the male population of northern Laos, who had not attended the government schools, was literate at the fourth grade level and above. Here were people who had become literate through means other than development resource absorbing elementary schools and adult literacy campaigns. What was the means of becoming literate outside the government schools? What were the effects of literacy obtained in this manner in terms of the commonly used modernization variables? What induces a man to become literate by means other than the regular government schools?

In Sayaboury Province of Laos, for example, one finds many isolated villages in valleys that are not served by a road or contain a river that will float a boat. They have had government schools only in the last decade, yet the average literacy rate for men ages 14 to 45 in these rural areas is about 40 percent.¹⁴ It was

¹³ UNESCO, Literacy, 1967-1969, Progress Achieved in Literacy Throughout the World (Paris: UNESCO, 1970), p. 3.

¹⁴ Bernard D. Wilder, "Literacy Levels of Various Sectors of the Population of Laos" (mimeographed), 1968.

hypothesized that most of these, who had never attended school, learned their literacy skills while living in Buddhist wats.

Every Lao who is a Buddhist, which is virtually 100 percent of the ethnic Lao, is supposed to spend a portion of his life, before marrying, living in a wat. If this tradition is followed, it puts every male Lao in a setting where it would be possible for him to acquire basic literacy skills at no cost to the government.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine a group of unschooled Lao who are literate at the fourth grade level or higher. They were examined to discover three facets of their literacy skills:

1. Their motivations for becoming literate;
2. The means by which they become literate;
3. The manifestations of their literacy skills.

At the time this field work was conducted, no one as yet had studied the effects of literacy in Laos. Mark Blaug, in his Trend Report on Literacy Research, asserts that this lack of studies is general throughout the world.

A great deal has been written on the importance of literacy and the teaching of literacy in the developing countries but little of this can be classified as research. The literature includes descriptions of literacy projects, practical advice for the teacher and administrator of literacy programs, and numerous generalities in rather dogmatic assertions about the role of literacy in promoting community development and economic growth; genuine

research, however, is conspicuously lacking The weakest area of all is that of evaluation of the short term and long term social and economic benefits of literacy in the sense of new values, attitudes and behavior patterns of adults who have acquired literacy.¹⁵

Rogers, in the Modernization of Peasants, supports this view:

Many publications are available on how to teach literacy but there is a dearth of reported research on how to measure literacy, its antecedents, and its consequence in the modernization of peasants.¹⁶

Literacy, then, is not only seen as one of the very important and scarce factors in development but also one whose effects are incompletely known.

It was hoped that the study would provide the country of Laos with more information concerning the phenomenon of the generation of literacy skills outside the formal schools.

Summary of the Study and Findings

The interview technique was used to obtain the quantitative data upon which the analysis of the manifestations of literacy skills was conducted. These same interviews contained the information necessary to ascertain the motivation and the means for becoming literate. A

¹⁵ Mark Blaug, "Functional Literacy in Developing Countries: A Trend Report on Current Research Based on a Selected Annotated Bibliography" (University of London, mimeographed, 1967).

¹⁶ Everett Rogers, Modernization Among Peasants (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969), p. 69.

randomly selected comparison group was utilized to determine if differences existed between the literate unschooled group and the general population.

The motivations to obtain literacy skills were socially-oriented in 42 percent of the sample, oriented toward an immediate function or use in 28 percent and in 23 percent of the sample were motivated by considerations that lay in the future.

The dominant principal means by which the unschooled literate group gained their literacy skills was in the Buddhist wat. This institution provided the means to become literate for 62 percent of the sample. The other two means, the government schools and independent, individual effort, accounted for 12 percent and 20 percent of the sample, respectively.

The manifestations of the literacy skills were not entirely as expected. It was hypothesized that the literate groups would score significantly higher than the randomly selected comparison group on all modernization variables. This was not the case. In some cases, the differences were not significant and in some, the randomly selected comparison group scored higher.

It was hypothesized that the modernization variables used to measure the effects of literacy skills would correlate positively with each other. The correlations were not all significant nor were they all positive.



The composition of the randomly selected comparison group was utilized to obtain a schooled literate comparison group and an illiterate comparison group. The findings obtained by analyzing the means and correlations of those groups with the literate unschooled group led to several recommendations that are presented at the end of the dissertation.

CHAPTER II

LITERACY AND DEVELOPMENT

It has been previously stated that literacy is a term that takes on meaning only in relation to a particular social and cultural setting. The same can be said of the term "development." When one sees "development," he is immediately tempted to ask, "what kind of development?" Development from what, toward what? Who is defining "development?" In reviewing and reporting on the literature that pertains to literacy in the process of development, the writer is forced to accept what has been written using the interpretation of "development" the literature has indicated. We cannot impose our own definition of development in interpreting the statements of others.

This chapter will discuss literacy and several aspects of development. A brief discussion of the role of literacy in individual development will be followed by a consideration of literacy in traditional societies. Literacy is then discussed in relation to its historical role in development, its role in economic development, political development and social development.

Literacy and the Individual

Illiteracy, or the lack of literacy skills, is looked at as the root cause of certain psychological traits that impede the individual's ability to participate in the modernization process. The UNESCO Regional Office of Education in Bangkok pointed this out to participants in a recent conference on literacy training.

To be illiterate means not only to be cut off from communication through the printed word, that ever fresh source of information, but also to perceive, comprehend, think, and reason in a very different way to a person who lives in a world submerged by the written word and symbols.¹

The effects of literacy upon the individual are part of the main body of findings of this study. Some of the contents of the literature are presented in Chapter V as background for the individual factors utilized in this study. Significant relationships have been found between these factors and literacy in past studies. This is the justification for their use as measures of manifestations of literacy skills in the individual in this study.

Literacy skills provide the individual with an additional way to process information. With these skills, the individual no longer must rely entirely on oral communication. Literacy skills not only open up the world of

¹UNESCO, Regional Office of Education in Asia, Literacy and Development Introduction to Functional Literacy (Bangkok: UNESCO, 1969), p. 111.

written knowledge, they also give the individual a measure of control over that knowledge so he can regulate the rate at which he receives it, he can preserve the communication in time and transmit it from place to place. This ability to communicate is central to the other effects that literacy has been said to have on politics, economics and individual modernization.

Lerner states that:

Literacy is indeed the basic personal skill that underlies the whole modernizing sequence. With literacy, people acquire more than the simple skill of reading. The very act of achieving distance and control over a formal language gives people access to the world of vicarious experience and trains them to use the complicated mechanism of empathy which is needed to cope with this world.²

Lerner sees the skills of literacy as opening up the world of mass media and as an aid in the development of empathy which he deems necessary for modernization to proceed.

A psychological trait of the illiterate that has been pointed out is:

... his thought remains concrete. He thinks in images and not in concepts. His thought is, in fact, a series of images, juxtaposed or in sequence, and hence it rarely proceeds by induction or deduction. The result is that knowledge acquired in a given situation is hardly ever "transferred" to a different situation to which it could be

² Daniel Lerner, "Toward a Communication Theory of Modernization," in *Communication and Political Development*, ed. by Lucian W. Pye (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 64.

applied, thereby restricting effective opportunities for progress.³

The above concept is not dissimilar to Lerner's "empathy." In summary, literacy is a personal, individual skill. When examining the macro effects of literacy, one should not lose sight of the fact that they stem from the effect that literacy has on individuals.

Literacy and Traditional Societies

The term "traditional society" is no easier nor less relative a term to define than "literacy." As used here, it refers to relatively unchanging societies, ones with a predominant peasant class.⁴ It is also taken to be a society that is toward the low end of a continuum measuring any of the standard socio-economic variables. It is generally agricultural with a largely subsistence economy. We are assuming that it is not a non-literate society though the population is probably largely illiterate.⁵

Literacy in the traditional society usually is found among the elite and the clergy. Being a scarce commodity, literacy is usually quite valuable. Further,

³ UNESCO, Literacy and Development . . . , p. 16.

⁴ Rogers, Modernization Among Peasants, p. 20.

⁵ The reference to a non-literate society and an illiterate population is based on Goody and Watt, Literacy in Traditional Societies, pp. 1-12, 28-33.

its use is often limited to a small number of functions, which are not unrelated to the types of persons possessing the skills.

Literacy skills in traditional societies are most prevalent in the religious bodies and the governing bodies. Tambiah, in studying literacy in a traditional Thai village, found that the location where literacy skills could be learned and the place where many of the literate people were to be found was the Buddhist priesthood.⁶ This was the only institution where literacy skills were utilized to any large extent until recent times when it became necessary for the village headman to work with the central government. In the Moslem and Hindu countries, the early source of literacy skills was also the religious institutions.

It is not surprising, considering the source from which literacy skills originate, that their major use is in the religious life of the community. In Buddhist countries, reading and writing are considered essential for recording religious stories and prayers. In Thailand and Laos, the wat is the repository for information on a variety of subjects. One can find written information on such things as medical and pharmaceutical knowledge, the

⁶S. J. Tambiah, "Literacy in a Buddhist Village in North-East Thailand," in Literacy in Traditional Societies, ed. by Jack Goody (Cambridge: University Printing House, 1968), p. 93.

magical and other animist ceremonial texts, folk tales containing much of the history of the peoples and a host of other topics.

What was not found in the written records of the traditional Thai village studied by Tambias is equally interesting. He found that techniques employed in the arts and crafts and the agricultural practices were not recorded. He did not find recorded the law or legal framework of the Thai community.

An interesting question to pose is why literacy did not become more widespread in traditional societies. Goody describes five basic factors that restrict literacy in a traditional society. As described below, some of these apply to the Lao situation and some do not.⁷

1. Tendency to secrecy--magical texts were often kept secret as a means of protecting a monopoly.

In Laos the importance seems to be on the utterance of the prayers and chants and not in understanding them. The "books" which were available in a village were usually those found in the wat. These are public property and there did not seem to be a conscious attempt to maintain any form of control over them that could be interpreted as a tendency to secrecy.

2. The Guru tradition--access to reading is channeled through a particular type of person. In India, from where Goody obtained this term, the number of people who can teach is limited. They receive pay for their services.

In Laos, the number of teachers is also limited but there is no pay required and any

⁷Goody and Watt, eds., Literacy in Traditional Societies, p. 17.

male can enter the wat and make use of the services of the monk teachers at no cost. Not only will the instruction be free but, as a member of the wat, the community will provide for all of his physical needs.

3. Emphasis on rote learning--This is seen as an especially restricting factor because of the emphasis on repetition of the content and not development of the skill.

The rote method is used almost exclusively in Laos and, if this is indeed a restriction, Laos is as restricted as any by this factor.

4. Materials upon which writing is done--The two pertinent factors of the writing materials are convenience and cost. In some societies, writing materials have been prohibitively expensive. In others, it has been in a form, such as clay tablets, that restrict its use.

Laos suffers from neither of these disadvantages. Writing can be cheaply and conveniently accomplished on split bamboo. The writing is done by scratching the bamboo and then rubbing soot into the scratch to make it legible.

5. Nature of the writing system--The writing system of China requires the memorization of 3,000 ideographic symbols before basic literacy is attained. A scholar must learn 30,000 to 50,000 symbols.

The Lao writing system is completely phonetic and easy to learn. The nature of the writing system does not restrict literacy in Laos.

An additional important factor pertinent to Laos is that there must be a surplus in the economy to support the non-producers while they are learning to read and write and to support those who teach. The agricultural production must be sufficient to allow those individuals who make their living from non-agricultural pursuits to draw on the surplus. In Laos, there was probably insufficient surplus to support those who would be the learners, their teachers and the producers of written materials.



The individual who possesses literacy in the traditional society is in an advantageous position. Those who are illiterate must seek him to perform those services that require literacy. Some occupations require literacy skills, e.g., in Thailand and Laos, if one is to become a practitioner of the traditional "folk medicine," he must first become literate as the techniques of treatment and pharmaceutical formulas are recorded in palm leaf books. At the point that the village begins to have contact with the outside world, the literate person is in a position to control and profit from that contact. His literacy skills give him prestige and a social position above that of the rest of the community. Though there is prestige in being literate, there is no social stigma to being illiterate as would be the case if one were illiterate in a largely literate society.

The Historical Role of Literacy in Development

One of the ways used to determine the role of literacy in the development of nations has been the comparing of rates of literacy with various other indicators of development. Among the first and most widely published to take this approach were C. Arnold Anderson and Mary J. Bowman. In general, Bowman and Anderson found:

. . . the data appear to support a generalization reached also by cross-sectional analysis of contemporary societies; about 40 percent of adult literacy or of primary enrollment is a threshold for economic development.⁸

The generalization was based on examination of literacy data and the development patterns of England, the United States, Japan, France and Russia.

Bowman and Anderson, in writing of a later period, the decade of the fifties, compared the per capita gross national product of various countries with a number of educational indicators. Among these indicators was adult literacy. They found that the countries that had literacy rates below 30 percent had per capita GNP incomes of less than \$200 with the exception of oil-rich British North Borneo.⁹ All countries with literacy rates over 70 percent had a per capita GNP of over \$200. They also found that only three of 24 countries that had literacy rates over 90 percent had a per capita GNP of less than \$500. Of the remaining middle range, the authors state, "the data strongly suggests that rising literacy alone contributes very little to development over the range from 30 to 70 percent literate."¹⁰ These findings seem to imply that

⁸C. Arnold Anderson and Mary Bowman, eds., Education and Economic Growth (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965), p. 347.

⁹Mary Jean Bowman and C. Arnold Anderson, "Concerning the Role of Education in Development," in Old Societies and New States, ed. by Clifford Geertz (New York: The Free Press, 1963), p. 252.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 254.



countries with high rates of literacy are always poor, that countries with literacy rates of from 30-70 percent may or may not be poor and that largely literate countries are almost always rich. A high GNP might not be caused by a high literacy rate but at least when a country gains a high GNP, it can afford to eradicate illiteracy.

Carlo M. Cipolla, Literacy and Development in the West, used primary data obtained from European military recruitment papers, marriage registers, and legal documents to determine the literacy rates upon which he based his findings. Cipolla holds that some relationships between literacy and socio-economic conditions are so obvious that they need not be stressed.

Intuitively, we relate levels of literacy to degrees of urbanization, type of employment, and levels of income, and no one is surprised to find that, as a rule, there are more illiterates in the countryside than in the urban areas, in poor countries than in wealthy ones, among peasants than among craftsmen. But one must always be ready to admit that many other factors also operate and, on occasion, play a prominent role.¹¹

By way of illustrating the latter, Cipolla points out that 16th century Switzerland had a high degree of literacy but was not particularly wealthy. Further, that Scotland had a degree of literacy in 1859 that England did not match

¹¹ Carlo M. Cipolla, Literacy and Development of the West (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 18.

until 1886 yet Scotland was definitely poorer and less industrialized.¹² This and other cautions expressed by Cipolla concerning the role of literacy in development should not cloud the broad-based findings of the importance of literacy.

Had literacy remained the well-guarded monopoly of a few mandarins, European society would hardly have developed in the way that it did. The Industrial Revolution was not the product of one or two high priests of science; it was the outcome of the daily down-to-earth tinkering on the part of a number of literate and amateur scientists.¹³

The point in the process of industrial development where only basic literacy was required to sustain growth was passed in the latter part of the 19th century. From about this point, the development of more educational opportunities became essential.

Until approximately the 1670's, a satisfactory economic growth could be supported by the apprentice system and by amateur scientists. But since the last two decades of the nineteenth century, economic growth has become more and more dependent upon organized scientific research and organized technical and scientific training.¹⁴

Cipolla points out in the final pages of his book that there are several paths to development and one should be cautious in trying to apply too literally the development patterns of the past. Further, the world today is a far different place to be a developing nation in than the

¹²Ibid., p. 18.

¹³Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 104.

world in which England and the rest of Europe found themselves when they were industrializing.¹⁵

Adams and Bjork support Cipolla's findings concerning the general patterns of the development of literacy and industry in England. They compare the development of Japan with England and find that, whereas there was little increase in literacy rates in England in the 200 years prior to the beginning of industrial development, there was a rapid increase in literacy in Japan in the years immediately preceding the Meiji restoration and the start of rapid development.¹⁶ A common feature of both countries at the start of development was a literacy rate of 30-40 percent.

Concerning the role of literacy in Japan's development, Adams states:

The extent to which a fairly widespread base of literacy during the early decades of the Meiji period contributed to the productivity of labor is not known. Presumably, literacy allowed some laborers an opportunity to become foremen in factories. Possibly some improvements in agricultural technology was transmitted to the farmer through the written word. But this is largely conjecture. What literacy did as a minimum was to prepare young workers academically and to some extent psychologically for the training programs being established by many industrial and commercial concerns.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁶ Don Adams and Robert Bjork, Education in Developing Areas (New York: David McKay Co., 1969), p. 32.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 54.



Kamerschen, an economist writing in the journal, Rural Sociology, proposes a "threshold theory" that is not inconsistent with Anderson and Bowman, Cipolla, and Adams and Bjork. He calls into question the assumption of a simple linear relationship between literacy and socioeconomic development. He attempted to establish a relationship between industrialization and literacy through the use of regression equations. The results were not conclusive but tended to support the thesis that literacy rates seem to predict the degree of development up to a certain level. Beyond this, literacy rates do not predict, but either tend to support, do not discriminate at all, or vary negatively with the degree of development.¹⁸

These historical studies seem to indicate that a certain degree of literacy is necessary for development. The take-off level in the past seemed to be around 30-40 percent. It has not yet been learned what degree of literacy is required in what groups to sustain development in the presently developing world. After examining the process of development in the presently developing nations, it would seem that universal schooling or universal literacy are by no means necessary for development to begin and that a balance between literacy expenditures and other development expenditures needs to be maintained. If

¹⁸David R. Kamerschen, "Literacy and Socio-economic Development," Rural Sociology, XXXIII (June, 1968), 187.

either is out of proportion, the result may be a retardation of development. The point of balance is a subject needing further research and explanation.

Literacy and Economic Development

In August of 1969, UNESCO convened a panel of experts for a workshop on the evaluation of literacy projects. One topic of discussion was the UNESCO "Handbook for the Evaluation of Functional Literacy Projects." This manual suggests that evaluation be conducted on four levels; the individual, the work unit, the regional (total region a project encompasses) and the national. The workshop concluded that such an ambitious evaluation is neither wise nor possible:

Evaluation should focus primarily on the effects of functional literacy on the participants and their families, secondarily on its effects in the work units and not at all on the impossible task of measuring its effect at the levels of the region (e.g., whole project area) and country.¹⁹

The position taken by this panel would preclude studies on the role of literacy in economic development at the national level. The available studies concerning literacy and development are mostly historical or, if current, are based on small units of analysis. It appears that no one has yet conducted an experimental study on the national level that considers the effects of literacy on economic

¹⁹Freddie Wood, The Evaluation of Functional Literacy Projects (London: London University, 1969), p. 13.

development. Other than the historical studies presented, treatments of literacy and economic development are couched in general terms. This literature usually deals with the economics of literacy as it affects the improvements of the quality of the manpower. Blaug, in considering the economics of literacy states:

The effect of literacy is to provide people with an additional means of communication. In this way, literacy may contribute to economic development by (1) raising the productivity of new literates; (2) raising the productivity of individuals working in association with literates--the so-called spillover benefits or literacy; (3) expediting the flow of general knowledge of individuals (say, instructions about health and nutrition) and thus reducing the cost of transmitting useful information; (4) stimulating the demand for vocational training and technical education; (5) acting as a device for selecting the more able and enhancing their occupational mobility; and, finally and perhaps most important, (6) strengthening economic incentives, meaning the tendency for people to respond positively to a rise in the rate of reward for their efforts. This is not an exhaustive list of all the direct and indirect economic benefits of promoting literacy in poor countries but it seems to cover the more obvious points made in the literature.²⁰

Blaug goes on to point out that those who list the benefits of elementary schools or secondary schools offer an almost identical list. The real problem is to choose between more adult education or more formal education for children and youth.²¹

²⁰ Mark Blaug, "Literacy and Economic Development," The School Review, LXXIV (Winter, 1966), 394.

²¹ Ibid., p. 394.

Literacy affects economic development through the individual. It is the effect it has on the individual and the way literacy changes individual behavior that determines what overall effects literacy will have. Myrdal, in Asian Drama, sees literacy as another means of communication.

Modern technology in government and administration, as well as in agriculture and industry, is continually increasing the need for a high degree of literacy among the people. Generally speaking, literacy opens up avenues of communication that otherwise remain closed; it is a prerequisite for the acquisition of other skills and the development of more rational attitudes. Literacy cannot be the entire purpose of education even at the elementary level but all the other elements in the complex of changes to be accomplished by education are related to literacy, though not in a simple and clear-cut way.²²

Studies in Russia and India indicate that the production of workers rises from 12-16 percent after the worker had attended literacy courses.²³ Benefits also accrue to the individual who obtains a first job or a better position by virtue of his literacy training. Benefits in increased wages to the individual are considered by economists to equal the benefits accruing to the national economy.

The economic benefits of literacy can also be considered by noting the obstacles or barriers that impede

²²Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama (New York: Pantheon, 1968), p. 1668.

²³H. M. Phillips, Literacy and Development (Switzerland: UNESCO, 1970), p. 17.

development that are to be overcome by literacy training. These barriers carry no quantifiable measure of negative value in their impediment of development. The benefits of literacy, for example, might be in helping to insure a stable government, a factor which is necessary for economic development but which may not be figured in a cost benefit analysis.

The role of literacy in development in the rural areas can be central to the transformation of these areas and the development of agriculture. The problems of the rural areas require change of all types. A publication of the UNESCO Regional Office of Education in Asia suggests that:

There will be no development at the village level unless the individual innovates--unless in the future he selects the highest yielding varieties, employs chemical fertilizers or insecticides, introduces more advanced equipment, rationalizes his cultural practices, joins a co-operative . . . "To innovate, to do what he did not do before, that individual must learn."²⁴

Literacy skills provide the individual with a means through which he can become aware of innovations and provide access to materials from which he may learn.

Myrdal places emphasis on the fact that literacy for the sake of literacy is not a valid goal in itself.

The ideologist of the community development movement starts out with the observation that "literacy is not enough." Literacy, they say, must be used for something of practical importance; merely "mechanical

²⁴UNESCO, Literacy and Development . . . , p. 17.

literacy" is of no significance for a country's development. This is correct, especially as people have little incentive to acquire literacy unless it will be used for a practical purpose, and the skills they acquire are likely to desert them unless so used. The observation that literacy has little value in itself and that education should be directed toward imparting knowledge, skills, and attitudes of practical importance, is naturally equally relevant to teaching in the primary schools--indeed, to teaching at all levels.²⁵

Though literacy has little value by itself, it should be reiterated it might very well be the facilitating factor without which other development efforts are wasted. It may not be a sufficient factor but it is certainly a necessary one.

The role of literacy as a facilitating factor in the agricultural sector is stated very well in a recent UNESCO document:

Every analysis of the modernization of the agricultural sector comes down to a two-fold conclusion: the need for vocational training and the need to raise the level of knowledge of the farmers. Functional literacy provides for these two essentials. It is not necessarily a matter of literacy. The same approach applies to populations with partial schooling. It is more a question of measures aimed at equipping individuals intellectually and bringing them to a level where their knowledge becomes usable from the technical point of view. Finally, this kind of functional literacy work can be defined as a pre-agricultural extension operation, a precondition for the success of extension work proper.²⁶

²⁵ Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, p. 1687.

²⁶ UNESCO, *Literacy and Development . . .*, p. 18.

To restate the above, literacy is a precondition to most economic development efforts. There is a certain degree of development that can be obtained with an illiterate population but there is also a ceiling above which one cannot rise.

Literacy and Political Development

Lucian Pye set forth some of the minimum considerations that should constitute development in the purely political sense:

With the modernization of a polity should go an increase in the capabilities of the society to mobilize its people for national efforts. Modernization also implies a widening of participation in ways which affects the decision-making process. Also, in a developed polity, there should be a wide range of interests, all freely represented and well-rooted in the social and economic life of the society as a whole.

We might further characterize a modern political process as one capable of coping with change in the sense of being able to purposefully direct change and not just be buffeted by social forces. There are also such matters as stability, orderly transfer of power, respect for constituted authority, adherence to legal procedures, and a clear recognition of the rights and duties of citizens.²⁷

Coleman set forth three areas in which education and Politics have a fairly clear relationship.²⁸ These are in Political socialization, political recruitment and

²⁷ Lucian Pye, ed., Communication and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), P. 18.

²⁸ James S. Coleman, ed., Education and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), P. 18.



political integration. Political socialization occurs in many places and ways, in the school, in the home, through the media and through voluntary organizations. Literacy, though not a determinant of any direction of political socialization, provides one more avenue through which political socialization can be realized. The utilization of this avenue can be conscious and directed, almost a form of thought control, or it can be the type of process where many aspects of a situation are presented from which the individual makes his own choices.

Political recruitment to Coleman refers to the identification and recruitment of political elites. Literacy's role here is the same as the role of any form of education. Political integration refers to bringing into the national polity the total spectrum of society. To quote from Coleman again:

Not only must more literacy, which makes a modern communication system possible be developed but so also must the rational-secular component in attitudes which are essential for individual participation in the modernization process. Literacy, as well as attitudes congruent with modernization is crucial for effective political "penetration" by government as well as for meaningful citizenship.²⁹

Of the three main areas of development--economic development, political development and social development--the area of political development depends most heavily on

²⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

a literate and aware citizenry. Political development demands an informed citizenry; one which can understand and intelligently express views on issues; one that can be communicated with through the mass media; one that can make its views known to the governing bodies. It is hard to conceive of a representative government functioning effectively without literate citizenry. Lenin stated it very simply when he said that without literacy: ". . . there can be no politics, there can be only rumors, gossip and prejudice."

Literacy and Social Development

The initial problem in dealing with the topic of literacy and social development is in defining just what is meant by social development. In the Review of Educational Research, Don and Janet Adams explain some of the problems in defining the term in their selection entitled "Education and Social Development."

A discussion of social development involves certain problems of definition not present to the same degree in the use of the terms "economic development" and "political development." The boundaries of the term "social" are vague and there is confusion as to when a particular institution or activity is economic and when it is social. In UNESCO discussions of development, for example, social development has been contrasted with "traditional," "static," and "pre-industrial" states of society and thus defined in terms of that social change which results from

industrialization and the impact of scientific and technological advance.³⁰

The Adams's go on to point out some of the various definitions of the term "social development." These include the definition of Adams and Farrel as "that kind of social change which is marked by emphasis on planning mechanisms to achieve desired types of complexity"; Aron and Hoselitz as "increasing moralization of human behavior and thought"; and also that of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development which defined social as "everything that refers directly to the conditions in which people live." We shall treat several aspects of social development briefly as they are embodied in the several definitions of social development.³¹

One measure of social development is the degree of social mobility and the extent of social participation. Both are enhanced by the spread of literacy. Literacy makes more people eligible for those positions in society reserved for those possessing the skills. To some extent, the overall effects of education can be accrued by those who become literate, possibly not directly but by virtue of the fact that other learning and education become available to the individual when he becomes literate.

³⁰Don and Janet Adams, "Education and Social Development," Review of Educational Research, XXXVIII, No. 3 (June, 1968), p. 243.

³¹Ibid., p. 244.

Literacy also contributes to the differentiation of individuals. As all people do not pursue education with the same degree of success and opportunities go to the most successful, literacy, just by presenting opportunities tends to facilitate differentiation. In this manner, literacy training also can contribute to the identification and training of the elites in the same way that any educational activity would.

The social phenomenon of urbanization is found in association with higher levels of literacy. The degree to which high literacy rates contribute to urbanization, or that urbanization causes increased literacy rates, is unknown. That there is a relationship between them is unquestioned. The pattern of this relationship varies in the three main areas where illiteracy prevails--Africa, South America and Asia. It is usually claimed that not only are the urban dwellers more literate than their rural cousins but that the rural dwellers who migrate to the urban areas are more literate than the average population. One researcher in Africa, however, found that in his urban sample, those that had emigrated from the rural areas were no more literate than those who remained.³²

Literacy is also hypothesized to have a strong effect upon efforts to control birth rates. That the new

³²Mark Blaug, The Role of Education in Enlarging the Exchange Economy in Middle Africa: The English Speaking Countries (Paris: UNESCO, 1964).

functional literacy campaigns can have an effect on birth rates is yet to be proved. It seems reasonable to assume that literacy training coupled with enough adult basic education to have the same effect as four years of schooling could claim the same effect as proponents do of formal schooling. Adams makes the point that:

Educational programs aimed at fertility control will probably be most effective in areas of high fertility, where literacy rates exceed 50 percent and school enrollment ratios of those between 5 and 19 years of age approach or have passed 50 percent.³³

One might question the rates of literacy and school enrollment that Adams deems necessary to affect birth rates but the effect of literacy and schooling are still present. If one considers that education is an indicator of social development, as does UNESCO, then the role of literacy and literacy programs in social development is self-evident. By making education of some type available to a larger spectrum of the population, the objectives of social development are being served. Education here is not only the cause of social development, its spread is social development. The social objective of providing a more equal opportunity to obtain education is also served, although a parent might view this differently than the planning official. A villager who values education of the formal variety for his children more than he values

³³ Adams and Bjork, Education in Developing Areas, p. 42.

literacy training for himself will not, from his point of view, see as much "social development value" in his own "adult" education as an educational planner might. In fact, he might look ahead and reason that, if he is getting adult literacy training, that is what his children must wait for and hence they are being deprived of an opportunity for the formal education that leads to positions of higher social status. He might, then, view literacy training for himself in the opposite light from the development planner.

It must also be pointed out that the social development aspect of literacy programs might not always be positive. Literacy and the learning that it brings into the illiterate community and home will usually be at variance with the well-established social and cultural patterns. At times, this might cause conflicts and ruptures in the social group. A complete unknown is what effect the new selective functional literacy projects of UNESCO will have on the fabric of the community when certain villagers are selected to receive literacy training and others are excluded using criteria that in all probability the villagers will not understand.

CHAPTER III

SCENE OF THE STUDY: THE NATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The relationship between literacy and several aspects of development has been discussed in general terms. It is now appropriate that we focus on the historical and cultural setting in Laos, the scene of the study.

The first section of the chapter will deal with the historical development of the country of Laos and its people. Its purpose is to provide some insights into the traditions and practices developed in its early history, to describe the impact of the French colonial period and to give a brief description of the events since independence. The second section describes the development of education in three distinct periods of Lao history. The first period begins in 1358 when Buddhism was introduced and extends to 1893 when the country became a protectorate of the French. The second period (1893 to 1946) is the period of French colonization. The third period is from independence to the present.

Geographic Characteristics of Laos

The Kingdom of Laos is the least developed of the three countries that comprised the former French colony of Indo-China. Laos is a landlocked country bordering Burma, the Peoples Republic of China, North Vietnam and Thailand. Shaped like an elongated porkchop, Laos contains about 91,000 square miles and is approximately the size of Idaho or Great Britain.

The western border is marked by the Mekong River. The eastern border is marked by the Annamite Mountains. The whole of the northern part of the country is generally characterized by mountainous terrain and narrow steep-sided valleys. The Mekong River, which marks the long western boundary with Thailand, is the key geographic feature in Laotian life. The water shed of the river drains most of Laos, provides access to Thailand and carries much of the north-south flow of freight. It also provides fish and its flood plains form the riceland for most of the southern two-thirds of the country. Laos is a tropical country whose climate is monsoonal in nature with rather well-defined wet and dry seasons.

Brief History of Laos

Lao folk history relates that the Lao people originally came from the valley of Dien Bien Phu in what is now northwestern North Vietnam. One group are said to



to have migrated to the area around Luang Prabang and were the ancestors of the present Lao people. This movement of the Lao has some historical basis and is thought to have taken place around the eleventh century.¹ This movement was one of a series made by the T'ai peoples of whom the Lao are a sub-group. A similar migration pattern took place in what is presently Thailand, the western part of North Vietnam and the eastern part of Burma during the same general period.

Little is known of the history of Laos prior to the mid-14th century. It is known that at the end of the 12th century, the Khmer Empire stretched along the banks of the Mekong as far north as the present administrative capital of Vientiane. In the latter part of the 13th century, the Siamese Kingdom of Sukhothai gained control of the northern half of Laos. The Kingdom of Sukhothai and the Khmer Empire at that point controlled all the territory making up what is Laos today and maintained control until the mid-14th century.²

Emergence of the Country of Laos

Contemporary Laotian historians trace the beginnings of modern Laos to 1358. The events leading up to

¹Hugh Toye, Laos: Buffer State or Battle Ground (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 11.

²See Toye, Breval, Dommen, Manich or Viravong.

this significant date began in 1316 with the birth of a son, named Fa Ngum, to the crown prince of the Kingdom of Luang Prabang. Fa Ngum's father took his family into exile with him to the Khmer capital at Angkor. There, Fa Ngum was brought up, educated, and married to one of the Khmer princesses..

The Khmer rulers were interested in ensuring that the area to their north be a stable and friendly land. To this end, the king of the Khmer's outfitted Fa Ngum with an army of 10,000 men and set him north to reclaim his birth-right, to unify the whole of Laos under one ruler, and to proclaim himself that ruler. With Fa Ngum begins the modern recorded history of Laos.

In 1358, after a campaign of 15 years, Fa Ngum was victorious over his grandfather, ruler of the northernmost kingdom. He proclaimed himself king and named his state Lang Xang Hom Khao, meaning "Land of a Million Elephants and White Parasol."³ He became the first ruler to ever unite the various states of Laos. He ultimately brought under his control all of what is presently Laos, the entire Korat Plateau (northeast Thailand), much of the northern part of Thailand, including Chiangmai and Chiangrai, and the northwest section of North Vietnam.

³Rene de Berval, ed., Kingdom of Laos, The Land of the Million Elephants and the White Parasol (Saigon: France-Asie, 1959), p. 34.

After Fa Ngum had established control of Laos, a Buddhist mission was sent north from the Khmer Kingdom. This mission of 10,000 men and women, including priests, scientists, artists, scribes and their families, was the first large-scale infusion of Buddhist influence into Laos.⁴

After Fa Ngum, until the middle of the sixteenth century, the rulers were essentially men of peace and neither the power nor the territory of Laos was maintained.⁵ The outer portions of the kingdom were quickly lost or came to owe partial allegiance to other states. This period to 1558 was generally peaceful except for one short invasion by the Vietnamese in 1478. The capital of Luang Prabang was burned but the force shortly withdrew to Vietnam.

In 1558, a Burmese force occupied Chiangmai, thus threatening Luang Prabang. The King of Laos, Sethathirat, failed in an attempt to dislodge the invaders and hence moved his capital to Vientiane where it was safer. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, the Burmese succeeded in capturing Vientiane but managed only limited control for a ten-year period. The Lao kings returned to full power and quickly restored the former kingdom.

⁴ Maha Sila Viravong, History of Laos (New York: U.S. Joint Public Research Service, 1958), p. 37.

⁵ Toye, Laos . . . , p. 5.

The Lao Kingdom reached its peak during the 17th century. In 1637, Souligna Vongsa came to the throne and he was to remain there until 1694. The country prospered and the first European visitors came to the country during this period. They were struck by its wealth and splendor.

A dispute over succession after his death in 1694 ended in 1711 with the kingdom breaking into three parts--Luang Prabang, Vientiane and Champassak. Luang Prabang first turned to China and then to Siam for protection. Vientiane became a vassal of Vietnam. Champassak turned to Siam and the Khmer kingdom to the south. The kingdoms alternately fought each other and their neighbors. In 1753, the Burmese overran Luang Prabang. In 1771, they sacked the capital again. In 1778, Siamese seized and pillaged Vientiane and obtained recognition of their sovereignty by Luang Prabang. In 1828, the Siamese depopulated the kingdom of Vientiane. Its people were resettled in Siam. The kingdom literally ceased to exist. Luang Prabang regained its authority over Xieng Khouang from the Vietnamese in 1851 only to lose it again to the Ho peoples who invaded from Yunnan in 1872. In 1883, the Siamese intervened militarily in the western parts of Luang Prabang.

The low point in Lao history was reached in the latter part of the nineteenth century. After 200 years of factious wars and external invasion, the once proud

kingdom of Lang Xang was still split in three smaller kingdoms, one of which, The Kingdom of Vientiane, had literally ceased to exist. The southern kingdom of Champassak owed its existence to Siamese protection. The kingdom of Luang Prabang was occupied in the east by the Vietnamese, the north by the Chinese and the west by the Siamese. To the south, lay the empty Kingdom of Vientiane which served only as a buffer zone between the mutually hostile peoples of Siam and Vietnam. Into this situation the French intervened for the first time in 1887 with a mission comprised of a postal service official and two aides.

The Advent of the French

France did not have to "conquer" the Kingdom of Luang Prabang. A French postal official, Pavie, was established as a vice-consul in Luang Prabang by agreement with the Siamese in 1887. Pavie arrived in Luang Prabang just prior to an invasion from the north. He persuaded the aging king to flee the capital in the face of the invasion by the Chinese and thus was credited with saving the king's life. This gave him a great advantage over his Thai adversaries.

. . . August Pavie is generally credited by the French with winning Laos for France by a "conquest of hearts." With apparently genuine sympathy for the appealing qualities of his "gentle and carefree

Laotians," Pavie convinced the royal court of Luang Prabang that its best interests lay in accepting French protection.⁶

The central Lao kingdom of Vientiane came under French control by the exercise of the Vietnamese claim that, by previous treaties, the kingdom was a Vietnamese vassal.

Through a series of progressively demanding treaties, backed up by gunboat diplomacy in the Chao Phya River near Bangkok, the French managed, in the period from 1888 to 1907 to establish the boundaries of Laos as they exist today. At the time, according to Dommen, Laos was comprised of the following entities:

1. The Kingdom of Luang Prabang, which included the present provinces of Luang Prabang, Sayaboury, Sam Neua, and the two southern districts of Phong Saly. The monarch retained his royal title and prerogatives under French protection, but in all important respects, its administration was controlled by French officials.
2. The defunct Kingdom of Vientiane, which had not had a monarch since its plunder by a Siamese army in 1827.
3. The defunct Kingdom of Xieng Khouang, which had been annexed by the Vietnamese in 1832.
4. The defunct Kingdom of Champassak, whose royal family lost their prerogatives in 1900. (A portion of the kingdom lying on the right bank of the Mekong remained under Siamese sovereignty).
5. The northern territories of Nam Tha and Phong Saly.⁷

⁶Frank M. LeBar and Addrienne Suddard, eds., Laos: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1960), p. 16.

⁷Arthur J. Commen, Conflict in Laos, The Politics of Neutralization (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1964), p. 11.

Little of international historical significance occurred in Laos from 1907 to 1940. A few roads and schools were built but, generally, the French attitude toward her new colony is summed up in this description by Dommen:

The Buddhist Lao had accepted the French with an open-mindedness sharply in contrast to the suspicion and hostility shown by the Confucian mandarins of Annam. Conversely, the French colonials in Laos were receptive to the natives' serene approach to life. Indeed, some Frenchmen formed a deep emotional attachment to the gentle Lao. One "fonctionnaire," stationed in a remote outpost of southern Laos, lived there in a blissful isolation with his Lao mistress and household. Annually, upon learning that the French colonial inspector was approaching, he would close up his house and take to the jungle until word came that the official presence had left. His excuse, that he was out hunting, was unfailingly accepted by his undeceived superior. France simply did not care as long as the administration ran smoothly.⁸

During the early years of the Second World War, Thailand gained control over two western provinces of Laos by agreement with Japan and Vichy France. The Vichy Government was left in control of the rest of Laos. The Japanese themselves did not occupy Laos until March, 1945.

The French returned in force and took control of the Government in April of 1946. On August 7, 1946, a provisional modus vivendi was reached between the French and King Sisavang Vong. This unified the three kingdoms for the first time since 1711. It also granted the Lao

⁸Ibid., p. 12.

internal autonomy, leaving only the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs under French control.

There was little guerilla activity in Laos from 1946 to 1953. The eight-year period after the signing of the 1954 Geneva Accords was one of attempted neutrality for Laos. The strain of the two world forces seeking allies in the country added to the weakness of the internal structure of the country and made the attempt to create a stable and neutral Laos a failure. In 1960, open civil war broke out which ended in the 1962 Accords on Laos. These, too, failed to bring peace and in the ensuing years, a see-saw, low-key war has been continually fought between the Western-supported neutralists and rightists and the Chinese and Vietnamese-supported leftist Pathet Lao. This conflict remains the dominant feature of the Lao politics and the primary personal concern of most of the population.

The Religions of Laos

Lao Spirit Worship

The early Lao worshipped a complex set of animist spirits called "phi." Belief in these spirits has survived in spite of the successful introduction of Buddhism and the influence from the western world. To the animist, most everything is inhabited by at least one spirit. The human body is said to be inhabited by 32 separate "phi."

The woods have a collective spirit and each tree can also have a spirit. A particular significant place usually has a spirit. The earth itself has a spirit which must be appeased before digging a well. Ordinary plowing doesn't disturb the earth deep enough to require appeasement.

The extent to which people believe in spirits varies greatly. It is, however, safe to say that, in general, all the Lao still believe in the "phi" to some extent or at least fear that he might be wrong in not believing.

Lao Buddhism

Fa Ngum is usually credited with the introduction of Buddhism into Laos.⁹ If Buddhism did precede Fa Ngum, it did not have a strong foothold nor was it universally practiced.

In Laos, Theravada Buddhism is practiced as in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia. In Laos, the main tenets of Ceylonese Theravada Buddhism seem to have been kept. The relatively low level of knowledge of the official state religion represents a point on a downward trend that began in the very latter part of the 17th century with the death of King Soulligna Vongsa. Efforts have been made and are still being made to reverse this

⁹Thao Nhoy Abhay, "Buddhism in Laos," in Kingdom of Laos . . ., p. 239.



trend.¹⁰ Thai Buddhism has adapted to the changes that modernization brings. This might have been largely possible because of the strong national organization of the Buddhist Sangha in Thailand. In Laos, the organization exists but has yet to demonstrate the control necessary to guide the adaptive process if critical Lao writings are to be believed and observable conduct of the monkhood are any indication.¹¹

One Lao author, Nhouy Abhay, describes the effect of Lao Buddhism on the thinking of the Lao people:

We heard our fathers repeating all day long that life is suffering, that nothing belongs to us, that this present existence is only one among a thousand others, that we are reaping the fruit of our past actions in former lives, that death could overtake us unexpectedly at any moment, and that our salvation depends on ourselves above all. And then our fathers enjoined us to humility and gentleness, kindness, justice and charity.

Indeed, the Laotian people live listlessly, convinced of the futility of any action. Life is a trial to which one must submit and the best way of going through with it, with a view to a better existence, is to keep what one already has with the least possible modification lest one go wrong.¹²

The French had little success in vitalizing the general attitudes of the people out of the lethargy into which they had fallen. In fact, the French intervention might have postponed any resurgence of vitality by eliminating

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 253.

¹² Ibid., p. 242.

its necessity. The Lao became "children of the French peace." They became "protected" spiritually as well as physically. Since 1893, the Lao have begun to come out of their debilitated state, albeit slowly. It is difficult to know whether the present military and political situation is a stimulant or a deterrent to emergence.

The Wat and Institutionalized Buddhism

Physically, a wat is a collection of buildings surrounded by a fence or wall. It is usually located in the center of the village. Within the wall is a temple or sanctuary where Buddha images are kept. People come to the wat to pray and meditate. Some religious ceremonies are conducted here, however most other ceremonies such as marriages, funerals, and blessing at birth ceremonies are conducted in the home. Formalized worship services are carried on in the form of the daily chants and meditations by and for the monks. Ceremonies especially for the laity are conducted usually only on holidays. The temple is the first and most permanent building constructed in the wat. It is usually of brick and stone in the cities and larger villages. In the smaller and newer villages, it may still be constructed of wood.

The second most prominent building is the "hocherk." This building usually has no walls. A small, raised platform is often a feature from which sermons are chanted.

It is also used as a dining room for the monks, a hall for celebrations, a classroom for the wat school, a workshop, and as a general meeting place for the villagers. There is also a "Bonze" dormitory which houses the novices. There will almost always be a well on the wat grounds. It is often the only well in the village.

The Development of Lao Education

The following description of Lao education is in three parts. The first deals with the traditional form of Lao education or that education that took place in the Buddhist wats. This form of education was most prominent from the founding of the Kingdom of Lang Xang until the establishment of the secular education system by the French. The second part deals with the education system as it emerged and was shaped by the French during the colonial period. The final section deals with the events since the Lao gained their independence.

Traditional Lao Education

The education that occurred naturally in the home from mother to daughter and in the fields from father to son is often cited as the form education takes in a traditional society. This form of education usually began to break down when formal schools were established. This form of education began to break down in Laos after the arrival of the Khmer Buddhist mission in 1358 and the establishment

of wat schools. What is to be considered "traditional education" for Laos is that education that took place in the Buddhist wat.

After the wats were established in the villages, they quickly became the means by which the necessary learning for effective functioning in society were passed on to the young males. The wats became the repositories of knowledge in the villages. Within the wats could be found men who were literate and the books that contained not only the teachings of Buddha but also secular knowledge about healing and the pharmaceutical formulas were also available. Much of the history of the Lao people could be found there, along with many of the folk tales. During this period, the objectives of the wat schools were to produce people who could live, work and be happy in the Laos that was an isolated, self-sufficient country with no worries about the western world. The wat schools produced effective heads of families, capable and self-sufficient men, jacks-of-all-trades, farmers, fishermen, wood and bamboo workers who could meet the needs of his family. From what we know of it, the curriculum was extremely practical. It also perpetuated the Buddhist faith and imparted the "Buddhist resignation" with a certain undercurrent of fatalism.¹³

¹³Phathamavong, Compulsory Education in Cambodia, Laos . . . , pp. 78-81.

Over the years, the schools in the wats have continued to function with about the same curriculum. The wat school, until the establishment by the French of a secular school system, was virtually the only place a boy could get any semblance of formal education. There, he could still learn to write and read and he could learn certain crafts and skills. Too, the wat school was the means by which much of the culture was passed on from generation to generation.

There are, at present, roughly three forms of wat schools. The first is, at best, informal. By daily living in a wat, a boy or man learns by participation in the life of the wat, in the ceremonies, caring for the garden and flowers, maintaining the buildings, building new structures, etc. They may also learn how to read and write. There is no need for formal classes. Their teacher is their "Khru," roughly equivalent to a Guru, who adopts him as his son while he is living in the wat. Every person who enters the wat benefits from this type of wat education.

The second type of "wat school" might not actually be held in the wat although it usually is. This type of school has a formal curriculum and formal classes conducted by a monk teacher. The enrollment statistics for this type of school are included in the Ministry of Education statistics. They are in a separate classification from the rest of the schools listed as CREC schools that

are located in a wat. (The term CREC is explained later). Their curriculum is similar to that of the government school.

The third type of wat school is held for monks only and is taught in the Pali language. (The previous type of wat school discussed will accept students who are not monks). The purpose of this type of school is to produce competent monks, knowledgeable about the Buddhist teachings. The curriculum is designed to train competent religious leaders. The students learn the Pali language and the Tham characters before they learn to read and write the Lao language. Students sometimes attend other schools before entering the Pali schools. After graduating from one of these schools, the monk becomes a Maha, which is a designation of rank within the Buddhist Sangha or organization. These people have a good foundation in Pali and Sanskrit from which much of the Lao language is derived. It is assumed, therefore, that they make good teachers of the Lao language. (A position of the Ministry of Education in Laos, not the writer's.) They, at least, make the best teachers of the Lao language that are available to the schools. In five years in Laos, every Lao language teacher in the grades above six that this writer met was a Maha and had received his education in a wat. One contribution of this type of school then is the

training of potential teachers of the Lao language in the national schools.

A recent survey in Laos indicates that the percentage of men who spend extended periods of time living in a wat is decreasing. The first type of wat "school" can effect only those who live in the wat. In the northern sector of the country (excluding the royal capital), by the age of 34, 43 percent of the total male population had spent some time in a wat. Eighty-eight percent of this group had spent more than six months in a wat.¹⁴ It can be seen that the informal wat school has an effect upon a quite large percentage of the male population. However, as the percentage of males entering the wat and the length of time they live there decreases, the degree of effect this form of wat education has also decreases.

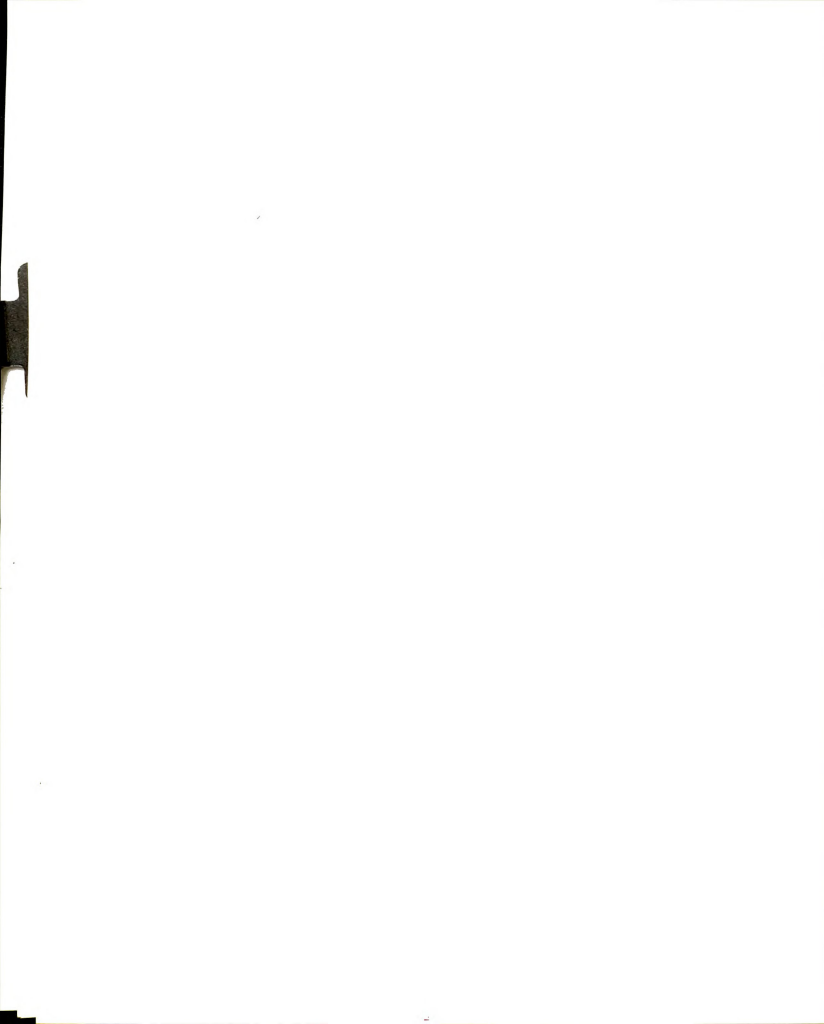
The impact of the second form of wat school is illustrated by the statistics for 1961-62 and 1966-67. In 1961-62, there were 252 wat schools. In 1966-67, there were 241. The decrease is slight in absolute numbers. However, in 1961-62, approximately 22 percent of all the elementary schools in the country were wat schools. In 1966-67, only 4 percent were wat schools. The government schools are increasing in number much more rapidly. The percentage of students in wat schools similarly declined from 10 percent in 1961-62 to 4 percent in 1966-67.

¹⁴Wilder, Literacy Levels . . .

The last available enrollment figure for the third type of wat school was for the 1963-64 school year. During that year, there were 4,493 students in such schools being taught by 337 teachers.

With the advent of the secular school system in the early 20th century, the wat system began to lose some of its attraction for men. If one wanted to get a job with the government, he had to know how to read, write, and speak French. This he could not learn in a wat school.

In 1935, the wats modernized their curriculum to try to compete with the French elementary schools. The move did not change the trend away from the wat schools. Entrance into the civil service ranks was still regulated by certificates that were obtained after taking examinations at the end of a program in the government schools. A wat school graduate could take the examinations but they were based on the curriculum of the government school. The reorganization of the wat school curriculum had not gone far enough and it was difficult for the wat school graduate to pass the examinations. The secular school system grew slowly until the end of World War II. Prior to World War II, the importance of the secular schools in the villages was limited. After World War II, government schools have been introduced in the villages in increasing numbers. In areas where government schools are introduced, the wat schools tend to lose their importance. In



the villages at the present time, the importance of the wat school is directly proportional to the distance from the village to the nearest government school.

Education Under the French

When the French came to Laos during the 1890's, they found a widespread system of education based in the village wat. The French were perfectly content to let this system operate. They relied on it for the continuance of the "moral" education of the people. However, the wat schools did not provide graduates who understood French and understood western ways to help administer the country. The French, therefore, found it necessary to establish a secular school system to prepare western-oriented, French-speaking Lao.

The slow growth of this secular school system might indicate that the needs of the French civil service were small. In 1915, there were only 10 elementary schools in Laos with a total enrollment of 260 students. In 1933, there were 70 schools with a total enrollment of 7,035 students. In 1946, there were still only 509 schools with 24,057 students.¹⁵

It was not until 1933 that the secular system instituted the practice of granting elementary school

¹⁵Royaume du Laos, "Bulletin de Statistique," 18eme Annee, No. 2 (December, 1968), Vientiane, Laos.



certificate based on a school-leaving examination. In the first year of its inception, 227 people passed this examination and were awarded a certificate. The number was high compared to the enrollment in the schools because people who had finished the elementary schools in previous years also took the examination. In 1934, 105 students passed the exam. In 1937, only 45 passed. The financial crisis caused by the world depression and its economic effects upon the Lao schools partially explains the drop in the number of people passing the exam. Another possible explanation is that the number of students who passed was limited to those who could be employed by the government or who could be admitted to the next higher grade in school.

Secondary schools developed in two stages. The 7th through 10th grades, called the first cycle, was started in Laos before the Second World War. The second cycle of the secondary school, grades 11 through 13, is essentially a post-World War II creation. Before the establishment of the second cycle in Laos a few selected students were sent to Hanoi, Saigon or Phnom Phen to attend secondary school. The secondary schools of Laos during the French rule hardly deserve mention. During the entire decade of the 1930's, the secondary schools

graduated 148 students. Of these, 96 were Vietnamese and only 52 were Lao.¹⁶

Education Since Independence

In 1946, the Lao gained internal autonomy by virtue of the modus vivendi signed with France. The initial problem of insufficient numbers of trained personnel became immediately more acute in 1946 when the Lao asked the Vietnamese, who were working in the government, to leave. The French had not relied on the Lao to staff the positions in the government but on the Vietnamese. Moreover, the Lao were trained to staff only the most minor positions. In 1945, two-thirds of all primary school teachers and teaching assistants were Vietnamese. Many other governmental posts were also occupied by Vietnamese. When the Vietnamese left, all the Lao moved up until the positions at the top were filled. The same procedure was followed in the army and, overnight, enlisted men became officers--some of whom are now generals. The exit of Vietnamese also caused a serious shortage of teachers. There was no solution except to accept as teachers many who had only meager qualifications.

¹⁶Troye, Laos . . . , p. 45.

Post War Growth of Education

The period since 1946 has been one of comparative rapid growth for the Lao education system. One Lao educator, however, stated that much of the increase in enrollment after World War II in the government schools actually represents a transfer of students from wat schools to government schools and there was probably little increase in the total number of students in schools.¹⁷ It is probable, however, that the large increase in enrollment in the government schools in the 1960's represents a real increase in the number of students attending schools. Table 1 presents the growth in the number of elementary schools and elementary school enrollment from 1946 to 1969.

The six to twelve year-old age group that might be in the elementary schools make up 16.3 percent of the population or about 470,970. The elementary school enrollment in 1969 therefore represented only 37 percent of the age group. This is quite an improvement from approximately five percent of the age group that was in elementary school in 1946.¹⁸

The total enrollment figures for elementary schools in Table 1 and the percentages of students in school is

¹⁷ Personal interview with Ministry of Education Official.

¹⁸ Bureau of the Plan and Ministry of Education statistics were utilized to extrapolate these figures.

TABLE 1.--Historical data: increase in enrollment in grades 1-6 since 1946.

Year	Enrollment	Number of Public Elementary Schools
1946-47	24,057	509
1947-48	31,414	507
1948-49	36,517	604
1949-50	38,331	641
1950-51	34,087	662
1951-52	36,902	741
1952-53	41,412	866
1953-54	33,357	852
1954-55	43,274	923
1955-56	63,950	1,021
1956-57	75,167	1,235
1957-58	77,204	1,269
1958-59	95,957	1,464
1959-60	99,302	1,567
1960-61	91,313	1,573
1961-62	88,312	1,646
1962-63	108,603	2,172
1963-64	117,111	2,410
1964-65	128,040	2,498
1965-66	142,296	2,636
1966-67	156,481	2,742
1967-68	166,159	2,863
1968-69	185,724	--

misleading if one does not also consider the distribution of enrollment throughout the various grades in the elementary school. Figure 1 graphically depicts the enrollment for all grades in the Lao education system for the 1968-69 school year. Of the total elementary school enrollment of 185,724, 144,865 or 88 percent were in the first three grades. Forty-three percent of the total elementary students were in the first grade. Only 16,770 students or 21 percent of the enrollment of the first grade were in the

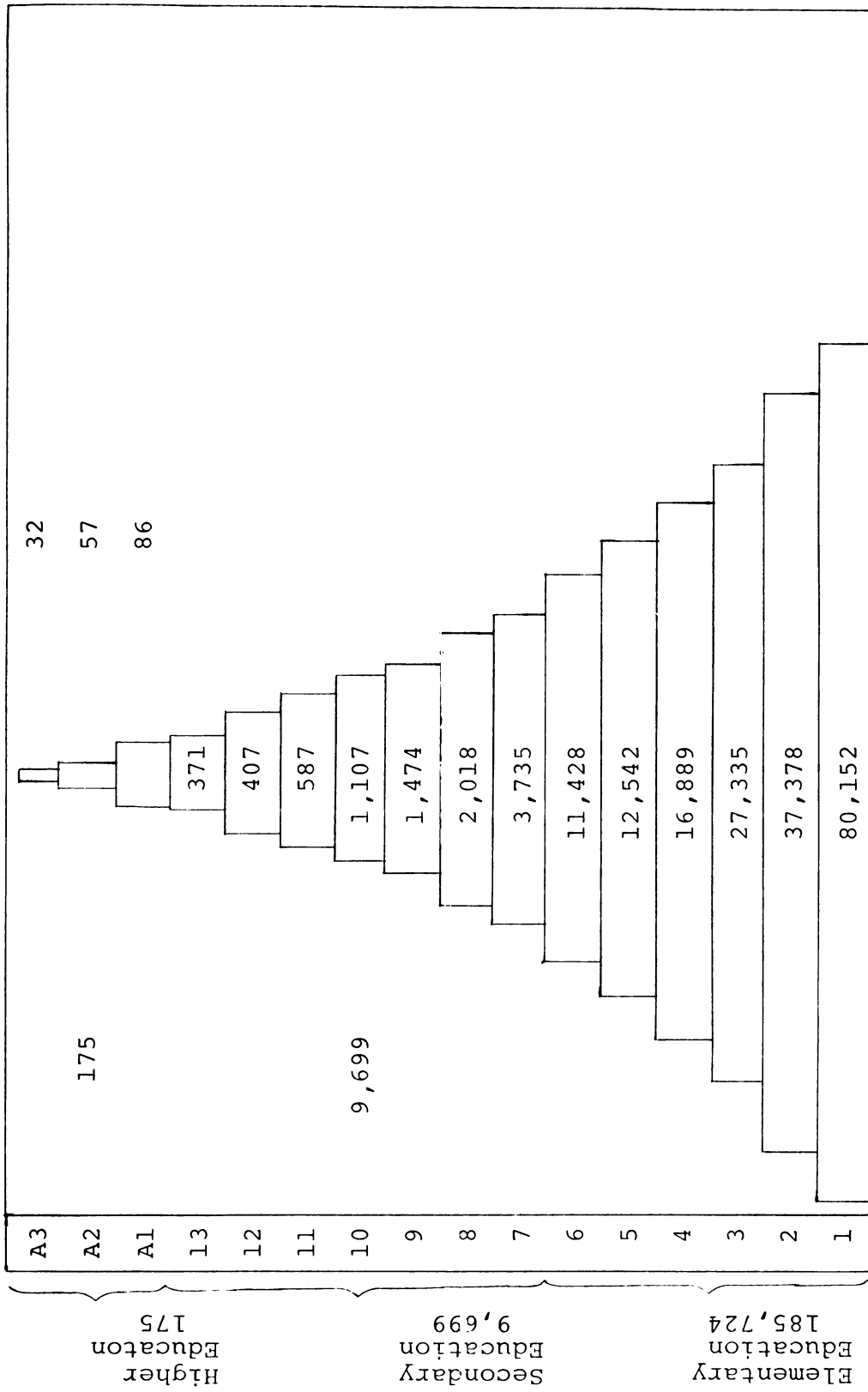


Figure 1.--Total enrollment in the Lao Public Schools by class for 1968-69.

fourth grade--the UNESCO-accepted level to ensure permanent literacy. Wastage in the elementary school is considerable. The Director of Elementary and Adult education reported to a UNESCO conference that the wastage rate is about 85 percent.¹⁹

The curriculum content of the elementary school remained essentially the same after Laos gained independence. The primary reason was that the curriculum and entrance requirements for the secondary schools did not change. Secondary education is still almost exclusively taught in the French language. The exception is a pilot secondary school project being conducted by AID and the University of Hawaii which admitted 114 students in 1968.

Of the total of 10,743 students who were in the sixth grade in 1968, 7,616 passed the examinations at the end of the year. Of these, 7,076 took the examinations for entrance into the secondary schools. Only 1,118 or 10.4 percent of the total enrollment in sixth grade the year before was admitted to some form of secondary school (including teacher training).²⁰ The growth of the secondary schools in percentage terms from 1946 to 1969

¹⁹ Khamphao Phonckeo, "Report on Laos--Technical Seminar on Wastage and Student Drop-outs," Kingdom of Laos, Ministry of Education, 1966 (mimeographed).

²⁰ Kingdom of Laos, Ministry of Education, "Elementary School Statistics," Vientiane, Laos, December, 1968 (mimeographed), 18 pp.

is an impressive 2,789 percent. In relation to the size of the entering first grade classes and the total population in the age group, it is miniscule.

The secondary schools show the impact of the colonial period. The language of instruction is French. The teachers are either French--51 percent in 1969--or were French-trained. The instructional materials and content of the courses and methods are French. In fact, until 1967, the leaving examination for the secondary school in Laos was taken on the same day as the Second Baccalaureate in France and was the same examination. In 1969, there were 185 students in the final year of the secondary school. The number who passed is not available. However, a typical percentage of success in past years has been about 65 percent.

The students in Laos studying at the "third" level numbered 175 in 1969. There is no complete higher education program in Laos at the present time but one is being developed and should be in operation in one or two years.

Vocational Education

In 1938, a school was founded in Vientiane for the purpose of training workmen. It was an "Ecole Atelier," a workshop school. The school trained woodworkers, masons, auto mechanics and metal workers. It remained very small. In 1955, an "Ecole Artisanant," a school for craftsmen was

started in Savannakhet. Enrollment grew to about 300 in ten years.

In 1958, both the Savannakhet and Vientiane schools were accepted into the secondary school system.²¹ At that time, they both became "Lycee Techniques." Each of these schools has a different character. The French Lycee de Technique in Vientiane is a second choice to the academic lycee. The "practical" courses--shop courses or skill training--are kept to a minimum. Most students have aspirations to enter a university after graduation.

Recently a vocational school sponsored by Germany which has very high standards of workmanship and related knowledge was founded. The first class finished in the Summer of 1969. They were mostly being prepared to go on for further schooling, eventually to replace the German instructors. The vocational school in Savannakhet, has a reputation of preparing good workmen. They are sought after and almost all get jobs in the occupations in which they were trained. The difference here is the philosophy of the director of the school--a Frenchman--and the energy with which he seeks employment for his students when they finish the program.

²¹Bounnong Thippawong, "An Analysis of the Social and Educational Systems of Laos in View of Establishing a Teacher Education in Agriculture for Elementary School Teachers," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1966, p. 89.

Present Structure and Curriculum

Figure 2 presents the structure of the education system of the country as it presently exists. One should consider the enrollment pyramid as he is considering this figure. The system has a 6-4-3 configuration. The elementary school is, in effect, divided into two three-year periods. This has emerged primarily because of the total of 1,422 elementary schools in the country--1,047 are in villages where only the first three grades are being taught. If they wish further education, the students must leave their home villages as some of them do, to attend the second three years.

The secondary school is divided, as in the French system, into two cycles. The first is four years in length and the second is three. Vocational schools and the teacher training schools that begin at the seventh grade also follow this 4-3 scheme.

In 1962, a reorganization of the curriculum and methods of the elementary school was passed by a Royal Decree. This so-called "1962 Education Reform" had little immediate effect on education in Laos. It called for a new direction in education with the main orientation being shifted toward the immediate environment of the school. A number of factors have led to a slow rate of adoption of the reform. Teachers are, in general, poorly trained and are not capable of applying the new approach. Instructional

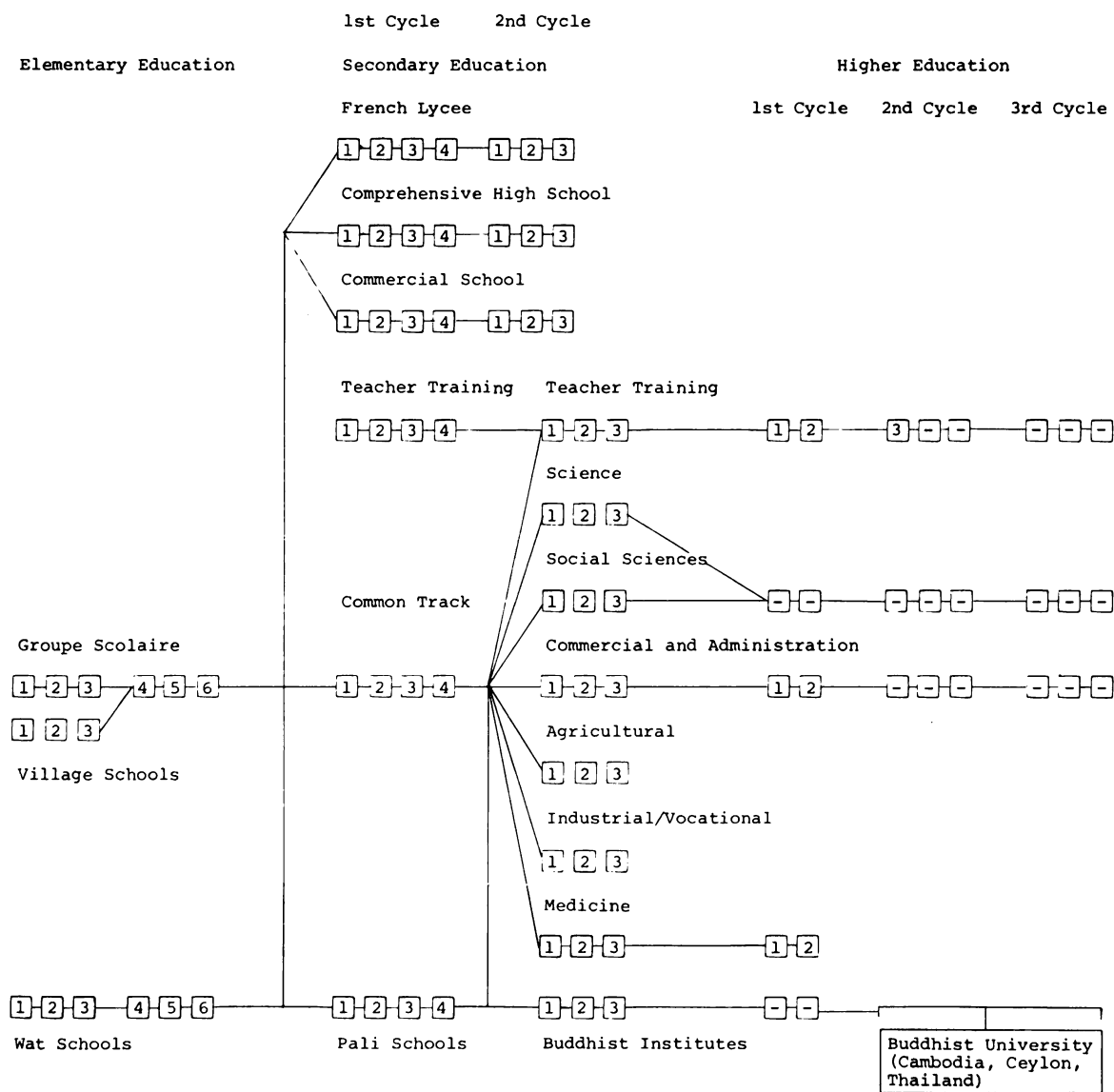


Figure 2.--Organization of the Lao education system (only those squares containing numbers are in operation)

materials--books and detailed courses of study--were not immediately available. The first textbooks based on the new approach did not become available until 1966 and the complete set of texts was not finished and available to the Ministry of Education until 1969. Probably a more important factor is that the entrance examination into the secondary school has not changed in character and the necessity of learning French is still present. When asked to choose between a village-oriented education relevant to the environment and one that prepares the student for secondary school, the preference is for the latter. The strategy of the Ministry of Education has been to adopt the 1962 Reform by a series of gradual steps.

The responsibility for adult education rests in the Directorship of Elementary Education. UNESCO and AID sponsored a program to train fundamental education advisors to go and work in the villages and establish CREC centers.²² These were to serve the adults and also to provide education for the children. The program trained only about 130 fundamental education teachers before the program was abandoned. These teachers were carried for a number of years on the budget of the Ministry of Education but their work was actually directed by the Ministry of Social Welfare. The nature of their work was

²²The CREC center is explained in Chapter IV.

community development and the CREC centers did not function as they were envisioned by UNESCO.

Summary

In considering the role of education in Laos in promoting literacy and development, the essential features of the system has been its orientation to France; its academic nature with its lack of relevance for the local environment; the extreme concentration of enrollment at the lower levels; the general low quality as evidenced by the large wastage rate and the fact that, when the size of the student enrollment and the number of years of school attended is considered, the impact in terms of the total size of population must be considered to be extremely short of the needs.

CHAPTER IV

LITERACY IN LAOS

This chapter will describe the literacy phenomenon in Laos, both past and present. A brief description of the development of the writing system and efforts toward the eradication of illiteracy is followed by a consideration of official Lao Ministry of Education pronouncements concerning illiteracy. The findings of a literacy survey of Laos conducted in 1968 by this researcher are presented in the final portion of the chapter.

The Historical Development of the Lao Language

The language of the Lao people belongs to the T'ai group of languages. (This is not to be confused with the Thai language.) This group is made up of a very large number of languages whose members are to be found as far north as the central part of China and extending to most of the sections of the Southeast Asian peninsula and even to some isolated areas in the Philippine Islands. The writing systems used by the various members of the T'ai language family are very diverse. They range from ideographic and very complicated systems such as that

utilized by the Chinese to the very simple and completely phonetic system used by the Lao.

The history of the Lao script cannot be separated from the history of the Thai system of writing. These two languages are very similar and are almost completely mutually understandable. From the evidence found in early records, it seems almost certain that the present-day scripts sprang from the same source.

The Thai alphabet is said to have originated with Ram Khamheng near the end of the 13th century. Records from Ayuthaya described how the inspiration for the design of the script came from the "heart" of the Ram Khamheng, then ruler of Sukhothai, a predecessor of present-day Thailand.¹ The writing of this early period bears a striking resemblance to the Khmer alphabet.

The Ram Khamheng alphabet was the dominant form of writing used by the Thai and Lao in the 13th century through the 16th centuries. The Ram Khamheng alphabet is used to this day in the wats of Laos. It is very similar to the ancient Thai alphabet and is called "Tham" by the Lao. It is in use in all of Laos and in most of Northeast Thailand today. Most of the writings using this alphabet, however, are in the Pali language. A distinct Lao alphabet does not emerge until the 16th century. Lao

¹Berval, Kingdom of Laos . . . , p. 314.

historians credit King Sethatirat (1559-1571) with requesting a monk from the Kingdom of Sukhothai to design the present Lao alphabet.²

Until recently, most of the monks in the wat schools were taught the Tham system of characters before they were taught the Lao alphabet. In some isolated villages, this is undoubtedly still the case.

The Lao language was probably quite uniform throughout the Kingdom until the period following 1711 when the Kingdom of Lang Xang was broken up into three separate kingdoms. The loss of communication allowed the language to deviate slightly in terms of meaning, spelling and pronunciation. The Lao have yet to completely standardize the spelling of the language to reconcile these differences between the three areas, though there is a literary committee working on the problem.

The Lao language is monosyllabic and the present writing system is completely phonetic. There are no unpronounced syllables as there are in Thai. The language is very easy to learn and, being phonetic, if one has a grasp of the oral language and the phonetic symbols, once he comes to recognize those symbols he can read and understand the full range of his oral vocabulary.

²M. L. Manich, History of Laos (Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1967).

Literacy Activities in Laos

The earliest literacy activities in Laos were conducted in the wats. This was the only source of literacy training until the advent of the French secular school system. The magnitude of the effect wat education had on the literacy rate is impossible to ascertain. It has been estimated that during the seventeenth century there was an annual enrollment of at least 500,000 students in the wat schools. Considering that the kingdom was larger in area and population, it has been estimated that the same percentage of school-age boys were in school as are at the present time, roughly 20 percent.³

If one makes the assumption that a person can become literate through residence in the wat, as is possible if one resides there long enough, then the literacy rates in this period could have been as high as 20 percent. The village had a literate base. The monks had access to the outside world through the written word. Much of the knowledge of the era was preserved in written form.

The impact of the French schools on literacy must be considered in light of three factors. One, lessons in the government schools were taught in the French language and generally tended to ignore the Lao language. Two, the

³Pathammavong, Compulsory Education in Cambodia, Laos . . ., p. 80.

number of students was very small, limiting their total impact. Three, the French schools were much more attractive to the Lao youth and their parents, tending to discourage attendance in wat schools. Graduates of the secular schools frequently took jobs with the colonial administration and generally the school leavers from the wat remained in the villages and on the farms. These three factors could have had a negative effect on the literacy rate in the Lao language. This can only be stated as a hypothesis as there are no accurate assessments of literacy rates during the colonial period. The first known study to determine a country-wide literacy rate in Laos was one conducted in 1968 by Wilder.

The only two efforts before 1958 that had the effect of spreading literacy skills were the wat schools and the secular school system set up by the French. The latter affected a very small percentage of the population and its introduction began to break down the former.

In 1958, the Lao government entered into an agreement with UNESCO to obtain help in establishing Fundamental Education Centers in the villages of Laos. The initial task of training the teachers ran into trouble at the outset when the future village education workers protested the fact that the training school was to be placed 70 kilometers from the capital. The views of the future

village workers prevailed and the center was built on the outskirts of Vientiane. The training center prepared a total of 130 fundamental education workers.⁴ These workers were kept on the payroll of the Ministry of Education but were placed under the direction of the Ministry of Social Welfare. Their activities were community development in the broadest sense and could not be considered to be fulfilling the expectation of the authors of the program of Fundamental Education. The school for training fundamental educators was closed in 1963.

Another attempt to provide literacy education for the villages was the establishment of "Rural Centers of Community Education" by Royal Decree in 1962. This Decree noted the fact that there were 11,000 villages in the country and only 1,700 schools; that only one-fourth of the children in the country had an opportunity to receive an education. The Decree provided for aid in supporting teachers in villages that would build their own schools. The government support per teacher was considerably less than a regular teacher's salary.

These Centers, as described in the Ministry of Education Circular No. 3.516 EP, seem to have the same functions as the previously described Fundamental Education Centers. They were to teach "what one should know in

⁴Khamphao Phonekeo, "Literacy Training in Laos," Vientiane, Ministry of Education (mimeographed), 1969.

the village"--agriculture, health, nutrition, literacy training and arithmetic and, in general, to promote a more effective village organization.

The Circular specifies that the control of the village education centers will be in the hands of the villages:

It is well understood that the opening of Rural Centers of Community Education, in agreement with provincial and academic authorities, is the work of the villages. The administration will help (aid by fundamental educators, monthly help of 500 kips) but must not impose anything.⁵

Later in the Circular, the duties of the persons hired to run the Centers are spelled out:

The person responsible for the Rural Center of Community Education is hired by his application and by recommendation from the Village Chief to the Provincial Inspector of Primary Education. He will have to apply the teaching program prepared for P1, P2, and P3.⁶

These schools are called CREC schools. (CREC being the initials of French translation of the title Centre, Rurale Éducation Communitaires.)

Two provisions of the Decree had great influence on the nature of the Centers. The first was the prerequisite to be a teacher, which was only three years of schooling or being a Buddhist monk. This is well below

⁵Ministry of Education, Royaume du Laos, The Formation of Centre Rurale de Education Communautaire Circular No. 3.616/EP, 1962, p. 9.

⁶Ibid., p. 5. P₁, P₂ and P₃ are designations for the first three grades of the elementary school.

the regular Lao standard of six years of elementary school plus completion of a teacher training program. The second provision was the expectation that the teacher would follow the P1, P2, and P3 primary school programs. Combining these two features, one has a description of a CREC school as it exists today--mainly an elementary school of the first three grades that is being taught by unqualified teachers.⁷ The Lao Ministry of Education still reports that they have rural centers of community education. Actually, what the government is reporting is that some schools have unqualified teachers. Commentators on Lao education often report CREC schools as being something that they are not. A CREC school's impact in spreading literacy can be considered to be the same as the impact of any poorly staffed elementary school.

Laos was one of the countries that applied for UNESCO assistance under the provisions of the scheme for the Experimental World Literacy Program. A UNESCO expert visited the country in 1963 to make recommendations for conducting a pilot Work-Oriented Functional Literacy Project in conjunction with the Nam Ngum Dam project of the Mekong Committee. A feasibility study was conducted in an area close to Vientiane during the summer of 1968.

⁷A CREC school automatically becomes a regular Ministry of Education elementary school when a qualified teacher begins to teach in the school.

Other planning experts followed in 1969 and 1970. A census was taken in the area of the proposed project in 1970. The result of this census is as yet unavailable.

Lao Ministry of Education Reports
Concerning Illiteracy

Little has been published by the Ministry of Education concerning literacy in Laos. Many of the publications reporting world literacy rates by UNESCO have not contained information on Laos. This is understandable since there has been little on which to base a literacy estimate. The most concrete data base to work from would be elementary school enrollment. UNESCO does have a formula from which a literacy estimate can be made that considers this factor. The formula, however, does not consider any role the wats may have in producing literate citizens.

A 1964 publication of the International Bureau of Education, Literacy and Education for Adults, contained a two-page description of Lao activities in literacy and adult education but did not include any literacy rates for Laos. This publication states that the content of Lao adult literacy programs is practical, dealing with health and other village matters. It makes note of the fact that the local authorities must take the initiating action for adult education programs. Staffing considerations are discussed with the 130 fundamental educators

being mentioned, as are Buddhist monks. The program being described in this publication seems to be the CREC schools as specified in the Ministerial Decree. Other adult education schemes are described, such as the distribution of radios (provided by Japanese aid), village journals to be printed and distributed throughout the country, and the distribution of simple readers. Few of these were viable programs at that time.

A report on literacy statistics prepared for the 1965 Teheran conference on literacy contains a literacy rate for Laos. It was supplied by the Lao Ministry of Education. It estimated the percentage of literates among men as being 30 percent and women as being 27 percent. This figure was probably based upon past elementary school enrollments.

The Ministry of Education, Directorship of Elementary and Adult Education, issued a report on the literacy drive in Laos in 1966. This report is somewhat defensive in tone and seems to have been promoted by the urging of UNESCO at that time that countries with low literacy rates mount a concerted effort toward the eradication of illiteracy. The Lao report does not venture a guess as to what the overall literacy rate is but does state that the illiteracy rate among soldiers is about 60 percent. In discussing the efforts toward the eradication of illiteracy, the report mentions the CREC schools, the



work of the fundamental educators, the military program for soldiers and a separate program organized by the military for the soldiers' children. Throughout the report, it is evident that the author, Khampao Phonekeo, considered literacy to be just one aspect of any program for adults and even states that:

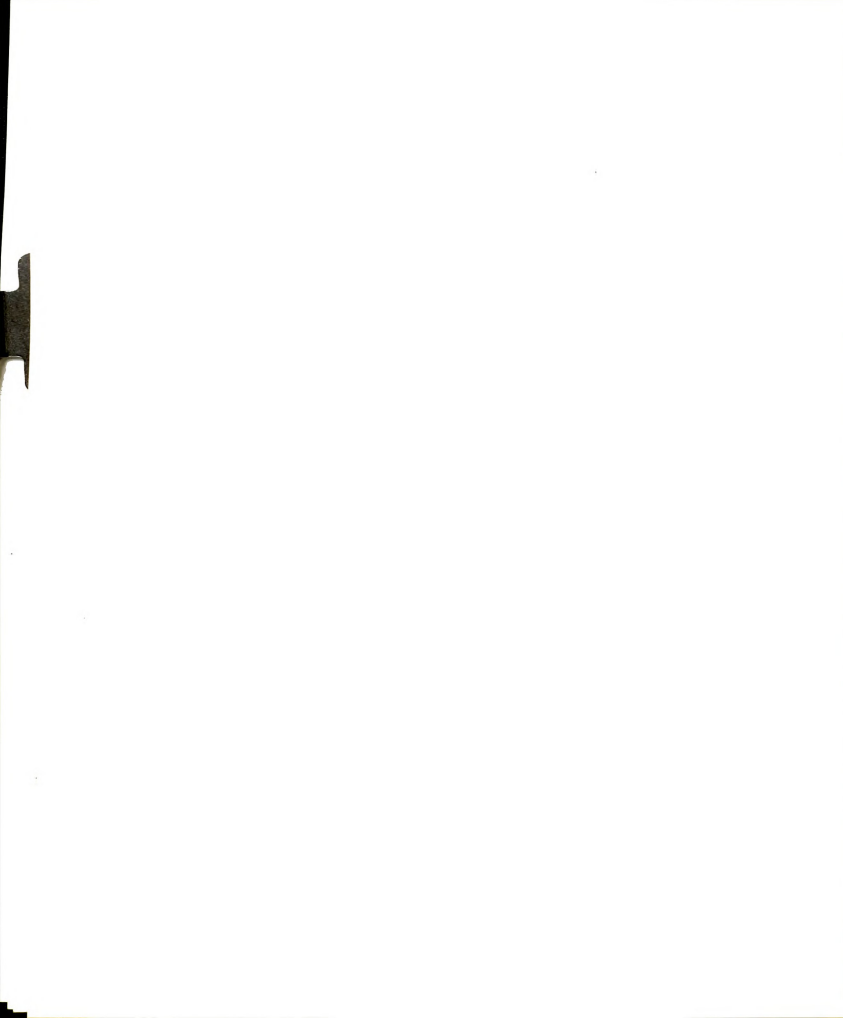
Indeed the rural population's literacy is most important but still more important is the acquisition of a number of habits in the field of sanitation, order, and work; of a number of simple and rational notions in agriculture and breeding, all these habits and notions being essential for raising the standard of life immediately.⁸

In August of 1968, the Ministry of Education was reporting the literacy rate as 35 percent. This was reported in the initial stage of a UNESCO feasibility study for a work-oriented functional literacy program.

1968 Literacy Survey Conducted
by B. Wilder

In December, 1967, a literacy survey was initiated by the Teacher Training Division of the AID Mission in Laos. An instrument was designed by AID, using as a measure of literacy a vocabulary list containing four words. This "Pilot Survey" consisted of a sample of 2,000 cases from the total population of Laos. The resulting literacy rate estimate of 24.4 percent was questioned by

⁸Khampao Phonekeo, "Literacy Drive in Laos," Vientiane, Laos, Ministry of Education, 1966 (mimeographed), p. 3.



foreign educators because they thought it was too high and by Lao educators because they thought it was too low. It was decided to redo and expand the study. This writer was asked by AID to conduct the study to verify the findings of the "pilot" study. Dr. Somphou Oudomvilay, Director of Teacher Training and Research at the Lao Ministry of Education officially sanctioned the study within the Lao Government which then provided 27 students and staff from the teacher training colleges to work on the study.

It was decided to expand the measure of literacy beyond that of being able to define four words. The definition of literacy as presented in Chapter I was used as the guide. The expansion of the definition of literacy raised some questions:

1. At what level of reading ability in the Lao language is one considered literate?
2. What is "functional" literacy in the Lao language?
3. The term "functional" in functional literacy should be defined in terms of what function?
4. Can functional literacy mean the same to all groups?
5. Should the level of achievement of reading and writing ability in the Lao language necessary to be considered literate be defined in terms of a particular school-grade level?

The objectives of the study, as stated in the initial plan were:

1. To determine the "functional" literacy level of urban and rural Laos in terms of printed material presently available.

2. To determine what grade level of the Lao school system a student must finish to achieve functional literacy.
3. To determine to what degree Lao residents are literate in languages other than Lao.
4. To gain information about the channels through which information spreads in urban and rural Laos.

The survey was conducted during the summer of 1968.

Interviewer and written literacy tests were administered to a sample of 7,692. The findings of this study are probably based on more data than any estimate of the literacy rate in Laos in the past.

What is still lacking is a clear and concise concept of what constitutes being literate in the Lao language. That is, at what point along the continuous variable of language facility is one considered literate. This is a problem that was not solved. For lack of a better standard, it was decided that the point at which one is considered literate on the test would be determined by the fourth grade reading level on the same test.

The study conducted by the author in 1968 produced literacy rates based on three different criteria:

1. Ability to complete a government form--
30.7% could fill out 75% of a typical government form correctly.
2. Vocabulary test-- 19.4% scored at or better than the median fourth grade score. This figure was determined by the same procedure as the pilot survey rate.

3. Reading comprehension--25% could comprehend at the median fourth grade level which was a 46% comprehension rate. The percentage of the sample who could comprehend 75% of what they read based on the same test was 14.1%.

It is the writer's conviction that the determination of the absolute countrywide level of literacy is of secondary importance to a measure of the speed and direction in which the literacy rate seems to be changing and the different literacy rates for various ages, geographic areas and sexes. More important than a literacy rate based on fourth grade reading level is the rate of comprehension of the material that is available for the people of the country to read.

To be able to say, as the findings indicated, that 19.4 percent of the total population can read as well as the average fourth grade graduate based on the fourth grade word lists is of limited value. To say, also, as indicated by the findings, that 25.2 percent of the population can read and comprehend what is available for them to read at least as well as the average fourth grade graduate is of more value. These statistics gain further significance when stated as follows:

Based on the reading comprehension test composed of materials readily available to the public, only 25% of the population can comprehend 46% or more of what they read. To state this negatively, the most literate 25% of the

population does not understand, or worse, misunderstands up to 54% of what it reads.⁹

These overall figures tell us little about the particular groups within Laos that a development scheme might draw upon.

Among the more interesting findings were those revealed when the data were broken down by region, sex, and age. The information gathered in Laos was broken down into seven geographic regions--three urban and four rural. They were further separated by sex and into six age groups. This breakdown yielded 84 sets of literacy figures which were reported in 14 sets of charts. The literacy rates of these individual groups presents a much more encouraging picture of the level of human resource development in Laos. The following is only a sample of the type of information that can be derived from these charts that are not available to one when he must work with gross literacy rates that are countrywide:

1. Women over 35 years old are virtually 100% illiterate.
2. Approximately 10% of the women between the ages of 25 to 34 years old can attain the lowest measure of literacy, making out a simple government form.
3. The reading comprehension rate of women between 14 and 24 years of age is 28.8%. (That is, 28.8% understand at least 46% of what they read, the fourth grade comprehension rate.) This compares with the overall country rate of 25.2%.

⁹Wilder, "Literacy Levels"

4. The difference in comprehension rates based on a reading test between age groups is large for the men. The 14 to 24 year-old group has twice the literates as the 25 to 34 year-old group. For the women, however, the 14 to 24 year-old group has four or five times more literates than the 25 to 34 year-old group--a testimony to the effectiveness of the schools in general and the increased education of women in particular.
5. When considering the group that developers are apt to work with, that is young women between 14 and 34 years old and men between 14 and 45 years old (a very arbitrary determination), the literacy rate is relatively high. This is particularly true of the youngest age group, those from 14 to 24 years old. In this group, about 75% of all men are literate when compared to the fourth grade standard on the reading comprehension test and about 25% of all the women are literate by the same test. An amazing percentage when one considers the difficulties under which the educational system of Laos operates.

From the time of the survey, July of 1968, until the end of 1968, no less than four different literacy rates were reported for Laos, none of which were based on the author's survey.

In August, 1968, the Ministry of Education reported to M. Couvert, a UNESCO expert visiting the country to conduct a feasibility survey for the literacy project in the Vientiane Plain, that an estimated 35 percent of the population was literate.¹⁰ In September, 1968, Mr. Couvert himself reported that the literacy rate of the Vientiane plain was 47.5 percent, if one included arithmetic skills

¹⁰ Manual de Clerck, "Functional Literacy as an Investment," Bangkok: Mekong Secretariat, 1968 (mimeographed), p. 5.

in the definition and 62 percent if one considered just reading and writing.¹¹ He is quoted in a Mekong Committee report as having determined the literacy rate in the same area to be 56 percent.¹² (It might be coincidental that 56 is almost halfway between 47.5 and 62.) In October, 1968, an article in the Lao press that could have originated in hardly any other place than the Ministry of Education, defended the Ministry policy and efforts toward the eradication of illiteracy. This article set the literacy rate at 45 percent. To further confuse the situation, the Deputy Director of Primary and Adult Education submitted a report to the UNESCO Regional Office of Education in Asia in December of the same year that placed the literacy rate at 40 percent.¹³

To complicate matters, the author's findings, submitted to the Ministry of Education of Laos in January, 1969, stated that there was not one literacy rate for Laos but several, depending upon the area, age, and most of all, upon the criteria which one wished to apply. It is little wonder that in the issue of Progress in Education

¹¹Ibid., p. 8.

¹²Mekong Secretariat, "Functional Literacy: Investment in Human Resources," Bangkok, Mekong Secretariate, 1969 (mimeographed), p. 3.

¹³Thou Bouthong, "Report on the Status of Reading and Follow-up Materials in Laos," Bangkok, UNESCO, 1968, p. 2.

in the Asian Region for 1969, the literacy rate for Laos was footnoted to the effect that the figures reported were those submitted for the UNESCO planning document for the Teheran Conference on Literacy in 1965.¹⁴

¹⁴UNESCO, Regional Office on Education in Asia, Progress in Education in the Asian Region (Bangkok: UNESCO, 1969).

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with a discussion of the process by which the sample was selected and then a description of these samples. This is followed by a discussion of the significance of the three principal questions to be investigated:

1. What was the motivation for becoming literate?
2. By what means were literacy skills acquired?
3. What was the effect or manifestation of these literacy skills?

This discussion draws on the literature of the field. The method of answering these questions and measuring the factors or their component parts will then be presented. The last section deals with the actual conduct of the field work.

Identification of the Sample for the Study of Unschooled Literate Lao Males

The study conducted during the Summer of 1968 led directly to the identification of the sample studied in this research. The population from which the sample was drawn is the male portion of the sample from the 1968

study coming from the area designated as the northern rural region. Actually, the sample for the 1970 study is a subsample of the 1968 study.

To understand how this sample was identified, it is necessary to present the data concerning literacy rates for the male portion of the sample from the northern rural region.

An examination of Table 2 reveals a phenomenon that is the opposite of what one would expect. It is usual to expect that a number of years after a group has finished elementary school some will have lost their literacy skills. It has been the experience in other developing countries that even after only six months, a group that has been given literacy training will have lost some of their literacy skills. An examination of the literacy data for the 25-34 year-old group in Table 2 indicates that 20 percent of the sample had finished at least four years of elementary school. The results from the government form portion of the examination indicates that 42 percent could fill out 75 percent or more of the items asked. The performance on the vocabulary portion of the examination was 19 percent at the fourth grade level which is close to the 20 percent who had actually finished four years of school. The percentage who could read and comprehend at the fourth grade level was 42 percent, the same percentage who could fill out 75 percent of the government form. It seemed that

a little over twice the percentage of the sample could read and comprehend at the fourth grade level than had actually finished four years of school. A sizeable portion must have learned to read and write outside the formal school entirely or had attended school less than four years and improved their skills after leaving school. A check of the individual cases verified that, indeed, a large number had never attended school but could read and write. A check of the other geographic regions revealed that a percentage in all the regions had never been to school but could read and write. In addition, a number who had attended school for two years or less could still read and write at the fourth grade level. The northern rural region was selected for study. It was in this area that the largest percentage of the sample was literate at the fourth grade level or higher and had never been to school or had attended for two years or less.

The percentage of unschooled literate Lao males in the northern rural region is in sharp contrast to some other areas. Table 3 presents literacy data for the 24-35 year age group from both the northern rural region and the urban Vientiane area (the capital city). In the city there are fewer literates than had finished fourth grade. In the rural areas there are more literates than had finished fourth grade.

TABLE 3.--Comparison of literacy rates of the 25-34 year old age group from the city of Vientiane and the northern rural region.

	Urban Vientiane	Rural Plain
Percent who have completed four years of school	68%	20%
Percent who can read and comprehend at the fourth grade level	30%	42%

The identification of the specific sample of persons who could read and write above their level of schooling was a simple matter. The IBM cards upon which the data were recorded were sorted for literacy level. After those cards were identified for the literate portion of the sample, they were sorted again for the number of years of school attendance. Those were retained for possible inclusion in the sample that indicated a literacy level at the fourth grade or above and that further indicated attendance at school for two years or less.

As the IBM cards had been stored in the United States and the interview forms had been stored in Laos, the author sorted out all the cards from all regions of the country that indicated a literacy skill greater than the years of schooling would indicate. These were taken to Laos in case it was necessary to work in another region of the country.

The unschooled group that was literate, which will hereafter be referred to as the Underschooled Literate Group, was drawn from the rural villages in the valleys surrounding the royal capital of Luang Prabang and the provincial capital of Sayaboury. The random group with which it was compared, hereafter referred to as the Complete Comparison Group, was drawn from the same villages. The instructions given the interviewer were that every time he interviewed a person for the Underschooled Literate Group, he should go three or four houses away in any direction and interview a man from that house. This group, then, made up the Complete Comparison Group. For every case in the Underschooled Literate Group, a case was obtained for the Complete Comparison Group.

A total of 104 cases were included in the study. There were an equal number in each of the two groups, the Underschooled Literate Group and the Complete Comparison Group. All members of both groups were males. They were from the same villages. Within the Underschooled Literate Group all but eight of the respondents were farmers. Within the Complete Comparison Group, all but seven were farmers. Within the Underschooled Literate Group 21 per cent had attended government schools, none for more than two years. Within the Complete Comparison Group, 44 per cent had attended government schools. Their average time of attendance was five years. By the descriptors of age,

geographic location, sex and occupation, the two groups are essentially identical.

The Questions to be Explored

The three questions to which answers were sought have a wider basis than the specific country studied here. Some of this wider concern is discussed in the presentation of each question.

Motivation for Obtaining Literacy Skills

Motivation of adults to become literate is one of the unresolved problems in this field of research. It would seem that the skills of reading and writing would be valuable economically, rewarding socially, and gratifying personally and that illiterate persons would welcome the opportunity to avail themselves of literacy programs. Generally, this has not been the case. Many are reluctant to join literacy classes and the few who start, more often than not, drop out before finishing. It is claimed that a major cause is lack of sufficient motivation.¹

Participation in some literacy training programs has been legislated, with varying degrees of success. Russia, for example, successfully applied several forms of incentives--some negative, such as threatened loss of job,

¹Phillips, Literacy and Development. Chapter I deals with the problem of motivation.

finances or other sanctions.² Turkey enacted laws requiring participation in literacy programs. The program met with success for a time. Later, the laws were not enforced and attendance dropped.³ The most widely applied compulsory program for the eventual eradication of illiteracy is the compulsory school attendance laws for elementary school-age children. This method has been successful in much of the western world as well as Japan.

In programs that do not or cannot compel attendance, the problem of providing motivation becomes an important aspect of a program. In the ABC of Literacy, Mary Burnet states:

The history of literacy movements throughout the world is full of the debris of failures, chiefly because the classes were started without a strong desire or motivation among the students for learning to read and write.⁴

The Director-General of UNESCO was asked by the UN General Assembly to submit a plan for the eradication of world illiteracy. That plan was submitted to the UN in May of 1963.⁵ When listing obstacles to the success of

²Charles Jeffries, Illiteracy, A World Problem (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1967), p. 35.

³Ahmet Sudi Bulbul, "The Efforts on the Irradication of Illiteracy in Turkey," unpublished paper, Michigan State University, 1970, pp. 9-15.

⁴Mary Burnet, ABC of Literacy (France: UNESCO, 1965), p. 27.

⁵UNESCO, World Campaign for Universal Literacy. This document is the plan referred to.

literacy campaigns, the first factor discussed was that of motivation.

There are many different opinions on what motivates people to become literate. The Second Five-Year Plan (1960-65) of Pakistan took a very pragmatic view of the type of motivation needed for literacy campaigns:

Past experiments in the literacy drive show that to be successful the programme to eradicate illiteracy must be based on economic motivation⁶

Essentially the same position is taken by Adam Curle in his critique of the UNESCO World Campaign for Universal Literacy. Curle said that the proposal by UNESCO made note of the fact that literacy was not an end in itself but must be linked to economic and social development. He added, however:

It would seem that perhaps the implications of this economic objective have not been taken fully into account in the elaboration of the program.⁷

Curle pointed out that this factor must be considered not only because of the obvious development implications but because it was the only way adults could be induced to attend the literacy classes.

⁶Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission, The Second Five Year Plan (1960-65) (Pakistan, June, 1960), p. 352.

⁷Adam Curle, World Campaign for Universal Literacy: Comment and Proposal (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1964), p. 6.

Indeed, unless there is some obvious or hoped-for (even if the hope is vain) social or economic advantage to adult literacy, it is doubtful whether in any case the requisite steady enrollments could be achieved.⁸

H. M. Phillip's Literacy and Development issued by UNESCO on Literacy Day, September 8, 1970, devotes one-third of the body of the book to a treatment subtitled, Motivation to Literacy and Its Attainment.⁹ Phillips refers to several different studies on the motivational factors in literacy attainment which show that economic and social motivations are important reasons for becoming literate. Ten years after the statement concerning the need for economic motivation appeared in the Pakistan Five-Year Plan, it was restated again by Phillips:

In general, literacy programs are only effective in developing countries if there are economic and social motivations¹⁰

On the strength of these persisting concerns, the factor of motivation was included in the consideration of this study.

Most studies have approached the subject of motivation by asking the respondent what was the value of literacy. This indirect approach was not necessary with the sample in this study because they were all known to be literate. Therefore they could be asked why they became

⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

⁹ Phillips, Literacy and Development, Chapter I.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

literate, what made you want to learn to read and write? What did you hope to gain by being able to read and write? If they had one or two years of schooling, the respondents were asked the same direct question in terms of why they improved their skills from 1st or 2nd grade level to the 4th grade level or higher. Because we knew the sample was literate, the question did not need to be stated in the third person but could be stated in the second person.

The interviewers were instructed to probe at this point until they thought they had ascertained the real motivation. Usually several motivations were obtained and part of the probing was directed at determining which was of primary importance. Additional questions related to motivation that were asked included:

1. Who, if anyone, do you remember encouraging you or urging you to learn to read and write?
2. What were the very first uses to which you put your literacy skills?
3. Did you write love letters? (The question will become clear after reading the findings).
4. Could your father or mother read and write?

Means by Which Literacy Skills Were Obtained

Interest in the means by which people became literate stems from two related considerations. The first is the consideration of quality, manifested by concerns about retention rates, rapidity with which

people learn, holding power of the courses themselves and the usefulness of the literacy skills learned. The second is economics. Wherever resources are limited, there is a desire and necessity to develop literacy programs that reach the greatest number with the greatest effect for the least possible cost. The Lauback "Each One Teach One" literacy technique was an attempt to make use of limited resources. UNESCO's concern to press mass media techniques into the fight against illiteracy is another manifestation of the concern for efficiency and economy.

In studies of literacy programs or literate groups, the method by which literacy skills were obtained is a factor that is usually known or not a variable. In this study, the means of acquiring literacy skills were an unknown. It was hypothesized that many would have learned in a wat but this was not known and a portion of the sample had indicated no wat residence.

As in the previous area of investigation, i.e., motivation, the question was approached directly. The following questions were asked, not necessarily in the order presented here but as they naturally came up in the course of the interview. The questions were guides or points at which to start and were not intended to be the only points covered in the interview.

1. Where did you learn to read and write the Lao language?
2. If you initially learned in school and then later improved your ability, what did you do to improve your reading and writing skills?
3. What steps, procedures, methods, etc. were used to teach you the language or did you use to teach yourself? (pedagogical considerations)
4. What sorts of materials did you use? (types of books, reading materials or other objects).
5. Who taught you, helped you to learn or helped you to improve your ability?
6. Who did you go to for help?
7. How long did it take you to learn to read and write?
8. Did you study as an individual or in a group?

The nature of the information recorded indicated that the interviewers indeed used these questions as only a starting point.

Manifestations of the Literacy Skills

Literacy campaigns are directed toward providing some element that was not present before. One element that is usually taken for granted is the change from the illiterate to the literate state. It is also true that the element of literacy skill is a means toward some other objective. Considering that change of some sort is desired, and expected, there is justification in seeking a way to measure that change or the impact of the change.

The economist's interest, for example, is in the impact of education on economic growth toward the end of being able to predict the optimum investment in education needed to achieve a pre-determined rate of economic growth.¹¹ In the assessment of the manifestation of literacy skills in this study, the economic impact of literacy is measured on the individual level.

Scholars in the field of sociology have also been interested in measuring the impact of literacy on the individual. Their inquiry has most often manifested itself in an investigation into the effects of literacy in moving an individual along the continuum from traditionalism toward the state of modernity, however it may be defined.

Investigators from the field of communications usually consider literacy as one factor in the diffusion of innovations. Literacy is included among the modernization variables that help to explain the adoption of innovations. Works in this area are included in the bibliography by such authors as Lerner, Weiner, Inkeles, Rogers, Hunter and Herzog. The variables used in the general area of the study of individual modernization as viewed by the sociologist are also included for consideration in this study.

¹¹For a treatment of education from the economist's point of view, see Mark Blaug, Economics of Education (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968).

The variables used to measure the effect of literacy skills all are directed toward the modern sector. These variables were chosen because the main concern in the measure of the manifestations of the literacy skills was to determine if the skills contributed to that segment of development that has been defined as modernization. These variables have been used by many researchers studying in other developing countries. This gives the findings of this study some comparative value. Variables from the traditional sector were not utilized because of their doubtful ability to predict contributions to modernization.

Economic level.--One obvious sought-after objective of most development schemes is an improvement in one's level of living. One measure of this level, though by no means the only one, can be made in economic terms as they apply to the individual. Most studies of the effects of literacy have found that literacy is positively associated with higher income, ownership of land, and other measures of economic activity. This is an important consideration for the government planner or others considering the allocation of scarce resources toward the achievement of desired goals. There are many valid social reasons for supporting literacy campaigns, but, if it can also be proved that literacy has an economic benefit, funds for literacy programs become easier to obtain.

The investigation into the economic level of the two samples was made in terms relevant to rural Laos. The villages sampled were mostly inhabited by subsistence farmers. The economic status was therefore stated in terms relevant to subsistence farmers. The questions asked were:

1. How much land do you farm?
2. How much of that land do you own and how much is rented?
3. What other crops do you grow besides rice? How much of these crops are planted?
4. What kind and how many animals do you own?
5. What household items do you own such as loom, cement stoves, gasoline lanterns, furniture, etc.?
6. What major items are owned outside the home? (Bicycle, motor bike, boat, rice mill, etc.)
7. How many times a week do you buy meat or fish?

The interviewers were asked to compare the house of the interviewee with the rest of the houses in the same village and make a judgment as to whether it was poorer and smaller, about the same, or larger, newer and better.

It was hypothesized that the Underschooled Literate Group would have a higher level of economic activity than the Complete Comparison Group.

Attitude toward their children's schooling.--

Earlier in this chapter, the determination of the respondents own motivation to become literate was considered as an area of investigation. A consideration of the respondents attitude toward his children's schooling is also included in the study. There are good reasons for making

this a consideration. At least one study conducted in India indicates that increased elementary school enrollments are a by-product of adult literacy programs.¹² Other writers have pointed out the difficulties encountered by a youngster who is in school four or five hours a day in a literate environment and the remainder is in his home in an illiterate environment. Phittammavang points to the lack of home reinforcement to the child's school work as a factor that made it difficult for the Lao child to compete with the Vietnamese students in the early years of French education in Laos.¹³

It was hypothesized on the basis of the above that the Underschooled Literate Group would score higher on the indications of positive attitudes toward their children's schooling than the Complete Comparison Group. The attitude was measured by a number of questions that sought to determine what, in fact, their children's schooling experience had been. These were:

1. Did all your children attend school?
2. Are all the school-age children in your house presently attending school?
3. How far do they go in order to get to the school they attend?
4. Do any of your children live some other place so they can attend school?

¹²Asian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, Planning Functional Literacy in Asia (New Delhi: A.I.E.P.A., 1968).

¹³Phittammavong, Compulsory Education in Cambodia, Laos . . . , p. 103.

Two further questions sought to determine how much the parent knew about his children's schooling. These were:

1. What is your child studying in school?
2. Is he or she doing well? (Could he supply an example?)

Three questions sought to determine the attitude toward schooling as opposed to demonstrated action as measured in the previous two. The attitudinal questions were:

1. Should your children get more schooling than you had? How much more?
2. Can your children do well with the same amount of schooling you had or can they get by with less?
3. If your child had to leave the village to attend school, would you let him?

Modernization variables.--One can refer to modernizing political systems, economic structures and social practices. One can also speak of modernizing the educational system, the judicial system and religion. Modernization has different implications in each of the above cases. Modernization has individual as well as national implications. Here we are concerned with an attempt to measure the effects or manifestations of being literate as it concerns the individual. The measures are based on the social-psychological concept of individual modernity.

There is some variation as to what modernization means among researchers and planners when applied to the individual. There is, however, also some general agreement as to its nature and some factors that can be used to measure individual modernization. To Lerner, modernization

". . . is a secular trend unilateral in direction from traditional to participant life ways."¹⁴ Lerner measured modernization in terms of four variables--urbanization, literacy, media participation and political participation.¹⁵

Inkeles sees modernization, when referred to individuals, as ". . . a set of attitudes, values, and ways of feeling and acting, presumably of a sort either generated by or required for effective participation in a modern society."¹⁶ In measuring modernity, Inkeles devotes most of his attention to attitudinal or social psychological factors rather than factors dealing with behavior and information processing ability.

The concept of individual modernity and the variables used to measure modernity in this study contain elements from both Lerner and Inkeles but is based more directly upon factors utilized by Everett Rogers in Modernization Among Peasants. Rogers views modernization in a way that shares elements of the two previous views. In his book, Modernization of Peasants, Rogers states:

Modernization at the individual level corresponds to development at the societal level. Modernization is the process by which individuals change from a traditional way of life to a more complex,

¹⁴Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society . . . , p. 89.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 47-63.

¹⁶Alex Inkeles and David Smith, "The OM Scale: A Comparative Socio-Psychological Measure of Individual Modernity," Sociometry, XXIV, no. 4 (December, 1966), p. 355.

technologically advanced and rapidly changing style of life.¹⁷

Rogers cautions his readers against three common misconceptions about modernization. Modernization should not be equated with Europeanization or Westernization. It should not be thought of as being always "good," as modernization can have some destructive elements. Finally, Rogers cautioned that modernization is multi-dimensional and cannot be measured by a single index or criterion. There are many interacting factors that determine modernization such as level of living, aspirations, literacy and education, political participation, cosmopolitaness, and empathy. As many of these as possible should be considered when measuring individual modernization.¹⁸

Five variables were utilized in this study to measure individual modernization. They are mass media exposure, empathy, cosmopolitaness, political awareness and achievement motivation. The author owes much to the work of William Herzog in clarifying these concepts and in coming to grips with the task of measuring them. Herzog summarized the modernization process as set forth by Rogers as "progressive stages of awareness, knowledge and

¹⁷Rogers, Modernization Among Peasants, p. 14.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 15.

use (or participation) in a new style of life."¹⁹ He also pointed out that measures of achievement motivation and empathy indicate to some extent the individual's awareness of other possible styles of life toward which he may move. Political awareness, as measured by the amount of political knowledge the individual has in the political sphere is an indication of the degree of knowledge possessed about one aspect of modernization. Cosmopoliteness and mass media exposure are measures of behavior as they apply to contact with modern ways of life and pertain to the aspect of use or participation.²⁰

Mass media exposure.--A recent book on modernization by Rogers has a chapter entitled "Mass Media Exposure: The Magic Multiplier."²¹ In it, he describes the central role being played by the mass media in the modernization process. Mass media can reach large audiences at relatively low cost. It provides access to information from the world outside the village. This provides a means of introducing information, influencing attitudes and providing vicarious experiences. Rogers sees mass media exposure as an indication of a process that makes use of literacy and

¹⁹William A. Herzog, Jr., "The Effects of Literacy Training on Modernization Variables," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1967, p. 26.

²⁰Ibid., p. 15.

²¹Rogers, Modernization Among Peasants, p. 96.

education, is affected by social status and cosmopolitaness to bring about the consequences of empathy, political knowledge, innovativeness, achievement motivation and educational aspirations.²²

Both Lerner and Rogers have pointed out that there are strong positive relationships between literacy and mass media exposure. This relationship exists not only with print media but also with radio.

Mass media exposure was measured by determining the degree of contact the sample had with various forms of mass media. The questions asked were:

1. How often do you read a newspaper?
2. What other materials do you read?
3. What have you read in the past week?
4. How often do you go to the movies?
5. Do you have a radio in your house?
6. How often do you listen to the radio?
7. What type of programs do you like best?
8. How often do you see a Molam? (The Molam is a traditional form of news dissemination where a couple chant stories and fables, interspersed with the regional news.)

It was hypothesized that the Underschooled Literate Group would score higher on the mass media exposure scale than the Complete Comparison Group.

Empathy.--Lerner defines empathy as "the capacity to see oneself in the other fellow's situation."²³ Empathy

²²Ibid., p. 102.

²³Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society, p. 50.

thus defined forms the base for one of the best known non-economic theories of modernization.²⁴ This theory holds that empathy gives one the capacity to participate symbolically in new and different roles. A person must be able to do this before he can conceive of himself being any different than he is at the present.

Lerner found that the group in his study he designated as "modern," who had higher literacy rates, also had higher levels of empathy.²⁵ Rogers and Herzog similarly found a positive significant relationship between literacy and empathy in their study of Colombia peasants.²⁶

The method utilized to measure empathy was essentially identical to that used by Lerner, Herzog, and Rogers. The respondent was asked to imagine himself in another position and was then asked what he would do.

1. If you were the Chao Mounng (County Chief) what would you do?
2. If you were the local agricultural agent, what would you do?
3. What would you do if you were the Chao Khouang (Province Chief)?
4. What would you do if you were the head Abbot at the local wat?

²⁴Rogers, Modernization Among Peasants, p. 195.

²⁵Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society, pp. 136-144.

²⁶Everett Rogers and William A. Herzog, "Functional Literacy Among Columbian Peasants," Economic Development and Cultural Change, XIV, No. 2 (January, 1966).

It was hypothesized that the Underschooled Literate Group would score higher than the Complete Comparison Group.

Cosmopoliteness.--Cosmopoliteness is defined by Rogers as "the degree to which an individual is oriented outside his immediate social system."²⁷ The opposite of this is referred to as localiteness or the confining of one's interest and activity to his immediate environment. Cosmopoliteness is included in a study of modernization because urban areas are more modern and provide opportunities for mass media contact.

The individual is exposed to new and different things. In the city, he is confronted with modern technology and opportunities to learn. He is provided more modern examples to follow. He is given a framework within which he can empathize with more modern roles. Lerner, Rogers, and Herzog found positive relationships between literacy and cosmopoliteness in such widespread areas as the Middle East and South America.

The actual measure of cosmopoliteness used here is based on the amount of contact with the urban setting, as are the measures by Lerner, Rogers, and Herzog.

1. Would you like to live in a large city like Vientiane?
2. Do you have relatives or friends that live in a large city?

²⁷ Rogers, Modernization Among Peasants, p. 147.

3. How often do you hear from them? (Messages or mail?)
4. How often do they visit you?
5. How many times a year do you visit your Mounng and Kouang?
6. When was the last time you visited your Mounng or Kouang?

It was hypothesized that the Underschooled Literate Group would score higher than the Complete Comparison Group.

Political awareness.--The level of political awareness was found to be positively related to literacy by Herzog and Rogers. Lerner's model of modernization had political participation as its last step. Political knowledge is a prerequisite to political participation. Literacy is a channel that opens up opportunities to obtain political knowledge.

In this study, political knowledge was measured by a four-item scale:

1. What is the name of your Chao Mouang?
(county chief)
2. What is the name of your Chao Kouang?
(province chief)
3. When was the last national election?
4. What is the job of the Prime Minister?

It was hypothesized that the Underschooled Literate Group would score higher than the Complete Comparison Group.

Achievement motivation.--McClelland is most noted for his work with the concept of achievement motivation. Achievement motivation was defined by McClelland as

". . . a desire to do well, not so much for the sake of social recognition or prestige but to obtain an inner feeling of personal accomplishment."²⁸ McClelland saw achievement motivation as the key ingredient in the entrepreneurial drive and the desire for excellence. McClelland's work was primarily with college students in the United States. Rogers was the first to use the measure in a developing country. In the Colombian study, Rogers found positive and significant relationships between literacy and achievement motivation.²⁹ The relationship in various villages, however, was not consistent. Rogers and subsequent researchers have used a sentence completion test as a measure. The measure used here is that used by Herzog.³⁰ He used five statements with which the respondent was asked to agree or disagree:

1. It is better to be content with little than to struggle for more.
2. I would like to try something difficult just to prove to myself that I could do it.
3. The wish to become important or to try to be successful is a waste of time.
4. No matter what I have done, I have always wanted to do more.
5. The way conditions are, it makes it discouraging for a person to work hard.

²⁸David C. McClelland, "The Achievement Motive in Economic Growth," in Industrialization and Society, ed. by B. F. Hoselitz and U. C. Moore (Mouton: UNESCO, 1963), p. 76.

²⁹Rogers, Modernization Among Peasants, p. 24.

³⁰Herzog, "The Effects of Literacy Training . . . ,", pp. 33-34.

It was hypothesized that the Underschooled Literate Group would score higher on the achievement motivation scale than the Complete Comparison Group.

Conduct of the Field Work

In early July, 1970, a preliminary survey instrument and the IBM cards of all the individuals from the 1968 study that met the criteria of being male, literate at the fourth grade level, and not having attended school for more than two years were taken to Laos. The first task was to confer with the Lao collaborator, Mr. Onsey Inthavong, on the appropriateness of the instrument to the Lao culture. After some modifications, the instrument was taken into the field to be tested. An area was selected that was in the northern rural region but had not been surveyed in the 1968 study.

The procedure used to test the instrument was to select some individuals from the village who were considered to be modern and some who were considered to be traditional. The selection was made after consultation with the village headman, the Chao Mouang (whose office was located in the village, teachers from the local school and staff from a small teacher training institution that was located on the edge of the village. The particular village used to test the instrument was fairly large for a Lao village. It had a population of about 3,000 people. The village, however, was also quite isolated so the

population was stable in terms of length of residence. One could be fairly confident that the people consulted to select the group to test the instrument were very familiar with the people in the village. The consultants were asked to make their selection of the test group on the basis of several factors:

1. Did the person demonstrate a willingness to try new things?
2. Were they innovative or imitative?
3. Were they respected, looked up to and turned to for advice by their fellow villagers?
4. What was their relative economic position in the village?
5. Did they make strong efforts to see that their children received an education?
6. Did they visit other cities and villages?
7. Did they take part in the village meetings?
8. Did they use what medical facilities were available? (Or still use the spirit doctor?)

After a group had been selected that represented both ends of the spectrum, the instrument was administered to them to see if it discriminated between the two ends of the "spectrum." A problem was encountered immediately in the administration of the achievement motivation portion of the instrument. None of the villagers was responding meaningfully to the five items. It was mainly a problem of getting them to take the matter seriously. Several translations were tried and the approach was varied. No direct approach to seek statements of agreement or disagreement to the five statements was successful in obtaining any discrimination between the "modern" group and the "traditional" group.

An indirect approach was finally hit upon that, when utilized with the five items, did discriminate between the two groups. The procedure was to conduct the entire interview and obtain all information needed except the five items in the achievement motivation portion of the instrument. Almost as an afterthought at the end of the interview, the respondent was told that the American helping with the survey was interested in the folk sayings of different countries and wanted to know if there were Lao sayings that corresponded to some of those used in the United States. The respondents were asked if they would see if they knew any Lao saying that corresponded to the five statements used in the achievement motivation test. The statements were read but the meaning was also translated into Lao. The reading of the translation usually meant nothing to the Lao. The saying "A bird in hand is better than two in the bush" is an utterly ridiculous statement to the Lao. However, they have a saying that carries the same meaning. Because of the four-letter words utilized, it probably would not be appropriate to repeat them here. The translation of the meaning invariably came up with a response from the respondent. There was such a saying and they were proud to be able to help. They were then asked if the Lao considered the saying a good or wise saying or whether it was not too

true and not used very often. This response was what was used to score the achievement motivation items.

It is realized that the validation of the test items used to measure the modernization variables may have little relevance outside Laos. This is not seen as a disadvantage. The objective of the research was to measure the effect of literacy on the Lao people. This was done by comparing two groups of Lao. Cross national comparisons were outside the scope of the study. The findings from the instrument are, however, not without some cross national comparative value as the instrument was derived from studies conducted in other countries by well known researchers.

After the instrument was tested in the northern rural region, it was administered in several villages in the central part of the country that had been surveyed in the 1968 study. People were selected to interview that met the criteria for inclusion in the Underschooled Literate Group. The purpose here was to ascertain the effect of the interview on people who had been interviewed two years before. No problems were encountered. At this point, it was felt that a number of cases from the central area would lend more generality of the findings to the country as a whole. However, poor security in the area prevented the interviewing of an extensive sample.

The question of security was one of major concern throughout the field work. Laos is torn by civil war. Areas chosen to survey were selected on the initial criterion of whether or not it was safe to work and travel. The extreme caution that had to be taken contributed to the sample being smaller than had been originally intended.

Basically, the field procedure was initially one of locating the underschooled literate Lao in his home village from the information obtained from the 1968 research forms. Then, after verifying his identity, the interview was conducted. After the interview with the members of the Underschooled Literate Group, the interviewer went three to four houses away to interview a person for the Complete Comparison Group.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS

The findings will be presented in four sections. The first three correspond to the three main areas of investigation of the study. They will deal with:

1. The motivations that prompted the Underschooled Literate Group to seek literacy skills.
2. The means by which the Underschooled Literate Group or, in the cases where it is relevant, the means by which they improved their skills.
3. The manifestations of those literacy skills as compared to the comparison groups in terms of the variables of:
 - a. Economic level
 - b. Attitude toward children's schooling
 - c. Mass media exposure
 - d. Empathy
 - e. Cosmopolitaness
 - f. Political knowledge
 - g. Achievement motivation

The fourth section will deal with the several variables as they seem to relate to each other. The relationship between the type of motivating factor and the modernization variables will be examined. The relationship between the method of learning the language and these same variables will be looked into.

It should be pointed out that while the size of the sample limits somewhat the generalities that can be formulated from these findings, they can at least suggest directions and hypotheses for further consideration. It should also be noted, however, that statistically, the samples were large enough so that small sample statistical techniques did not have to be utilized.

Motivations for Becoming Literate

Why did you learn how to read and write? In some instances, this question was a bit perplexing to the Lao villagers. The answer might seem self-evident to many who had, indeed, become literate. The interviewer often had to explain the question by pointing out the low literacy rate in his village, and, although many of his illiterate neighbors also had probably wanted to learn to read and write for various reasons, his reasons had been strong enough to insure that he actually did follow through and learn whereas many of his neighbors had not. It was pointed out that knowledge of the motivations of people who successfully learned how to read and write might help design programs that would induce others to learn. It had been some years since some of the respondents had become literate. (The average was 31 years.) One might question that the time lapse between the obtaining of literacy skills and this survey is such as to place in question the

reliability of the responses. This is an argument that cannot be disproved (no more than it can be proved). However, the type of answers given are consistent with what would be expected within the social, cultural and economic milieu of rural Laos.

Categories of responses were determined by the responses themselves. No structure or classification was determined beforehand. Thirteen separate groups resulted. These were then examined to see if there was a smaller set of groupings into which these could be placed. The writer decided upon three.

The first group was designated as having future oriented motivations. The criterion for inclusion in this group was an indication of a "future" use for the literacy skills, whatever that use might be.

The second group was designated as having present functionally-oriented motivations. There was an indication of use that individuals had in mind for their literacy skills. Where there was both a "function" specified and an indication of "future," the individual was placed in the "future" group.

The third group had motivations that were related to a relative position in society whether in relation to some individual, society as a whole, or an abstract estimation of the individual's personal worth.

Future-Oriented Motivations

Twenty-three percent of the sample gave motivations oriented toward the future. That is, the motivation had to do with things that were not part of the respondent's immediate activity or environment. There was to be no immediate payoff from obtaining the literacy skills. These responses were given the designation of future orientation because the respondent himself gave an indication that he had perceived the benefits as being derived in the future.

Half of the 23 percent gave future-oriented motivations that were extremely vague. The responses indicated that the respondents were unsure of what the future use was to be. There were references to "improving the possibilities for the future" and to wanting to insure that his "future" would have the same "possibilities" as those around him. It is possible that some of this group were still looking into the "future" and were not answering the question in terms of the time that they learned to read and write. It is also possible that the vagueness came from the fact that whatever they had seen as the future use or benefit of their literacy skills had not yet materialized and, after failing to realize the intent of their learning, they did not want to give it as a reason. Whatever the cause, this half of the future-oriented group was vague and unsure but nonetheless gave motivations which contained the concept "future."

The other half of the future-oriented group saw the literacy skills as a way of obtaining a good job in the future. This half of the group also specifically mentioned future in their responses. They all used the term "job" or mentioned a specific occupation. In either case, it would refer to a position that would place the individual in the money economy as opposed to the village agricultural subsistence economy. One of the specific classifications mentioned was that of a government job. Another was the broad classification of business which here probably means a small retail shop.

Two of the reasons in this classification tend to confirm the above reason for vague and unsure responses. These were motivations for which the individual obtained literacy but did not achieve. In one case, the individual had wanted to get a job, probably with the government, but he did not do well enough in school so he could not go on. When people were selected from the wat to go to Thailand for further education, he could not go. The other individual said that he wanted to be a teacher and simply shrugged his shoulders and said that he did not make it.

One might expect future-oriented people to be more modern. These respondents were all living in the rural villages that are quite traditional. All but one gave "farmer" as their occupation. Their economic level is below the average for the total Underschooled Literate

Group. Other relationships between this motivation and other indicators to be discussed later tend to confirm that the future-oriented motivations held by this group do not indicate higher levels of modernity.

Functional-Oriented Motivations

Twenty-nine percent of the Underschooled Literate Group gave motivations that were related to some function. That is, they had some use in mind for their literacy skills. This group is distinct from the previous group in that there was no specification of "future" and there was always a function specified. A number of the respondents gave as the intended function that of improving their "knowledge." Probing with these people did not yield a specific secondary use for their literacy skills. Sometimes the "knowledge" referred to above was stated in terms of "understanding." "I wanted to be able to read so I could understand." What they wanted to understand was the available printed material. One person stated his desire in terms of being curious. He wanted to know what was "in the writing" that he had seen others read.

To be able to read the current news was the motivation given by some. This could be a factor only in those communities where newspapers or other printed matter were available. Another motivation related to news was that of wanting to be able to write and read correspondence.

Despite the fact that Laos has no organized postal system outside a few cities, communication between villages is maintained by having travelers carry mail from village to village. The ability to read and write letters is a source of self satisfaction for the individual.

Another very functional purpose given was that of the necessity of reading and writing as protection against exploitation. The illiterate must rely on persons with literacy skills to perform those functions requiring reading and writing. Those who have the skills often take advantage of the illiterate.

Other reasons were connected with business and trading. People giving these motivations were in business or trading and needed the skills to ensure better operation of their business. One person wanted to read so he could understand the "laws" and the "regulations," an example of the need for literacy skills imposed on the traditional village when it comes into contact with a literate central government.

Four people in this group did not state that they wanted to become literate to perform some other function--the function was reading and writing itself. When queried about the importance of gaining knowledge and understanding, they dismissed this as a motivation and said they just wanted to read and write. There are many folk tales and stories available to the literate. They are enjoyable

reading and some of the respondents just wanted to be able to read these tales and other material.

The ancient courting tradition of Laos involves the recitation of love poems by the young couple. The boy stands outside the house at night reciting poems while the girl answers from above in verse. This oral courting tradition has evolved and today the writing of love letters and poems is a common practice. Letters are exchanged between two people even if neither of them can read and write. The illiterate male wanting to send a letter will hire someone or have a friend write the letters for him. The illiterate girl, who receives the letter, will likewise ask a friend or hire someone to read letters from her suitor and write her reply.

It was hypothesized at the outset that the desire to be able to read and write one's own love letters would be one of the motivations for learning literacy skills. This motivation would fall into the functional category as a specific use would be specified, although it could be argued that this is more social than functional. Surprisingly, not one respondent gave this as a motivation for learning literacy skills. Only one gave the general function of being able to correspond through letters as his primary motivation. There were indications, however, that this use of writing skills was not unimportant. One of the questions in the interview asked was, "What was the

first use of your literacy skills?" Forty-seven percent of all the respondents in the Underschooled Literate Group gave the writing of letters as the first use. The respondents were also asked if they had ever written love letters. Seventy-five percent of the respondents indicated that they had used their literacy skills, at one time or another for the writing of love letters. The writing of lover letters, then, though unstated, could still have been one of the motivational factors. If not a strong motivating factor, it was found that it was the most universal use of literacy skills indicated by the respondents.

None of the functionally-oriented motivations were influenced by the urban, money economy areas. None of the functions stated necessarily required the respondents to leave his village. The reasons were not inconsistent with what would be expected in the social and cultural milieu. Other studies have indicated that one strong desire for literacy skills is to allow the person to "escape from the village." The motivations expressed here, however, are more consistent with the findings of Mark Blaug in his study of the role of education in the rural economy of Africa. His sample indicated that it was not the child who wanted to leave agriculture and the village but his parents who wanted it for him.¹

¹Blaug, The Role of Education in Enlarging . . . , p. 95.

Socially-Oriented Motivations

The third classification of motivational orientations contains those that are basically societal in nature. This classification comprised 42 percent of the responses. The social motivations can be grouped into four classifications. The first includes those whose acquisition of literacy skills was to make them "as good as" others. The second group wanted literacy skills to make themselves "better than others." The third wanted to make themselves better but made no comparison with "others." The fourth social motivation had to do with religious observances, which are the major social functions of Lao village life.

The group that wanted to be "as good as the others" sometimes stated their desire in terms of wanting to know "as the others did so I would be as good as they are." Some were afraid that others would be "better" than they, so to remain equal, they had to learn to read and write. Some stated the motivation in terms of being afraid that the others knew more than they did. This somehow gave them a sense of insecurity. Others put the comparison in terms of the literacy skills themselves. "I wanted to be able to read and write as the others could." One individual put the necessity to be able to read and write in terms of manhood. He stated that he was a man so he must know how to read and write as the other men.

The second group of societal motivations for becoming literate had reference to "other" within the context of wanting to be "better." I wanted to be better than the others so I had to improve myself." One person put the comparison in terms of being a more important person than the others. He mentioned as a secondary reason that of being able to help his country improve. One person stated that, "I wanted to learn to read and write so that I could get into a new society." The "new society" that he referred to was a higher level of society. He wanted to improve himself by reaching this new level. There was no specific reference to individuals or groups that the person wanted to be better than. There was, however, always some vague and undefined "others."

The third set of social motivations were given by people who wanted to improve themselves but did not mention any others. Statements were made such as, "I wanted to improve myself," "I wanted to develop myself," and in one case the person answered with a proverb, "A person without schooling is like a blind man." He said he did not want to be blind so he learned how to read and write. Further probing with this group seemed to indicate that they held the belief that being able to read and write would improve their personal worth. This improvement was without comparison to any other people. They were just interested in being better human beings. Learning

how to read and write was one method that in their estimation would make them so.

The fourth group of social motivations had to do with religious observances. It is surprising that so few gave this as a motivating factor, especially since so many respondents obtained their literacy skills in the Buddhist wat. Only three people gave this reason. One wanted to learn the religious teachings. He wanted to study the advice of the Buddha to be able to teach others about what the Buddha wanted them to do. He saw this as a way to become a respected man. The other two wanted to be able to "thet," a practice in which a person from outside the family is requested to chant religious prayers and incantations on certain special occasions. There are special prayers and chants for every occasion, with different ones for births, deaths, marriages and for each holiday. On almost any special occasion, someone may be required to "thet." While this practice has little payoff financially, it does ensure the chanter prestige and a respected place in the community. One respondent wanted to "thet" because he spent a lot of time in the wat and another wanted to "thet" for reasons external to the wat, that is, to be a respected person in the community.

The remaining six percent of the sample, but for one, could not explain his reason for wanting to become literate. The one exception said that his parents forced

him to learn how to read and write. This sort of compulsion is rare in Laos.

An inquiry was made to ascertain if any person influenced the respondents to obtain literacy skills. Sixty-three percent of the sample indicated that no one had urged them to become literate. For this group, it was a decision that they themselves made under no pressure or encouragement. Twenty-five percent of the sample had been encouraged by their parents. In four of the cases, a parent was specified, once the mother and three times the father. In the other nine cases, the reference was to "parents." The other 12 percent of the sample was encouraged by other relatives, teachers or combinations of the persons stated above.

The general classification of "social motivations" is the largest of the three groups. This is not consistent with an unpublished study by UNICEF. The findings, based on a survey in Iran, gave seven classifications of motivations. They were:

1. For a better living.
2. Illiterates are "blind,"
3. Literacy is good,
4. For a better income,
5. For a better job,
6. For being more respectable, and
7. Negative and other answers.²

²Phillips, Literacy and Development. Chapter I deals with the problem of motivation.

Of these responses, 1, 4 and 5 are oriented toward economics, level of living or refer to a job. These three make up 48.5 percent of the total sample. About 23 percent of the motivation in Lao sample was oriented in this direction. Whereas 42 percent of the Lao sample learned for socially-oriented reasons, only 17 percent of the Iranian sample gave such reasons.

It has been noted that UNESCO, Adam Curle, and Mark Blaug, to name just three who have been quoted earlier, all agree that participation in literacy campaigns is dependent upon the participants perception that he will gain some social or economic advantage from his participation. The UNESCO emphasis on "Work-Oriented Functional Literacy" programs is designed to take advantage of the economic aspect of this premise. This could be interpreted in two ways. First, in order to get people into the literacy programs they must see a benefit. Therefore, development goals must be a part of literacy programs to motivate people to participate. The second is that literacy, by itself, is of little value in meeting the development goals of the country. However, development programs, to be effective, must contain a literacy element; hence, development-orientated literacy programs. One could say that the end result is the same in each case. However, the emphasis is entirely different. The yet to be completed evaluations of the UNESCO Experimental Literacy

Campaigns might throw some light on the effects of these differences in emphasis.

Examining the motivations given by the Under-schooled Literate Group readily shows that a very small proportion of the sample obtained their literacy skills for the intrinsic value of literacy itself. The concept of literacy as a human right, as a precondition to human dignity, seemed to be the motivation for only 7.6 percent of the sample. The remainder had reasons connected with some expected benefit from the literacy skills. It was stated above that literacy programs are expected to contribute to the development goals of the country. To get people to participate in the programs, they must perceive some benefit. It seems that the assumption has been made in many recent literacy programs that development goals are the most important objective. The assumption made from this is that these development goals are also the most important consideration of the participants of the program. From the findings of this study and those of the Iranian study by UNICEF, it would seem that this assumption may be subject to question. It behooves planners to ascertain as part of their planning process just what motivations will be persuasive enough to get their target population into their literacy programs and keep them there long enough to become literate and to meet their more general development goals.

Means by Which Literacy Skills
Were Obtained

The value of determining a means by which a group of people can become literate outside the formal school system has obvious benefits to a country that does not have the resources to provide universal schooling. If the means discovered are less expensive and more efficient, the government can provide literacy skills to a larger number of people.

The examination of the data from the 1968 Study indicated that there were large numbers of Lao men who had learned to read and write outside the formal school system. Unlike most literacy surveys, this one started with the source of literacy skills largely unknown. It was hypothesized that many would have obtained their literacy skills in the Buddhist wats even though it had been the intention to exclude all from the study who had resided in the wat for longer than six months. This exclusion was not wholly accomplished. In the final experimental group, more than half of the sample had spent at least two to five years in a wat. Only 43 percent of the sample had spent less than six months in residence in a wat.

In the interview, it was pointed out to the respondent that he had done something that was unusual in learning to read and write outside the regular school; that it was important to know how he became literate because possibly his experiences would help others who

did not have the opportunity to go to a regular school. The Underschooled Literate Group responded to this approach positively and some careful explanations were obtained of the methods by which they became literate.

The means by which literacy skills were obtained was seen to contain two separate considerations. The first is the agency or institution which provided the means and the second is the method by which the skills were learned. In this study, three groups are identified, each one of which is comprised of two other smaller groups. The classification of these groups is based on the dominant institution which provided the means. The largest of these was, as was expected, the Buddhist wat where 62 percent learned to read and write. The second major group contained 20 percent of the total sample. This group did not learn their literacy skills in an institution such as the wat or the government school. This group learned primarily by independent study. The third group, comprising 18 percent of the sample, had some experience in the government schools. One third of this group had attended school for one year and the remaining two-thirds had attended school for two years.

The means of acquiring literacy skills will be discussed in terms of these three classifications.

Means Associated with
the Buddhist Wat

As has been stated above, 62 percent of the Under-schooled Literate Group learned their literacy skills while in residence in a Buddhist wat. The techniques used to learn the language was more or less the same. Not everyone who goes into a wat to live becomes literate but the means are available and everyone living there participates to some extent.

A day in a Buddhist wat begins and ends with the chanting of prayers. The chants seldom take less than 30 minutes and an hour is more typical. The prayers are chanted in the Pali language. The monks and the bonzes (young novices) learn the prayers by heart. They seldom know what they were chanting or even the general meaning of the prayer.

One of the duties while in the wat is to study the palm leaf books upon which Pali prayers memorized by the monks are written. They are written in what the Lao call "tham" characters which are very similar to the old writing system of the Siamese and the Khmer. It is a completely phonetic system of writing. This makes it possible to learn the sound system and to be able to "speak" the complete language and still not know the meaning of what one is saying.

Sometimes students studied in groups, with a monk as a teacher. More typically students studied alone and the monk would serve as a tutor. In smaller wats, the individual might study the characters almost completely on his own and get only occasional help from the senior monks. In either of the two cases, the result was the same. The phonetic writing system was learned so the bonze could chant the prayers. The language was not learned. This is a perfectly acceptable condition for the monks as the importance is put on the recitation of prayers, the "saying" of the words, and not in understanding the meanings.

The respondents said that often the characters were not learned in a systematic fashion. First a prayer would be memorized and then the student would study the palm leaf books for that prayer until he "knew" the characters representing the sounds he was making. This was usually done by the simple process of chanting the prayers over and over while studying the characters as he went along. In the early stages of this process, the individual would have to start over if he lost his place. When the characters for that prayer were memorized, he could start any place in the prayer and continue. After the person has learned a number of prayers in this fashion, he would have learned all the tham characters necessary to "read" all the Pali prayers. This method of learning the writing system seem to indicate that the individual almost unconsciously

internalizes the sound system of the Pali language and the tham characters in which it was written.

In some of the more modern wats, and especially in more recent times, the practice of learning the characters in a more systematic fashion has come into use. The bonze learns the sound the individual character represents and then in all their possible vowel and consonant combinations. Knowledge of the writing and sound system is built up gradually.

Even if the process were to stop here, the Lao would still have a socially useful skill. He could chant prayers from the palm leaf book though he could not understand Pali itself. Fortunately, there is another use for the ability to read tham characters. The Lao language can be transliterated into these characters. This has been done for a limited number of Lao folk tales. Therefore, after the bonze has mastered the tham characters, he has something to read. However, he reads it the way he reads the prayers, that is, out loud. The characters themselves have no meaning for him. Therefore, he "reads" the sounds out loud and then listens to what he has said. At this stage, he typically must read out loud to get any meaning from what is written.

The characters in which contemporary Lao is written were derived from the tham characters that the bonze has learned. They are similar in shape, the phonetic system

is the same, and the sounds are the same. The transition from tham to Lao characters is relatively easy and can be done quickly. It is further one that the bonze can do himself with only occasional help of monks or some other literate person. It is not a regular part of the wat routine as the learning of tham characters is. There were no cases where the individual learned tham in the wat and then went to a government school to learn the Lao language. Although there is no literature to confirm it, this system of learning tham characters and Pail language is probably the one that has been used in the wats for some time.

One of the questions in the interview was aimed at determining the length of time it took to become literate. The answers to this question given by those who learned in the wat varied from two months to three or four years. The answers cannot be taken as an indication of anything, as an examination of the data revealed that, in some cases, the respondent was referring to the length of time the whole process took, that is the learning of tham, Pali and then Lao. In some cases, they were referring to the length of time it took to learn Lao after learning tham and Pali.

Individual Effort as Main Means

Twenty percent of the Underschooled Literate Group learned their literacy skills by means that were not primarily connected with the wat or the schools.

A quarter of this group used the same method of learning Lao as was used in the wat. That is, they learned the prayers on their own, the tham characters, and then made the transition to the Lao language. This group typically did not seek help from the wat or the school. Their help came from friends or members of the family. It is probable that the people they sought help from had, at one time, themselves been residents in the wats.

Half of the group who learned individually did so by methods that were similar to those used in the public schools and, in fact, used the same materials as those used in the schools. The materials were, in all likelihood, obtained from the schools. In this method, the sounds that the consonant symbols represent are memorized. Then the sounds that these symbols represent when followed by various combinations of vowels and tone characters are learned. The meanings that the symbols represent are only incidentally learned. The emphasis is on learning the sound system. In this respect, it is not dissimilar to the method used in the wat. The learning is done orally and, if in a classroom, in chorus. People who learn by this method learn to read out loud and, for some time after learning, most still read out loud. As in the reading of Lao with tham characters, if the individual cannot "listen" to what he is reading, he can get no meaning from the printed page. If one reads a lot and for a long period of

time, he eventually learns the meanings of the words by symbol recognition and no longer has to read out loud. Many Lao, however, never get to this point.

Only two people in the entire Underschooled Literate Group learned to read by the process of symbol recognition. This group learned the meanings of the written characters by asking friends to write a word for them and then they memorized it. Then they would learn another and another. Eventually, they learned to read. They claimed they learned the symbol, the sound, and the meaning at the same time. They had to learn a reading vocabulary. Those who learned the sounds had only to learn a system of sound representation.

The people in this group usually sought help from friends. It might be significant that they did not seek help within the two institutions where others learned to read and write. Only one respondent said that his children helped him to read.

Means Associated with the Schools

Twenty percent of the group learned their literacy skills through initial contact with the public government schools. This group attended school for not more than two years, though at the time of the 1968 Survey, they could read and write at the fourth grade level or better. This group learned to read and write by the method described

above and began reading in school. Most of the group improved their skills simply by using them. Only occasionally did they seek help from someone. In only one case was the help sought from his ex-teacher. One-third of the group went into a wat after learning in school and continued to improve their literacy skills there. With but one exception, this group did not mention learning tham characters and Pali in a wat.

The significance of these findings is the confirmation of the assumption often made that many Lao learn to read and write in the Buddhist wats. The portion that learned by themselves confirms that people with motivations that are strong enough can and do overcome the lack of schools as means for obtaining literacy skills. The portion that learned initially in the schools and then improved their literacy skills illustrates that elementary school "wastage" might not be as serious as some assume. Some of this group who had only one or two years of school used their incomplete skills as a foundation and built on them and did not "waste" them.

Manifestations of the Literacy Skills

We have considered the How and the Why of the literacy skills that were obtained outside the formal school system and now we will consider the So What. This was done by measuring the level of certain indicators of

modernity in the individual. These indicators were described in Chapter V, as were the tests that were used to measure their level in each individual. The same indicators were measured in a group of randomly selected individuals from the same villages.

The group of randomly selected individuals with which the Underschooled Literate Group was compared is referred to as the Complete Comparison Group. This group was found to have a self-reported literacy rate of 55 percent. This is about the same as the self-reported literacy rate for the male population from this region as found in the 1968 literacy survey.³ The Complete Comparison Group was divided into two groups, one that was literate, hereafter referred to as the Literate Comparison Group, and one that was illiterate, hereafter referred to as the Illiterate Comparison Group. The Underschooled Literate Group was compared with all three of these comparison groups and the literate and illiterate portions of the Complete Comparison Group was compared with each other. The end result was four sets of comparisons:

1. Between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Complete Comparison Group. The first is 100 percent literate and the second is 55 percent literate.
2. Between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group. The first is 100 percent literate and the second is 100 percent illiterate.

³Wilder, "Literacy Levels of Various Sectors . . ."

3. Between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison Group. Both are 100 percent literate, one by test and the other self reported. Eighty percent of the comparison group in this case had attended a government school. The average length of time enrolled was five years. The comparison, then, is between a literate group, largely through the government schools and one literate largely through the Buddhist wats.
4. Between the Illiterate Comparison Group and the Literate Comparison Group. One is 100 percent literate and the other 100 percent illiterate.

These four comparisons were made in terms of the seven indicators of individual modernity discussed in Chapter V. The test for significance between the means utilized was the Univariate F Test. The hypothesis that a difference between the means existed was rejected if the F Test indicated that the probability that the difference was due to chance exceeded five percent. All probability levels will be reported in terms of decimals, so the rejection level becomes .05.

Difference Between the Groups

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) Test for difference between the four comparison groups was performed. The MANOVA Test considers the means, variance and, to some extent, the correlation of all seven modernization variables together when determining if there is a significant difference between the four groups.

The test showed that there were highly significant differences between the Underschooled Literate Group and both the Illiterate Comparison Group and the Complete Comparison Group. There was also a significant difference between the literate and illiterate portions of the Complete Comparison Group. There were no significant differences between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison Group. These two groups were both literate, one obtaining their skills through the government schools and the other through the wat. Table 4 presents all the probability scores utilized in the between group comparison which follows.

A significant statistical test on the MANOVA Test here indicates that the groups are different in some systematic way, based on the considerations of all the seven variables at once. The test does not indicate the direction of the difference, the location of the difference among the seven variables, nor the causes of the differences. The between group comparisons of differences between the means of the seven modernization variables individually and the examination of the correlational data which follows is an attempt to identify the location and direction of the factors causing the differences between the groups noted here.

TABLE 4.--Comparisons between groups on the modernization variables in terms of probability scores.^a

	Between Groups			
	One and Two ^b	One and Three ^b	One and Four ^b	Three and Four ^b
Total Difference Considering All Measures	.0009*	.0004*	.0545	.0274*
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	.451	.005*	.347	.004*
Mass Media Exposure	.061	.041*	.352	.223
Economic Level	.652	.861	.518	.620
Political Awareness	.024*	.001*	.583	.012*
Cosmopolitaness	.154	.813	.066	.234
Empathy	.021*	.006*	.321	.074
Achievement Motivation	.015*	.341	.023*	.667

^aThe figures indicate the probability that the differences between the groups could be due to chance. Any probability of .05 (5 times in a hundred could be due to chance) or higher was taken as unacceptable and those differences were rejected as insignificant.

^bGroup One--Underschooled Literate Group (n = 47)
 Group Two--Complete Comparison Group (n = 52)
 Group Three--Illiterate Comparison Group (n = 24)
 Group Four--Literate Comparison Group (n = 28)

*Indicates differences accepted as significant.

Attitude Toward Children's Schooling

The respondent's attitude toward his children's schooling was quantified by giving numerical values to the responses to questions described in Chapter V. The measure was a combination of behavioral and attitudinal items.

Some of the responses to the question of "how much education does your child need?" revealed a high degree of village orientation. A common response was that the child needed more schooling than the father to do as well as the father had done. This seems to indicate that the respondent was satisfied with his own life and that this might well be the level of aspiration that he held for his child. It also seems to indicate that the respondent perceived change. He perceived that something was changing so that it was necessary for the child to have more education now to do the same sorts of things that the father had done earlier. It is interesting that the perceived change is not in that he expects his child to do something different but in how much education is necessary to do the same thing. The nature of this reply is in contrast to the expected one of wanting more education for the child so he might do "better" than the parent had done.

There were no significant differences between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Complete Comparison Group nor between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison Group. Both groups in each comparison contained literate segments. There were significant differences at above the .01 level between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group and the Literate Comparison Group. In these cases, both comparisons were between a 100 percent literate group and a 100 percent illiterate group. The literate group had a more positive attitude toward their children's schooling in each case. The between group comparisons indicated that literacy is associated with positive attitudes toward schooling, whether the literacy was obtained in the schools or outside the schools.

These findings are consistent with other modernization studies where educational aspirations for the individual or his children has been compared in literate and illiterate groups. In every case, a more positive attitude toward schooling has been associated with literate populations than with illiterate populations.

A correlation matrix was constructed for each of the four groups. The matrix contains the seven individual modernization variables. The Underschooled Literate Group contains the additional variable of the score obtained on

the literacy test. The Literate Comparison Group contains the additional variable of the number of years of formal school attended. Table 5 contains the correlation coefficients of Attitude Toward Children's schooling with the other seven variables within each of the four groups.

Two of the correlation coefficients within the Underschooled Literate Group were significantly different from zero at the .05 level. These were mass media exposure and economic level. This is consistent with previous studies. The fact that the other five variables did not correlate at a significant level is inconsistent with other studies.

In the Complete Comparison Group, four of the correlation coefficients are significant, three at the .01 level and one at the .05 level. Within both the Illiterate Comparison Group and the Literate Comparison Group, three variables correlate significantly with attitude toward children's schooling. These three latter groups more closely conform to the characteristics of literate and illiterate groups from other studies.

The very surprising correlation coefficient in this chart is the one that indicates that the larger the number of years of schooling the Literate Comparison Group has had, the more negative will be their attitude toward their children's schooling. One can only speculate that this might indicate a greater awareness of the inadequacies of

TABLE 5.--Simple correlations between the modernization variables and attitude toward children's schooling.

	Within the			
	Underschooled Literate Group n = 47	Complete Com- parison Group n = 52	Illiterate Com- parison Group n = 24	Literate Com- parison Group n = 28
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Mass Media Exposure	.352**	.173	.127	.019
Economic Level	.292**	.380*	.384**	.394**
Political Awareness	.213	.311**	.519*	-.117
Cosmopoliteness	.184	.369*	.402**	.258
Empathy	.230	.428*	.197	.447**
Achievement Motivation	.152	-.108	-.146	-.003
Literacy Score	.035			-.451 ^{a**}

^a correlation is with years of schooling

* α = .01

** α = .05

the schools. It might also indicate that the longer the individual was in school, the higher his personal aspirations became and the more disappointed he is in finding himself still in the village. In general, however, more experience in the schools has resulted in a more negative attitude.

Mass Media Exposure

Mass media exposure was measured in terms of three types of media. The first was the print media, basically newspapers, although an effort was made to identify any other types of print media to which the respondents were exposed. The second was radio, which was approached both from the aspect of ownership and listening. This allowed us to take into account the listening to of radios that do not belong to the individual. The third type of mass media is the traditional form of news dissemination, the molam. Two people travel from village to village, one playing an instrument called a khene and the other narrates, in song, the latest news, bawdy jokes and traditional stories.

The hypothesis that there was a significant difference between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Complete Comparison Group was rejected as the probability was 6 in 100 that the difference was due to chance. This difference might have been significant if the groups had been slightly larger.

The difference between the level of mass media exposure between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group was significant at the .05 level. The differences between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison Group and the differences between the Literate and Illiterate portions of the Comparison Groups were not significant. Other studies have found that mass media exposure varies significantly with literacy. Further, that those who are literate and are most likely to read the newspapers are also most apt to own and listen to a radio.

Of the Underschooled Literate Group, 42 percent have a radio in their home. Only 30 percent of the Illiterate Comparison Group have a radio in their home. In the Underschooled Literate Group, 47 percent neither listen to the radio nor read the newspaper whereas 70 percent of the Illiterate Comparison Group do neither. The additional element that must be considered is that of the molom. Only 25 percent of the Underschooled Literate Group see a molom at least twice a month. Of the Illiterate Comparison Group, 55 percent see a molom at least twice a month. Some of the Illiterate Comparison Group that do not have radios in their homes listen to friends' radios. The overall result is that there is not a large difference in the total amount of mass media exposure between the various groups. The types of mass media to which a person is exposed to

seems to vary with his skills to make use of media. But even at that, 73 percent of the Underschooled Literate Group, all of whom are literate, seldom read a newspaper if at all.

The simple correlations of mass media exposure with the other modernization variables within the four groups is presented in Table 6. It can be seen that, within the Underschooled Literate Group, mass media exposure correlates positively with five of the seven variables. The correlation with attitude toward children's schooling is significant and in the expected direction. The fact that literacy scores do not correlate positively with mass media exposure seems to be a contradiction. It can only be hypothesized that the literacy skills were obtained from traditional sources, through contact with a traditional institution, i.e., the wat. In order to have higher literacy scores, one must have had more contact with the wat, making him a more traditional individual. This state of being more traditional and closer to the wat would make the individual less prone to seek mass media exposure, which in two of its three aspects measured in this study are modern institutions. Hence, the higher the literacy score, the more traditional the individual and he is not more likely to make use of the mass media.

TABLE 6.--Simple correlations between the modernization variables and mass media exposure.

	Within the			
	Underschooled Literate Group n = 47	Complete Com- parison Group n = 52	Illiterate Com- parison Group n = 24	Literate Com- parison Group n = 28
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	.352**	.173	.127	.019
Mass Media Exposure	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Economic Level	.411*	.203	.235	.126
Political Awareness	.286	.455*	.360	.424**
Cosmopolitaness	.395*	.484*	.443**	.484**
Empathy	.612*	.235	.397**	.040
Achievement Motivation	.195	.013	.015	.065
Literacy Score	.160			.421**

^acorrelation is with years of schooling* α = .01** α = .05



The Complete Comparison Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group both contain only two significant correlations, both positive. This indicates that political knowledge and cosmopolitaness are associated with exposure to mass media within the Complete Comparison Group. Cosmopolitaness and empathy are associated with mass media exposure in the Illiterate Comparison Group.

The Literate Comparison Group contains three significant and positive correlations, political awareness, cosmopolitaness and years of schooling. Exposure to mass media does not correlate significantly with literacy scores within the all literate group that obtained their skills primarily within the wat. It is positive and significant with the number of years of schooling among the all literate group that gained their literacy skills primarily in the formal schools. It would lead one to believe that as one gains more literacy skills in the wat he is not more likely to utilize the mass media. If he obtained his skills through an increasing number of years of contact with the formal schools, he is more likely to utilize the mass media.

Economic Level

In almost every case, our respondents were the head of the household. It is usual in Lao society to assume that anything owned by any individual living in a house will be reported as a possession of the household. The

instrument did not try to isolate that that was owned by the respondent as an individual. This would have probably been impossible in any event. The questions were directed toward those items owned by the entire household intentionally, as this is the only meaningful measure that could have been obtained.

There were no significant differences between the two groups in any of the four comparisons. Not only were the differences not significant, they were the least significant of any measure of differences obtained in the study. For example, the probability that the measured difference between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group was due to chance was 86 in 100. The direction of difference was not even in the expected direction. The illiterate group scored higher than the literate group.

Economic level is one of only two variables that did not appear as being a significant variable between the comparison groups in at least one case.

Although there were no significant differences between the means in either of the four comparisons made, economic level significantly correlated with the other variables at levels greater than zero in 13 of the 26 possible tests. These coefficients are presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7.--Simple correlations between the modernization variables and economic level.

	Within the		
	Underschooled Literate Group n = 47	Complete Com- parison Group n = 52	Illiterate Com- parison Group n = 24
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	.292**	.311**	.519*
Mass Media Exposure	.411*	.455*	.361
Economic Level	1.000	1.000	1.000
Political Awareness	.157	.245	.406**
Cosmopoliteness	.165	.281	.534*
Empathy	.444*	.489	.516*
Achievement Motivation	.003	-.033	-.144
Literacy Score	.185		-.205 ^a

^acorrelation is with years of schooling* α = .01** α = .05

Within the Underschooled Literate Group, economic level correlated significantly with mass media exposure, empathy, and attitude toward children's schooling. It is interesting that it did not correlate significantly with literacy schores. If there had been a difference between the groups who were literate and those who were illiterate, then the lack of a significant correlation here could be interpreted as supporting the threshold theory of the effects of literacy. That is, a certain amount facilitates economic development but after a "threshold" has been reached more literacy may or may not induce more economic development. In this case, evidence does not support the assumption that literacy has an effect upon economic level between a literate and an illiterate group or within a literate group.

The variables with which economic level correlates significantly do not form a pattern across the four groups. There is no significant correlation between the number of years of school attendance and economic level. Only one variable correlates highly with economic level across the four groups, i.e., empathy. Mass media exposure and attitude toward children's schooling are significantly correlated with economic level in three groups. Mass media exposure does not correlate significantly with economic level within the Illiterate Comparison Group. This might indicate that the type of mass media exposure the illiterate

group experiences does not have the same effects in terms of imparting development information that the type of mass media exposure the literate groups experience.

Political Awareness

The measures used to indicate the level of political awareness were measures of political knowledge. There was a significant difference between the means in three of the four comparisons made. The only comparison that did not indicate a difference between groups was the comparison between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison Group. The Underschooled Literate Group scored higher than both the Complete Comparison Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group. The Illiterate Comparison Group scored significantly lower than the Literate Comparison Group.

It should be safe to assume that a main contributor to political awareness when measured by political knowledge, would be mass media exposure, cosmopolitaness, empathy, literacy score, and number of years of schooling. However, within the group scoring highest on the political awareness scale, the Underschooled Literate Group, political knowledge correlated significantly with only one of the variables. The other significant correlations shown in Table 8 form no pattern. There is insufficient evidence to speculate as to the causes of the differences



TABLE 8.--Simple correlations between the modernization variables and political awareness.

	Within the			
	Underschooled Literate Group n = 47	Complete Com- parison Group n = 52	Illiterate Com- parison Group n = 24	Literate Com- parison Group n = 28
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	.213	.311**	.519*	-.117
Mass Media Exposure	.286**	.455	.361	.424
Economic Level	.157	.245	.496**	-.034
Political Awareness	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Cosmopoliteness	.157	.489*	.621*	.309
Empathy	.193	.219	.481**	-.122
Achievement Motivation	.233	.010	-.251	.325
Literacy Score	.021			.244 ^a

^a correlation is with years of schooling

* α = .01

** α = .05

in the way political knowledge is associated within the four groups.

Cosmopoliteness

Cosmopoliteness for the purposes of this study has been defined as the degree of orientation to the urban centers. It has been assumed in other studies that the city is a more modern influence than the village. Cosmopoliteness, which can also be assumed to be the degree of orientation outside the village, was measured by ascertaining the number of trips made to the city and the amount of contact the individual had with people who came from the urban strata of Lao society. Other studies have found that literate populations are more apt to be oriented toward the urban setting. In this study, there were no significant differences between the means of the comparison groups on the measure of cosmopoliteness. The findings here are at variance with other studies but a fairly common feature of Lao culture might explain this. There is a period in their lives when it is not unusual for Lao young men to wander from village to village just visiting and stopping wherever they wish. They stay in a wat for a while or live with relatives and then move on. It is sort of the Lao "Grande Toure." This sets a pattern that makes it very likely for Lao to have considerable contact with the urban sector later in life. He is not

afraid to travel and visit. He seems to feel comfortable in visiting other villages and the provincial centers.

Most of the Lao villages are on roads or rivers. The Mekong and its tributaries, in particular, form the "road map" of Laos. Villages are not isolated physically in the sense that it is really difficult to get to and from the cities.

The agricultural cycle is another enabling factor in the ability of the Lao farmer to leave the village and visit the city. The one crop rice cultivation cycle common in Laos leaves the farmer free for a six-month period to do as he wishes. It is during this free period that the dry season occurs so he may travel by ox cart. For these reasons, one would expect Lao men to have considerable contact with urban provincial settings and that it would not take the skill of literacy to orient him in that direction. Conversely, urban contacts do not seem to be a factor to any significant degree in influencing the acquisition of literacy skills.

The table presenting the correlations between the modernization variables within the four groups shows that cosmopolitanism correlates with mass media exposure and achievement motivation within the Underschooled Literate Group. Cosmopolitanism does not correlate significantly with literacy scores. In the Complete Comparison Group,

cosmopoliteness correlates with five of the six variables, the exception being achievement motivation. The same pattern is true for the Illiterate Comparison Group. Within the Literate Comparison Group, only mass media exposure correlated significantly with cosmopoliteness. Within this group, 80 percent of whom have attended school, the number of years of schooling does not correlate with cosmopoliteness. One could conclude that orientation to the urban setting can predict or will be associated with five of the six modernization variables within the group with sizeable illiterate segments but within the largely literate groups, orientation to the urban setting is not necessarily found in association with high measures of the other modernization variables. This would indicate that, though the level of cosmopoliteness is essentially the same in all four groups, its effects on the other modernization variables differ from group to group.

Empathy

Empathy as defined in this study is the same as the empathy that Lerner was speaking of when he advanced the notion that it is ". . . the capacity to see oneself in the other fellow's situation."⁴ Rogers and Herzog used the same concept of empathy in their considerations

⁴Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society, p. 50.

TABLE 9.--Simple correlations between the modernization variables and cosmopolitanness.

	Within the			
	Underschooled Literate Group n = 47	Complete Com- parison Group n = 52	Illiterate Com- parison Group n = 24	Literate Com- parison Group n = 28
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	.184	.309**	.402**	.258
Mass Media Exposure	.395	.484*	.443**	.484*
Economic Level	.165	.281**	.534*	-.014
Political Awareness	.157	.489*	.621*	.309
Cosmopolitaness	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Empathy	-.087	.354*	.566*	.155
Achievement Motivation	.390*	.125	-.055	.341
Literacy Score	.127			.073 ^a

^aCorrelation is with years of schooling* α = .01** α = .05

of the modernization of the individual.⁵ The present study, as Lerner, measures empathy by asking the respondent to assume the role of some other person.

The difference between the means of the Underschooled Literate Group and the Complete Comparison Group on the measure of empathy was significant, the Underschooled Literate Group scoring higher. The difference between the means of the Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group was significant with the former scoring higher. The other two comparisons, between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison Group and the Illiterate and Literate portions of the Comparison Groups were not significant. This indicates that literate groups score significantly higher on this empathy test than do illiterate groups. There seems to be no difference in empathy scores between those who learned their literacy skills in the schools and those who learned their skills in the way or on their own. The finding that the literate groups score higher is consistent with the findings of Lerner, Rogers, Herzog and others who have used empathy as a measure of individual modernization. In studying empathy and modernization in Brazil, Portocarrero found that empathy correlated positively with all the

⁵Rogers and Herzog, "Fundamental Literacy Among the Colombian Peasant," and Herzog, "The Effects of Literacy Training . . ."

measures of individual modernity that he utilized.⁶ The measures Portocarrero utilized are also used in this study. He found that mass media exposure was the best predictor of empathy. The findings here indicate that mass media exposure correlated positively with empathy within two of the four groups, these being the Under-schooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group--one a literate group and the other an illiterate group.

Portocarrero also found indications that the empathy phenomenon was part of the expression of social and economic status, that is, that empathy and economic level would correlate highly and that social and economic status affected the relationship between empathy and all the other modernization variables except those of literacy and educational aspirations. The findings in this study tend to confirm this in that economic level is correlated positively with empathy in all four groups. Neither literacy level nor number of years of schooling correlate significantly with empathy or the economic level.

The correlational matrix indicates that economic level increases as the level of empathy increases. One cannot assume causality from correlational data but, as a conjecture, if one assumed that it was desirable to

⁶ Cesar Alfonso Portocarrero, "Empathy and Modernization in Colombia," unpublished M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1966.

TABLE 10.--Simple correlations between the modernization variables and empathy.

	Within the		
	Underschooled Literate Group n = 47	Complete Com- parison Group n = 52	Illiterate Com- parison Group n = 24
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	.230	.428**	.197
Mass Media Exposure	.612*	.235	.397**
Economic Level	.444*	.489*	.516*
Political Awareness	-.193	.219	.481**
Cosmopoliteness	-.087	.354*	.566*
Empathy	1.000	1.000	1.000
Achievement Motivation	.754*	.073	.101
Literacy Score	.106		-.136
			-.126 ^a

^aCorrelation is with years of schooling* α = .01** α = .05

increase empathy, the data contains no clear pattern that indicates what other variables seem to change with empathy. Empathy has been assumed by other researchers to vary positively with mass media exposure, literacy and cosmopolitaness. Within none of the four groups identified here does empathy correlate significantly with more than one of these three factors.

The role-playing type questions of Lerner, Rogers and Herzog were used with modern roles and individuals within the government hierarchy. A question that dealt with a traditional role was also added. The question was "What would you do if you were head of the local wat?" Practically all the respondents, regardless of the group they came from, could answer this question adequately. This leads one to question how much of the variation in the measure of empathy is due to a variation in the ability to assume a role other than the one presently filled and how much of the variation is due to a difference in the amount of knowledge of that role. One cannot imagine himself in the role of the local agricultural agent if he has no knowledge of that role. Empathy as a measure of individual modernity needs to be more completely investigated.

Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation as measured in this study is defined as the desire to do well--"to obtain an inner

feeling of personal accomplishment."⁷ Some of the difficulties encountered in its measurement have been discussed in Chapter V. The first item in the test translated roughly into: "It is better to be content with little than to struggle for more." All respondents answered this in the same way. All agreed. This agreement did not indicate a lack of achievement motivation, that is, a lack of desire to do well because of the inner satisfaction obtained from doing well. The Lao consider a person to be greedy if he is not content with what he has and wants more. This response is consistent with the teachings of the Buddha, which here seems to take precedence over McClellan's achievement motivation and earlier discussed desires of social motivations.

There was variability on the responses to the remaining four questions. These led to a significant difference between the means when comparing the Underschooled Literate Group and the Complete Comparison Group with the former scoring higher on the measure of achievement motivation. There was no significant difference between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group. This was not what was expected. Even more surprising is that there was a difference between the

⁷ McClelland, "The Achievement Motive in Economic Growth," p. 76.

TABLE 11.--Simple correlations between the modernization variables and achievement motivation.

	Within the			
	Underschooled Literate Group n = 47	Complete Com- parison Group n = 52	Illiterate Com- parison Group n = 24	Literate Com- parison Group n = 28
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	.152	-.108	-.146	-.003
Mass Media Exposure	.145	.013	.051	.065
Economic Level	.003	-.033	-.144	.097
Political Awareness	.233	.010	-.251	.325
Cosmopoliteness	.390*	.125	-.055	.341
Empathy	-.080	-.073	.101	-.136
Achievement Motivation	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Literacy Score	-.035			.074 ^a

^aCorrelation is with years of schooling* $\alpha = .01$



Underschooled Literate Group, who had not attended government schools, scoring higher than the Literate Comparison Group who had mostly attended government schools. One is tempted to conclude that achievement motivation is more likely to be associated with groups who have not attended government schools.

The Chart containing the correlation matrix for the four groups shows that only within the Underschooled Literate Group is there a significant correlation. This indicates that only within the Underschooled Literate Group does the achievement motivation score vary in a significant way with the score of any other modernization variable. The correlation is positive, as would be expected, except in the case of the literacy score. From the data presented thus far, no conclusions can be drawn as to the reason for this pattern of significant correlations and lack of significant correlations.

Literacy Level

Within the Underschooled Literate Group, the literacy test scores were correlated with the seven modernization variables. Within the Literate Comparison Group these same modernization variables were correlated with the number of years the respondents had attended a government school. It should be remembered that both groups are literate, the first by test at at least the

TABLE 12.--Simple correlations between the modernization variables and (1) literacy test score within the Underschooled Literate Group, and (2) number of years of schooling within the Literate Comparison Group.

	Underschooled Literate Group 100% literate--80% had no formal schooling	Literate Comparison Group 100% literate--80% had attended avg. of 5 yrs of formal schooling
Attitude Toward Children's Schooling	.035	-.451*
Mass Media Exposure	.160	.421*
Economic Level	.185	-.205
Political Awareness	.020	.244
Cosmopolitaness	.127	.073
Empathy	.106	-.126
Achievement Motivation	-.035	.074

* α = .05



fourth grade level and the second by self-definition. Little can be said without further research as to the causes for the types of relationships found. Within the Underschooled Literate Group, attitude toward children's schooling does not correlate significantly with literacy scores. Within the Literate Comparison Group, years of schooling correlates negatively and significantly with attitude toward children's schooling. Literacy scores, as a result mainly of wat education, do not correlate positively with mass media exposure whereas years of education in the school does. There are no other significant relationships within the Underschooled Literate Group.

One can only speculate on the lack of significant correlation coefficients within the Underschooled Literate Group. It would appear that literacy in this group is a result of contact with a traditional institution, the Buddhist wat. The more contact, the higher level of literacy the individual had a chance to develop and the more traditional he became because of the contact with the wat. The significant factor is the degree of traditionality that is also associated with literacy and not literacy alone. In this case, the source of the literacy skills might have a greater effect than the literacy skills themselves.



Correlations Within Groups

Another way of looking at the correlational data is to construct a diagram that contains all the significant correlations within each group. Figure 3 illustrates how the various factors within the Underschooled Literate Group form a network of related factors. All the correlations are significant and positive.

Figure 4 contains the factors that correlate significantly within the Complete Comparison Group. In the first diagram, mass media exposure and achievement motivation were the central elements. In the second, cosmopolitanism and attitude toward children's schooling seem to be the central elements.

Figure 5, which refers to the Illiterate Comparison Group contains a smaller number of factors that relate to each other more highly and with a greater number of linkages.

Figure 6 refers to the Literate Comparison Group, percent of whom have attended government schools. The significant correlations do not form a tight interrelated group of variables as is the case in the three preceding groups.

One can only conclude that there is no pattern of relationships across the four groups. Assuming that the illiterate group is the most traditional, the Underschooled Literate Group who obtained their literacy skills through



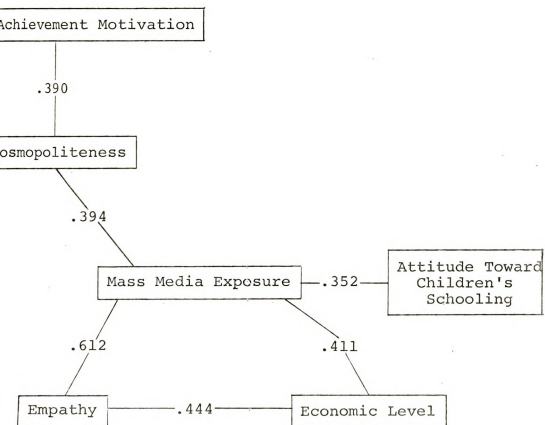


Figure 3. --Significant correlations within the perschooled Literate Group.



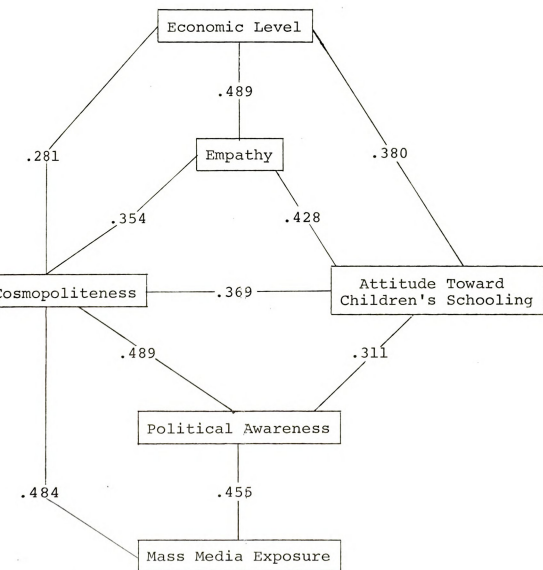
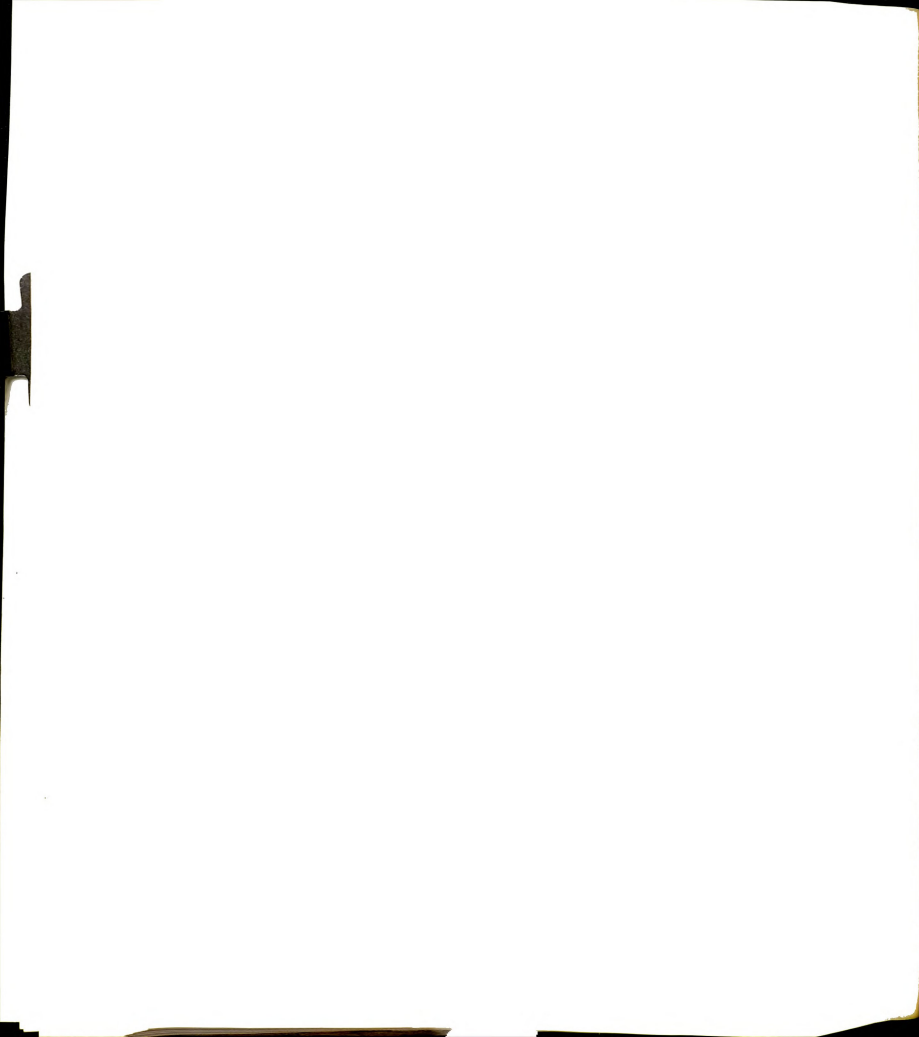


Figure 4.--Significant correlations within the
Complete Comparison Group.



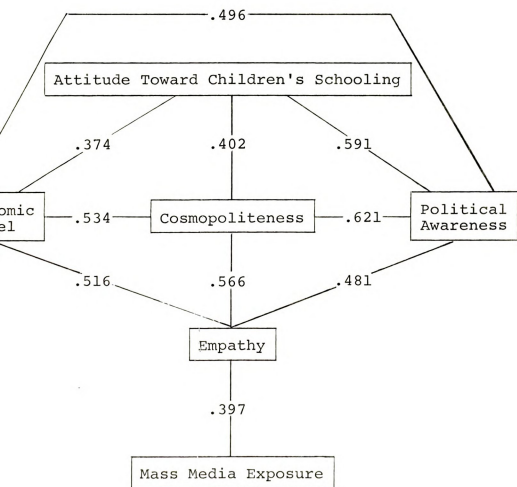


Figure 5. --Significant correlations within the Rate Comparison Group.



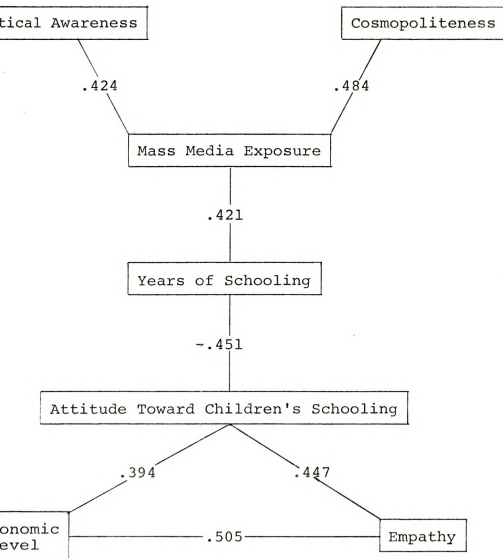
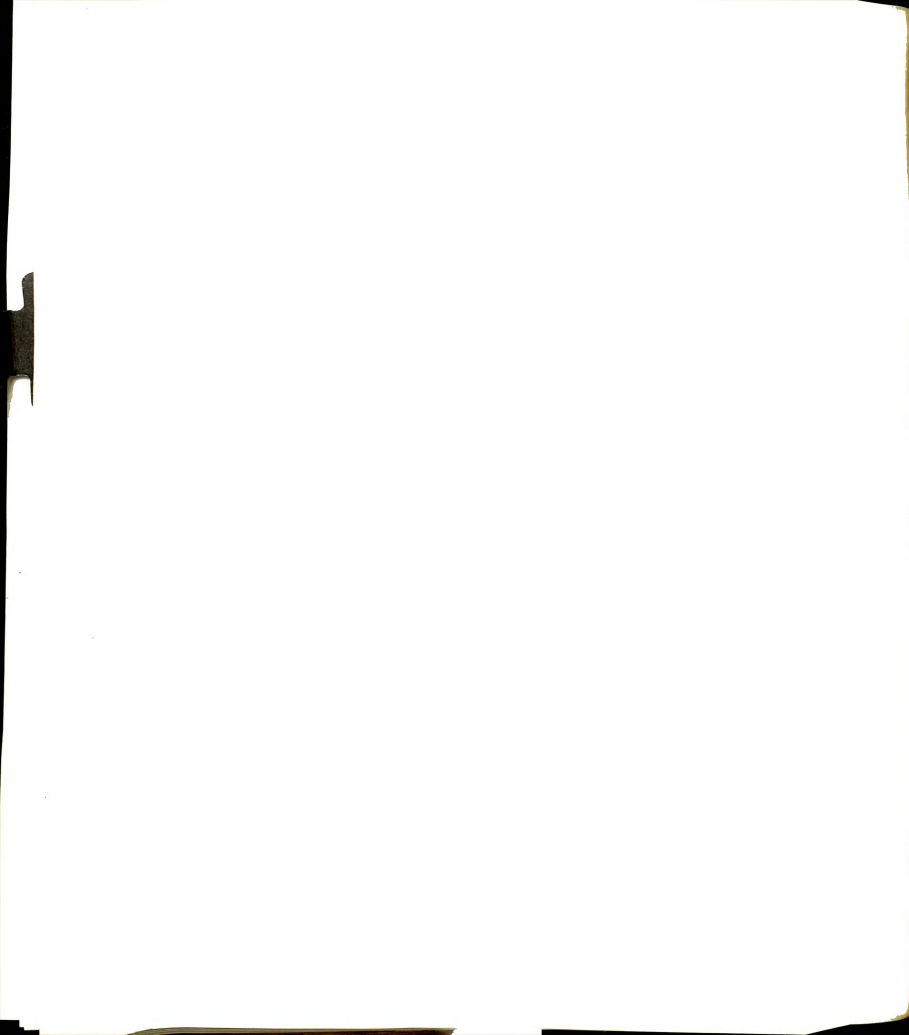


Figure 6. --Significant correlations within the Comparison Group.

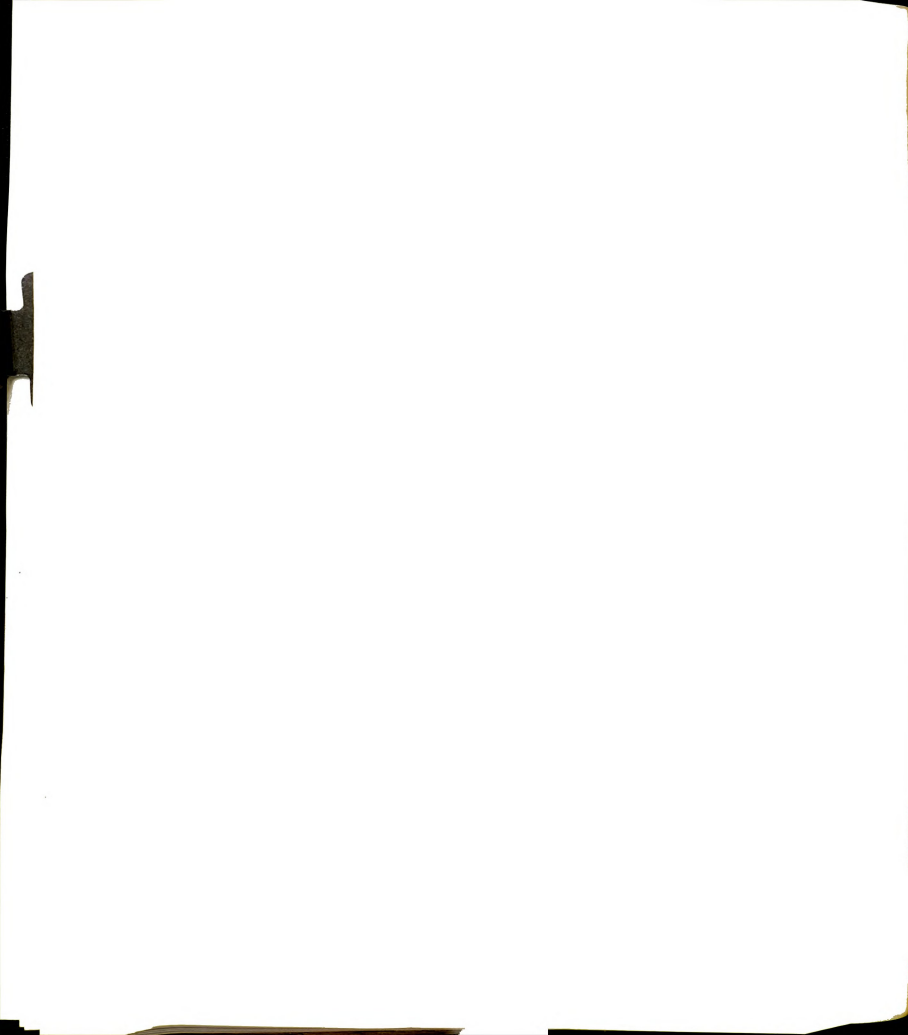


tional means as the next most traditional, the Literate Comparison Group next and the Literate Comparison the most modern because of its contact with the government schools (assumptions that have not been supported), then the more traditional the group, the more related the modernization variables are. This could indicate that schooling tends to diffuse the effects of the variables or that schooling allows that group to be more homogeneous. In a traditional setting, there is a high degree of homogeneity. The influence of the school tends to upset the processes in the society that tends to bring all members of the group into a common set of relationships.

Tests of Means and Motivation

The Underschooled Literate Group was divided into three groups determined by the means by which they became literate. Means were computed for each of the seven variables for each of the three means of becoming literate. Means were associated with the wat, means largely independent of either wat or school and means associated with government schools. Tests for significance between means were conducted when comparing the:

1. Wat and independent means
2. Wat and schools means
3. Independent and school-associated means.



of the differences were significant. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance Test considering all factors did find, however, that the group that obtained their literacy skills through the way that was different from both the group who learned their skills through independent means and the group who obtained their skills through the schools. As the size of the group involved was small, no further attempt was made to identify the causes of the differences.

The Underschooled Literate Group was again divided into three groups. In this case, the groups were determined by the motivation for becoming literate. The tests described above were conducted. The overall test for differences between the groups, the Multivariate Analysis of Variance test, revealed that the group that obtained literacy skills because of a functional motivation was significantly different from the group that obtained their skills for future-oriented reasons. The group who obtained their skills for future-oriented reasons was significantly different from the group who had social motivation. There was no difference between the functional-oriented group and the social-oriented group.

Differences between the groups on the individual measures of modernity were significant in a few cases. The functional-oriented group had significantly higher achievement motivation scores than the social-oriented



The functional-motivated group scored significantly higher on the empathy scale than did either the future-oriented group or the social-oriented group.

The difference between the means on economic level was significant in two cases. These were the comparison between the functionally-motivated group and both the self-motivated group and the social-motivated group. The economic level of the functionally-motivated group was higher in both comparisons. This is the only set of tests in which a significant difference in economic level was obtained. It would seem that in terms of affecting economic level, the most important consideration for policy programs for these groups would be the motivation of the participant. For these groups, it is also the only statistically significant factor.



CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The acquisition of literacy skills provides the individual with another means of communication. The individual gains a new means by which he can express himself.

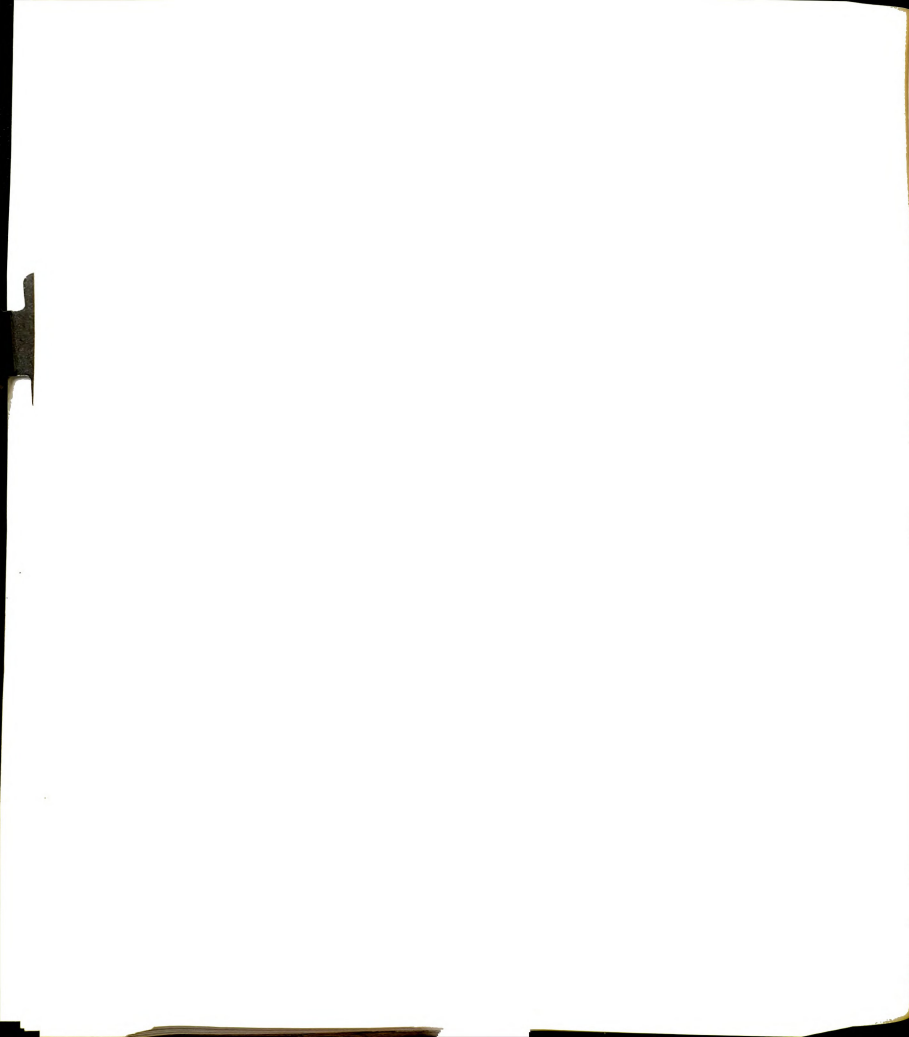
Further, concerning the implications of literacy:

Its true meaning is the passage from one type of civilization to another, or more explicitly, the passage from an oral civilization with its own assortment of references, innovations, formations of the bases of legality, and the introduction to rational processes of perception and reflection. It is at the same time the passage from a society closed in upon itself to one which is necessarily open to the world.¹

The passage referred to by Lengrand above is multifunctional. It is complex and involves individual as well as aggregate transformations. It is also a "passage" which proceeds at varying rates with many stops, starts and possible regressions along the way.

Laos is a country which finds herself at a point on the continuum between an oral civilization and a highly literate civilization. Movement along the continuum determines the type of development she has outlined for

¹Paul Lengrand, An Introduction to Lifelong Education (Paris: UNESCO, 1970), p. 87.

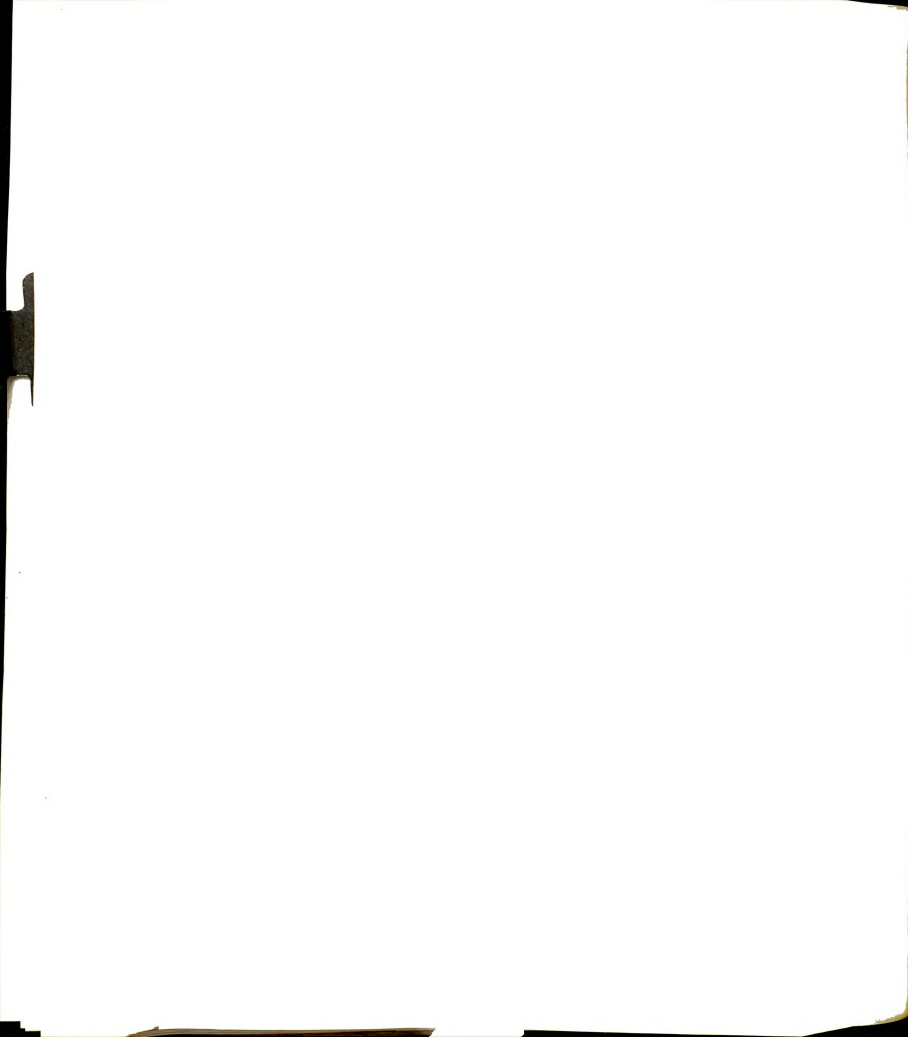


self depends, in large measure, on being able to raise level of her human resources, on more complete participation in the development process, and on increasing support for the Royal Lao Government. These, in turn, would be aided by the presence of a predominantly literate citizenry. However, wholesale expansion of the school system and institution of large scale adult literacy programs are financially out of reach of the government.

The Study

A study was made of a previously identified group of 100 males residing in the rural areas of northern Laos, who could read and write at the fourth grade level or higher as determined by a written test. Although literate at the fourth grade level, no one in the group had more than two years of education in the government schools. Presumably, they had gained these skills from some other source. This group was compared with another group of similar size chosen from the same villages by a relatively random procedure.

A structured oral interview was constructed to be administered to both groups. This instrument was prepared in an area similar to the area studied. The field work was carried out by the researcher and personnel from teacher training institutions of Laos. Three types of information were sought:

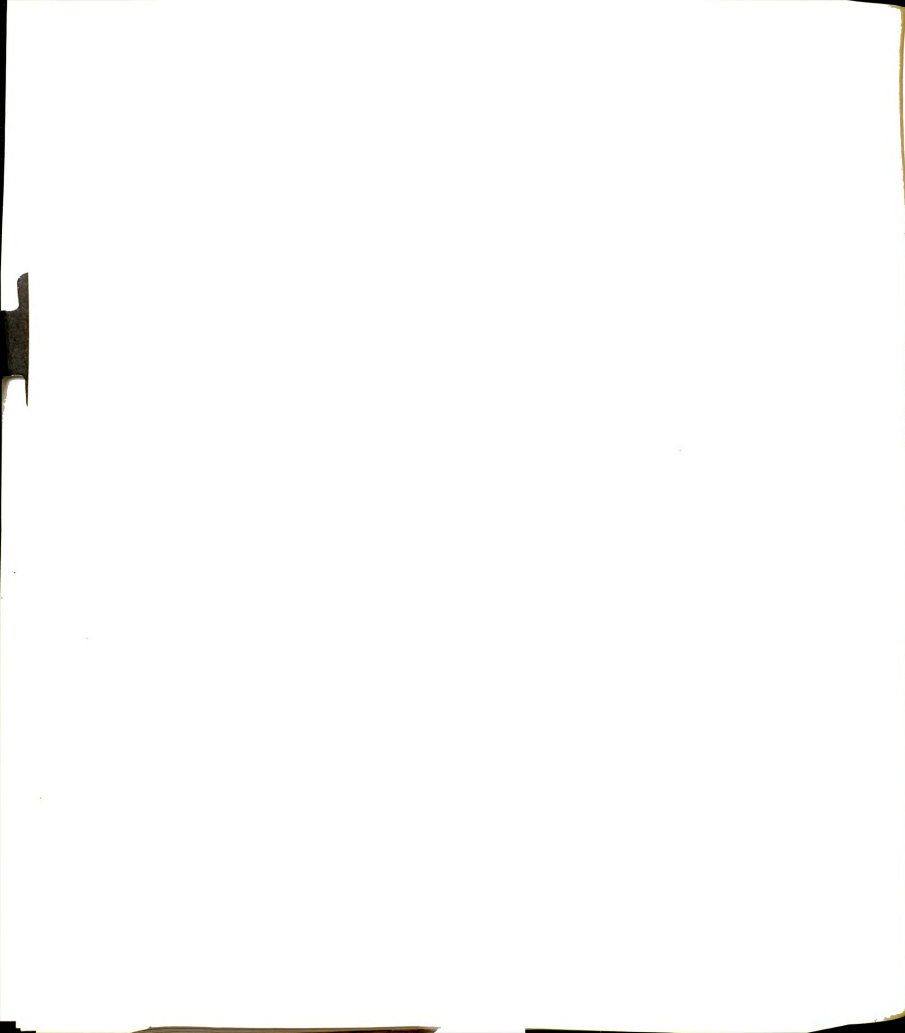


1. Motivational--what were the factors that influenced individuals to become literate or to improve their literacy skills through means other than the formal school system,
2. Means--what were the means that were utilized to obtain the literary skills equivalent to those of the fourth grade and,
3. Manifestations--what were the manifestations of the state of being literate in terms of the commonly-used variables to measure modernization tendencies present in "schooled" literate people?

Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Implications

Question of Motivation

The motivations for becoming literate fall into three categories. One, motivations which were future-oriented accounted for 23 percent. Half of these were stated specifically in terms of some job that the respondent hoped to obtain and half were stated in terms which were general and did not specifically state a definite use. Two, motivations that were stated in terms of the present and had a functional orientation were given by 37 percent of the respondents. Three, social motivations made up the largest category and accounted for 42 percent of the respondents. The social motivations were usually stated in terms of other members of society. A portion, however, saw the skills of literacy as improving their social position without any reference to "others."



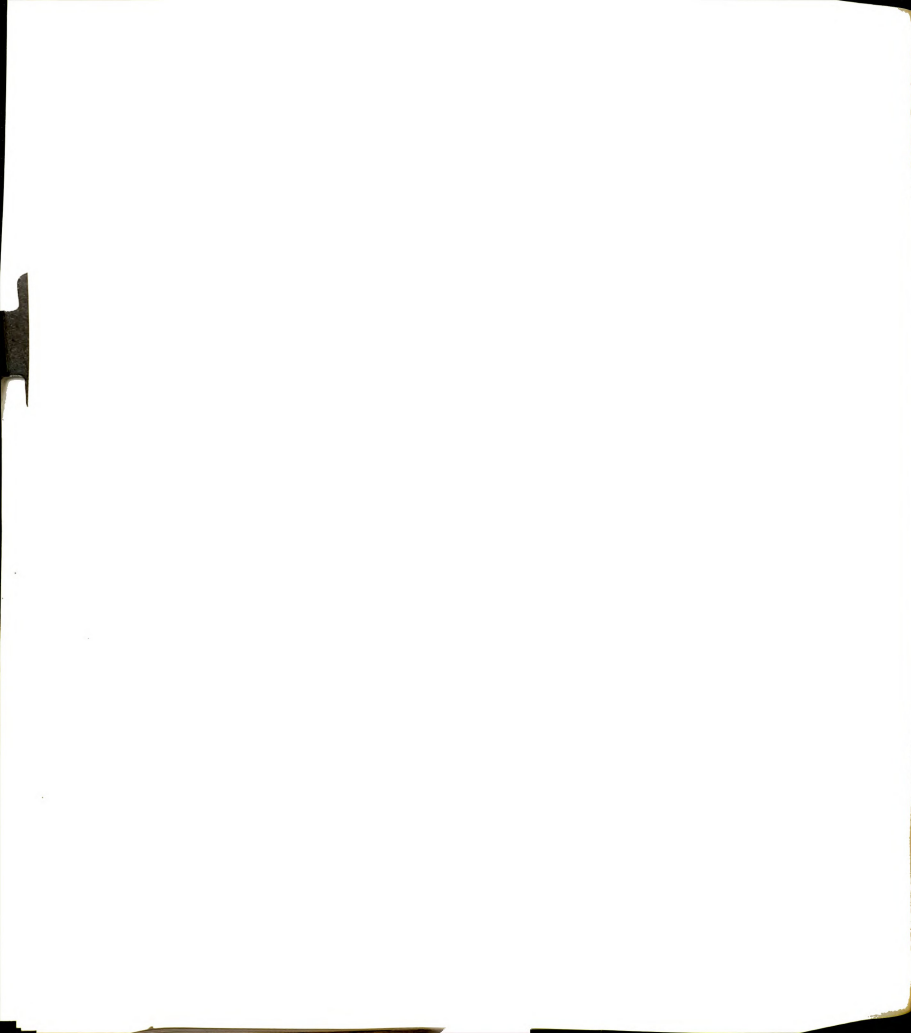
Question of Means

The means by which the group became literate fell into three classifications. The largest group became literate through contact with the wat. Here they learned a system of writing using the tham characters without knowing the ritual Pali language. Becoming literate in Lao language was simplified due to the similarity between the Lao writing and tham characters. A portion of the group attended government schools for two years or more. This 20 percent was initially introduced to literacy skills in school and continued to improve after leaving until they could read and write at the fourth grade level. The smallest portion, 12 percent, learned completely on their own with only occasional help from friends.

The method of learning the Lao language writing system seems to indicate that the individual has not necessarily learned a system in which meanings are derived from symbols. They often learn only the sound of the word and have to read out loud so they can hear themselves in order to understand the meaning. They have not learned the oral tradition; for these people symbols do not have meanings, they merely represent sounds.

Question of Manifestations

Manifestations were measured by comparing the Uneducated Literate Group with a Comparison Group that

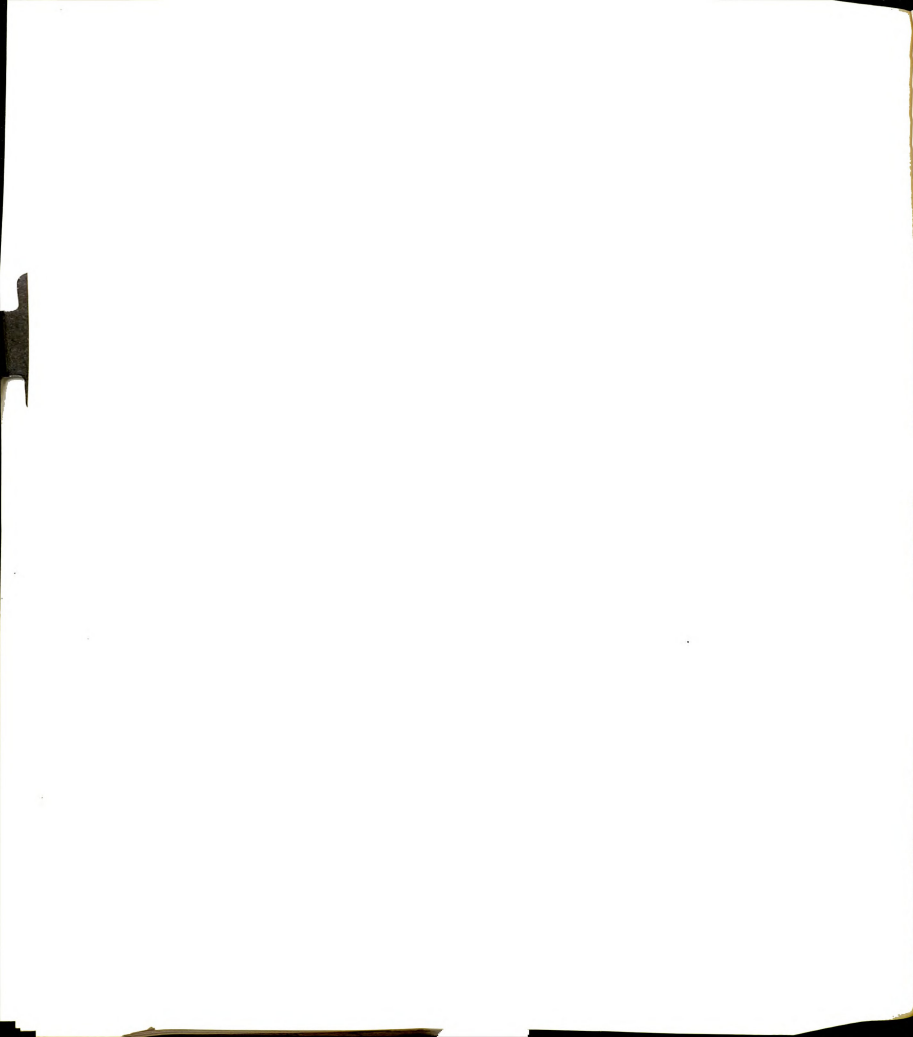


selected from the same villages. The Comparison Group further divided into illiterate and literate portions. r comparisons were then made for each of the seven ernization variables plus the comparison of the groups ng a combination of all the variables. The comparisons e between:

1. The Underschooled Literate Group and the Complete Comparison Group (which was between a group that was 55 percent literate through attendance at the government schools).
2. Between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group (which was between 100 percent literate group as described above and a 100 percent illiterate group).
3. Between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison Group (which is a comparison between two groups that are both 100 percent literate. The difference lies in where the group obtained their literate skills. The first, primarily in a vat and the second primarily in the government schools).
4. Between the two segments of the Complete Comparison Group (one 100 percent literate and the other 100 percent illiterate. The literate group obtained their literacy skills in the schools).

Total of all measures of difference.--

1. Summary--The MANOVA Test for differences between the four groups took into account all variables. It indicated that there was a significant difference between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Complete Comparison Group; between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group; between the Illiterate Comparison Group and the Literate Comparison Group. It



1 that there was no significant difference between the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison

2.

2. Conclusions--This test indicates only that there are differences between the groups. It does not indicate what or where those differences are nor what caused them.

3. Implications--The implication is that further investigation into the causes of the differences is warranted.

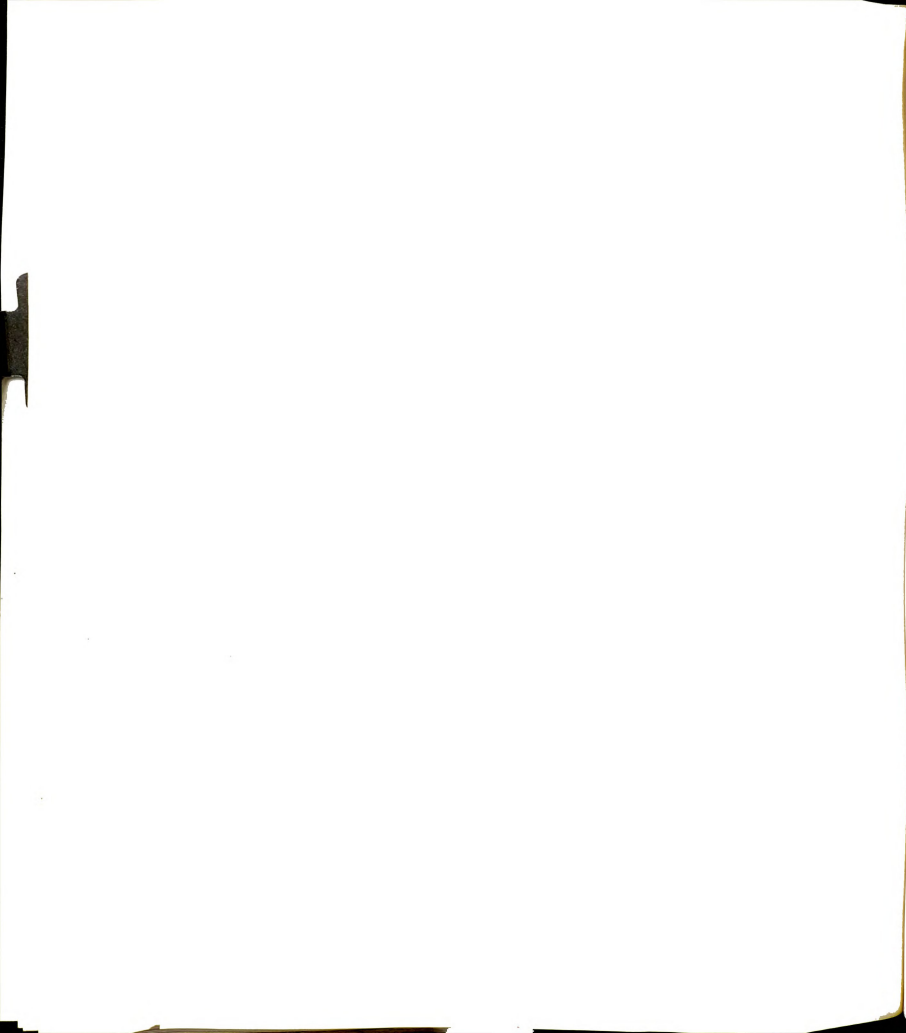
Examination of the differences between the groups was then approached by investigating the effects of the modernization variables individually.

Attitude toward children's schooling.--

1. Summary--There were significant differences in attitude toward their children's schooling when the comparison was made between a literate group and an illiterate group. When two literate groups were compared or when the group that contained 55 percent literates was compared to the Underschooled Literate Group, no significant differences were noted. When correlating attitude toward children's schooling within the four groups, two significant correlations appeared within the Underschooled Literate Group. Attitude toward schooling correlated negatively with the number of years of schooling within the Literate Comparison Group.

2. Conclusions--Literacy, whether obtained through government schools or through the wat, does not seem to foster a more positive attitude towards children's schooling. Within the literate groups, higher scores on literacy tests does not accompany more positive attitudes towards schooling. Increasing numbers of years of school attendance within the Literate Comparison Group is associated with a less positive attitude toward children's schooling. One could conclude, as a working hypothesis for further study, that the experience in school did not meet the individual's expectations or, that the more schooling one had, the more they expected from the schooling. As this group all resided in traditional villages, the fact that they had schooling and were still in the village might lead to a negative attitude toward their children's schooling.

3. Implications--One can look for more pressure for schooling for children among the literate portions of the population than among the illiterate portions. The level of literacy skills after one has reached the fourth grade level does not seem to affect the attitude toward schooling in those who obtained their literacy skills outside the formal schools. An increase in the experience with government schools is associated with a less positive attitude toward schooling. A fruitful piece of research might be to try to determine why this

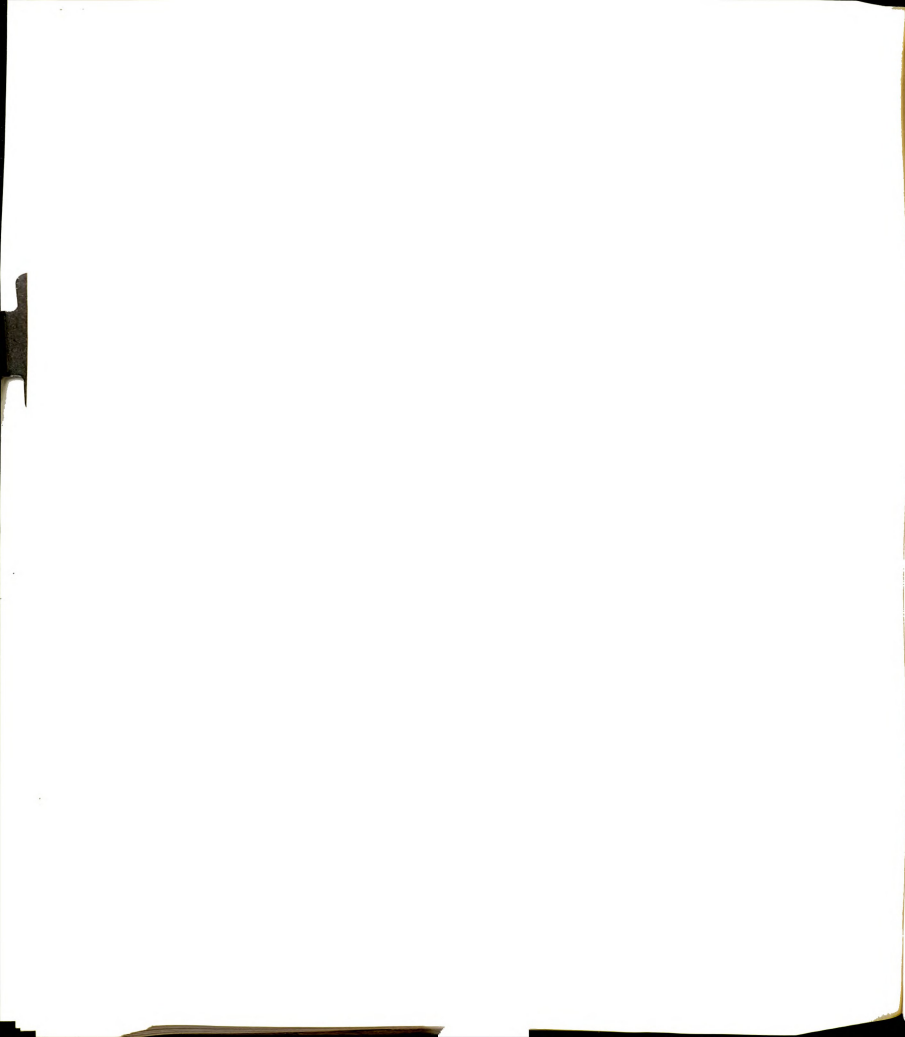


ociation is present. Is there some factor present in the schools that acts in a systematic way to make this positive attitude present to a greater degree when one has had more contact with the schools?

Mass media exposure.--

1. Summary--There was a significant difference between the degree of mass media exposure only in the comparison between the 100 percent literate Underschooled Literate Group and the Illiterate Comparison Group. The Underschooled Literate Group scored higher than the illiterate group. The total amount of mass media exposure did not vary greatly, however, from group to group. The type of mass media that an individual was exposed to seemed to vary with presence or absence of literacy skills. Mass media exposure correlated highly and with a larger number of factors within the Underschooled Literate Group than within the other groups. However, within this group, the correlation between literacy scores and mass media exposure was not significant. Within the Literate Comparison Group, the number of years of school attendance and mass media exposure correlated highly and in the positive direction.

2. Conclusions--Higher scores on the literacy test for those who learned to read and write outside the formal schools is not associated with more exposure to the mass media. A larger number of years of school attendance

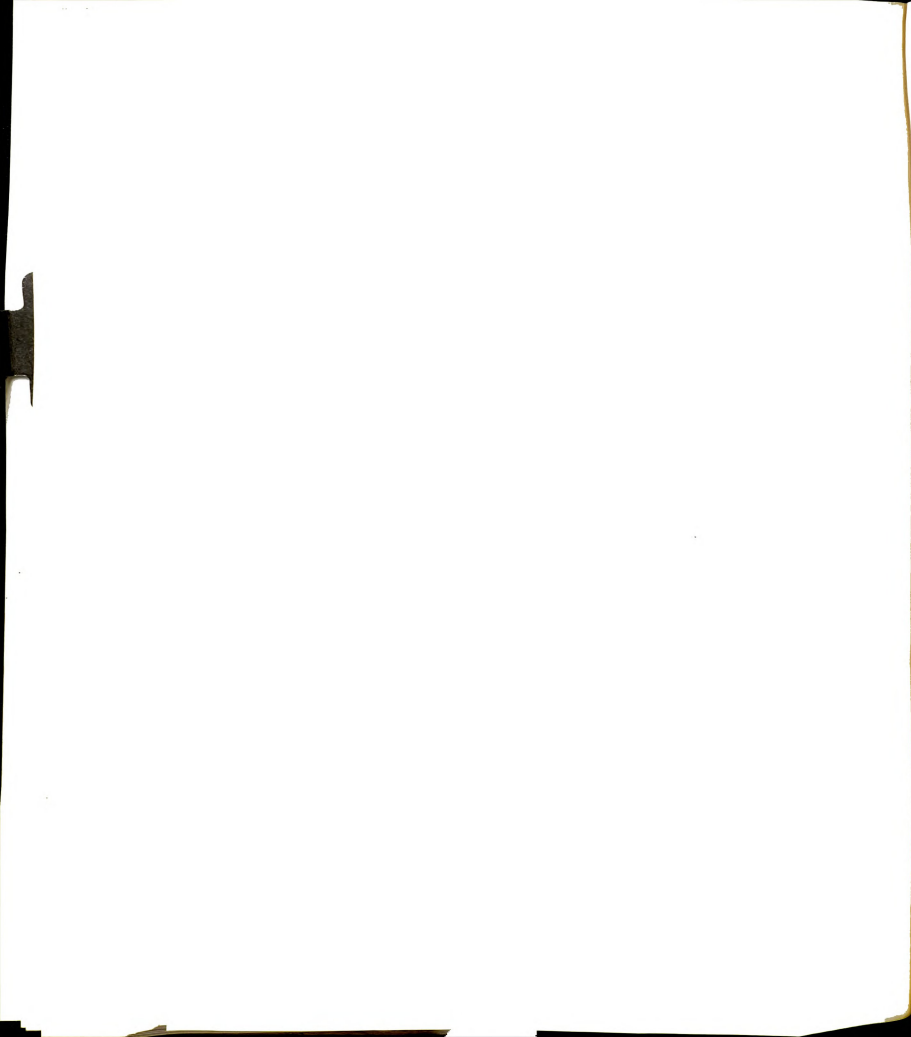


associated with increased exposure to the mass media. These statements, again, refer to 100 percent literate groups. The fact that total mass media exposure does not vary greatly between most of the groups indicates support for the position taken by some researchers in the diffusion field that it is possible to reach the illiterate through mass media and, in fact, they might make use of the non-print media to a greater extent than the literate, thus compensating for their illiteracy.

3. Implications--Literacy gained through the wats, in general, as good a facilitator for mass media exposure as literacy gained through the schools. Considering the lack of positive correlation between wats-based literacy scores and mass media exposure, if the objective is increased use of mass media, changes in the type of literacy training obtained in the wats might be suggested. These changes might entail an attempt to orient the wats student toward a wider range of reading material than religious texts. The problem of the type of available materials might also be one reason for the decreased interest in wats education in recent years.

Economic level.--

1. Summary--There were no significant differences between any of the groups in economic level. Economic level did not correlate significantly with literacy scores or with the number of years of school attendance. There



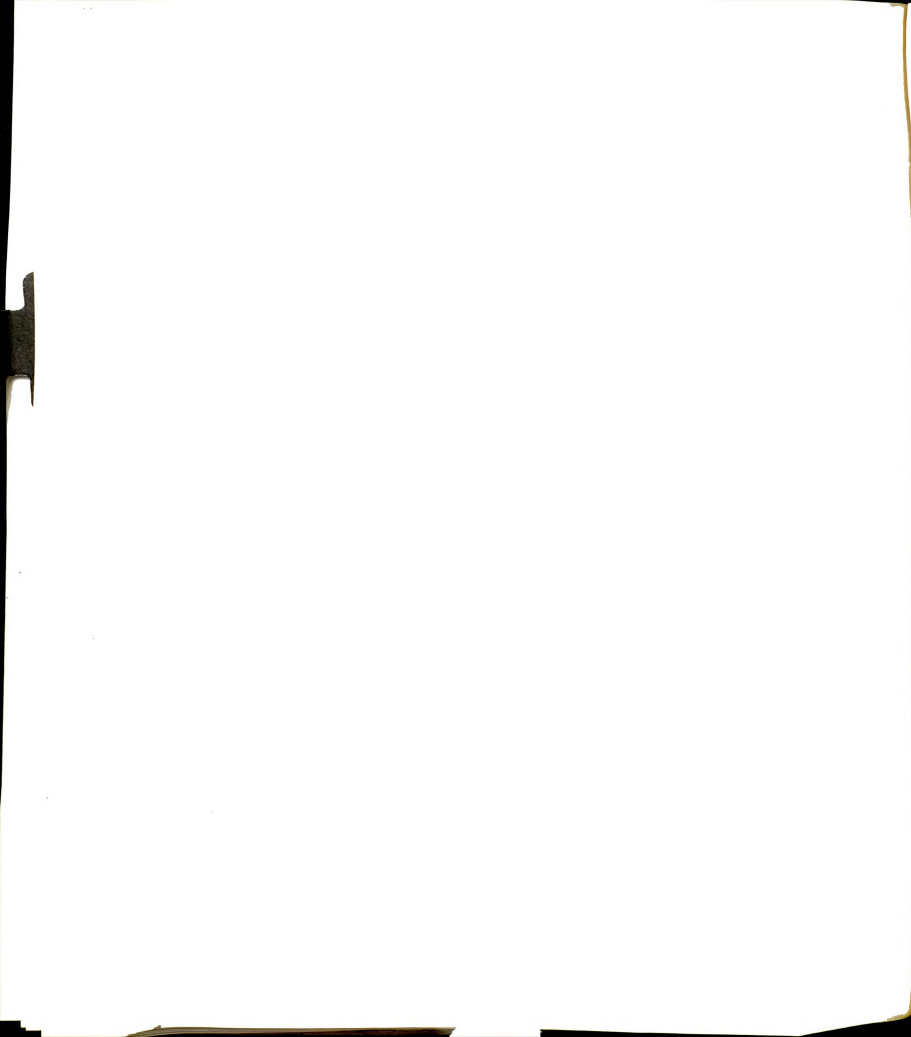
was no pattern of significant correlations between the groups except for empathy, which correlated positively with economic level within all four groups.

2. Conclusions--In these groups, literacy does not seem to lead to higher economic levels. The Under-schooled Literate Group had been literate for an average of 31 years. If literacy skills by themselves were going to make a difference, they were certainly given the chance as far as length of time is concerned.

3. Implications--As so many have said before, literacy is not enough. If one has the objective of immediate economic gains, much more than literacy training must be included in a program of education. Further, it has not been established that literacy is necessarily the correct first step in rural adult education, although it might be.

Political awareness,--

1. Summary--Significant differences were found when comparing literate groups with the illiterate groups or with the group that had an illiterate component. The comparison that was not significant was that between the two 100 percent literate groups. Significant correlations were scattered throughout the four groups. They formed no pattern nor was any one variable correlated significantly in all of the four groups.



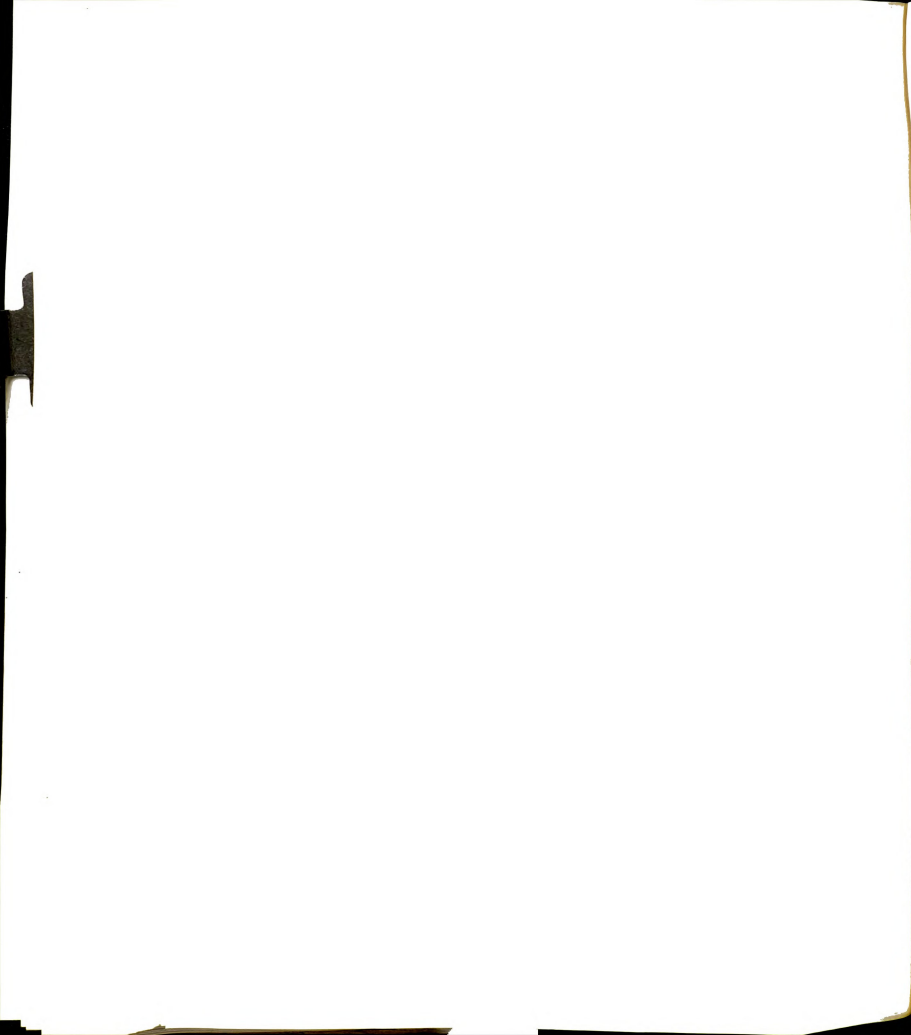
2. Conclusions--The literate groups consistently score higher on the political awareness measures. The source of literacy skills, that is, from the government schools or from the wat, does not seem to affect the level of political awareness.

3. Implications--Literacy leads to increased political awareness. The wat method seems to be as applicable for this objective as the government schools.

Empathy.--

1. Summary--The comparisons between the literate and the illiterate groups were significantly different with the literate groups scoring higher. The comparison between the two 100 percent literate groups and the 100 percent and the 55 percent literate groups were not significant. Empathy correlated positively and significantly with economic level within all four groups. Empathy did not correlate positively and at a significant level consistently with the other modernization variables except in the case of economic level. This finding is not consistent with other studies utilizing these same variables.

2. Conclusions--Empathy is associated with increased economic level in all groups, literate and illiterate alike. The pattern of correlations between empathy and the other modernization variables gives no indication as to what other factors are consistently associated with empathy.



3. Implications--These findings indicate that the relationships between economic level, literacy and empathy are by no means simple. Further, the lack of a pattern of correlations between empathy and the remainder of the other variables indicates that the relationships are affected in some way by the characteristics of the group as described by variables other than the ones utilized in this study.

Achievement motivation.--

1. Summary--When two 100 percent literate groups, the Underschooled Literate Group and the Literate Comparison Group, were compared with the 100 percent illiterate group, no significant difference was noted. When the Underschooled Literate Group was compared with the Complete Comparison Group (55 percent literate) and the Literate Comparison Group, significant differences were found. Achievement motivation correlated positively and significantly with other variables only in one case within the Underschooled Literate Group.

2. Conclusions--Other studies have found that achievement motivation correlates positively with all other measures of modernity and that literate groups are found to have higher achievement motivations than illiterate groups. The findings in this study do not support this. The literate groups did not score higher on this variable than the illiterate ones. It is puzzling

the Underschooled Literate Group scored higher than group that obtained its literacy skills in the government schools.

3. Implications--No implications will be drawn from this measure. The correlations and differences were too few to form a pattern or to indicate a lack of one. The problems encountered in measuring this variable lead the author to suggest that further verification of this measure is needed.

Literacy level and schooling level.--

1. Summary--Literacy scores did not correlate significantly with any of the seven variables used to measure literacy. Number of years of schooling correlated significantly different from zero in two cases within the Underschooled Literate Comparison Group. The correlation was negative between the attitude toward children's schooling and position with mass media exposure.

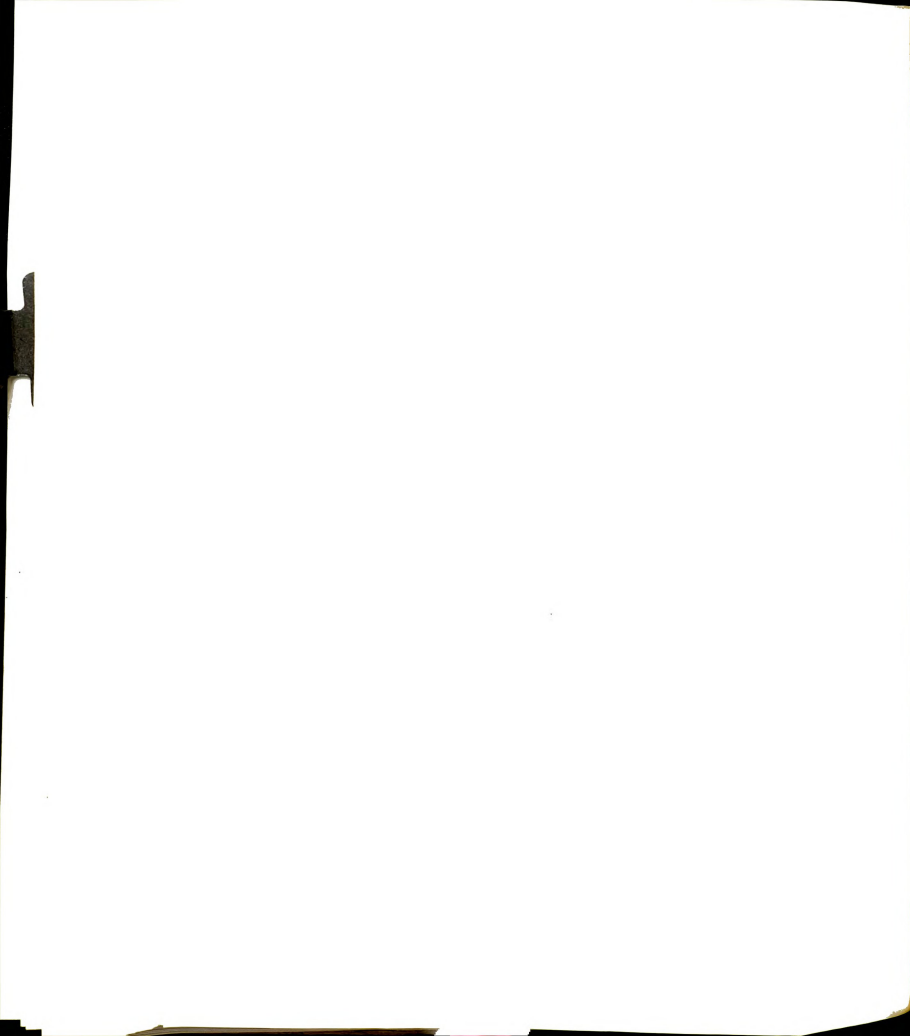
2. Conclusions--Both of these groups are 100 percent literate. It is evident that the two groups are not so different or that the effects of increasing ability measured by the literacy test does not have the same relationship to years of schooling. It is only a conjecture when we assume that both are true.

3. Implications--The implications drawn here have to do with the nature of the influence of literacy and schooling (schooling). Inkeles, Schuman, and Smith,

reporting on a study of individual modernity in Pakistan state that "For most practical purposes, literacy and education in these samples can be regarded as interchangeable."² They assume that, when no effects of literacy are found, it can be taken to mean that there is also no effect of schooling but, when positive effects are found, the position is less clear. They hold that the role of schooling may be small and the more important element is being able to read and write later in life. They state, "This leads us to believe that the skill of reading and its later use are more important than any specific content learned in school."³ The findings of this study lends no support to this view nor does it tend to refute it. It merely indicates that one should not use the term "more important" but rather "different" when comparing the effects of literacy and schooling. The implications, which can only be stated as hypothesis at this time, are that literacy skills obtained through the years of schooling are not interchangeable. Further, that increasing literacy skill and number of years of schooling have not been an altogether positive

²Alex Inkeles, Howard Schuman, and David H. Smith, "Social Psychological Effects and Noneffects of Literacy in a New Nation," Economic Development and Cultural Change, XVI, No. 1 (Oct., 1967), 3.

³Ibid., p. 11.



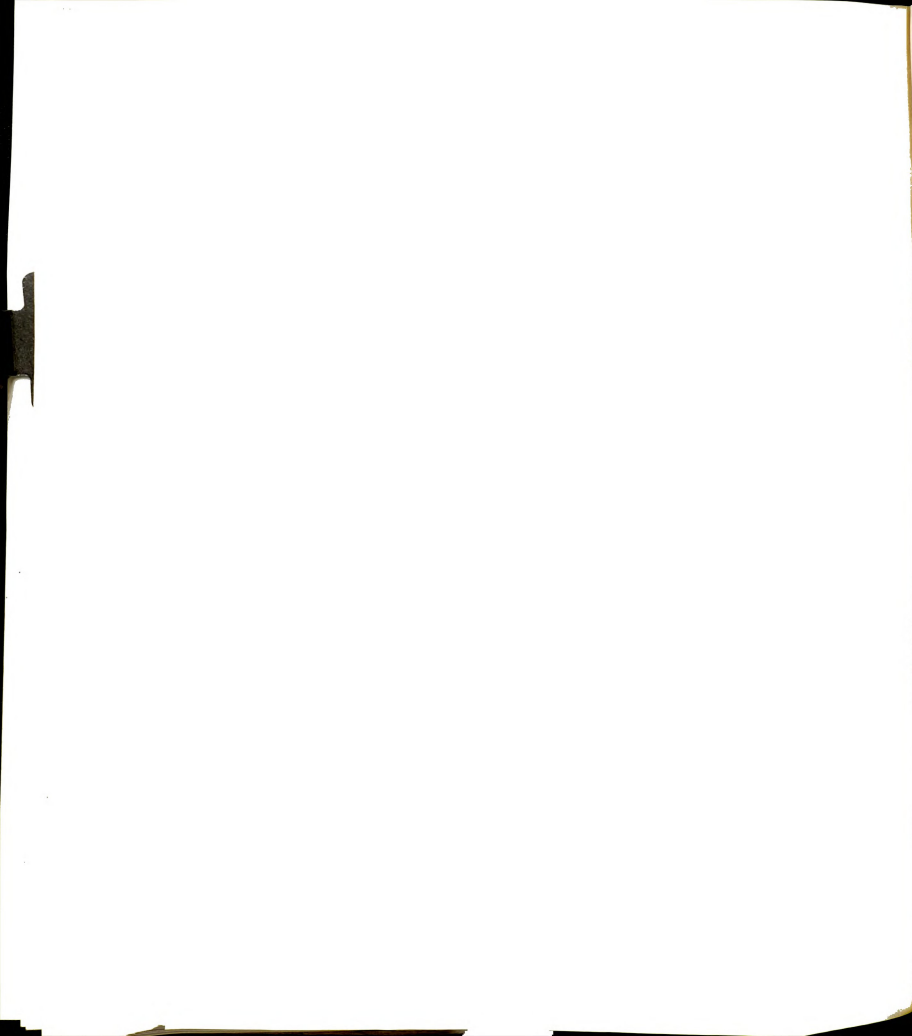
influence on either group when this is evaluated by the modernization variables used in this study.

Correlational pattern within groups.--

1. Summary--The interrelationships between the variables within the four groups show little, if any, similarity. Both the level of correlation and the factors that correlate vary from group to group. Mass media is an important factor in the groups that are literate. In the groups that are wholly illiterate or contain illiterate elements, cosmopolitanism becomes an important factor.

2. Conclusions--There is little that can be concluded from this except that the groups are different in the manner in which the variables correlate to each other within each group. It also seems that the variables become less related to each other the more modern a group when literacy is taken as a measure of modernity and literacy obtained in the schools is considered more modern than literacy obtained in the wat.

3. Implications--This phenomenon needs more study. A working hypothesis can be proposed. The group that attended government schools forms the least interrupted pattern of correlations. The patterns of individual correlation within this group vary most widely. This may be because the school provides an opportunity to group along individual lines. The illiterate group and the wat-educated group indicate a tight pattern of



interrelationships, indicating a degree of homogeneity of relationships. Their social milieu did not provide the opportunities to develop along individual lines or to differentiate.

Interrelationships between modernization variables and means of becoming literate within the Underschooled Literate Group.--The group was divided according to the means by which they became literate. The average scores obtained on the measures of the seven modernization variables were calculated for each means of becoming literate. There were no significant differences between the means. When all measures of modernity were combined, there was no significant difference between the groups that had learned literacy skills in the way as opposed to the groups that had learned independently and the group that had learned initially in the schools. There was no significant difference between the group that had learned in the schools and the group that had learned by independent means. Due to the small size of these groups, no further analysis was conducted.

Interrelationships between the motivations and the variables within the Underschooled Literate Group.--The underschooled literate group was divided according to the motivation that had led to their becoming literate. The average score for each of the modernization variables in

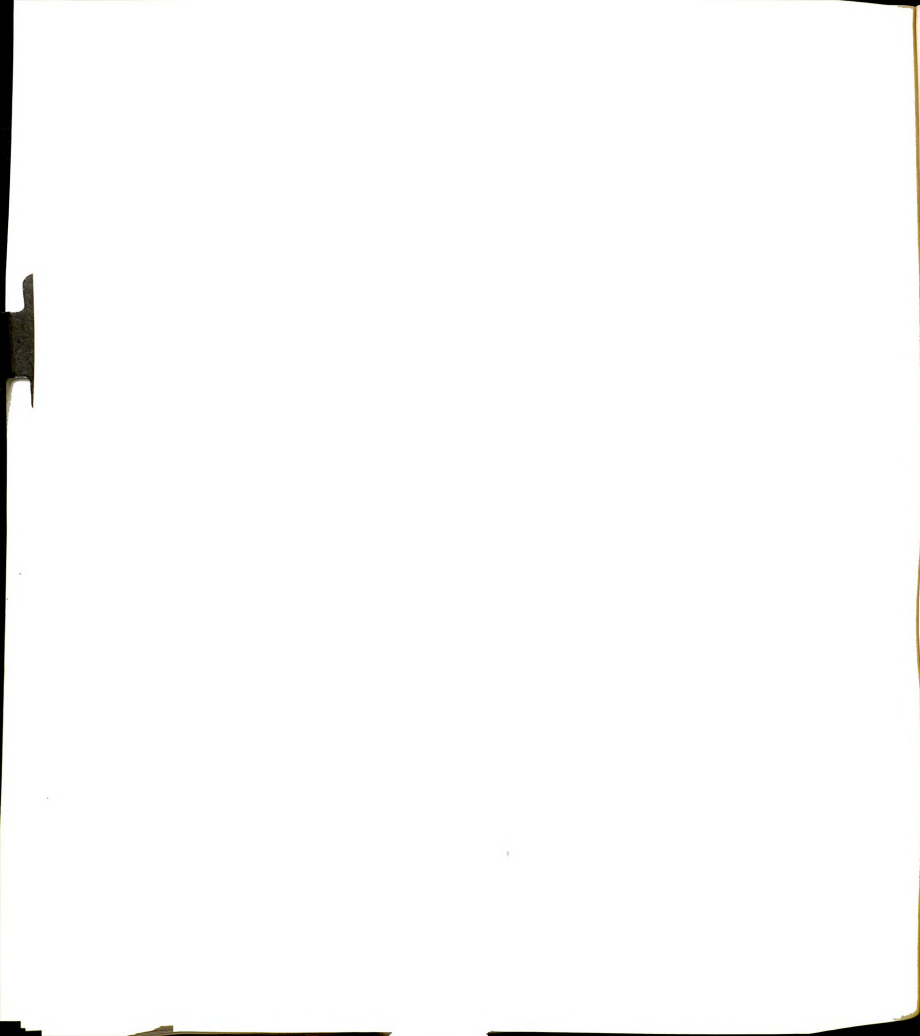


each motivational group was calculated and tested for significant differences from the other motivational groups. There were significant differences between the groups on some of the individual modernization variables. The most significant was that of economic level. There was a significant difference between the functionally-motivated group and the socially-motivated group and between the functionally-motivated group and the future-oriented group, the former in both cases scoring higher. The conclusion that can be drawn is that why a person obtains literacy skills might have more to do with his economic level, assuming that there is a causal relationship, than how where he obtains his literacy skills. The functionally-motivated group also seems to have developed higher levels of empathy.

Conclusions and Recommendations

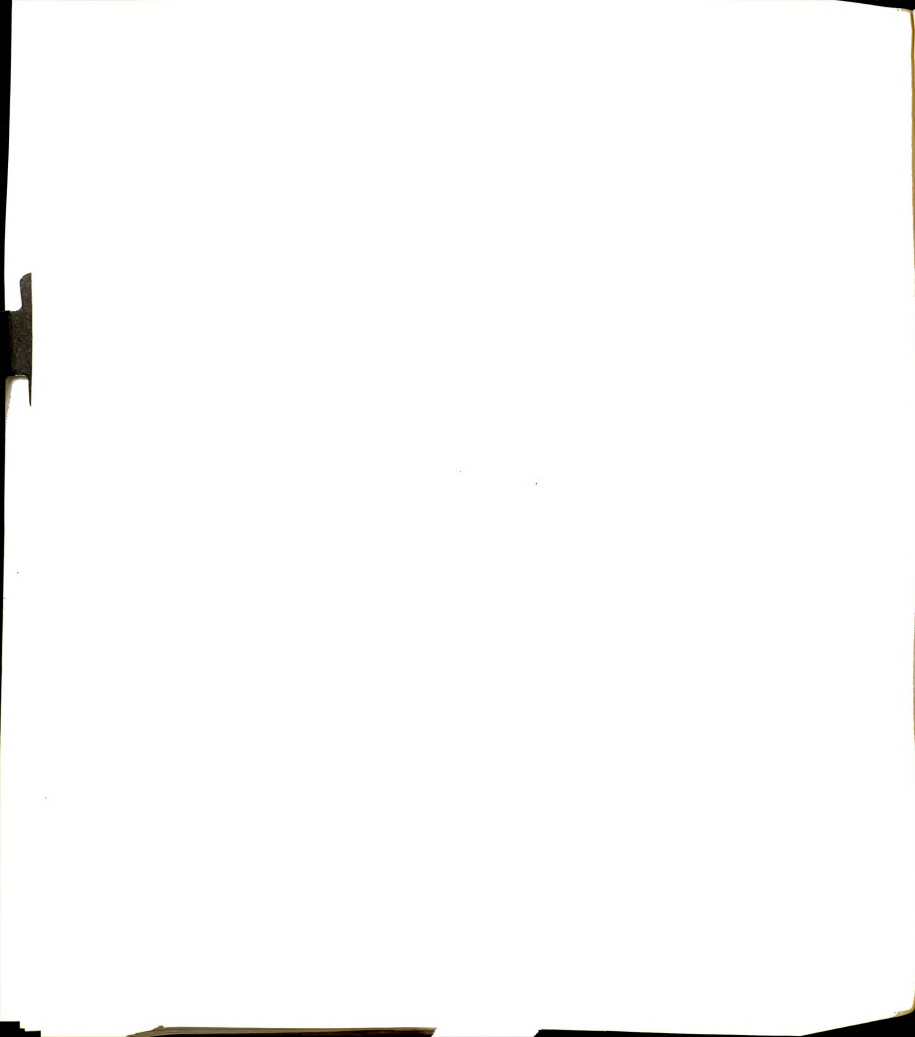
The following recommendations are those that are drawn from the findings in general and involve more than one of the specific findings.

1. The influence of motivation on the effect of literacy skills on the modernization variables, particularly on the economic level, seems to indicate that the factor of motivation should be taken into account when selecting participants for a literacy program. If people are selected who have an immediate functional use for the literacy skills, it seems more likely that literacy will



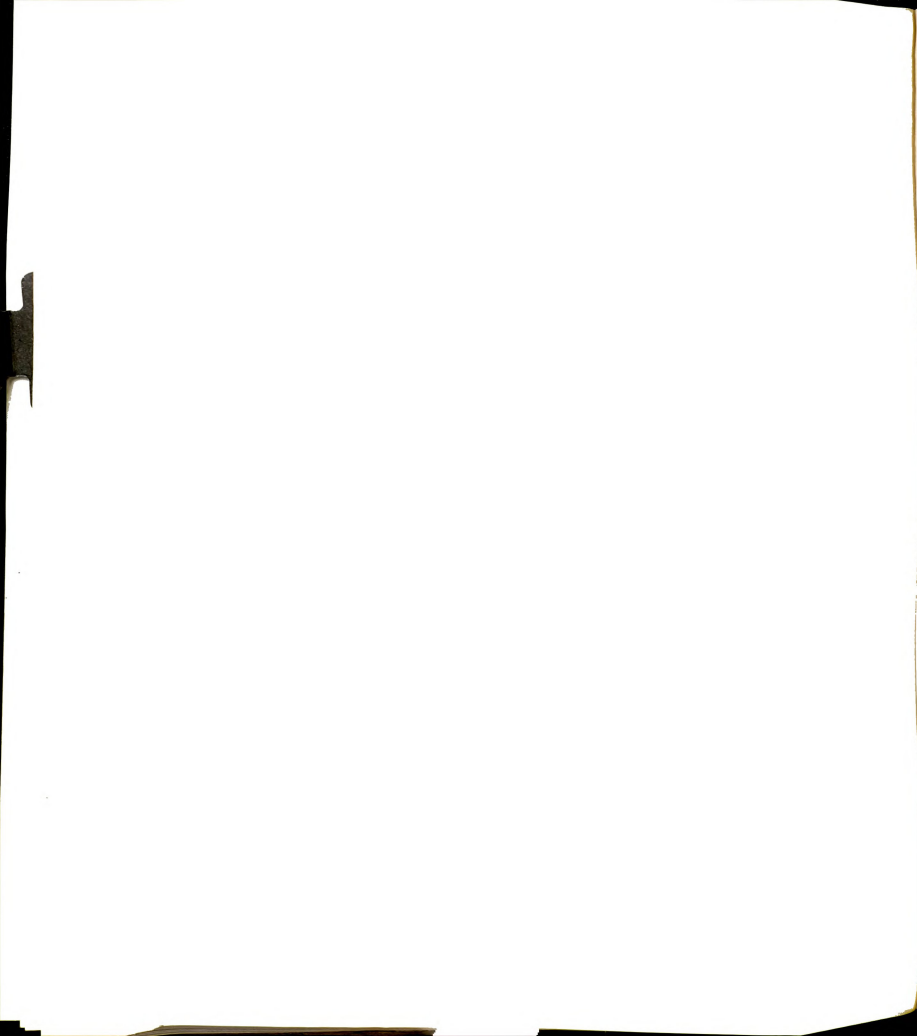
lead to higher economic levels. If this is not practical, then early in the literacy program a functional motivation should be fostered by the conscious selection of content or the approach utilized in the program. Those who enter literacy programs for socially-motivated reasons would seem to have their objectives fulfilled immediately upon graduation." This group might not tend to utilize their skills for other than obtaining of social status.

2. It seems logical to suggest that some means be found to more fully utilize the potential of making large numbers of people literate through the resources of the Buddhist wats. From the varying effects that the literacy obtained in the wat and the government school seem to have, it would also seem appropriate to suggest that the Buddhist monks be helped in their attempt to teach people to read and write. This could be done by providing the monks with intensive training in language instruction methods, by providing improved materials with which to teach, both in religious and secular terms, by inducing the monks to teach content subjects in addition to reading and writing. Certificates could be given for achievement in the wat schools that would be equivalent to the government school certificates. The wat could be provided with some sort of financial support when there is no government school in the village. Regular government schools would not need to be established in a village that has a wat school or



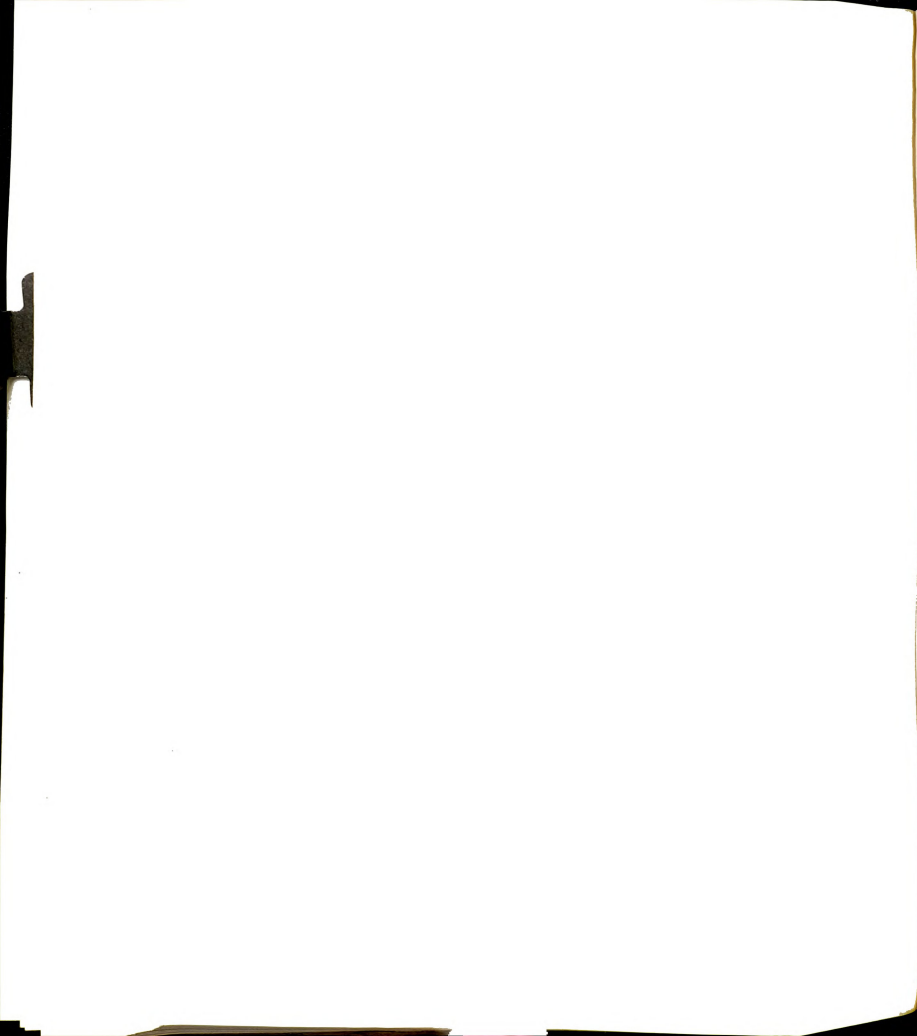
the wat capable of operating a school. The institution of these reforms and others that could be taken to integrate the wat school into the government system would require strong official support. It is possible that nothing short of involvement by the King would be sufficient to obtain the cooperation needed.

3. The implications for spreading literacy skills have been touched upon above. To further expand, however, it seems as if it would be possible to utilize the resources of the wat to spread rural education to the villages not now served by a government school. In those villages where the government school is inadequate, the wat could be utilized to expand the capacity of the government school. The proposition offers several advantages--the buildings are already present in the wat, the wat has a staff that is usually as well qualified as most of the CREC teachers (which is probably the only type of teacher a new school would get anyway), the wat is the center of village social activities. It would be easier to expand a school based on the wat into a community education center than it would a government school. The concept of community support of the school, instead of government support should be easier to foster and maintain if the school resides in an institution they are accustomed to support anyway.



There are some disadvantages in having the school in the wat. One is illustrated by some of the correlations and differences in means presented in the findings. The effects of literacy in the wat is not always what one would desire to foster modernization in terms of the variables utilized in this study. Some of the monk-teachers are not well trained. It is not known if they can be trained to be effective teachers at a reasonable cost. A further problem might be a repeat of the French experience in the 1930's when they tried to retrain monk teachers so the wat could be a more effective school. As soon as they became trained, many left the wat and took jobs, usually with the Civil Service. This would have to be considered in any new program. Most important of all is that the parents and students will look at the wat school as an inferior substitute for the government school. It might be difficult to convince the parents that there will be true equivalency with the government schools.

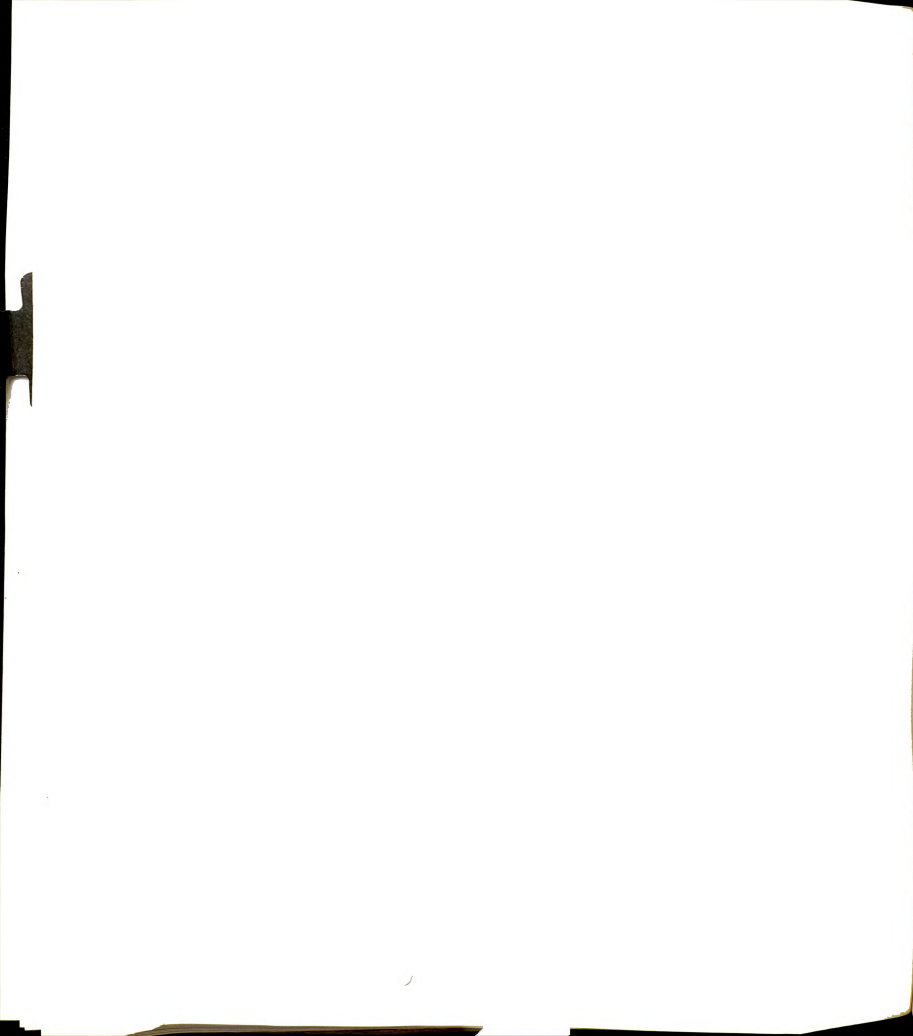
4. High drop-out rates from adult literacy programs is a worldwide problem. It is typical that, of those men who are illiterate in an area, only 10 to 15 percent can be induced to start a literacy program. Of those who start, more than half drop out before the program get very far. Usually about 25 percent actually become literate and some estimate that half of these lapse to illiteracy within a year. The wat as an institution



to spread adult literacy and a modification of the wats method to teach the language offers some advantages. In wats, language is not taught as a "course" that starts at some time and finishes at some other time. The wats is always open for people to come and go at will. It would not be necessary to tie the course in language to the calendar. The person can come and get language instruction when he wants it and leave when he has become literate or is no longer interested.

The problem is essentially one of motivation. The respondents of this study show that, if one has a need to read and write, he will learn somehow. It also shows that if a person wants to read and write, irrespective of any real need (other than social), then he will also learn. It has been well established that lacking the desire and motivation, it is practically impossible to force someone to learn. Solving the dropout problem is basically a matter of solving the motivational problem.

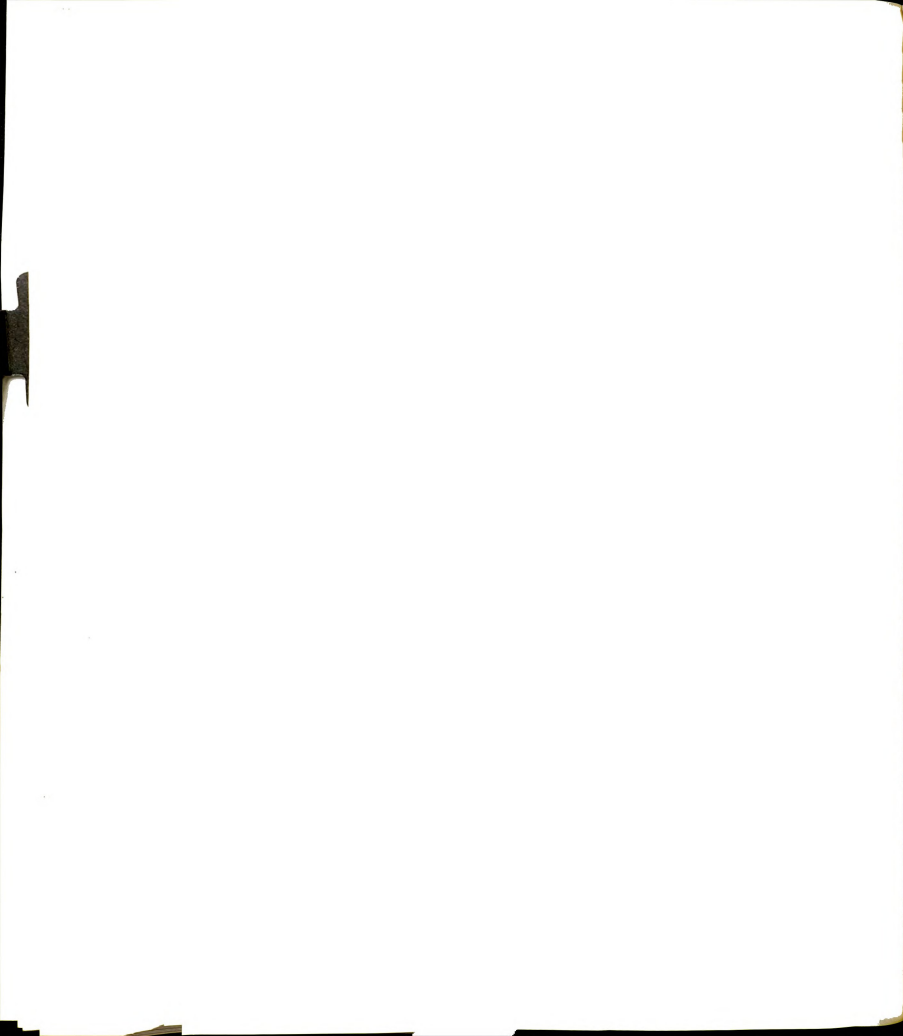
5. From the above statement comes the hypothesis that the leaders of the literacy campaigns must take the nature of literacy programs one step further. They have moved from traditional literacy programs to functional literacy programs to Work-Oriented Functional Literacy programs. Literacy is a tool that may or may not be used, depending upon the desire and opportunity of the individual. It seems fruitless to expand resources to provide



people with the tool of literacy unless they have some use for it. In general terms "use" might mean access to reading materials. In specific developmental terms, it means some application that will contribute to the individual's advancement and his contribution to the development of his community. This would indicate that the next step that literacy promoters must take is to institute programs that, instead of being "Work-Oriented Literacy Programs" are "Literacy-Oriented Work Programs."

In the former, the primary element is the literacy aspect of the program and the work element is introduced to legitimize the program in the eyes of the development planner and to take advantage of the individual's motivation for economic advancement. In the latter, literacy is a secondary element of the program, included to meet some other direct objective or development need. This solves the dilemma of whether literacy education is consumption or investment. As an element of a "literacy-oriented work program," literacy is clearly a part of the investment in productive human resource improvement.

Literacy has long been recognized as a tool for achieving other objectives--economic, political and social. When literacy becomes the secondary objective instead of the primary objective onto which other economic, social and political objectives are tacked, then the



program planners are, indeed, acting on the assumption that literacy is a tool, not a primary objective.

6. It has yet to be determined whether literacy levels increased as development proceeds or whether an increasing literacy level causes development. It all depends on probability, both are true. It can be established that for this group of underschooled literates studied here the literacy skills certainly were not sufficient. Literacy is not a sufficient factor for many kinds of development, although it may be, and in all probability is, a necessary factor.

7. Rogers, in the Modernization of Peasants, states,

The more innovative individual is typically more literate, empathic and cosmopolite. He rates higher in achievement motivation and has greater political knowledge. It would appear, however, that those are not simply, additive relationships. The contribution of one factor in explaining the variance in another, as well as the nature of possible interactions, particularly in peasant societies, is poorly understood.⁴

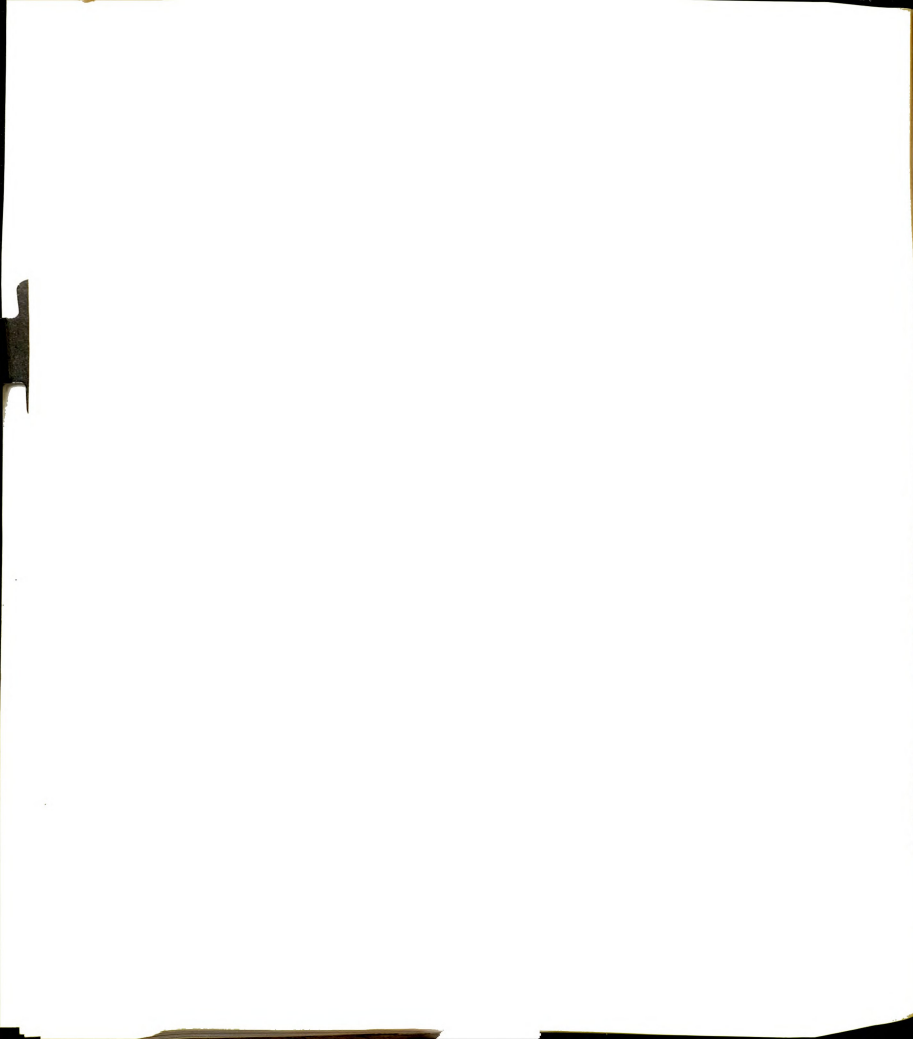
There is no innovativeness measure in this study. Because innovativeness usually correlates so highly with economic level, a case can be made for equating economic level as measured here as being a measure of innovativeness. If one accepts this, then the findings here indicate that the relationship is even more complex than Rogers implies.

⁴ Rogers, Modernization Among Peasants, p. 93.

further, when the additional variables of motivation for becoming literate and means of obtaining the skills are included, the findings call into question the correlational nature of the modernization variables as presented in other studies. Further verification is needed.

8. Most developing countries face a problem of "urban drift." It is thought that western, academically-oriented education accelerates this drift and that rural, agriculturally-oriented education will help to hold people in the rural areas. Many arguments have been put forth supporting this thesis and some have been put forth in opposition. The results of the tests in this study indicate that the Underschooled Literate Group has not become more oriented toward the urban setting despite the fact that they are literate. Is it possible that the characteristic of wat education that would make some development planners reject it, the fact that it does not seem to make people considerably more modern, is the very reason why it might be the most advantageous for Laos?

9. There are relatively large numbers of literate people in the rural areas of Laos. A pertinent question to ask before making an investment in literacy programs in these areas is whether the already present literacy skills are being utilized to their fullest to meet development goals.

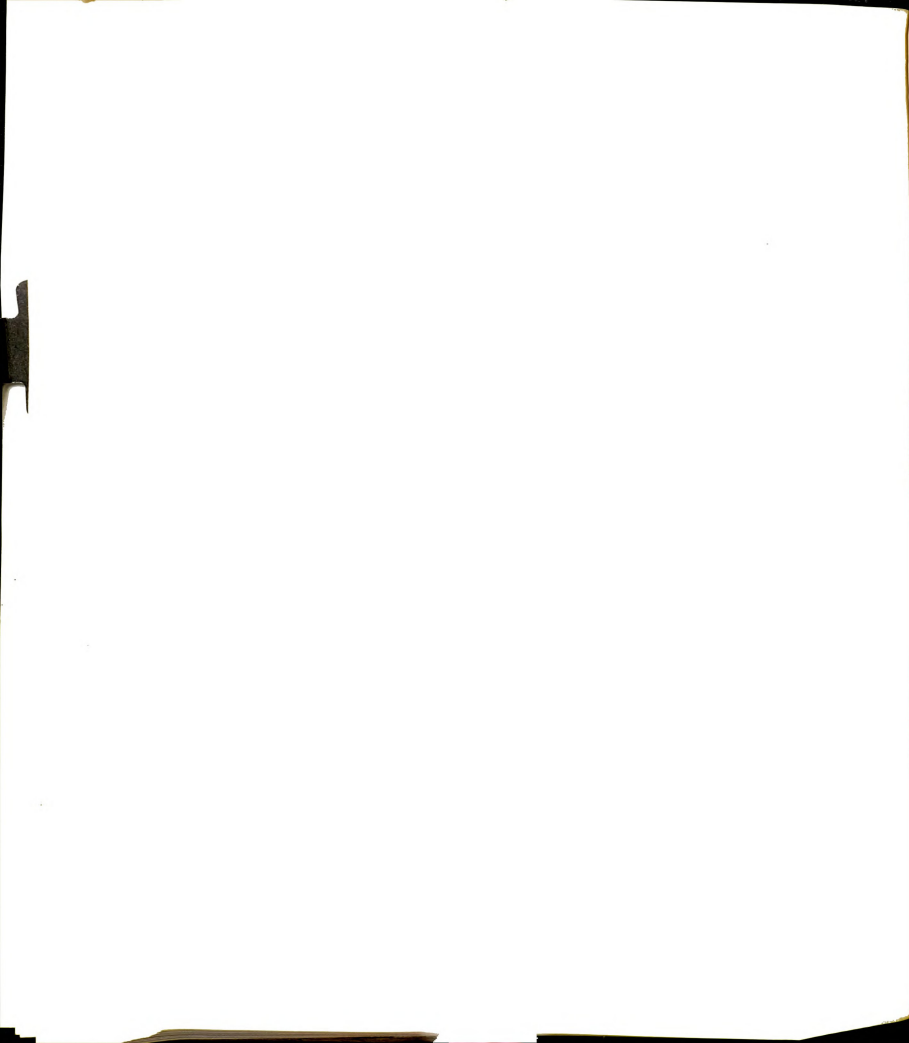


10. The Dutch sociologist, Benno Galjart, proposed in a recent issue of Rural Sociology that the concepts "modern" and "traditional" have failed to help in the attempt to understand the process of agricultural development in the third world.⁵ The terms have helped to identify some of the necessary conditions for agricultural development but not the sufficient conditions. He proposes that, instead of trying to salvage the terms "modern" and "traditional," factors retarding development should be examined under three classifications. The first is ignorance. Does the farmer know what he can do other than what he is presently doing? Second, is the factor of inability. Does the farmer know what he can do and is he also able to do in terms of financial resources, markets, social acceptability, etc? Is the structure there which enables him to do what he knows how to do? Thirdly, the factor of unwillingness. Knowing what he should do and being able to do it, does he want to do it? Are there certain values and attitudes that prevent him? Does he prefer to achieve some other value?⁶

Galjart maintains that people in the diffusion field have placed their emphasis on the first and third items, that of knowledge and motivation and have not

⁵Benno Galjart, "Rural Development and Sociological Concepts: A Critique," Rural Sociology, XXXVI, No. 1 (March, 1971), 31-40.

⁶Ibid., p. 34.

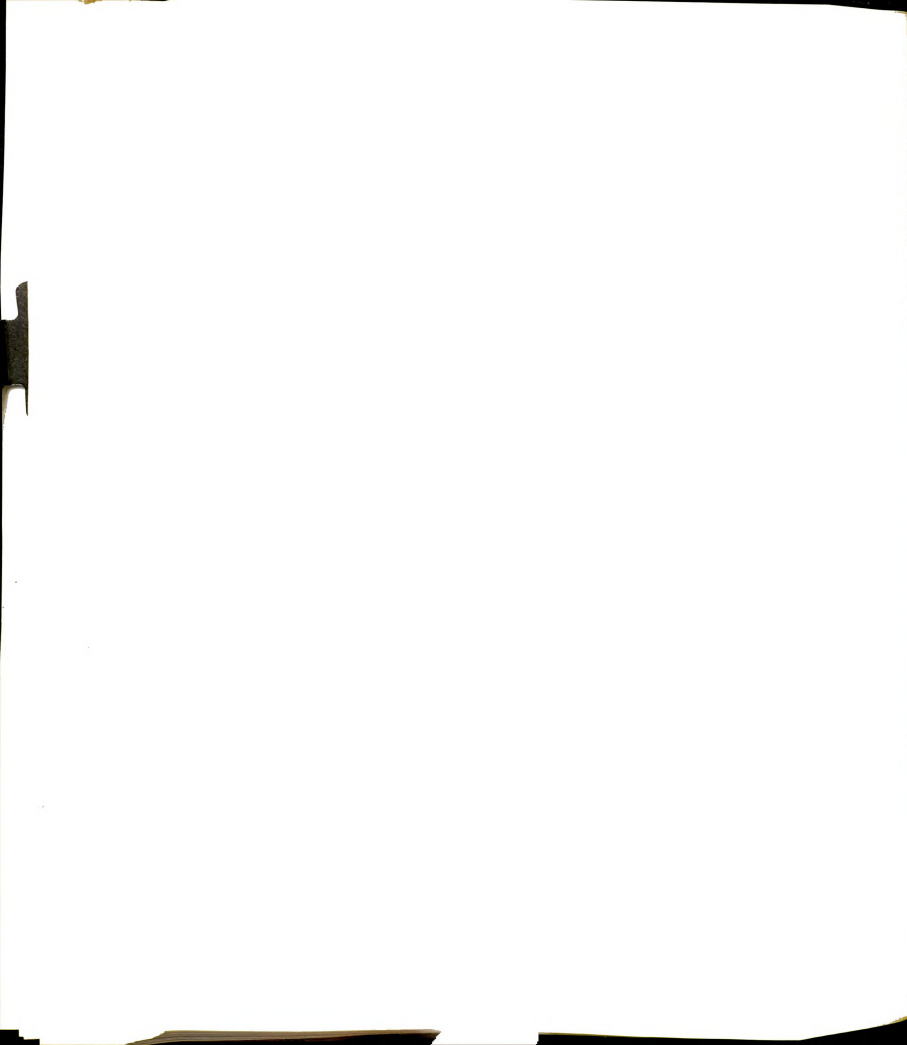


placed enough emphasis on the factor of structural ability. The factor of structural ability is the most likely explanation for the lack of influence of the skills of literacy and schooling on economic level in the present study. The respondents were in possession of some of the necessary skills and possibly were motivated, although one is seldom motivated to do what he thinks he cannot do. However, they were in a situation where the structural conditions prevented them from becoming different to any great extent from those who did not have these same necessary skills of literacy and schooling. The factor of inability can be applied to agricultural development, social development and also political development. In other words, the skills of schooling or literacy, though necessary, did not have the opportunity to play a role in the development of the respondents in this case because of the factor of inability due to the structure of the society and the economy.

Lengrand gives support to this position when he says:

One cannot give too much weight to the notion that the value of literacy, like that of any other instrument, is only relative, and that literacy will only reach its full meaning and utility as part of a social, economic, political and also educational complex.⁷

⁷Lengrand, Introduction to Lifelong Education, 87.

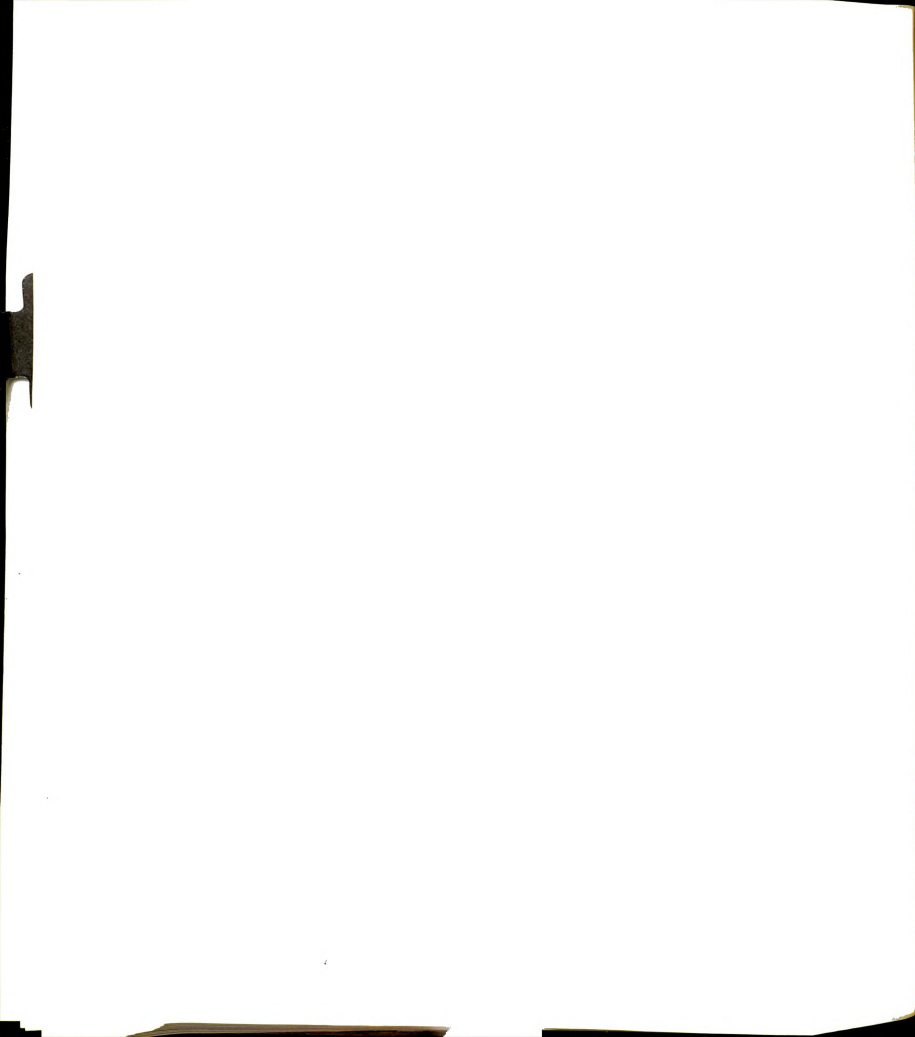


The modernization variables that seem to exist in association with the skills of literacy might be the ones that could exist in the structure in which the respondents found themselves. Schooling itself is a structure conducive to utilization of the mass media. Literacy in a way exists in a structure that is not conducive to the utilization of the mass media, hence the lack of correlation between literacy scores and mass media exposure in the Underschooled Literate Group. An increase in the economic level requires increased market and credit possibilities, better transport and political stability. These structural factors were not present. Hence, economic levels did not increase.

Research Needs in Adult Literacy

Two recent works deal specifically with research in literacy education. Blaug's Functional Literacy in Developing Countries: A Trend Report on Current Research Based on a Selected Annotated Bibliography contains a checklist which he states can be regarded as an agenda for future research. The main categories in this checklist are:

1. Motivation to acquire and retain literacy,
2. Curriculum planning,
3. Media--its utilization in programs,
4. Teacher and teaching assistants,
5. Linguistic problems,



6. Organization and administration,
7. Evaluation of benefits.⁸

The Meeting of Experts on Research in Literacy, convened by UNESCO, issued a report entitled, Suggestions for Research in Adult Education.⁹ This publication lists eight specific problems connected with functional literacy that need further research:

1. The actual number of illiterates in the world today,
2. The kind of programmes required to meet the needs of specific target groups,
3. Ways and means of integrating vocational training and literacy teaching,
4. The role of languages and *linguae francae* in literacy teaching,
5. The type of curriculum and training required to produce planners, organizers and trainers for literacy programs,
6. The psychological factors which impede or foster change,
7. The contributions of mass media to functional literacy programs,
8. Indicators which may serve to evaluate the total impact of a project.

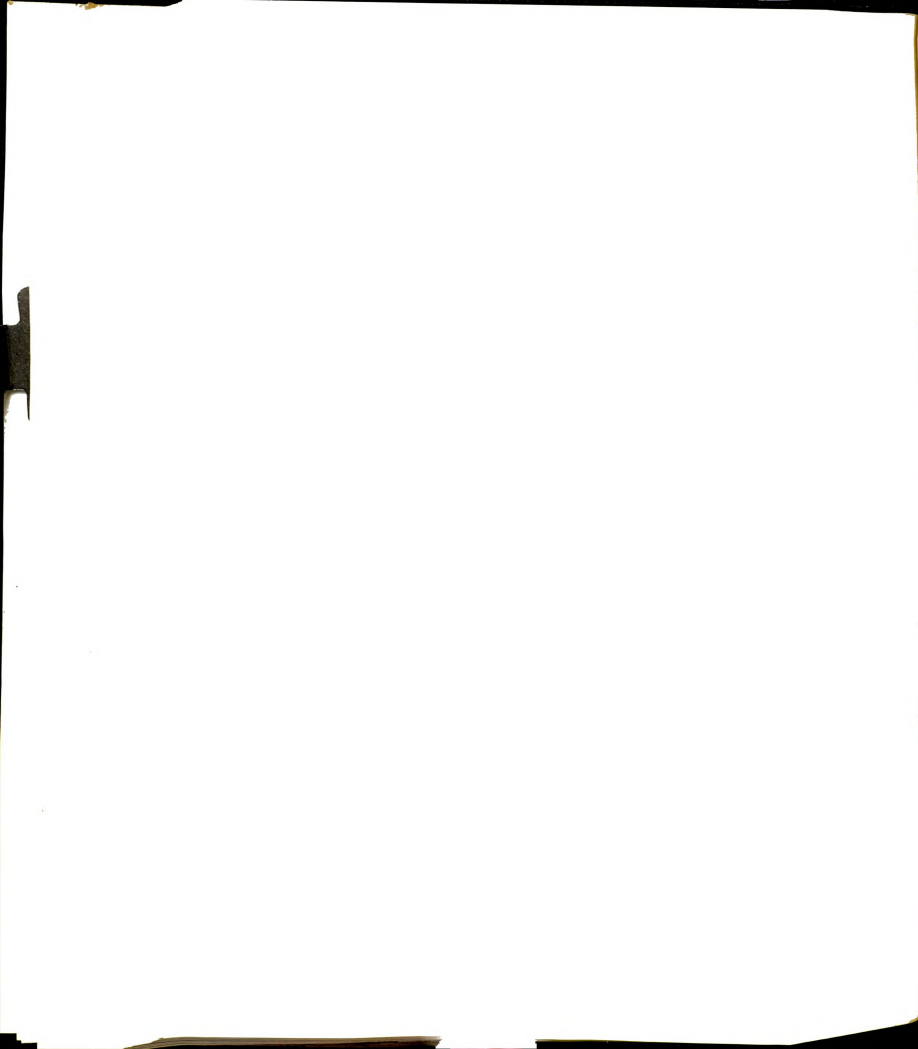
The publication further identifies three main classifications of literacy research as:

1. Research connected with project planning,
2. Research connected with the execution of projects,
3. Research on the effects of a literacy project.

A total of 53 specific research projects were identified and grouped under the above three headings. The 53

⁸ Blaug, "Functional Literacy . . ."

⁹ UNESCO, "Suggestions for Research in Adult Literacy," A report of a Meeting of Experts on Research in Literacy, July, 1968 (UN Doc. No. ED/MD/5).



projects were further identified as being studies that were either essentially economic, sociological or psychological in nature.

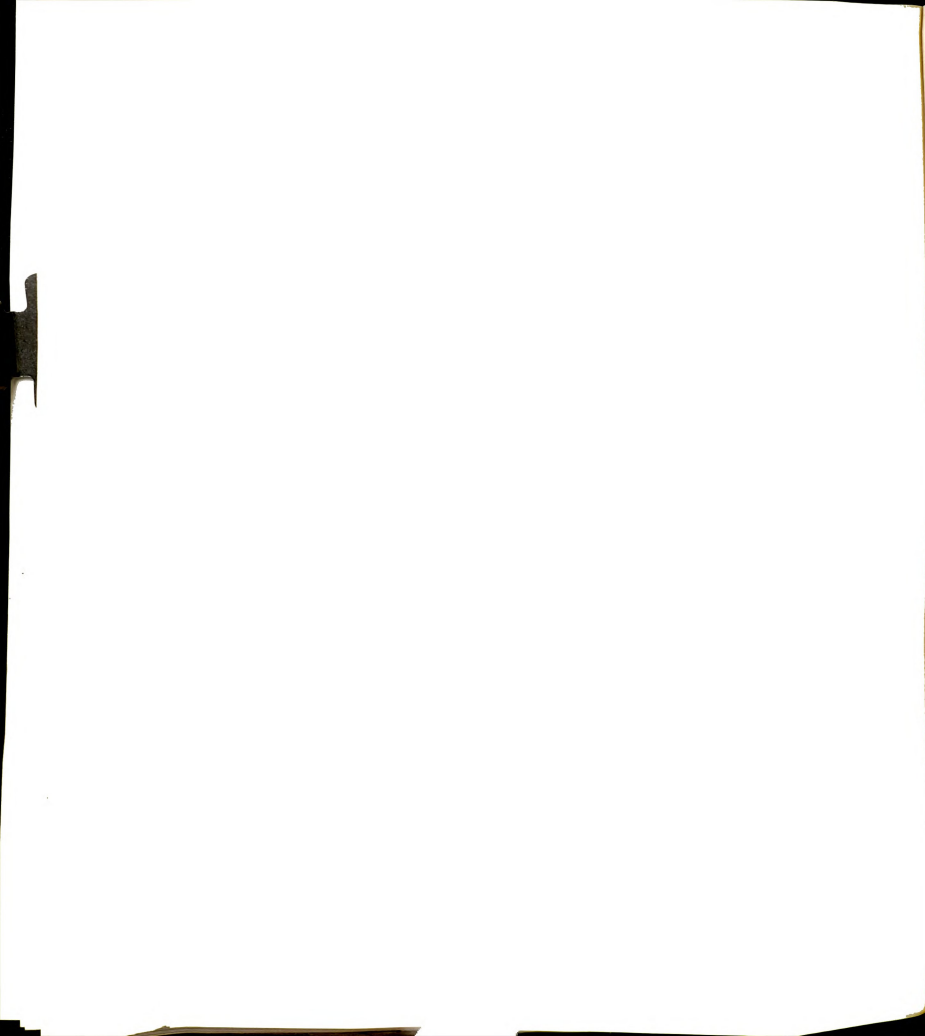
The reader seeking detailed information concerning research needs in the field of literacy is well advised to read these two publications.

In addition to the subjects for research included in the above publications, the writer would add as needed research:

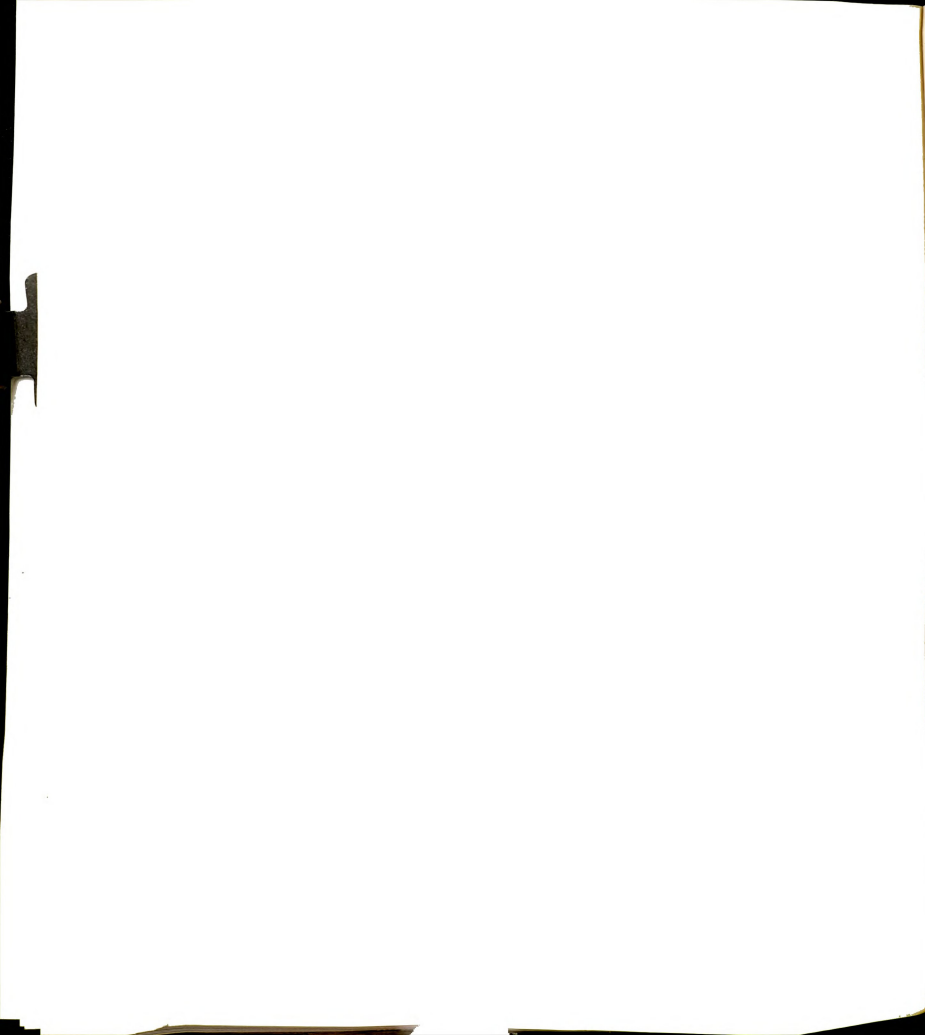
1. Investigation into the effects of the type of writing system utilized on the thought pattern of the individual, his ability to empathize and reason abstractly. That is the effect of learning a writing system that is ideographic, that is, where symbols represent meanings, as opposed to one that is phonetic where symbols represent sounds?

2. Investigations into the effects of the method of learning a writing system by a word recognition method as opposed to a phonetic method. This is related to the above and the same variables would be used in each. The former stems from the nature of the writing system where the latter stems from the method used to teach that writing system.

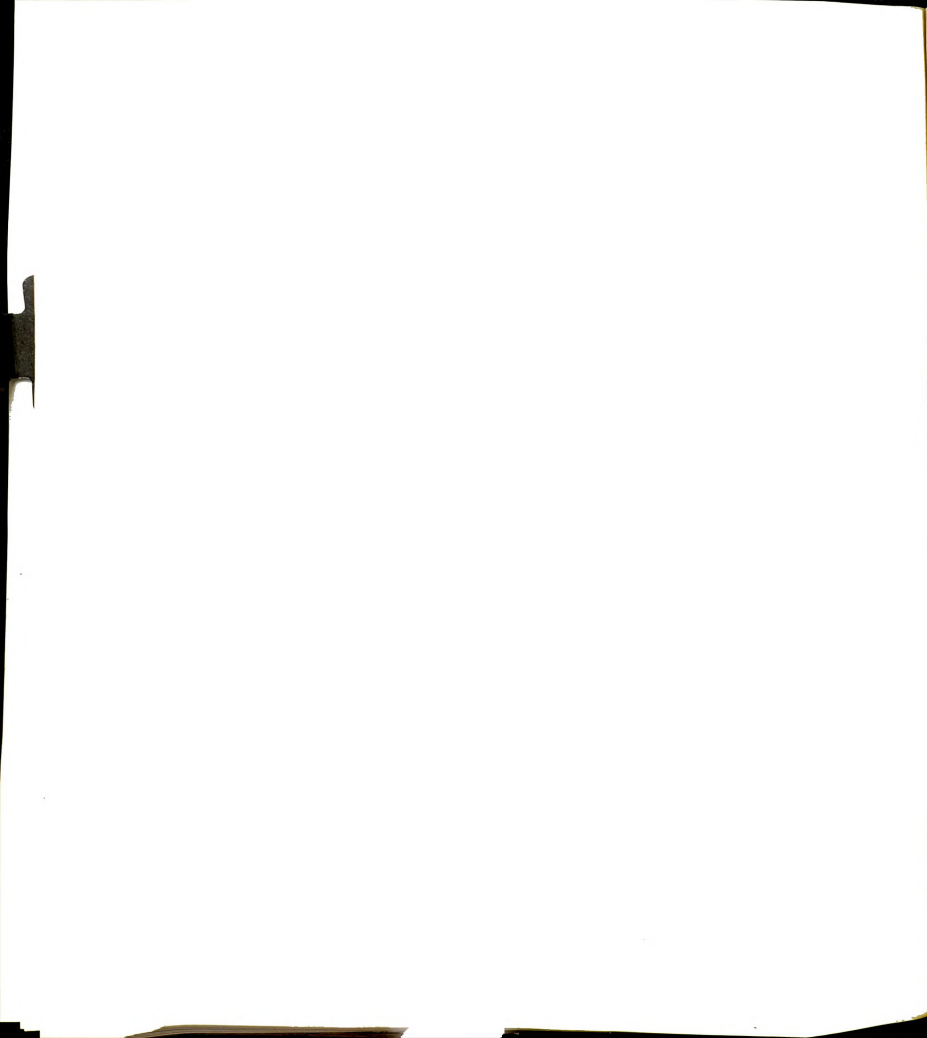
3. Investigation into the development process using the three categories of Galjart--ignorance, inability and unwillingness--to try to identify the sufficient



uses of development. In this, the unit of investigation would be the village. The individual would be studied to form the aggregate characteristics of the village population. The structural characteristics of the village, however, would be the major consideration.



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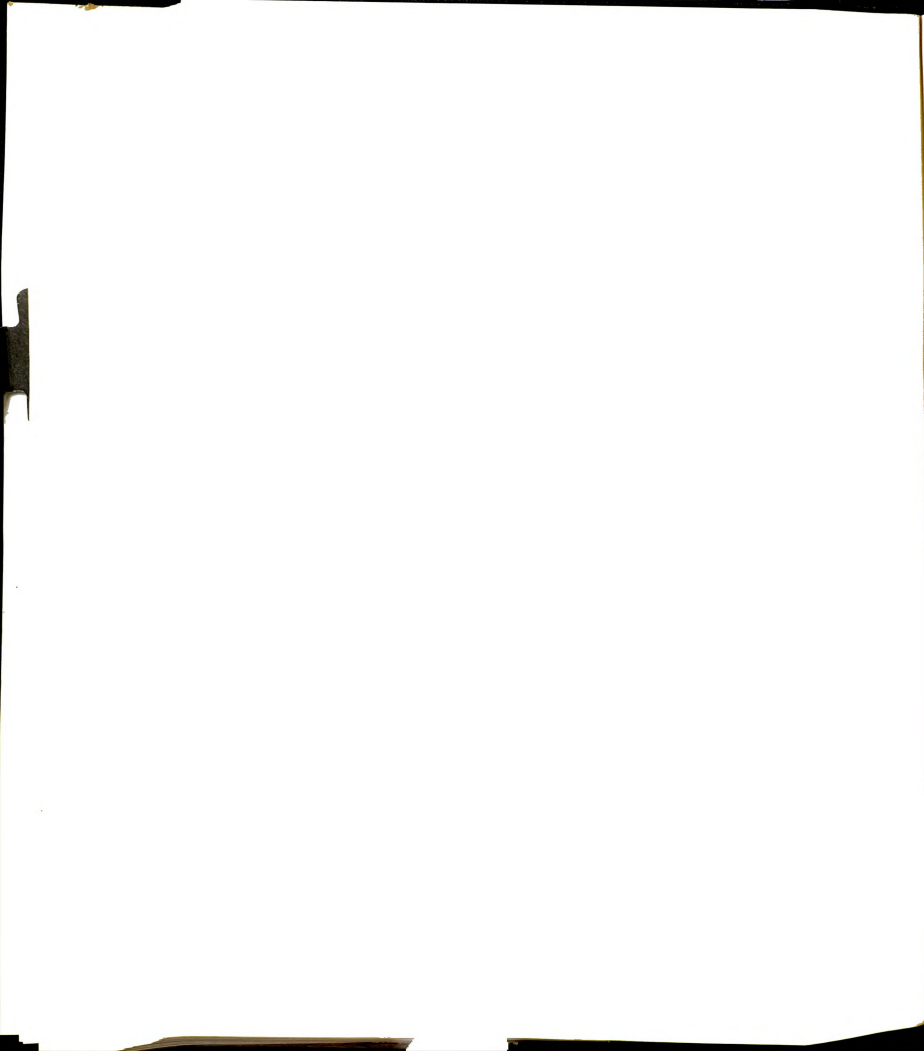
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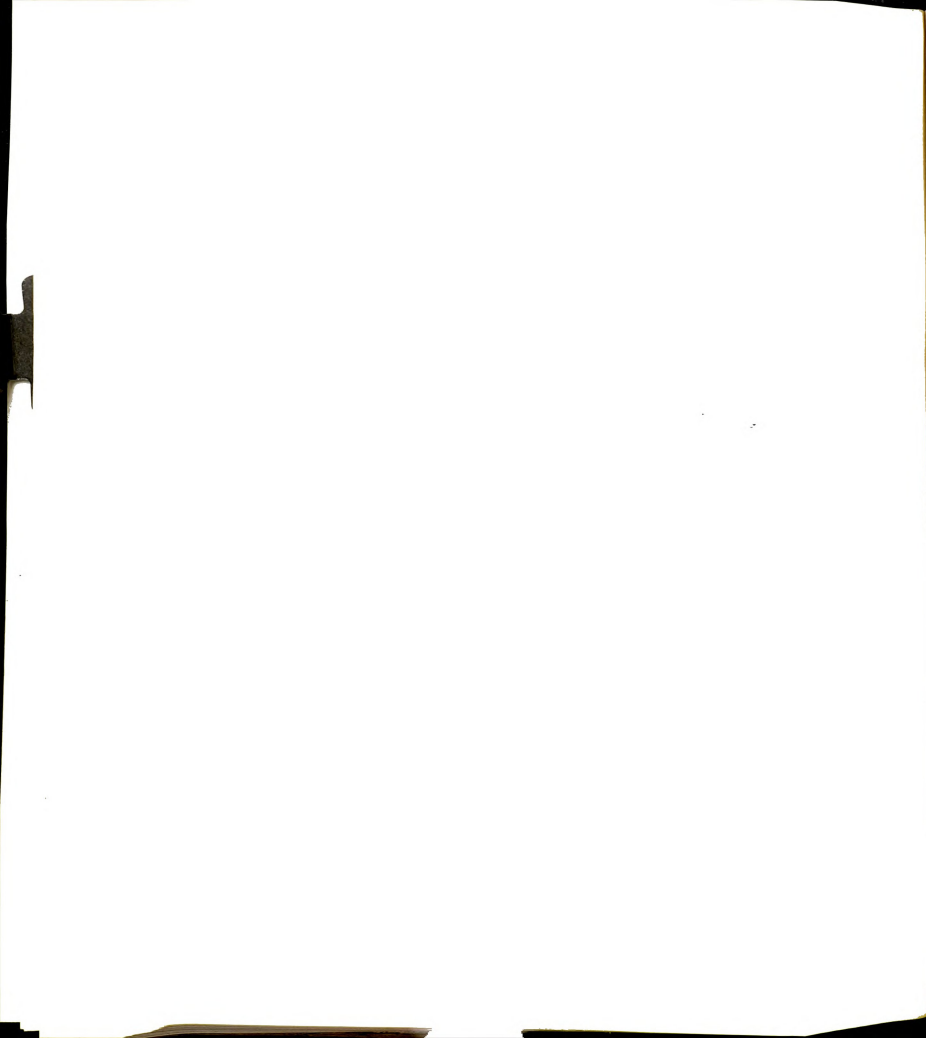
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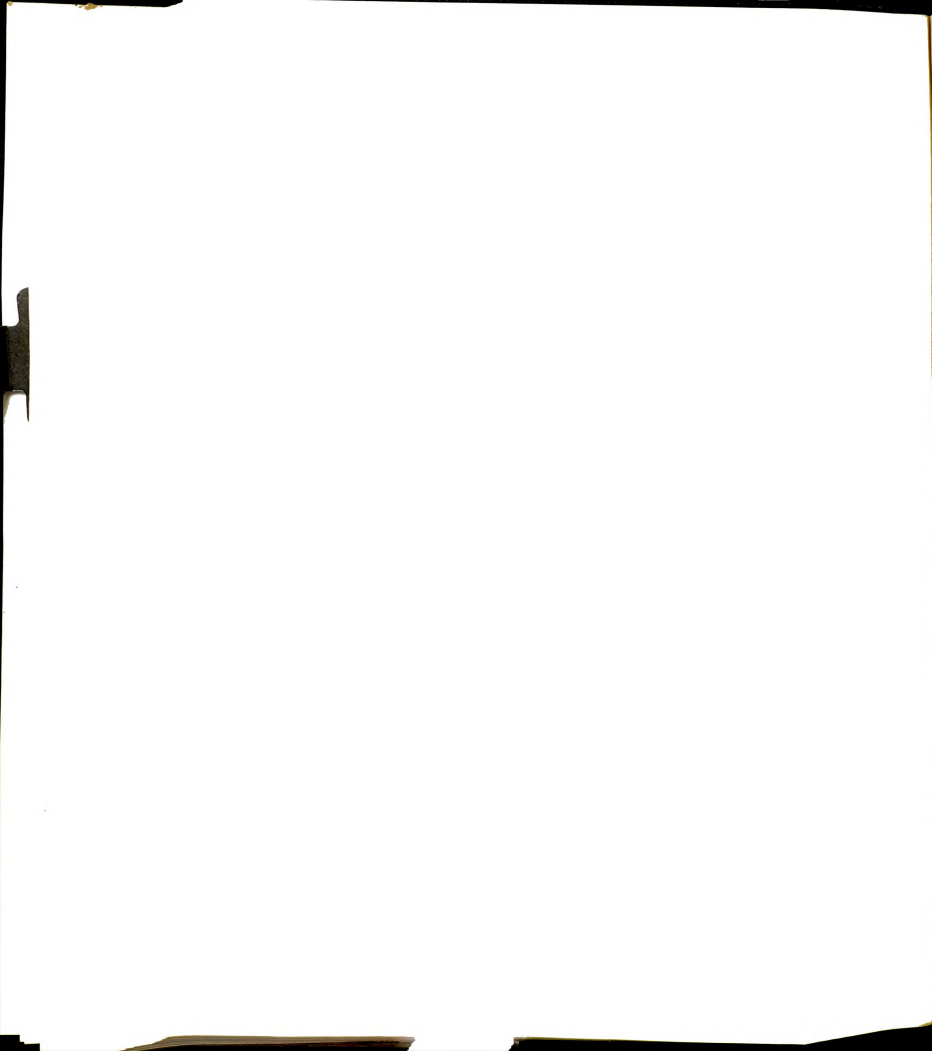
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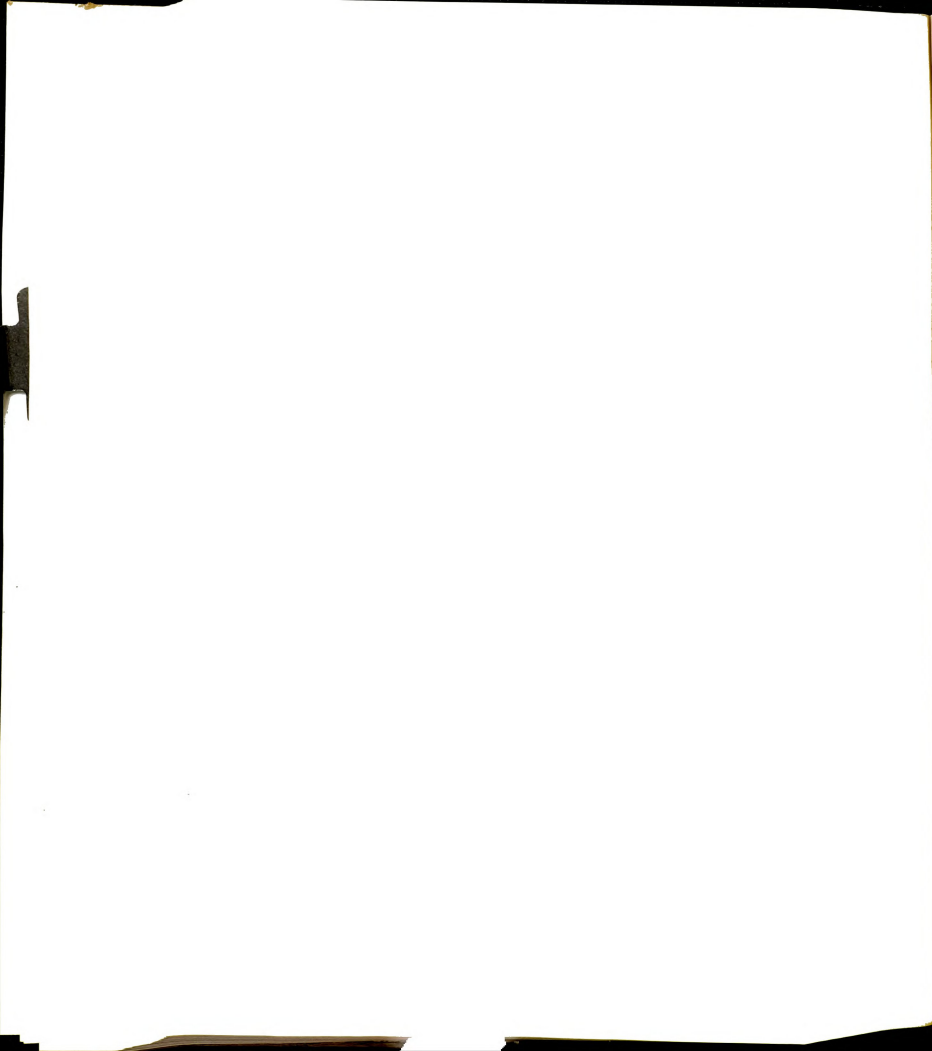
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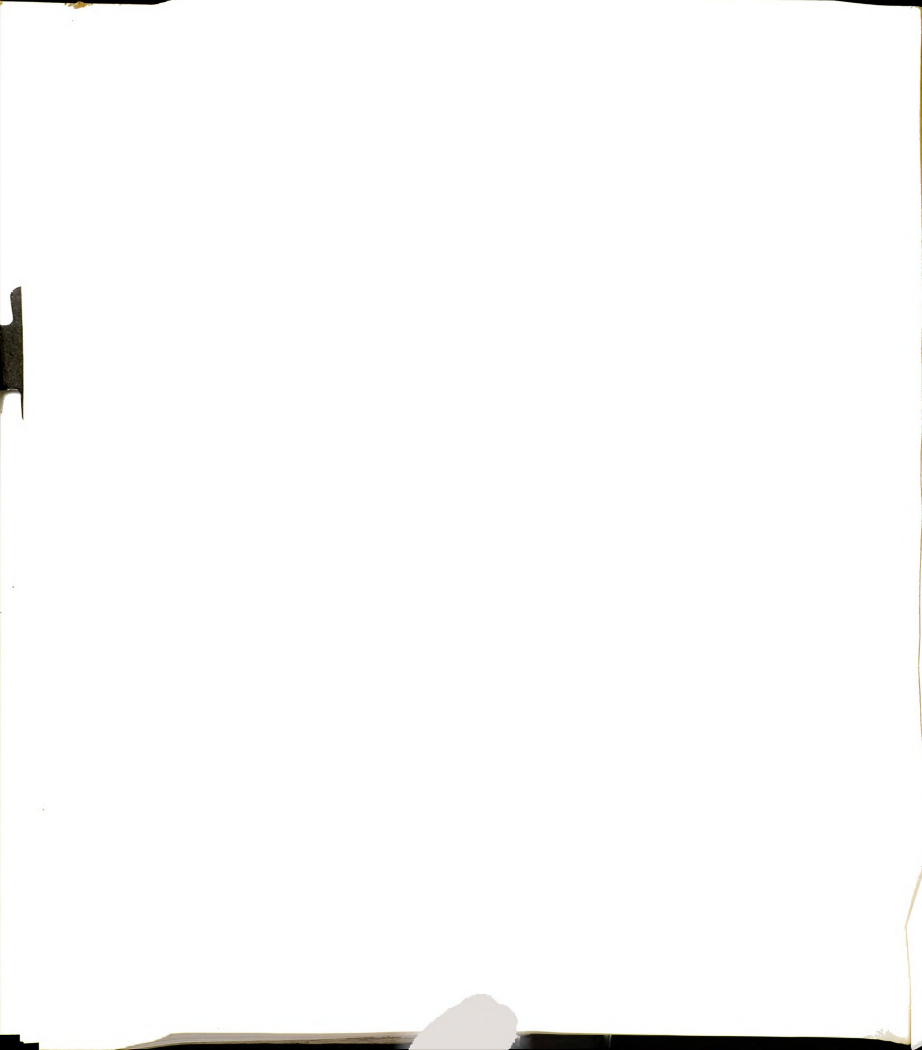
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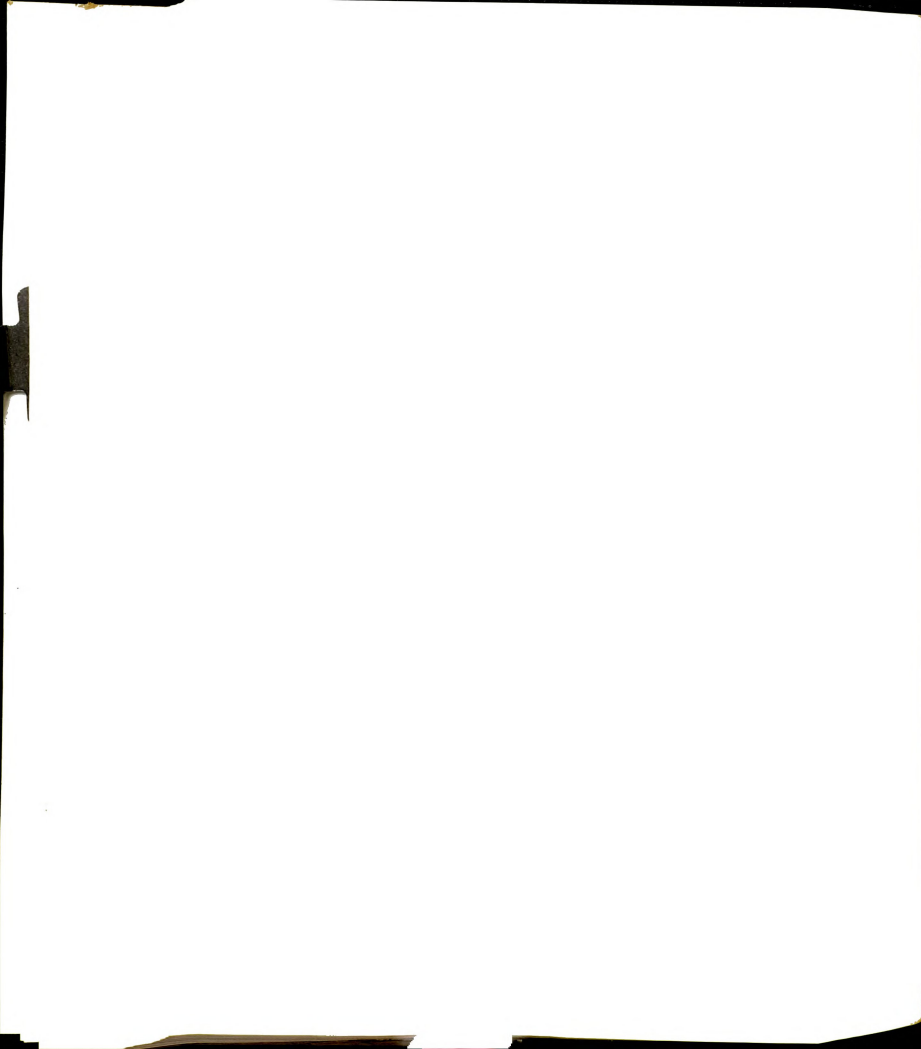
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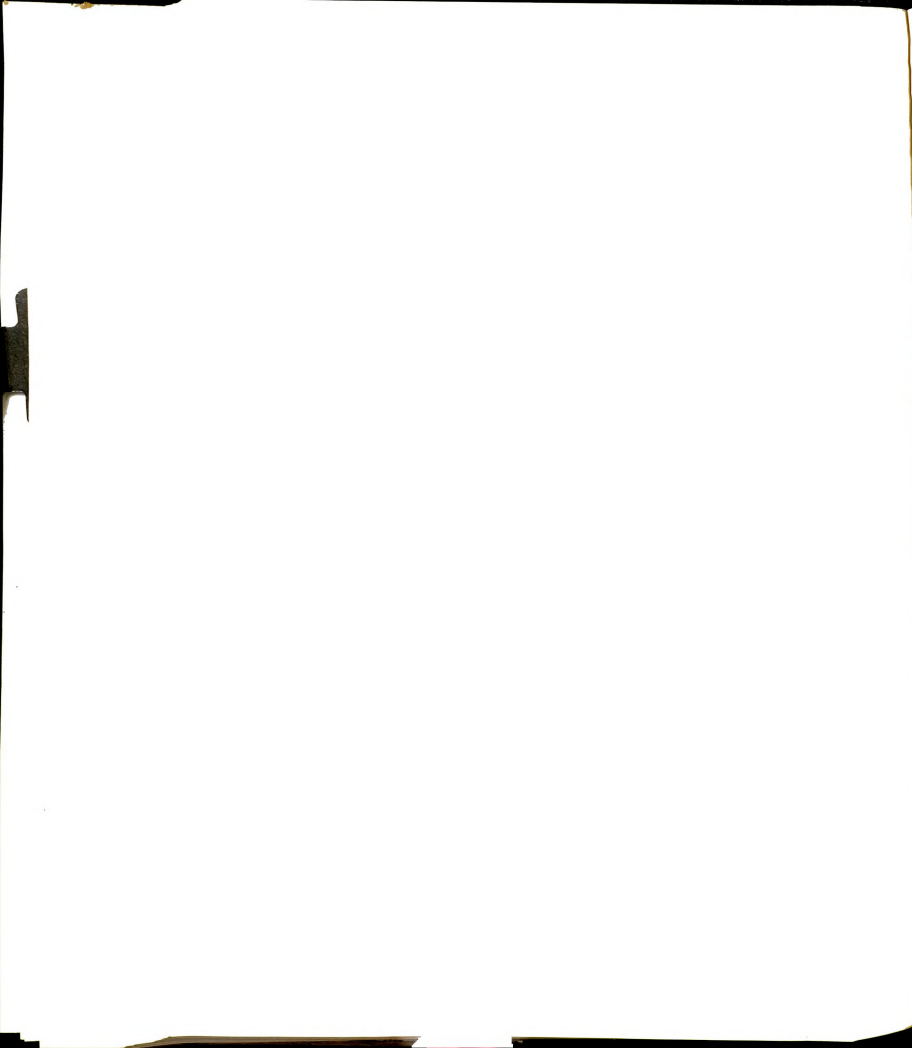
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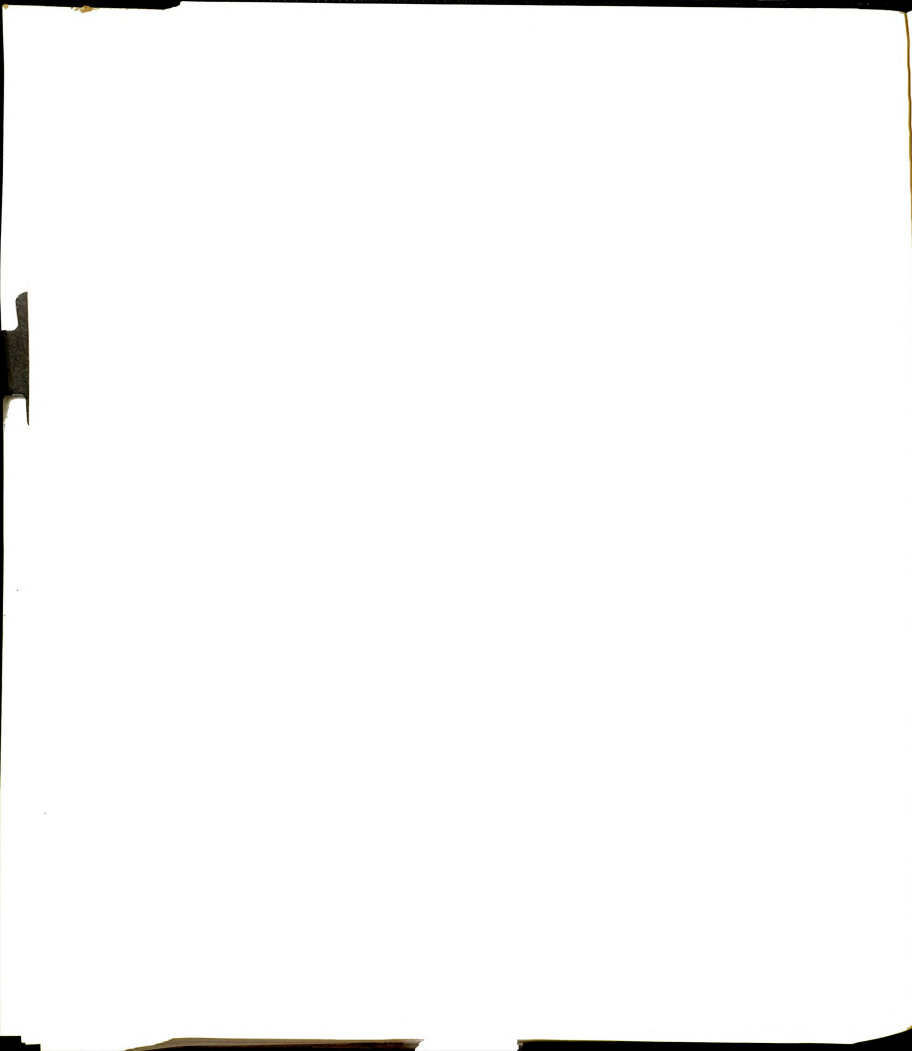
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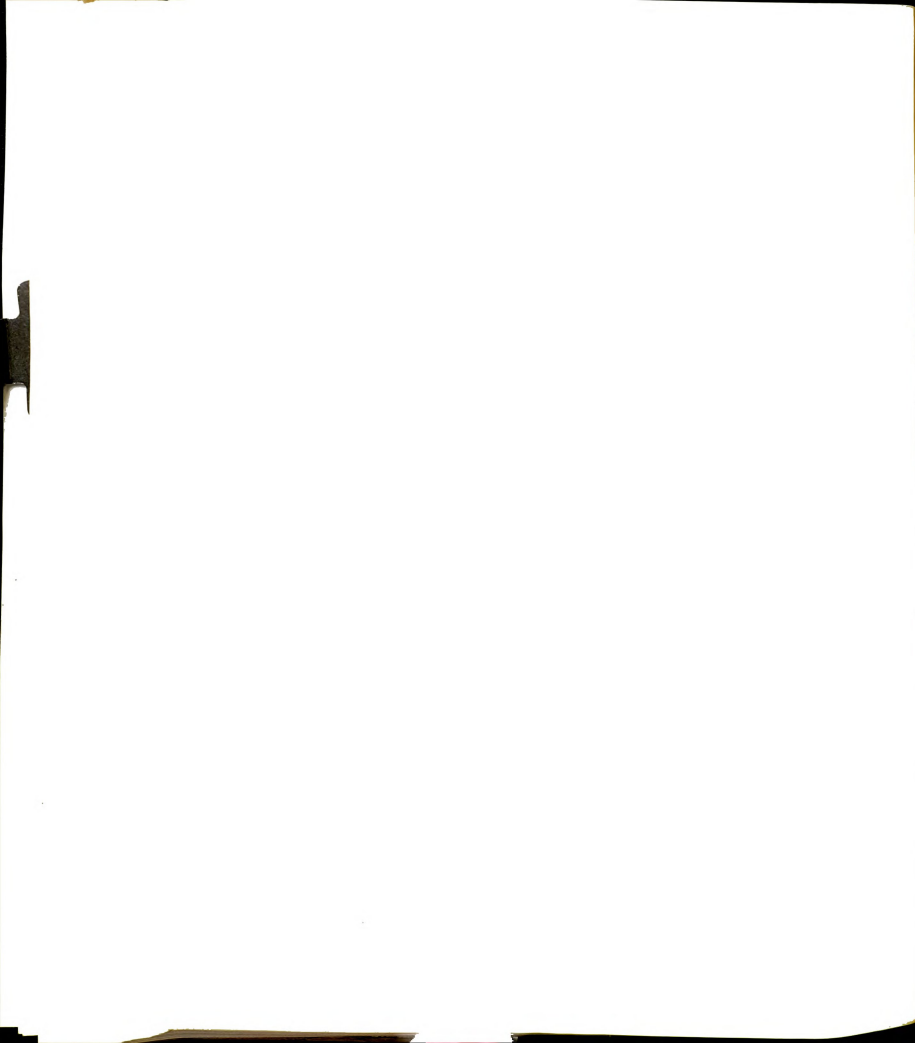
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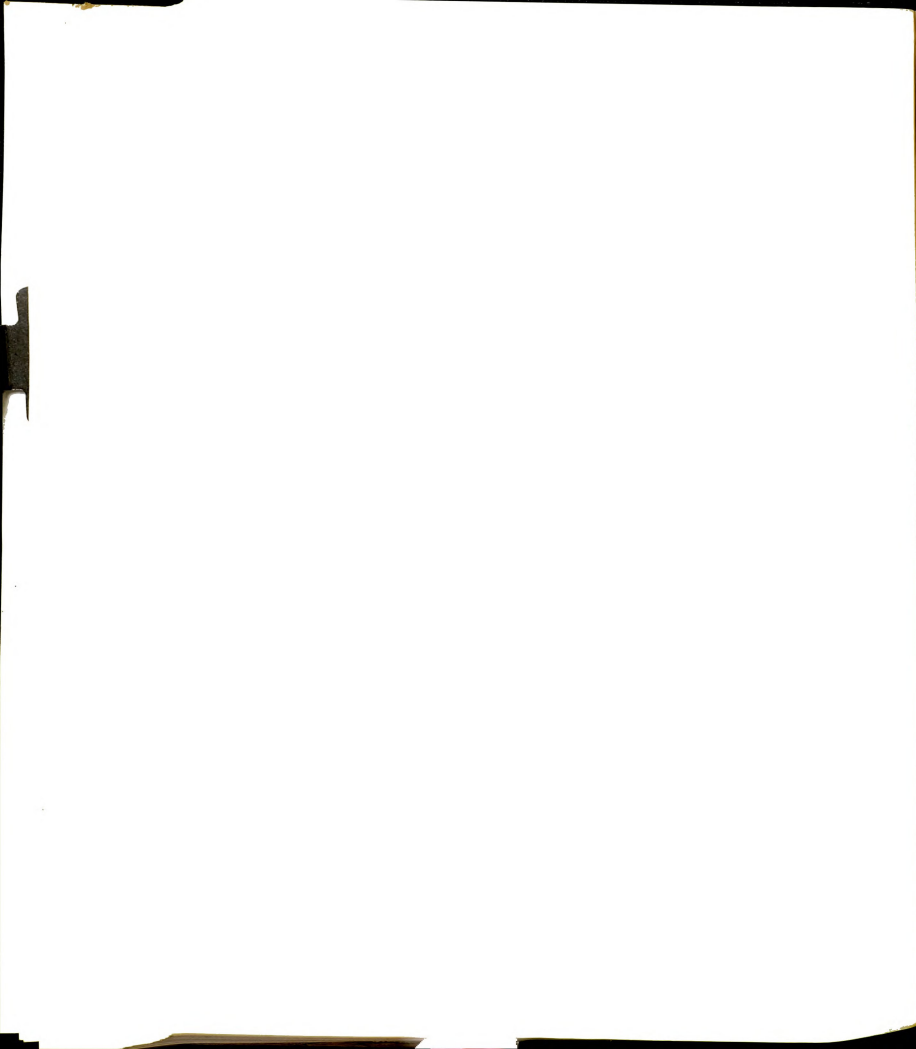
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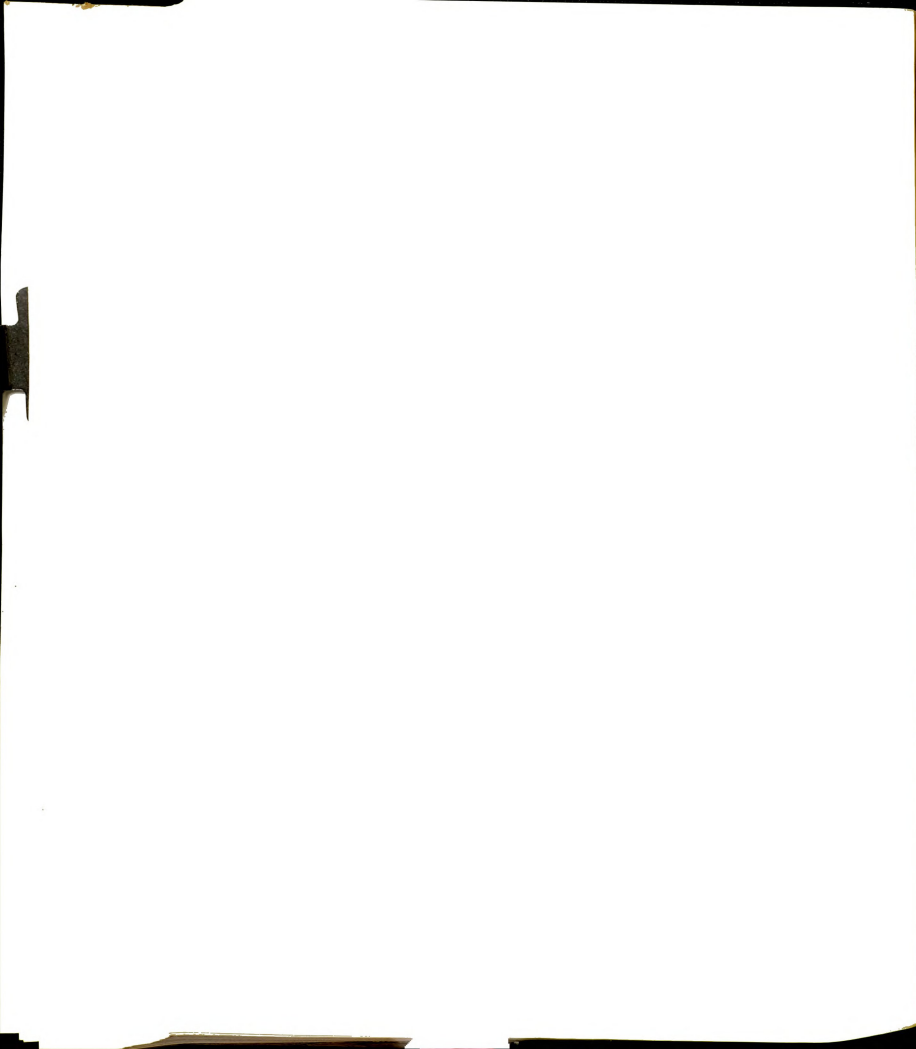
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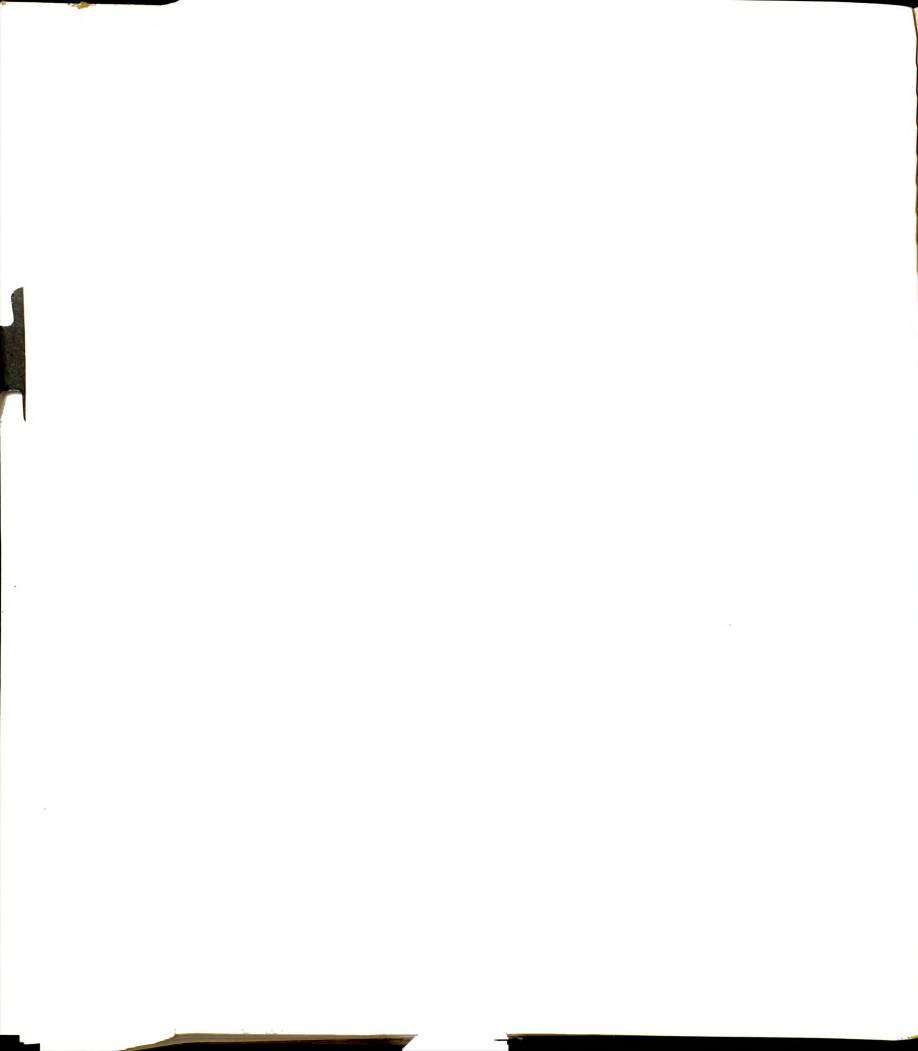
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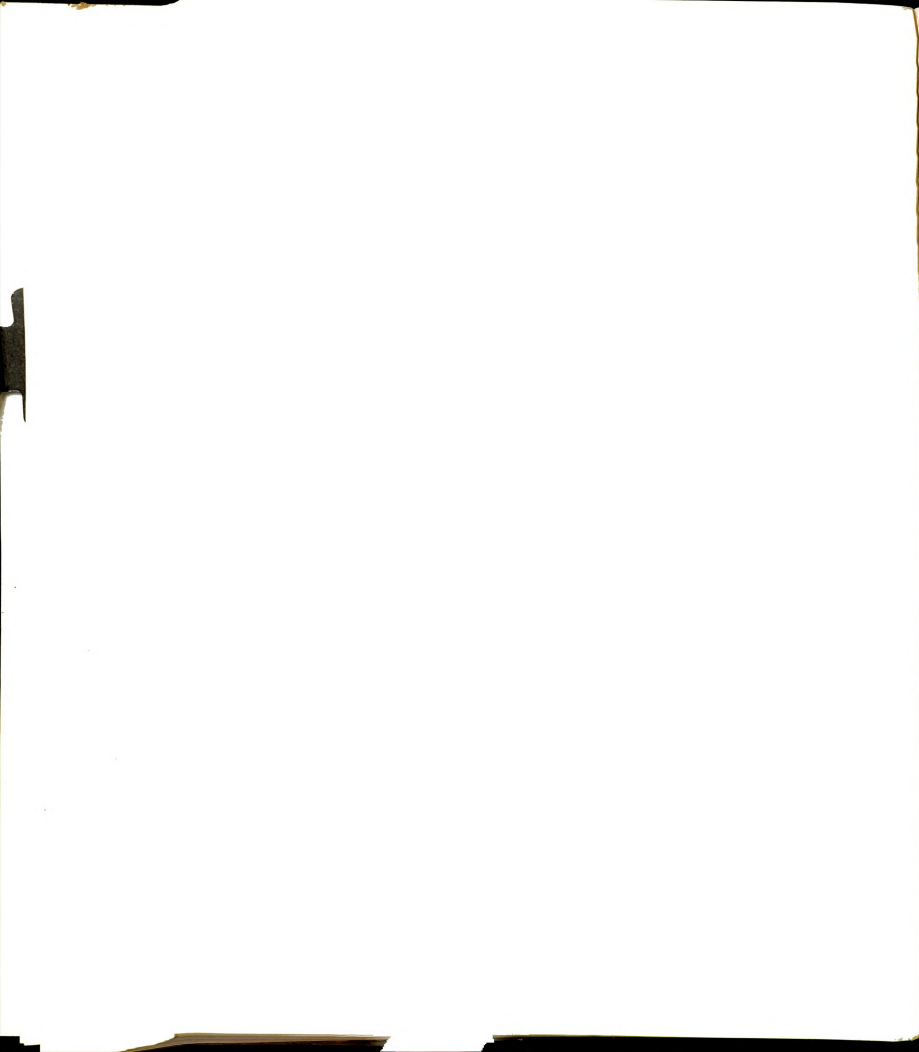


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