

Schein

April 26, 1983

Dear Dr. Meselson -

The Hurlich paper enclosed may not be as helpful as it sounded since it deals mostly with U.S. diets. You may want to contact him for additional info on Laos diets. In Hurlich's list of references I marked ones that may be relevant and some additional possibilities. Unfortunately, the Thai-Hmong material is probably not relevant. LeMoine's stuff is the most recent and detailed; I enclosed the page with relevant diet changes.

Apparently rice has supplanted maize as the principal crop/food of the Lao-Hmong only in the last few decades ("since World War II" according to one source) - the Hmong in China and Vietnam are presumably still eating a lot of corn since they were not traditionally dry rice farmers. Since it has become a "low status" food for the Lao-Hmong, the time it would be eaten is only just before the new rice harvest-when rice supplies have run low-in August/Sept. This is the only seasonal change I'm aware of as far as diet is concerned. Other than agricultural reasons, would be the ritual changes in diet that might occur seasonally, but I don't know of any, nor any significant festivals or observances at this time. I'll keep my eyes out.

} March-April, that is.

Seasonal/agricultural cycles have been so upset by the war/refugee/rice-drop/post-war years that I seriously doubt whether traditional practices would be relevant. More significant, it would seem, would be dietary changes resulting from outside aid dependency, development in post-war reconstruction, food shortages/starvation for insurgents in jungle, etc. Were it a uniform change for the Lao-Hmong as a group, it would be difficult to explain the variation and distribution of attack reports, wouldn't it? I don't know enough about your hypothesis to comment further - and I'm still hoping to see the materials your secretary was sending.

The phone bill for Utah calls hasn't come back yet so no need to worry about accounting for now.

Looking forward to meeting you at some point,

Louisa Schein -