

SURVIVAL  
OF  
THE JAVAN RHINOCEROS IN LAOS

DECEMBER, 1975

SUBMITTED BY:

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## PREFACE

The writer was given a grant by the New York Zoological Society to determine if kouprey (*Novibos sauveli*) still existed in south Laos and along the northern Cambodian border area. While searching for the whereabouts of kouprey, evidence kept cropping up regarding "het" or the One Horned Javan rhinoceros as the villagers call this animal species.

The first three months of the five month project (November, 1974 to March, 1975) was spent solely in the search for kouprey. The last two months involved searches for both kouprey and rhinos.

The field work of the project was carried on mostly by the writer's two Lao assistants due to insecurity in most of south Laos for foreigners. One of the assistants, Amphone, had worked for this writer in a different capacity from 1955 - '68 in the same area where the search was carried on. At that time he was found to be loyal, truthful and trustworthy (he handled large sums of money). Because of these formidable attributes in an area where they are hard to find, Amphone was singled out and solicited to help on the project.

The other assistant, Lu, was always mentally alert and seemed to be acquainted with someone in every village, district and province headquarters in south Laos. He had previously been to the U.S. for a military training program which indicates that some proficiency existed.

The project consisted of the two assistants being directed by the writer to specified areas and villages to interview village chiefs, hunters, farmers, soldiers (both nationalist and communist) and then relay this information back to the writer to be analyzed and verified if possible.

Incidents that could not be verified in some form were usually discarded.

The information provided in this report is not detailed or conclusive. It is, however, the latest known data on the Javan rhino that is available from Laos.

The drawings in the report were provided by a local Lao artist living in Pakse. The writer requested that Amphone and Lu furnish the details of rhino sightings as was told to them by villagers to the artist and he in turn made the drawings from these descriptions.

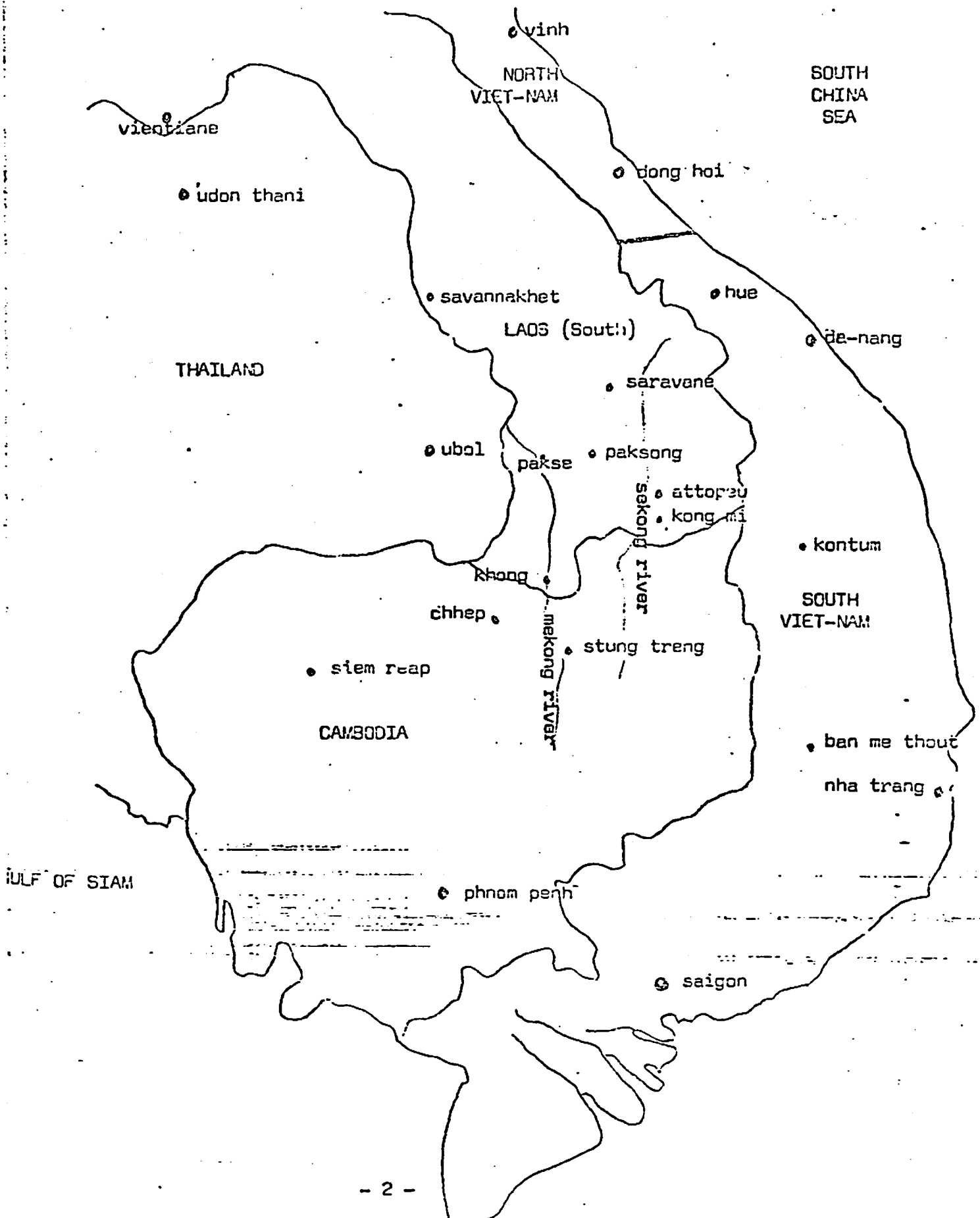
## INTRODUCTION

The search for the Lesser One Horned or Javan rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) has been conducted in south Laos between November, 1974 and March, 1975. The search for this rare animal species began partly because of frequent references to the existence of the species by villagers, some of them experienced hunters. The primary mission of this writer in south Laos was to locate the rare wild cattle species, the kouprey (*Bos sauvelis*). However, in looking for the kouprey, the more rugged areas inhabited by rhinos were sometimes adjacent to wild cattle habitat. Because of the close proximity of their ranges, information started coming in on both species.

Only the local assistants of the writer were able to enter areas controlled by the Pathet Lao or Lao communist political force in Laos. The writer had to be content with reading reports, debriefings and questioning discrepancies when they occurred. The assistants would follow a similar routine in questioning of villagers in key target areas. At first, questions centered only around wild cattle, the primary objective. As the word "het" or the Lao word for the One Horned rhino crept into conversations; efforts to locate this animal began.

A rather unfortunate situation that created many refugees to come to the Pakse area proved good luck in the research for rhinos. Most of the Kha or Lao Thuong Hills peoples came from the rugged, mountainous areas where, it was found, rhinos are more apt to live. A systematic questioning of these villagers in their mountain villages would have taken quite a period of time. By settling in the Pakse area, it

Fig. 1. Map of Former Indo-China Area in April, 1975



became quite easy to quickly interview the chiefs of these villages and glean much valuable information from them.

The writer has tried to group the evidence gathered on rhino sightings into two categories. Incidents where only one person had claimed to have seen evidence of rhinos or the story told happened some time ago are grouped into one category. The other category entails incidents in recent times and involves more than one person.

What may be quite significant is that information concerning rhinos has filtered in despite deep psychological opposition by many villagers. (More about this later in the text).

References used for naming the rhino seen by villagers as the Javan rhinoceros was Jean Deuve's Les Mammiferes Du Laos and wildlife experts at the Association for the Conservation of Wildlife, centered in Bangkok, Thailand. Both the literature by Deuve and personnel at the ACW indicated that a one horned rhinoceros found in Laos most probably is the Javan rhino. And, of course, there are the many reports from villagers who always referred to the rhino seen as "het" which is the colloquial name for the one horned rhino found in Laos.

The information related in this report is recorded as it was received through reports and debriefings. Any variations are due to translations only.

## DESCRIPTION OF AREA UNDER STUDY

### Bolovens Plateau

The main geographical feature of the southern panhandle is the Bolovens Plateau. This high elevation area is encompassed partly within the boundaries of all four khuengs (provinces) in the southern tiao.

The elevation at Paksong, the major town on the Plateau, is over 1300 meters. It formerly had a population, prior to exodus of refugees, of 5,000 and was the largest town on the Bolovens.

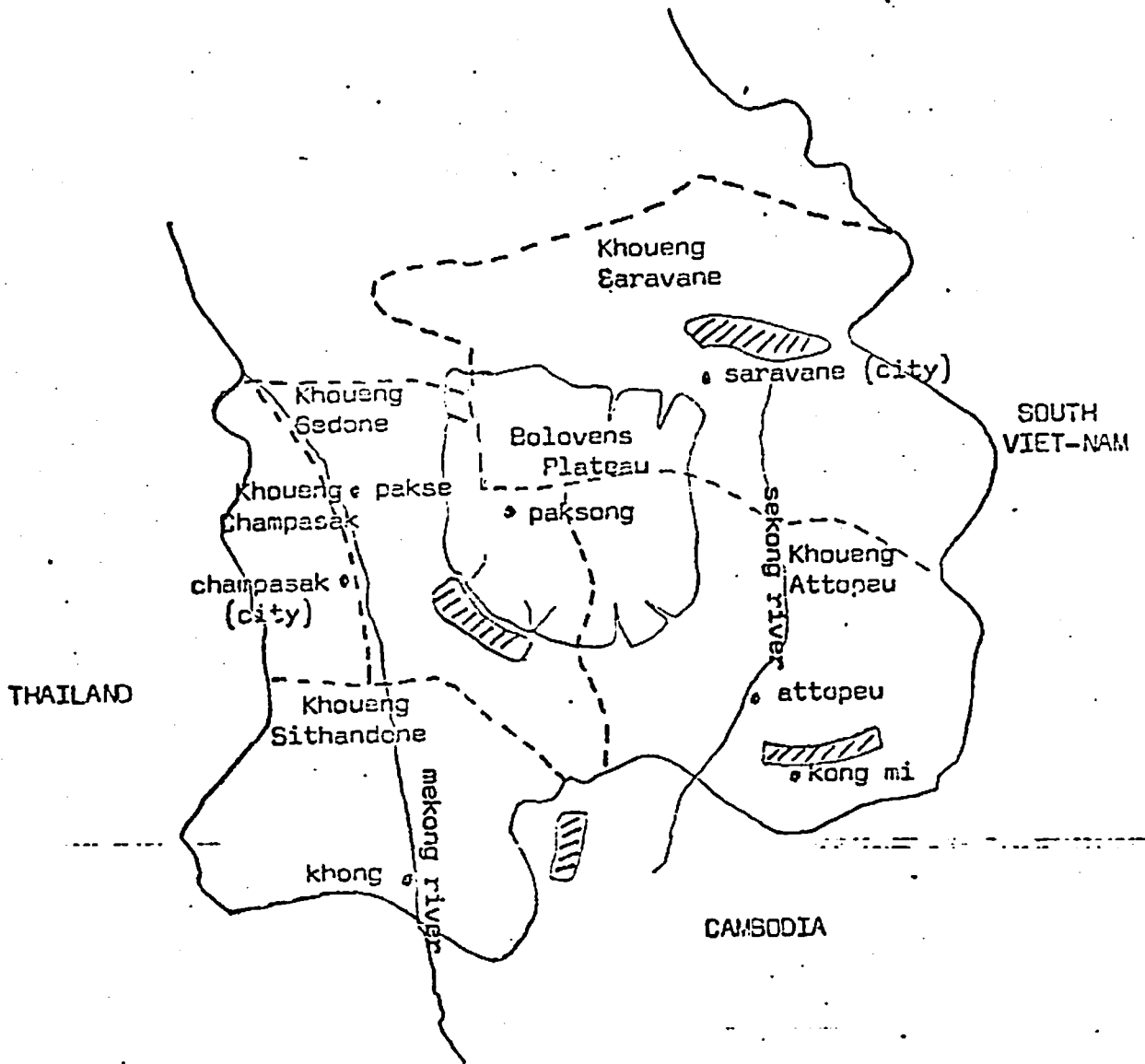
At least one mountain rises to 1800 meters on the Plateau and several lesser ones at over 1600 meters. Rainfall at Paksong is said to average around 2,400 mm per year.

The Bolovens, can be divided into the following geographical divisions - mountains, open forests, rolling grasslands and rather abrupt drop-offs on the edges of the Plateau. There are no major water tributaries on the Bolovens although it is a water shed for several rivers in the lower areas.

Temperatures on the Bolovens Plateau can be quite low in the winter season (December to February). There are occasional frosts in the Paksong area.

The main agricultural crops are logging, 'hai' rice (upland rice), coffee, vegetables and some spices. A good black topped road exists between Pakse and Paksong. A new gravel topped road was constructed in 1967 from Paksong to Houei Kong but was not usable at the time by people outside of the Pathet Lao held area. Other roads on the Plateau are apt

Fig. 2. Map of South Laos in April, 1975



Areas where Javan rhinos have reportedly been seen in recent years



to be non-passable to barely passable, depending upon the season. At best, these secondary roads are in poor condition.

Most of the travel on the Bolovens is by foot and trail. The Kha or Lao Thuong ethnic groups are predominant, inhabiting small villages over the Plateau.

#### Khoueng Sedone

Khoueng Sedone has an area of 5,800 sq. kms. and a population of 147,000 people. (1973, Laos Annual Statistics). Other sources give the population as low as 122,000.

Pakse is the major city in Sedone Province with a reported population of 45,000.

The main river in the Province is the Mekong, running the entire length. The other major river is the Sedone, which starts in the Saravane area and winds through Pakse, emptying into the Mekong.

Agriculture is the main means of livelihood. It is one of the few rice exporting provinces in Laos. Coffee, pineapple and some spices are grown on the slopes of the portion of the Bolovens Plateau which is in Sedone Province.

Pakse is a main trade center, traditionally receiving goods from Thailand, Cambodia and Viet-Nam.

#### Khoueng Saravane

Khoueng Saravane comprises an area of 18,360 sq. kms., making it the largest province in the panhandle. It has a reported population of 166,000 (1973, Laos Annual Statistics). Other sources place the population at

closer to 140,000.

Saravane District has a population of 17,000 people.

The main river tributary is the Sedone. The other major river is the Sekong which runs into Cambodia.

Agriculture and logging are the main agricultural crops. All agriculture is on a small scale, the slash-and-burn type, except in some lowland areas.

Elevation in the province ranges from 150 meters at Saravane City to a high mountain in the eastern portion of over 2300 meters.

Rainfall in the lowlands is low and the temperatures are hot during the dry season. The mountainous regions to the east, and the Solovens, have lower temperatures and higher rainfall.

#### Khoueng Attoueu

Khoueng Attoueu comprises some 11,900 sq. kms. It has a population listed at 99,000 (1973, Laos Annual Statistics).

The main river is the Sekong.

Khoueng Attoueu borders Cambodia on the south and the South Viet-Nam Highlands on the east.

Agriculture and logging are the main industries. Most agriculture is limited to slash-and-burn type with 'hai' rice the main crop.

Elevation ranges from about 100 meters at Attoueu City to over 1700 meters in the mountainous northwest portion of the province.

#### Khoueng Sithandone

Khoueng Sithandone is listed as having 5,300 sq. kms. of land area.

It has a population of 103,000 people (1973, Lao National Statistics). Other sources set the population at 80,000.

Muong Khong, (District) has a population of nearly 30,000.

Sithandone borders Thailand on the west and Cambodia on the south and east.

The main river is the Mekong which runs the entire length of the province.

The main means of livelihood are agriculture and fishing. Previously there was a brisk commercial trade from Cambodia as Route 13 runs through Sithandone and into Cambodia.

Elevation is consistently between 100 and 200 meters. Open forests and grasslands are characteristic of this province.

#### Khoueng Champassak

Khoueng Champassak comprises some 2,600 sq. kms. and has the smallest land area in the southern provinces. It has a reported population of 103,000 (1973, Laos Annual Statistics). Other sources set the population at 80,000.

The main river, the Mekong, flows the length of the province. Agriculture and logging are the main occupations.

#### Ethnic Populations of Four Khouengs

The ethnic populations of the lowlands are Lao, Chinese and Vietnamese. The mountainous and remote areas are occupied by Kha or Lao Thuong. The Kha people consist of the following different tribal groups - La ven, Nya heune, Ta hoi, Nghe, Alak, Kasseng, La ve, Sa poun, Ha lang, Seng, Souei and Eng.

## BAD SPIRITS OR "PHI" AND THE RHINOCEEROS .

Many Kha or Lae Thuong in Laos - and some Lao - believe that shooting rhinos or attempting to capture them is tantamount to disaster. Sometimes, it is believed that even mentioning the Lao word for the One Horned rhino, "het" at certain times can cause unfortunate things to happen. The writer was given this information by assistants Amphone and Lu, along with other local people. Whatever information that is obtained, in many cases, is given under duress and considerable coaxing is necessary to get these villagers to talk about rhinos.

The powerful phi or bad spirits, supposedly closely connected with rhinos, generally includes a death penalty for a relative or close acquaintance if the phi are disturbed. For example, some members of the Kha Laue tribal group near Ban Pa Dou (Khoueng Saravane) related that anyone shooting a rhino would shortly see the death of his wife or children.

Another incident - described more in detail later in the text - tells of the Lao leader of a wild elephant roundup dying shortly after someone shouted "het! het!" upon sighting rhinos.

It can be postulated that the above superstitions probably began when the person closely connected with seeing or shooting a rhino, died from some other unrelated cause. The superstitious villagers interpreted this to mean that rhino phi had caused the death.

A Westerner might laugh at these beliefs where rhinos are thought to have powerful spirits that can demand quick revenge from humans when they are tampered with. But these people believe deeply in these superstitions and one doing research in this animal species in Laos should

learn to live with the problem rather than attempting to fight it. The writer learned, first hand, what such superstitions can do to a research project if not taken into consideration.

Amphone had been told to begin asking questions about existence of rhinos in areas where he was searching for kouprey. At first, there didn't seem to be any reluctance on his part as he began to bring back important information. As evidence began to indicate the presence of rhinos in some of these areas, Amphone became more negative in his evaluations on whether rhinos actually did exist. Several villagers might describe an incident where they had seen rhino tracks or the animal itself. Amphone would come back and say he didn't believe there were rhinos as the villagers had reported. His reports became quite contradictory in that he would give a positive side to villagers' answers and then in the end, without any apparent reason, he would say he didn't believe them.

In one important happening, Amphone told the writer he didn't believe rhinos existed in a particular area despite the fact that some 26 people - on an elephant roundup - had seen two of them. This aroused the writer's suspicions that something was wrong. Thinking back in retrospect, small, seemingly insignificant events began to take shape.

Amphone's wife, from the Kha Eng Tribal group, had been acting quite sullen in the writer's recent encounters with her. Kha women are usually very amiable. In a report, that Amphone knew the writer was going to have translated, he wrote that he didn't understand why he was asked to look

for rhinos. And further, would his wife be provided with a death benefit payment in event he died in the line of duty? These statements were included in a report after Amphone had returned from some remote villages where the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese military units had put him under arrest and threatened him with death if he was found to be a Lao military.

Finally the writer brought the whole problem out in the open in a heart-to-heart talk with Amphone. He then poured out his wife's fears - and his too - of engaging in a project that would either capture or kill rhinos. When he was assured that this project was only to develop a program for their protection, he lost his fears. He said he wasn't reluctant to work with rhinos on this basis.

Unfortunately there are Lao and Kha who have managed to over-ride their superstitions, if they had any, and hunt these rare animals because of high monetary rewards. The rhino horn - much sought after as an aphrodisiac by the Chinese medical profession - has undoubtedly contributed much to its near extinction. In May of 1975, the writer priced rhino horns in a Chinese drug store in Vientiane. The prices were extremely high for a small shave of the horn. The owner was quite suspicious and took great pains in the beginning to let me know that the horns came from Africa. In a later visit, he said some of the horns came from north of Vientiane. I could not verify where they actually did come from.

## INCIDENTS INVOLVING RHINOS IN SOUTH LAOS

All of the incidents where villagers reported to have seen rhinos or their tracks, referred to the species as "het". As mentioned, this name is reserved for a One Horned rhinoceros. At no time did any of the villagers use the word for the Two Horned rhino which according to Deuve is "sou".

Several of the rhino sightings seemed to take place in June or July. On the climatic side this would be the beginning of the rainy season. It is not known why rhinos have been seen in these particular months except perhaps this time period might coincide with the mating season or availability of certain food plants.

The information contained in this report indicates that rhinos tend to inhabit lower elevations, below steep mountainous areas where there is apt to be plenty of water. Ravines, rivers and or creeks seem to be characteristic of these areas.

It would also appear that rhinos might be nocturnal in their feeding habits. This could be one of the reasons, along with their low numbers, that they aren't seen more often by villagers. Another reason is undoubtedly the fact that rhinos and elephants inhabit much the same geographical areas and it is not apparently easy for the novice to differentiate between a young elephant's footprint and those of a rhino.

At least one villager estimated the size of an adult rhino footprint as approximating the size of a two month old elephant footprint. Some indicated it was a bit larger. A number of villagers reported that rhino footprints do not show the prominent toe nails as one would see on an elephant's foot.

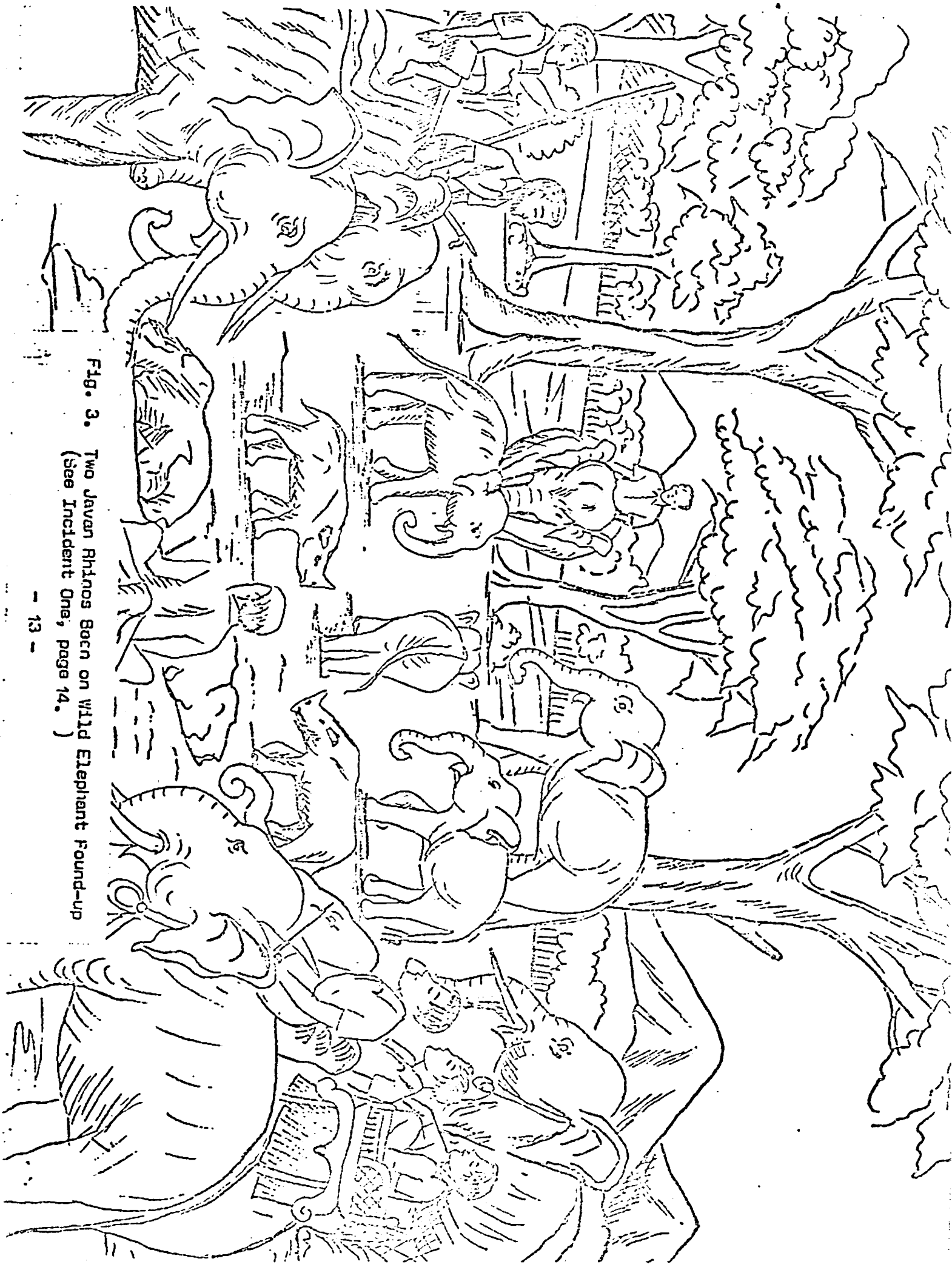


Fig. 3. Two Javan Rhinos Seen on Wild Elephant Found-up  
(See Incident One, page 14. )



Some villagers stated that they thought rhinos hibernate in wet, muddy areas for a three month period each year (May, June and July). It could be postulated that rhinos might relax in wet areas during this period, the end of the dry season and the beginning of a rainy season, but only during the daylight hours.

The following incidents, involving rhinos, were recorded as they were received by Amphone and Lu, the writer's two assistants. If feasible, an attempt was made to check out discrepancies. Much of the information was related by Tassengs or chiefs of clusters of villages which formerly were located in the remotest parts of south Laos.

Incident No. One

Amphone was told by a Lao that some villagers in Ban Kala (the name given on the map is erroneously shown as Ban Na Khala), Khoueng Sedone, had seen two rhinos in June, 1974. Amphone went to the Lao village to check out the story. He had planned to stay only overnight but due to Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese interrogators, he was kept under arrest for most of a week.

At Ban Samein, slightly west of Ban Kala, and also in Khoueng Sedone, Amphone met with Thao Kong and his brother, Thao Huong. Amphone learned from them that Ban Kala has 20 trained elephants and Ban Samein, 25. The villagers have an annual elephant roundup in the nearby proximity of the villages as there are reportedly large herds of wild elephants inhabiting that area.

In 1974, in the month of June according to Thao Huong, 26 villagers

mounted 13 elephants and commenced the roundup just east of the Kham Pho (Kham Pho River) in the Khoueng of Sedone. They reportedly encountered large herds of elephants, some estimating the total number at nearly 100 animals.

After herding five of the elephants into a circle with the 13 trained animals, they began to close the circle in order to restrain them with chains. A close look showed that with the five elephants there were two adult rhinoceroses. Apparently all or most of the 26 people (two to an elephant) saw the rhinos. (See fig. 3).

One of the villagers yelled "het! het!" and the rhinos and three of the elephants escaped the trap.

Amphone asked Thao Huong to describe the rhinos since he had seen them along with the other villagers. His description was as follows: legs like an elephant, tail like a pig and ears like a buffalo. When Amphone attempted to downgrade the story, Thao Huong argued that all or most of the villagers on the hunt had also seen them.

Thao Huong also said that it was now forbidden for anyone to talk about rhinos on future hunts. The reason being that the leader of the roundup had died shortly after the hunt and the villagers attributed his death to someone yelling rhino during the roundup.

The villagers are now reluctant to talk about this animal and they are no longer interested in having anything to do with them. They now believe rhinos have very powerful phi or bad spirits.

Amphone was put under house arrest by the PL and North Vietnamese military personnel at Ban Kala. He did manage to talk to several other

people who verified Thao Huong's story on the elephant roundup.

Amphone was questioned intensely during this period as to whether his background was military or civilian medic, which he professed to be. At Amphone's request, a PL courier was sent to Pakse to visit Amphone's house to determine if there was any evidence that he was a military spy. As luck would have it, this writer happened to go to Amphone's house at the same time the PL did, trying to find out why Amphone had not returned from his anticipated two day stay. The PL immediately attempted to find out if Amphone worked for an American or not. The writer, suspecting something, told the PL that Amphone was going to purchase some baskets for him. (The PL must have believed the story as he was released in a couple of days.)

At Ban Samien, on the same trip, Amphone met with a friend called "You". They refer to each other as brothers. That night there was a party at You's house. You, his father, Amphone and a Kha from Ban Hinlap (Khoueng Sedone) was present.

You's father stated that he had killed over 100 deer during his hunting years. He also said he had never seen a rhino but he believed they still existed in the area because so many villagers had seen them. The Kha from Ban Hinlap, on the Bolovens Plateau, said that a man from his village had shot a rhino several years ago. Because of the PL and North Vietnamese watching the proceedings, Amphone was not able to question him further.

Incident No. Two

A villager had told Amphone on his return from Ban Kala that a noted hunter from Boun Tai (Khoueng Sithandone) had an encounter with a rhino in 1974. In fact, he related to Amphone that the hunter name Cong Yen had shot one.

Amphone visited Cong Yen at Ban Boun Tai and the following story was related to Amphone by the hunter:

Cong Yen and eight other hunters entered Cambodia in an area east of Ban Kok Padek (Khoueng Sithandone) and west of Ban La Ak which is in Cambodia. The nine hunters built a tree platform above a well used mineral lick. All the hunters, along with their bicycles, managed to get on top of the platform. At sundown, they planned on waiting through the night for elephants. There was ample moonlight to shoot by.

During the night, a lone animal did approach the mineral lick. At first the group thought it to be a young elephant but elephants seldom travel alone at such a young age. As the animal began to eat the soil, they noticed that it didn't have a trunk. How could it then, they thought, be an elephant?

They watched the animal as it finished and ambled away into the night. The next morning the hunters jumped down from the tree and examined the tracks. The tracks were similar to the tracks of an elephant but without the prominent toe nails. They knew then that it must have been a rhinoceros. (See fig. 4).

Before the hunt was over, one of the group was killed and another was wounded by the Khmer Rouge (Cambodian communist insurgents).



Fig. 4. Eight Hunters See Javan Rhino from Atop Tree Platform  
(See Incident Two, page 17.)

### Incident No. Three

Lu, the writer's other assistant, visited a village by the name of Ban Houay Tone (Khoueng Sedone). He met with a villager there by the name of Thao Thiane. Thao Thiane related the following story about an incident with a rhino:

In 1972, during the night time, Thao Thiane sleeping in his hut heard what he thought was an animal chewing on his banana trees. (See fig. 5). There were numerous elephants in that area. He was afraid to disturb the animal if it was an elephant because it might be a lone one which are always cantankerous.

The next morning he went out to look at the tracks. They were similar to those of an elephant, but smaller. Something must have looked odd to Thao Thiane as he asked a neighbour, Thao Ko, to follow the tracks to see where they might go.

The tracks led towards a nearby stream but before reaching it, the animal had to go either around, over or under a tree that had fallen across the trail. According to Thao Ko's story to Thao Thiane, the animal elected to crawl under the low-lying tree. Thao Ko then doubted very much that it was an elephant, as he told Thao Thiane, because elephants do not cross obstructions in such a way.

Thao Ko's conclusion was that it was a rhino judging from the tracks and the method it used in getting past the fallen tree. Also, young elephants do not usually travel alone as this animal did.

### Other Incidents

The following incidents - involving villagers either seeing rhinos or rhino tracks - were reported by single individuals or refugees who

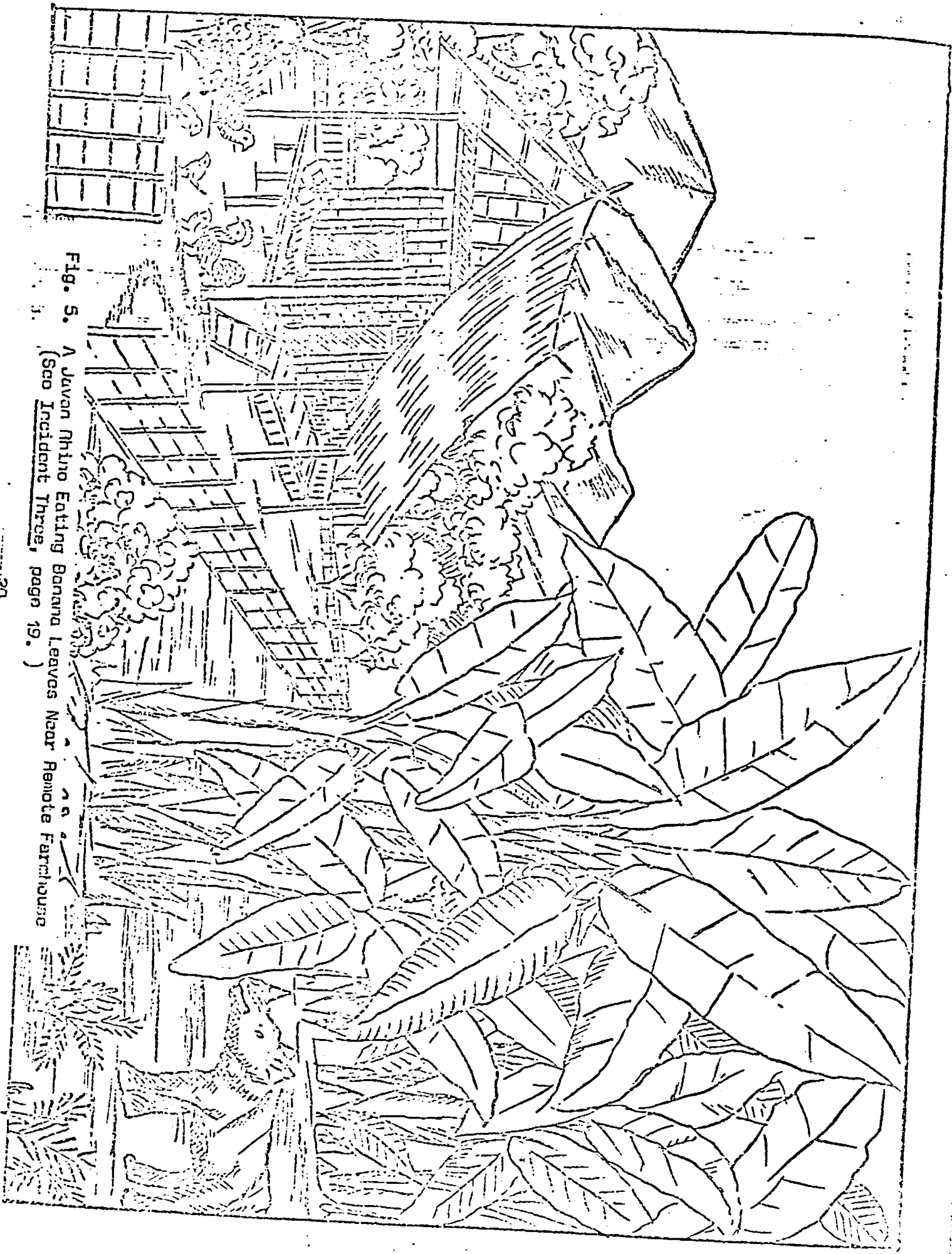


Fig. 5. A Javan Ohino Eating Banana Leaves Near Remote Farmhouse  
(See Incident Three, page 19.)

have abandoned their former villages in the remote areas of south Laos. The Tasseng or chief of a cluster of villages (a tasseng) was usually the person interviewed. The reported events involving refugees took place mostly from 1967 - 1970, after which many of them left their native villages to resettle near Pakse.

There are several significant happenings regarding the refugees and their displacement that might be important. And these events could be closely correlated with continued survival of rhinos in these remote regions.

Rhinos traditionally were not hunted by the Kha La ve and some of the other ethnic minorities living in the mountainous areas. This abstinence from hunting - when the areas were inhabited with many villeges - no doubt prolonged the rhino's survival. Now that there are fewer inhabitants in what is suspected to be rhino habitat, it could be postulated that survival of this species has a better chance than previously. We do know, however, that some of the villagers would shoot rhinos, phi or no phi. But from information submitted by the Kha, hunting rhinos was generally considered taboo.

The PL and North Vietnamese military units stationed in these remote sections are not known to be prolific hunters. At least evidence does not point to their participating evidently in hunting.

If these conclusions are correct, then whatever animal populations that were alive prior to the 1967 - 1970 exit period by native villeges, most probably are in as good a shape today or perhaps even better.



The following events were taken from refugees and other sources and recorded as they were received by Lu and Amphone in early 1975:

Item 1

A Nai Ban originally from the Bolovens said that a villager from the southeast part of the Bolovens had brought a rhino horn to Fakse and left it with him to sell in 1973. The Nai Ban thought the horn was from an animal killed only a few years before. The Nai Ban did not sell the rhino horn and the owner took it back to his village. The village could not be reached by Amphone and Lu because the PL didn't allow visitors.

Item 2

A language teacher from Fakse said a former Lao pupil of his came to see him in late 1974 and wanted to know how much he would pay for a rhino horn. (The language teacher also dealt in wild animals, skins, etc.) The language teacher asked his former pupil to let him see the horn. The pupil told him that the horn was on a live rhino but he would go and shoot the rhino if he got a high enough offer for the horn because he knew where a rhino lived. The language teacher related to the writer that his former pupil appeared to be in a high state of excitement when he told the story of the rhino sighting.

Item 3

Thao Phong, a villager from San Hinlap (Khoueng Sedone) on the Bolovens Plateau told Lu that he had seen rhino tracks, while hunting in 1974 near Phou Ta Seng (Ta Seng Mountain) in Khoueng Sedone. The area where Thao Phong reported seeing the rhino tracks is quite near Thao

Thiane's banana plantation. (See Incident No. Three).

Item 4

Several villagers from Ban Pa Dou (Khoueng Saravane), a village north of Saravane City, told Lu they had seen rhino tracks, as well as the animals in a phi area near their village before the year 1970 when they moved out. According to the villagers, no hunting was allowed in this area because of suspected phi.

Item 5

Amphone met with the Tasseng of three Kha Nge villages in a refugee resettlement area near Pakse. The name of the Tasseng is Ngan. The names of the three villages he represents are: Ban A Don, Ban Lai Do and Ban Pom (Khoueng Saravane) which are northeast of Saravane City on the Xe Kong (Sekong or Kong River).

According to the Tasseng, in 1959, people from the three above villages saw a young, adult, one-horned rhinoceros lying in a nong (pond). The male was reportedly about the size of a buffalo bull.

The villagers eventually killed the animal with spears and ate the meat.

The Tasseng described the animal as having large folds of skin over his upper legs.

The same year, 1959, some of the same villagers saw another male rhino at Houay Pak, a nearby stream. They didn't kill the rhino.

Item 6

Amphone met with Theo Nien, a Kha Ta hoi who was from Ban La Vi Tong

(Khoueng Saravane). The following incident took place in 1961 near Ban Sa Bong (Khoueng Saravane):

A one-horned rhino was found dead in a nong near Ban Sa Bong. Thao Nien said it died from natural causes. The villagers ate the meat. No one from the village had noticed rhino tracks in that area up to the time they found the animal dead.

Item 7

Thao Duom, a Kha La ve, was from a village called Ban Pia Ha (Khoueng Attopeu) east of Attopeu City.

In 1955, according to Thao Duom, a rhino was seen near his village. Since the Kha La ve are afraid of rhino phi, the animal was not killed.

Item 8

A Kha La ve school teacher named Dao Nua reported that he came from a village called Pak Huong Dua which is between Attopeu and Kong My (Khoueng Saravane). An acquaintance, Sen Cuon, supposedly saw a rhino twice (or two different rhinos) at Houay Te (creek) between Kong My and Attopeu in 1967.

Item 9

Che Lang Tong, a Kha La ve Tasseng originally comes from a village called Tong-A-Sa near Kong My. He reported that near Phou Kang Huong (mountain) a rhino was seen in 1967.

Item 10

A Kha La ve named Thao Muon Pak Di, left his village, Ban Pa Am near Attopeu in 1967. He reported that a rhino was seen three years before he left his village near Phou Sang (mountain) and Houay Luong (creek).

## FUTURE RESEARCH AND PROTECTION FOR RHINOS IN LAOS

Laos is now totally controlled by the communist political faction. When this project was being conducted in south Laos, only parts of the area was dominated by the Pathet Lao or Lao Communists. Accessibility to the area would be extremely difficult, if not impossible at this time. The PL are paranoic in considering foreigners and intelligence activities synonymous. They consider anybody not one of them to be potential intel agents.

If an attempt were made to gain entrance into rhino habitat areas, an international organization such as the United Nations or its branch, the FAO, might be used as the conduit. (It is thought that the FAO still operates in Laos at the time of this report). The World Wildlife Fund or the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) might be suspect. Then again they might have some success. In event that sometime in the future some organization expresses interest in gaining more information about the Javan rhinoceros or kouprey numbers in Laos, the foreign element proposed for the project should be kept to a bare minimum. The communists - being unpredictable at times - might, in a rare moment, consider a small contingent of two or three experts from the outside. It is the opinion of this writer that they would never consider an expedition of numerous foreigners to roam around the remote areas of their country, no matter how harmless their objective was.

The area on and near the Bolovens Plateau is fairly abundant in wildlife. This includes elephants, gaur, banting, tigers, leopards, bear and probably some kouprey along the border areas. There are many different species of monkeys, snakes and smaller animal life. Wildlife experts able

to travel around the area would have opportunity to study a variety of wildlife, some considered on the endangered species list.

The writer spent the five months of the project only in the proximity of the Bolovens Plateau in south Laos. Other areas in the northern part of the country might have larger rhino populations with less adverse geographical features to hinder a project.

It would appear from information gathered by the writer that June and July are the best months to see rhinos in south Laos. The reason for this is not known. The rainy season begins slowly in May and reaches an apex in August and September. July is a month of fairly constant rains but many roads and trails over creeks and rivers are still passable. August and September sees accessibility by foot or vehicle to many areas almost nil. October to May brings first the dry, winter season of cool temperatures and then the dry, hot season of the other extreme. Travel to most areas is progressively easier as the winter season changes into the hot, dry season.

TRANSLATION OF TERMINOLOGY

Kha or Lao Thuong	- - -	Minority tribal groups found usually in remote, mountainous areas of Laos
Khoueng	- - -	A province
Muong	- - -	A district
Tesseng	- - -	A group of villages (The administrative head of a Tasseng is also given the same name)
Ban	- - -	A village
Chao Khoueng	- - -	A province chief
Chao Muong	- - -	A district chief
Po Sar.	- - -	A village chief
Nai Ban	- - -	An assistant to the district chief, usually a Lao Thuong
Phou (pronounced 'poon')	- - -	A mountain
Phi	- - -	Bad spirits
Nong	- - -	A pond
Pong	- - -	A mineral lick
Houay	- - -	A creek
Pathet Lao or PL	- - -	Lao communist faction
Khmer Rouge	- - -	Cambodian communist faction