

# Village Formation Process in *Isan* from Oral Tradition

## -a case study of Amphoe *Mahachanachai*, Changwat *Yasothon*-

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## 1. Research Purpose

### 1-1 Research Activity

This research is aiming to follow historical process of village establishment in Amphoe *Mahachanachai*, C. *Yasothon*, by collecting oral tradition of them. In 1994 and 1996, totally 3 weeks in *Yasothon*, we have interviewed with village heads or some notables of around 61 villages in Amphoe *Mahachanachai* on history of their villages.

### 1-2 Research Purpose

Generally speaking, though Northeastern Thai Studies have developed so rapidly, but the history of *Isan* is quite unclear because of short of historical documents. Recently, Archeological studies in *Isan* is developing to make clear the being of *Mon* settlement before the 11th century along the *Mun /Chi* Rivers (*Nitta*, 1989), and Documentary Studies after last decades of the 19th century also so makes progress (*Koizumi*, 1990,) in Japan. But, still now, the age between 13th and the 18th century has not yet had clear image.

In 1980's, we could get a splendid research project on *Isan* Understanding in Area Study on a small village near *Khon Kaen* named *Don Deang* by *Fukui* (*Fukui*, 1993). The *Don Daeng* Study concludes that the social structural base of *Isan* peasant is a life system of agricultural nomads or peasant migration expressed by the term of *Ha Na Di* (abbreviated as **HND**) or seeking god field.

This concept should be quite appropriate to understand the village history of Isan especially in the late 18th century, when Lao villages covered *Isan* for the first time. Our Research aims to make image of relation between HND movement and village formation in the period.

## **2. Geographical Situation**

### **2-1 Topography**

Amphoe *Mahachanachai* situates in the southern region of Changwat Yasothon. The *Chi* Main Stream flows from the North to the South through the center of the Amphoe. Generally the amphoe is so flat that the highest point is 134m in the corner of Northwest and the lowest under 116m along the *Chi*. It has a big basins at the center of *Mahachanachai* along the *Chi* which is divided by the *Chi* into 2 lowlands. We call the West Floodplain and the East Floodplain most of which lower than 121m above sea level. In the space between 2 floodplains along the *Chi*, there situates the wide swampy area. 4 highlands between 120m and 130m surround bottoms of the basin, namely the North-West, Central, North-East and South. To the South of the South Highland there is another big basin belonging to Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, Changwat Sri Saket. Three villages of the Northern part of this basin belonging to Amphoe *Mahachanachai* is called the South Floodplain in this paper.

### **2-2 Transportation Network**

The National Road 2083 from Amphoe Muang *Khan Khuan Kaeo* at No.23 (Ubon -Roi Et) runs through the Center of Amphoe from Northeast to Southwest to Changwat Sri Saket. No. 2043 from Mahachanachai to Roi Et through Amphoe *Phanom Phrai*. in the meaning, Mahachanachai situates at the center of the rectangular surrounded by Ubon, Sri Saket, *Tha Tum-Rattanaaburi* and Roi Et.

### **2-3 Highland**

#### **2-3-1 North-West Highland**

It expands the northwest region of Mahachanachai inclining down from the Northwest to South.

**2-3-1-1** The Route 2043 runs through the ridge of the highland from East to West. Generally, along the road covered Rainy Green Forests or bushes.

**2-3-1-2** They have several depressions at lower terrace along the ridge where villages were founded such as : Ban *Nong Bua* (1), Ban *Nong Ngiu* (2), Ban *Nong Tu* (3), Ban *Kha Sai* (4), Ban *Kut Phan Keo*(5), Ban *Nong Yang* (9), Ban *Khu Song Chan* (10), Ban *Pla Pung* (61), Ban *Nong Yang* (16), and Ban *Na Di* /Ban *Na Udom* (22), Ban *Daeng Noi* (18) and Ban *Kham* or Ban *Makham* (29).

2-3-1-3 Amphoe Muang *Mahachanachai* (25) situates on the eastern edge of the highland along the *Chi*.

2-3-1-4 The Southern edge of the highland forms low precipice of around 4-5m. some villages were built on the edge such as *Ban Hua Dong* (15), *Ban Hua Muang* (21), *Ban Khu Muang* (26) and *Ban Sam Rong* (34).

### 2-3-2 North-East Highland

It develops the highland between 126m and 121m from north to east in the right side of *Chi* which surrounds the East floodplain until the southeast corner of the Amphoe.

2-3-2-1 Forest, bush and dry land covered the most of highland. which forms the boundary between *Mahachanachai* to the South and Amphoe *Kham Khuan Kaeo* to the North.

2-3-2-2 Villages situates at the south slope of highland as follows; *Ban Bak Rua* (17), *Ban Daeng* (19), *Ban Luap* (20), *Ban Rat Muni* (24), *Ban Yang Noi* (25), *Ban Yang Khrua* (28) and *Ban Dong Chong Ang* (45).

### 2-3-3 Central Highland

It is narrow sloped plain from the North to South along the Route 2083 between the North-East and North-West Highlands but lower than them. 4 villages situates there. *Ban Tha Chang* (6), *Ban Dong Yang* (7), *Ban Don Phung* (11) and *Ban Po Daeng*(12).

### 2-3-4 South Highland

It extends from *Ban Khum* (37) along the Route 2083 to the Northwest to *Ban Khi Thum* (57) to the Southeast. The local road from *Ban Phon Wai / Phon La Wai* (41) to Amphoe *Kho Wang* (C. Yasothon ) runs on the ridge of the South Highland. Following villages based on fruit cultivation such as Cashew Nut situate along the road. *Ban Khum* (37), *Ban Phon Wai / Phon La Wai* (41), *Ban Sang Paen* (48), *Ban Song Yang* (51), *Ban Hua Dong* (54) , *Ban Non Khoi* (55) and *Ban Khi Thun* (57).

## 2-4 Floodplain

### 2-4-1 East Floodplain

It is a wide bottom of the *Mahachanachai* basin extending between North-East highland and the *Chi* River. Following villages situate on small mounds like moated villages in low flat. *Ban Chai Chana* (27), *Ban Wan* (30), *Ban Yang Klang* (31), *Ban Bung Kae* (32), *Ban Bra Pha* (33), *Ban Lao Yai* (35), *Ban Nam Thaeng* (36), *Ban Muong* (39), *Ban At* (39-2), *Ban Don* (40), *Ban Tha Samo*(46), *Ban Khok Som Bun* (47), *Ban Bua Khao* and *Ban Muat Kao* (73).

### 2-4-2 West Floodplain

It is a lowland in opposite side of the *Chi* of East Floodplain between the Route 2083 and South

Highland. Following villages situate: Ban *Don That* (38), (42), Ban *Pa Tong*, Ban *Phu Hi* (49), Ban *Puat* (50), Ban *Sam* (52) and Ban *Waen Chai* (56).

### **2-2-3 South Floodplain**

It locates to the South of South Highland Following villages belong to this region.: Ban *Dong Khuang* (58), Ban *Nong Bua* (59), Ban *Bo Bung* (60).

## **3. Pre-Lao Stage**

### **3-1 Moated Village Period**

Ancient moated villages' mounds remain in the lowland in *Mahachanachai*. According to Prof. *Nitta's* study (1989), most of the moated villages along the *Mun* and *Chi* River could be traced back to the 1st or 2nd century B.C. and abandoned in the 10th or 11th century A.D. If *Nitta's* opinion would be true, the first agricultural settlements in *Mahachanachai* should be founded in the lower area on the east bank of the *Chi* River before the 10th century. Moat and mound supply the settlement from where they cultivated surrounding floodplain as ricefield. It would be the best situation for the first agricultural settlers in the area. Moated village circle there is divided into 2 groups, the South Floodplain and the East Floodplain.

#### **3-1-1 South Floodplain**

Ban *Noi* (74) and Ban *Bo Bung*(60) settle at the mound of moated village remains. Those moated villages belong to the circle of Amphoe *Rasi Salai* in Chang Wat *Sri Saket* centered at Ban *Nam Om* and Ban *Nam Om Noi*.

#### **3-1-2 East Floodplain**

In East Floodplain, Ban *Bung Kae* (32), Ban *Bon* (40), Ban *At*, Ban *Muong* (39), Ban *Pho Si* (44), Ban *Lao Yai* (35), Ban *Yang Klang* (31) , Ban *Tha Samo* (46) settle on mounds level. Though most of them lost their surrounding moats except Ban *Bung Kae*, they should be remains of ancient moated villages. The circle was centered at Ban *Bung Kae*<sup>1</sup>.

### **3-2 Khmer Period**

Generally speaking, Angkor's influence penetrated in the area after the 11th century.

#### **3-2-1 East Floodplain**

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<sup>1</sup> Present Ban *Bung Kae* settles at a high mound surrounded by big moat which is remarkable in flat base of East Floodplain. Mound and moat of Ban *Bung Kae* was introduced in Laeng Boran Khadi Ban *Bung Kae*, *Laeng Boran Khadi Prathet Thai*, vol.4 Krom Silpakon 2533(1990) .

The clearest evidence of Angkor in *Mahachanachai* was a Khmer inscription discovered in Ban *Bung Kae* village. It is said that Ban *Bon* (40, *Mu Ban* 8 of Tambon *Bung Kae*) has still remained Khmer stupa. According to an oral tradition of Ban *Wan* (30), there was another Khmer inscription in village but disappeared. Probably, Angkor people immigrated there after the moated village abandonments centered at Ban *Bung Kae*. The relation between the Moated villagers and Khmer new comers is still unknown.

### **3-2-2 North-West Highland**

In the other hand, moated villages were quite undeveloped in the west bank of the *Chi* River, because of the development of the terrace-edge villages. As above-mentioned, there are several big villages are well situated at the edge of terrace of around 126m above sea level such as Ban *Hua Muang* (21), Ban *Khu Muang* (26), Ban *Hua Dong* (15) and Ban *Sam Rong* (34). Topographical observation suggests there were several agricultural complex of village settlements on terrace and ricefield in the floodplain under them as same as moated village in East Floodplain. A linga style *Sima* stones were discovered in the center of *Hua Muang* village. Another *Sima* stone was erected in the southern outskirts of Ban *Sam Rong*. According to the villager's information, the third stone was found between Ban *Hua Muang* and Ban *Sam Rong*. Those three stones were built on the line from Northeast to Southwest correctly.

### **3-2-5 West Floodplain**

According to a informant in Ban *Non That*(38), there is a small khmer type *Sima* stone named *Sima Nan* in the *Nong Phai*.

It can be supposed that there were some influence of Khmer civilization in the Terrace Edge and Moated villages in the floodplain.

## **4. Before Lao immigration**

According to the oral tradition, in the end of 18th century, Lao migration movement started. We have no historical information on the period between the end of Khmer remains and the early settlement of Lao. But, there are several oral traditions on being of non-Thai and Thai residents before their immigration.

### **4-1 Khmer as aborigines**

It is very difficult to consider whether there remained Khmer settlement up to the Lao immigration time because it is impossible to differentiate between *Suai* and Khmer among oral traditions. Some villages still have oral traditions on Non *Suai*- Khmer aborigines as follows.

#### **4-1-1 East Floodplain**

According to informants of following villages, they have preserved oral tradition on Khmer Aborigines.

4-1-1-1 Ban *Wan* (30): the village was called 'land of *Yom*' or land of Khmer.

4-1-1-2 Ban *Chaichana* (27): the old name of the village was Ban '*Kayom*' meaning victory of *Yom* (Khmer).

4-1-1-3 Ban *Bung Kae* (32): A west bridge of the moated village to Ban *Chaichana* was named *Kua Kayom*.

4-1-1-4 Ban *Bung Kue* (32): Before Lao immigration, Khmer people lived in the village.

#### 4-2. *Suai*: Khmer as late comers

In the end of 18th century, at the same time as Lao first migration wave starting, Several *Suai*<sup>2</sup> villages were also established there. . But their origin and history are still unknown. The most important information on *Suai* immigration was collected from the Village Chief of Ban *Sam Rong* who is told to be a descendant of *Suai*. According to him, there are two types of villages in *Mahachanachai*, namely Lao origin villages and *Suai* origin villages the latter of which were listed as follows: *Ban Sang Paen* (48.2), *Ban Bo Bung* (60), *Ban Sam* (52), *Ban Phu Hi* (49), *Ban Don Klo* (*Mu Ban of B.Phu Hi*), *Ban Hua Don* (54), and *Ban Na Di, Na Udom* (22).

##### 4-2-1 South Floodplain

4-2-1-1 Ban *Bo Bung* (60) is a typical moated village still preserving a big moat under the south edge of the highland of Tambon *Song Yang* and in the South border of *Mahachanachai*. The field level is lower than 120m above sea level. According to information of the village, the village establisher coming from unknown village settled here 300 years ago.

4-2--1-2 Ban *Don Khwan*(58) is situated on small higher place, 122m above sea level around expanded flood plain of the Chi. The establisher came there from unknown village 300 years ago.

Though the date of founding of those 2 villages could not be believed, but they should belong to the oldest village group in *Mahachanachai* because they have not remembered their mother village names and as above-mentioned this region is a northern part of *Rasi Salai* basin in the topographical concept where the deforestation date was older than that of *Mahachanachai* basin.

##### 4-2-2 South Highland, *Song Yang* group

4-2-2-1 Ban *Sang Paen* (48) was established by 10 families from Ban *Yang Chum Noi* , A. *Yang Chum Noi*, C. *Sri Saket* 200 years ago.

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<sup>2</sup> The *Suai* is a tribe name of Minorities in South Isan speaking a dialect of Khmer language.

**4-2-2-2** Ban *Sam* (52) is built in the same region as 2-2-1, 1km to the west of Ban *Song Yang*. 10 families from *C.Sri Saket* moved there through Ban *Hua Don* (54), A. *Mahachanachai* in 1782. Those 2 villages would be founded by the second *Suai* immigration movement from *Sri Saket* in the late 18th century.

**4-2-2-3** Ban *Hua Don* (54) was founded by villagers of Amphoe *Khu Khan*, *C.Sri Saket* where is a amphoe near Cambodian border 160 years ago or 3-4 generation before. Though we can not believe 160 years ago, but probably it was built by the third immigration movement from Cambodian border in the 19th century.

#### **4-2-3 West Floodplain**

**4-2-3-1** Ban *Phu Hi* (49) is situated along the right bank of the Chi, 120-123m above sea level. 10 families from Ban *Kut Kheng* and Ban *Pla Kha*, *C. Sri Saket* founded the village before 200 years.

Ban *Phu Hi* is a core village for migration in the late 18th century in the area as mentioning later. Probably the second *Suai* immigration from *Sri Saket* (probably from Amphoe *Rasi Salai*) arrived Ban *Phu Hi*.

#### **4-2-4 North Highland**

**4-2-4-1** Ban *Sam Rong* (34) is situated at 3km to southwest of Ban *Hua Muang* (21). The founder moved from Amphoe *Rasi Salai* 220 years ago. Though they are regarded as Lao, probably, they would belong to a *Suai Sri Saket* group. The ancestor of present village chief immigrated there from *Rasi Salai* in 1914 (BE 2457). The movement of *Suai* from *Rasi Salai* to *Mahachanachai* continued even in the early 20th century.

**4-2-4-2** Ban *Kham* (29) or Ban *Makham* is the lowest village in the highland group. It was told that 200 years before, 3-4 families of *Suai* group from *Sri Saket* moved to Ban *Daeng* (19), then to Ban *Hua Muang* (21), then to Ban *Nong Sai* (24) and then Ban *Kham*. because of epidemic problem. The Second *Suai* Immigration group from *Rasi Salai* also arrived at those 2 villages 200 years ago.

**4-2-4-3** Ban *Na Di* and *Na Udom* (22) are situated at 1km to the west of Ban *Hua Muang* (21) and Ban *Khu Muang*(18) on the same terrace but their ricefield is higher than those two villages around 126-127m above sea level o they have so difficult draught problem such as 1977. The first establisher of Ban *Na Di* (also Ban *Na Udom*) came from Ban *Suan Kruai*, Muang *Yai Chang* wat *Sri Saket* before 150 years because of short of land.

#### **4-2-5 summery**

**4-2-5-1** All of villages regarded as *Suai* origin were established by the immigrants from *C. Sri*

*Saket*. According to the legends, the first wave of the *Suai* of *Sri Saket* immigrated into the South floodplain from amphoe *Rasi Salai* 200-300 years before.

4-2-5-2 The second group of *Suai* from Amphoe *Yang Chum Noi*, Amphoe *Khun Han* and Muang *Yai C*. *Sri Saket* moved to the South Highland in the late 18th century. *Yang Chum Noi* situates in the center of the Floodplain between the *Mun* and the *Chi* to the north of *Sri Saket* city, 15km far from Amphoe *Khuang Nai* from where Lao migration started in the same period. The motive of those *Suai* immigration should be same as Lao immigration from *Ubon* at that time. According to villagers of Ban *Nong Tu* (3) in the North-West Highland, 30 families of typical moated village area of Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, C. *Sri Saket* moved there to flee from *Lao Invasion* in 1772. Probably the case of Ban *Phu Hi* (49) belongs to this group. At the same time, another *Suai* group wandered in the Highland and settled in Ban *Kham* (29).

This story suggests that Lao migration movement in 1770's to *Sri Saket* region pushed some *Suai* people there to move to Amphoe *Mahachanachai*.

4-2-5-4 The third group of *Suai* immigrated to North Highland behind terrace edge before 100 years from Ban *Suan Kruai* where situates at 17km to the Southeast of *Changwat Sri Saket*. Those immigration continued in the early 20th century. But those *Suai* immigration movements were concentrated in the west bank of the *Chi*.

#### **4-3 Kula: Shan Trader settlements**

The *Kula* was well known name in the area as merchant group from Burma in the 19th century. A swampy belt between the *Mun* and *Chi* is still called *Thung Kula Rong Hai* or the Field of the Weeping *Kula* (Koizumi, 1990, 132). Dr. Koizumi mentioned the *Kula/Tongsu* means people from Burma coming to Siam. In the early 19th century their activity was concentrated in the Northern regions in Siam such as *Chieng Mai*, *Tak* and etc. They came to South Isan in the middle of 19th century to buy cattle. Their activity was concentrated in the *Swannaphum*, *Rattanaburi*, *Ubon* and *Sri Saket* (Koizumi, 1990, 132-136). *Mahachanachai* situates at the center of the diamond shape. Some villages in *Mahachanachai* have preserved some legends on *Kula* as the first settlers.

##### **4-3-1 East Floodplain**

4-3-1-1 Ban *Wan* (30): the *Kula* people of Ban *Bung Kae* was called *Tao Kula* (chief of *Kula*) who settled there with Camels which Present Village Chief of Ban *Wan* (born in 1938) saw in the age of 5 years old (namely in 1943?). He died when the village chief was 8 years old (namely in 1946?).

4-3-1-2 Ban *Chai Chana*(27): 25 % of the village population is descendants of the *Kula* who has a term of " *Ta* " in his family name, for example *Ta Nu Ra* of the village chief's name. Ban *Yan*



*Noi*(25): 2 families of the *Kula* still live in the village who came from Ban *Bung Kae*<sup>3</sup>.

4-3-1-3 Ban *Tha Samo* (46): There is a small stupa called *Phi Phi Ta* built by the *Kula* who moved to *Bung Kae* from here. But there have lived 20 families of the *Kula* in Ban *Tha Samo* (46) still now

4-3-1-4 Ban *Muat Kao*(73) was built by *Khon Tai Yai* (Shan people) or *Kula*<sup>4</sup> 500 years ago, whose descendant named Sai Bun Mi family have lived there.

#### 4-3-2 West Floodplain

4-3-2-1 Ban *Muat* (42): Long ago, 4-5 families of *Kula* settled here from North to sell *Khong* (drum) and came back to *Chieng Tung* again. 200 years before 15 families of Lao from *Vieng Chan* settled in the former *kula* village.

4-3-2-2 Ban *Sam* (52): Long ago, the *Kula* people came the area to sell something and settled in Ban *Sam* with 300 households(?). But they moved to the other place after 2-3 years. After *the Kula* moved away, Lao People came here in 2325(A.D.1782).

4-3-3 summery

4-3-3-1 The *Kula* people came to *Mahachanachai* in the middle of 18th century and established some villages in 2 regions. The first is *Bung Kae* region such as Ban *Bung kae*(32), Ban *Chai Chana*(27), and Ban *Wan*(30) and expanding to Ban *Muat Khao* (73). Among them Ban *Bung Kae*(32) should be the center of the *Kula* settler as a symbol mound of the area.

4-3-6-2 The second is Ban *Tha Samo* region including Ban *Tha Samo* (46), Ban *Muat* (42) and then expanding to Ban *Sam* (52). Probably, the first settlement of *Kula* among them is Ban *Tha Samo*, a typical moated village along the right bank of the *Chi* where the *Kula* people landed around 200 years before according to *Tha Samo* legend. After then they expanded across the River to the Left Bank to establish Ban *Muat* and Ban *Sam*. Most of them came back to *Chieng Tung* in *Shan States*, but some stayed behind and lived with Lao New Comers.

4-3-6-3 Those *Kula* activities in the late 18th century was so early because most documents on *Kula* in *Isan* appeared after the reign of Rama IV (*Koizumi*, 1990, 132) as a name of *Tongso*. But most of villages' oral tradition mentions the *Kula* had lived in their villages before 200 years,

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<sup>3</sup> Ban *Chama Chai* is a branch village of Ban *Bung Kae* separated in 1940

<sup>4</sup>

Ethnic group of *Kula* is not identified but according to *Mahachanachai* information, they regarded *Kula* as *Khon Tai Yai* whose main base is *Chieng Tun*, It means that *Kula* in *Mahachanachai* should be Shan People.

especially in the case of *Ban Sam* which has the Lao immigration date of 1782. We should reconsider the starting date of the *Kula* activities in Isan much earlier.

4-3-6-4 It is interesting that *Od Kula* village could be identified the early settlement of Lao People in the East Floodplain. It suggests a relation between the *Kula* activity and the Lao Immigration in the late 18th century. Probably an economic incitement carried out by the *Kula* in the area caused Lao immigration.

## **5 Lao Immigration to *Mahachanachai* in the 18th century**

### **5-1 Lao as aborigine**

5-1-1 According to *Ban Pla Pung*, when their ancestor came there, there were Lao residents already called *Pok Lao* who fled away to somewhere. But meaning of *Pok Lao* is unknown<sup>5</sup>.

### **5-2 The Oldest Lao Settlements**

#### **5-2-1 West Floodplain**

5-2-1-1 *Ban Woen Chai* (56) has preserved the oldest story of their immigration that 5 to 6 families called *Kumer* (Cambodia), *Yo* (Vietnam) and *Kha* (Mountainous Lao) who came from Lao 500 years ago. The immigration date is unbelievable because 500 years before is an exceptional number if comparing with other immigration date. The story coming from Cambodia, Vietnam and Lao would be also influenced under modern education of Thai History.

But the geographical situation of *Woen Chai* looks very well for early settlement. Because firstly it situates at the joint point between South Highland and the *Chi* meaning the first approaching point from Sri Saket. They do not remember their mother village's name that is a remarkable character of the old villages there. *Woen Chai* should be the first bridgehead of Lao Immigration in *Mahachanachai* West Floodplain established in or before the 18th century.

#### **5-2-2 South Highland**

5-2-2-1 A neighbor village named *Ban Dong Khwan* (58) is stated to be found 300 years ago. But they do not remember names of their mother villages. Then, 200 years ago, the second migration

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According to an informant in *Ban Muat*, their ancestor came from *Vieng Chan* 200 years ago. *Pck* means 'the first person' in *Vieng Chan* dialect. *Pok Lao* could be identified to *Vieng Chan* Lao who had arrived there before *Ubon Lao* coming. According to Akiko Iijima, *Chao Muang* of *Yasothon* originated at *Vieng Chan* in passing. *Ban Muat Kao* villagers states that 150 years before 30 family of *Vieng Chan* settled there through *Mukdahan*. It is possible that *Vieng Chan* people had settled in *Mahachanachai* predated the 18th century..

started from there to Ban *Phon Chan* in the Central Highland. Ban *Dong Kwan* could be the oldest village in the area as an important pass between *Rasi Salai* and West floodplain in *Mahachanachai*.<sup>6</sup>

### 5-2-3 East Floodplain

5-2-3-1 Except for the legend on *Kula* of Ban *Muat Kao* as mentioned in 4-3-1-4, Ban *Muong* (39) has the oldest origin in the area. It is stated to be established 500 years ago by 3 groups of Ban *Sam Kha Prasio* C. Ubon of which amphoe is unknown among the villagers.

5-2-3-2. Ban *Muat Kao* (73) is also stated to be built 500 years ago, but no data about mother village.

5-2-3-3 Ban *Yang Khrua*(28)'s ancestor came from Ban *Daeng Moea, Weng* and *Song Yang* , Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C.Ubon in 1562 (BE2105) by *Thao Phin Phirat, Luong Wiset, Thao Luong Rut* based on the Temple document. A village temple called *Wat Yang Khrua* was established in BE 2117 (1574) by three monks named *Ya Khru Thua, Ya San* and *Ya Khru Bumpha*. It was the oldest date on Lao immigration to Amphoe *Mahachanachai*. However, it is also unbelievable as same as the case of Ban *Woen Chai* because the date is so exceptional among *Khuang Nai* migrant group to *Mahachanachai* as mentioning later. We need to reconsider the real date of village founding. But the village situates at the foot of West Highland in the front of Central Floodplain near *Bung Kae*. The geographical pattern suggests that it should be settled so earlier.

5-2-3-4 As above-mentioned, the first settler of the *Bung Kae* (32) was Moated villagers, the second, Khmer people, the third, *Kula* people. It was stated that the first Lao immigrant came here around 200-300 years before and 10 generations passed until now. They do not have any memory on their mother villages. The name of *Bung kae* appears in several villages' oral traditions, for example, the founder of Ban *Don Rua*(70) came there through *Bung Kae* 200 years before. Furthermore, Ban *Dong Chong An* (45) , Ban *Wan* (30) , Ban *Bra Pha*(33) and Ban *Chai Chana* (27) were branch villages of Ban *Bun Kae*. after the 19th century.

Probably *Bung Kae* was regarded as the migration center from *Khuang Nai* region to the East Floodplain in *Mahachanachai* predated the late 18th century.

### 5-2-4 West Floodplain

5-2-4-1 Ban *Muat* (42) is situated at the center of the West Floodplain along the left bank of *Chi*. The story of the village is so strange comparing with other villages. As above mentioned, the first

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Another neighbor village of Ban *Don Khrua* named Ban *Khi Thun* (57) does not have any memory on village founding

settlers were the *Kula*. After the *Kula* moved away, 200 years before, 25 families of Lao came there from *Vieng Chan* and settled former *Kula* village site. It is only one information on the Lao immigration from Northwest through the *Chi*.

However, The founder of *Ban Pa Tong* (43), a neighbor village of *Ban Muat*, was built by a peasant of *Ban Muat* named *Nai Son Kem Kaeo* who led 11 families of *Ban Muat* 200 years before. Furthermore, *Ban Non That* (38) situated at 3km to the north of *Ban Muat* was founded by 4 family of *Ban Muat* 200 years before. *Ban Muat* should be the first Lao settlement in the East Floodplain predated the late 18th century.

5-2-5 summery

Before the late 18th century, Lao People had built some villages in 3 areas. The first was South Highland, the second, East Floodplain, the third West Floodplain. There were no Lao villages in Northern area but the Pok Lao.

### 5-3 Lao Villages founded in the Late 18th century

Most of villages in *Mahachanachai* is stated to be build 200 years before. Some villages has preserved so detailed date in the period. The late 18th century would be so important meaning in immigration history of Lao.

#### 5-3-1 North-East Highland

5-3-1-1 The oldest detai date of Lao village founding in the 18th century in *Mahachanachai* is 1765 (BE 2308) of *Ban Luap* (20). It states that 6 families came here from *Ban Pa Kha*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon and *Ban Nong Bon* Amphoe *Don Moat Daeng*, C. Ubon by *Kwien* (Ox-cart) to establish new village in the year.

5-3-1-2 The founder of *Ban Bak Rua* (17) came from *Ban That Noy*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon in 1767.

5-3-1-3 *Ban Nong Sai* or *Rat Muni* (24) was founded before 200 years by 2 groups. The first group of 2 families came from *Ban Saeng*, Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, C. Sri Saket, The second group came from *Ban Chi Thuon*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon.

5-3-1-4 *Ban Don Rua* (70) was founded before 200 years by 3 groups. The first group of 7 families came from *Ban Chi Thuan*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon through *Bung Kae*. The second group of 1 family led by *Intharathirat* came from *Thung Yai*, same amphoe. The third group of 1 family came from *Thung Nong Mani*, same amphoe.

5-3-1-5 summery

The villages in North-West highland were formed in the period by *Khuang Nai* villagers' immigration.

### 5-3-2 Central Highland

5-3-2-1 *Ban Po Daeng* (12) was built by immigrants of 5 villages namely *Ban Phon Paeng*, *Ban Na Khao*, *Ban Nong Hua Na*, *Ban Dong Kean Yai* in Amphoe *Kham Khuan Kaeo*, C. Yasothon and *Ban Lao Yai* (35), 200 years ago. Except *Ban Lao Yai*, most of founders came from Amphoe *Kham Kuan Kaeo*.

5-2-2-2 *Ban Dong Phung* (11) was founded by 6 families of *Ban Dong Khen Noi* in Amphoe *Kham Khuan Kaeo* and *Ban Song Puai* in same amphoe 200 years ago. Those 2 villages situate along route 2083 connecting Amphoe *Kham Khuan Kaeo* on the route 23 and Chang Wat Sri Saket.

5-2-2-3 *Ban Dong Yang* (7) also situated at the east side of the route. The founder came from *Ban Sang Tho*, Amphoe *Muong Sam Sip*, C. Ubon where situates at 20 km to the east of Amphoe *Kham Khuan Kaeo*. probably belongs to the same group as 5-2-2-2.

5-2-2-4 *Ban Tha Chang* (6) was founded before 200 years by villagers of *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon.

5-2-2-5 *Ban Phon Chan* (72) was built by Villagers of *Ban Dong Khwan* (58) in the South highland 200 years ago.

5-2-2-5 summery

The above suggests most of villages in the Central Highland coming from *Kham Khuan Kaeo* 200 years ago except the case of *Ban Tha Chang* and *Ban Phon Chon*.

### 5-2-3 North-West Highland

5-2-3-1 *Ban Nong Tu* (3) situates at a foot of Northwest Highland of 131m above sea level. The founder of the village came from *Ban Muang Khaen*, *Ban Nam Om Yai*, *Ban Nam Om Noi* and *Ban Du*, Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, C. Sri Saket in 1772 because of *Lao Invasion*. This is the oldest date of immigration from *Rasi Salai* to Northeast Highland.

5-2-3-2 *Ban Hua Dong* (15) is situated at 4km to northwest of *Ban Hua Muang* (21), based on the 131m above sea level also suffering big draught problem. Their ancestors moved there around 100 years before from 2 villages, *Ban Nam Om*, Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, C. Sri Saket and *Ban Pa Kha Na Khan*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon. 10 family from *Sri Saket* among them were regarded as *Suai* group by neighbors.

5-2-3-3 The case of *Ban Sam Rong* (34)<sup>7</sup> is a little complicated. 220 years ago, 10 families moved from Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon to *Ban Man Hang*, Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, C. Sri Saket

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<sup>7</sup> The Case of *Ban Sam Rong* might be an example of *Suai Sri Saket* Group as 4-2-

but because of short of land, 7 families among them moved to Ban *Sam Rong*. Their movement from *Rasi Salai* to Ban *Sam Rong* started in the same time of the case of Ban *Nong Tu*. If they were the Suai, they should flee from Lao Invasion in *Rasi Salai*. Otherwise if they were Lao, they invade *Rasi Salai* from *Khuang Nai* then followed the Suai Refugees to Northwest Highland in *Mahachanachai*.

**5-2-3-4** Ban *Khu Song Chan* (10) was founded before 210 years by People of Ban *Tha Hai*, Ban *But*, and Ban *Thong*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai C.Ubon* because of a big flood in *Ubon* Area. The first settler from Ban *But* was a ancestor of 7 generation of present Village Chief. It is believable that the migration occurred before around 200 years.

**5-2-3-5** Ban *Khu Muang* (26) was established before 200 years by 6-7 families from some villages in *C.Ubon*.

**5-2-3-6** Ban *Phra Sao* (8) is exceptional case in *Mahachanachai* immigration history. Though most of villages' founders there came from Sri Saket and Ubon, its founder came from Roi Et. It is stated that 200-300 years before or 6 generations before, 3 families ( 10, 18 and 7 person, totally 35 people including a monk ) moved therefrom Ban *Ra Ngae*, Amphoe *Suwannaphum*, C. Roi Et on foot. Even now, they have a close contact with some villages in C. Roi Et. For example, the present village chief was born in Amphoe *Phanom Phrai* in 1953 and married with a woman of the village in 1972 and settled there. Probably *Khuang Nai*, *Rasi Salai* migration circle has a certain border between Ban *Phra Sao* (8) and Ban *Pla Pung* (61).

**5-2-3-7** Ban *Pla Pung* (61) is also exceptional which was built by 4 families from Ban *Nong Kheng*, Amphoe *Udomphon*, C. Sri Saket 200 years ago.

#### **5-2-3-8 summery**

200 years before, 3 groups of *Lao-Suai* moved to the North-West highland through 3 routes. Firstly, *Rasi Salai* group occupied villages along route 2043 and Southern Terrace Edge. Secondly, *Khuang Nai* group arrived at *Khu Son Chan*. Thirdly, *Phanom Phrai* group came to Ban *Phra Sao*.

#### **5-2-5 East Floodplain**

**5-2-5-1** Ban *Tha Samo*(46) was built by 5 families from Ban *That*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C.Ubon 200 years ago or 10 generations before.

**5-2-5-2** 200 years before. *So Pha Pharansi*, a villager of *Khuang Nai* built Ban *At* (39.2) .

**5-2-5-3** 180 years before Ban *Lao Yai* was founded by 4-5 families from Ban *That Noi*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai* . *Lao Yai* was a mother village of Ban *Nong Yan* (9) 100 years ago.

**5-2-5-4** Villagers of Amphoe *Khuang Nai* occupied all of villages in East Floodplain except *Bung*

*Kae* as stated in group 180-200 years ago.

### **5-3-1 West Floodplain Expansion of Core Villages**

**5-3-1-1** Ban *Pa Tong* (43) was founded by 11 families led by *Nai Son Kem Kaeo* of Ban *Muat* 200 years ago as mentioned in 5-1-4.

**5-3-1-2** Ban *Nong That* (38) was built by 5 persons led by *Bun Om* from 2 villages namely Ban *Muat* (42) and Ban *Pa Tong* (43) far 1km from there 200 years ago<sup>8</sup>.

**5-3-1-3** As mentioned in 4-3-2, Ban *Muat* should be the oldest core village in the area. In this period, Lao immigration in the West Floodplain was not outcomer 's work but 'expansion of the core village' or 'inner migration'.

### **5-2-4 South Highland**

**5-2-4-1** Ban *Song Yang* (48) was established in 1770 (BE2313) by 3 families led by *Pho Kaiya Rat Mi Bun*. They moved there from *Ban Khaya*, Amphoe *Phi Bun Mang Sang Han*, C. Ubon. where situates at 15km to the east from Ubon city along the national highway no.217 to *Champasak* in Laos. It was the oldest date of Lao immigration movement to South Highland and also it shows the forefront of *Champasak-Ubon* Lao group had arrived at the territory of *Rasi Salai* group in the late 18th century.

**5-2-4-2** Ban *Khum* (37) was built by 50 families moving from 3 villages namely Ban *Tia*, Ban *Tum* in Amphoe *Kho Wang*, C. Yasothon and a Ban whose name was forgotten in Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon 200 years ago. Amphoe *Kho Wang* is neighboring Amphoe *Mahachanachai* to the South and Amphoe *Rasi Salai* to the west. . Probably this case belongs to the movement from *Rasi Salai* to the South Floodplain.

**5-2-4-3** Ban *Non Khoi* (55) was built by 10 families from Ban *Yang Chum Noi*, Amphoe *Yang Chum Noi*, C. Sris Saket 200 years ago.

**5-2-4-4** Except Ban *Song Yang*, most of villages in the South Highland was immigrated by the people from Sri Saket group including *Kho Wang* group in Ubon.

### **5-3 summery**

In all the region in *Mahachanachai*, most of villages are stated to be established in the late 18th century. some of them preserved more detail dates such as 1765 ( Ban *Luap*), 1770 ( *Song Yang*), 1772 (*Nong Tu*). The late 18th century should be regarded as the most unstable period in Isan by

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<sup>8</sup> Bun Som is stated an ancestor of 4 generation before. It is too short if he moved 200 years ago. According to Ban *Pa Tong*, Bun Som family moved to Ban *Kho*, Amphoe *Non Sang*, C.Udon in BE 2498 (1955)

any reason.

## 6. The Second Migration of Lao

After the 18th century, another big immigration movement occurred in Mahachanachai in the 19th century.

### 6-1 East Floodplain

The immigration movement in the 19th century is mostly concentrated in the East Floodplain

6-1-1 Vieng Chan people came to Ban *Muat Kao* (73) 150 years ago. It is probable that this immigration had some relation with *Anu War*, but this case is so exceptional in *Mahachanachai*.

6-1-2 5-6 families of Ban *Bung Kae* (32) immigrated to Ban *Wan* (30) 100 years ago. At the same time another group from Ban *Phong Sin*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon came there.

6-1-3 People of Ban *Muong* (39) and people from Amphoe *Khuang Nai* built Ban *Pho Si* (44) 100 years ago.

6-1-4 Ban *Nam Thaeng* (36) was built by people from Ban *Khit Hong*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon in 1897.

#### 6-1-5 summary

Except for a case of Vieng Chan migration, 3 villages in the East Floodplain were established by *Khuang Nai* group. *Bung Kae* expansion was so remarkable in the period as 6-2-3.

### 6-2 North- East Highland

6-2-1 Ban *Dong Chong Ang* (45) was built by 3 families of Ban *Bung Kae* (32) 150 years ago

6-2-2 Ban *Yan Noi* (25) was built by people from Ban *Khuon Koto*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon in 1827. In the next year (1828), people of Ban *That Noi*, C. Ubon immigrated there.

6-2-3 Ban *Daeng* (19) was built by immigrants from 3 villages of Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, such as *Na Kaeo*, *Thai* and *Chit Uon* in 1862.

6-2-4 Ban *Daeng Noi* (18) was built by immigrants from 2 villages of Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, C. Sri Saket and Ban *Nong Fa*, Amphoe *Phanom Phrai*, C. Roi Et, 100 years ago.

#### 6-2-5 summary

After the late half of 19th century, *Khuang Nai* people immigrated to the East Highland so actively as same as the East Floodplain.

### 6-3 Central Highland

6-3-1 100 years ago, 60 families of Ban *Khuang Nai* people immigrated to Ban *Tha Chang* (6) founded by same villagers 200 years ago. This is the last village establishment in the Central Highland.



#### **6-4 North-West Highland**

The 19th century in the North-West Highland is so unstable. There were 2 big immigration waves , in the middle and end of the 19 century.

##### **6-4-1 Immigration in the middle of 19th century**

**6-4-1-1** In 1819, Ban *Non Yang* (9) was founded by 10 family from 2 villages of Sri Saket , namely Ban *Nam Thung*, *Non Klang* and 30 families from 2 villages of Ubon, namely Ban *Thung* and *But*.

**6-4-1-2** 20 families of Ban *Suwan Kruai*, C. Sri Saket which situates at 20 km to the Southeast from Sri Saket city immigrated to Ban *Na Di* (22) 150 years before or 5 generations before.

**6-4-1-3** People of Ban *Dong Bang* (still unknown), Amphoe *Mahachanachai*, immigrated to Ban *Kham* (29) 150 years ago.

##### **6-4-2 Immigration in the late 19th century**

**6-4-2-1** 10 families of Ban *Nong Khoi*, Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, C. Sri Saket founded Ban *Nong Ngiu* (2) 100 years ago or 3 generations before.

**6-4-2-2** 10 families of Ban *Pa Kha Na Kha* , Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon and also 10 families of Ban *Nam Om*, Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, C. Sri Saket, immigrated to Ban *Hua Dong* (15) 100 years ago or 4 generations before.

**6-4-2-3** 7 families of Ban *Lao Yai* (35) and *Hua Muang* (21) immigrated to Ban *Nong Yang* (16) 100 years ago or 13 generations before.

**6-4-2-4** 8 families from Ban *Phon Thong* and Ban *But*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon immigrated to *Hua Muang* (21) 100 years ago.

**6-4-2-5** 3-4 families from Ban *Nong Fa* , Amphoe *Phanom Phrai*, C. Ubon immigrated to Ban *Daeng Noi* (18) 100 years ago.

**6-4-2 Summery** Generally speaking, The immigration movement in the North-West highland in the 19th century, its population size was bigger than previous centuries. 10- 20 or sometimes 30 families moved at the same time and The immigration from *Khuang Nai* group continued to develop up to the late 19th century.

#### **6-5 West Floodplain**

The movement of the West Floodplain in the 19th century was so weak. Only one village was established as follows.

**6-5-1** Ban *Puai* (50) was founded by 11 families of Ban *Hua Dong* (15), Amphoe *Mahachanachai* in 1895.

#### **6-6 South Highland**

The immigration movement in the South Highland from Sri Saket ( including *Kho Wang* group)

in the 19th century was so active.

6-6-1 Ban *Hua Dong* (54) was built by people from Ban Amphoe *Khu Khan*, C. Sri Saket 160 years ago or 4 generations before.

6-6-2 Ban *Sam Paen* (48) was built by 13-4 families from 3 villages in C. Sri Saket. namely Ban *Saeng* and *Muang Khaen*, Amphoe *Rasi Salai*, Ban *Na Kham* , Amphoe *Uthomphon* 150 years ago.

6-6-3 Ban *Phon Wai* or *Phon La Wai* (41) as a important transportation terminal of route 2083, was founded by 16 families from 3 villages of Amphoe *Kho Wang*, C. Yasothon, namely Ban *Tak Daet*, Ban *Nong Po* and Ban *Dong Bang* in 1866.

#### 6-7 summery

In 19th century, village expansion in *Mahachanachai* was centered at (1) South Part of East Floodplain, (2) North-East Highland (3) West Highland and (4) South Highland. It means the village expansion or Ha Na Di in *Mahachanachai* lowland was finished and they should establish new villages in agricultural frontier such as low floodplain and dry highland.

## 7. Lao Immigration in the early 20th Century

There are several villages established in the early 20th century.

### 7-1 East Highland

7-1-1 Ban *Khok Sat* was separated from 2 villages namely Ban *Bak Rua* (17) and Ban *Dong Rua* (70) in 1938.

### 7-2 East Floodplain

7-2-1 Ban *Chaichana* (27) and Ban *Bhra Pha*(33) was separated from Ban *Bung Kae* in 1940 because the settlement of Ban *Bung Kae* was so crowded in the period.

7-2-2 Ban *Khok Som Bun*(47) was separated from Ban *Tha Samo*(46) in 1941.

7-2-3 Ban *Bung Kae* and Ban *Tha Samo* are two typical moated villages in the East Floodplain so their settlement area was so limited that they should expand to outskirts of their mounds.

7-2-4 1 group from Ban *That Noi*, Amphoe *Khuang Nai*, C. Ubon settled in Ban *Muong* 4 years before. It is the last case of new settlement from outside in East Floodplain.

### 7-3 North-West Highland

7-3-1 Ban *Kha Sai* (4) was separated from Ban *Phra Sao*(8) in the North-West Highland 70 years before.

7-3-2 2-3 families from *Khuang Nai* settled at Ban *Kut Han Kheo*(5) 70 years before.

7-3-3 1 family from *Rasi Salai* came to Ban *Sam Rong*(34) in 1914 or 3 generations before.

7-3-4 *Ban Kha Sai* situates at 2 km to the west from *Ban Phra Sao*, at the borderline between *Mahachanachai* and *Phanom Phrai*, top of the North- West highland surrounded by Forests. *Ban Kut Han Kheo* is also at the swampy spot on the North border of *Mahachanachai*. Establishment of *Ban Kha Sai* means the final frontier line was finished in the period.

## 8. Conclusion

As above-mentioned, we have a temporary conclusion of *Mahachanachai* Village formation History as follows;

**8-1 Aborigine Stage:** Before Lao immigration, there were some aborigine Khmer settlements in the East Floodplain and the *Pok Lao* people in the North-West Highland. But after the late 18th century, they disappeared under the pressure of *Lao* and *Suai* immigration..

**8-2 Kula Stage:** Just before Lao immigration time, the *Kula* people started to settle in the East Floodplain to expand their trade activity and then some of them came back to Shan area in the end of 19th century but others remains in *Lao* villages. Their activity would cause the *Lao* and *Suai* to immigrate to *Mahachanachai*.

**8-3 Old Lao Settlement:** Probably before the 18th century, some *Lao* villages had already formed in the East floodplain.

The East Floodplain especially *Ban Bung Kae* was the first cleared area in *Mahachanachai*.

**8-4 Suai Immigration:** In the late 18th century, the *Suai* group in *Rasi Salai* basin (including 3 villages in the South Floodplain in *Mahachanachai*) occurred a big migration movement probably immediately because of Lao invasion. They penetrated to the South Highland from South and then a part of them arrived at the North- West Highland.

**8-5 Lao Immigration in the late 18th century:** Most of village founding date in *Mahachanachai* is concentrated in the late 18th century. In this time, 3-5 families of *Lao* immigrated into *Mahachanachai* and formed the origin of many villages in all area.

**8-5-1** villages in the Central Highland were built by *Kham Khuan Kaew* *Lao* people from the north.

**8-5-2** villages in the East Flood and North- East Highland were built by *Khuang Nai* *Lao* people from the East.

**8-5-3** villages in the South Highland were built by *Lao/Suai* people from *Rasi Salai* from the South.

**8-5-4** villages in the West Flood were built by *Rasi Salai* from the South

**8-5-5** villages in the North- West Highland were built by *Rasi Salai* and *Khuang Nai* people. The *Lao* wave from the west and *Lao/ Suai* one from the east met together in the Northwest corner

of *Mahachanachai*.

#### **8-6 Lao immigration in the 19th century**

**8-6-1** The Separation of core villages was quite active in all of *Mahachanachai*.

**8-6-2** Khuang Nai people's immigration continued in the East Floodplain.

**8-6-3** Khuang Nai and Rasi Salai people continued to build villages in the North =West Highland.

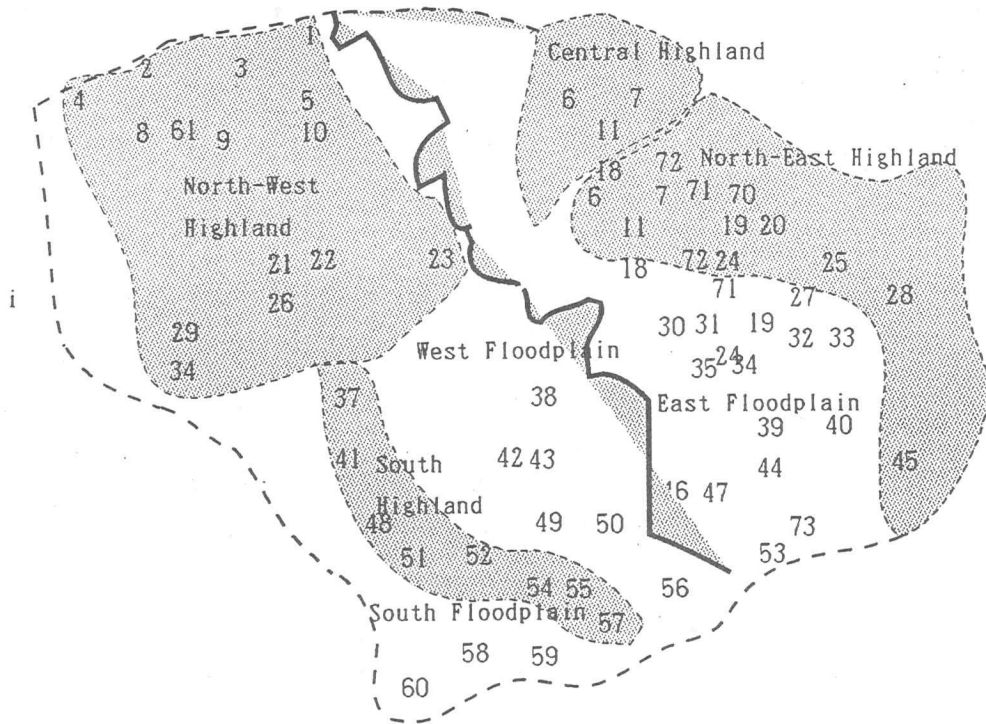
**8-6-4** Khuang Nai and Rasi Salai people joined in the North-East Highland.

**8-6-5** *Rasi Salai* group continued to build some villages in the South Highland. *Kho Wang* group joined them there.

In the end of 19th century, all of villages of *Mahachanachai* were formed. But it was a convergent stage of village formation. All of village base of *Mahachanachai* was already built in the late 18th century.

Generally, the late 18th century in Southeast Asia is regarded as the state formation period before Colonial era or the rebuilding age of international commerce after fall of *Age of Commerce* in the late 17th century. But, according to our research, the change in the late 18th century in Isan means not only a formation of modern state but great expansion movement of *Lao* world there. Probably this movement had a close relation with state formation in *Thonburi/ Bangkok*, *Vieng Chan* and *Champasak*, and also under the direct influence of economic internationalization through activity of *Kula*.

The 18th century should be regarded as the century when the modern village were born in Isan.



Map of Village Number of Amphoe Mahachanachai

