

Nov. 15., 2004
The Akha Book Project

The Akha Book Project was started in 1991. The Akha hill tribe people live in northern Thailand, Burma, Laos and China, numbering 400,000 population.

The Akha live by an oral tradition and have no record of a historical script. But years of missionary work had developed several overlapping scripts. However it was clear that the Akha culture and history was not being preserved by the missionary efforts. In fact the mission scripts were inaccurate and difficult to use. This made it very clear that a concise and simple phonetic system was needed that would be more readily accepted by the young people, more useful and non partisan along religious lines.

Thus after seven years of meetings with numerous Akha writers, many of them traditional Akha and some of them also missionized Akha, a new script was 98% completed.

We then began having Akha books written in this script which was roman letters. After a number of years we had published a book on culture, a handbook of words and a children's alphabet book. A children's work book is also in process at this time, along with more books on Akha culture.

In addition we began publishing the Akha Journal Of The Golden Triangle in English, Thai and Akha together in one book. This book was intended to alert the public about the Akha situation.

We distributed 7,000 journals, 20,000 alphabet books and limited numbers of books on Akha culture.

Some of the Children's books were used in village classes as well.

We discovered a number of facts. First, Thai assimilation policy did not encourage use of the Akha language let alone literacy in Akha.

Secondly, American mission policy was to completely eradicate Akha culture and history. Although by this time the Bible was in Akha language, the likelihood that the Akha would have anything to talk about let alone write about once their ancient culture had been destroyed made literacy in "mission Akha" rather useless.

Thirdly we found that the destruction of Akha culture and the removal of Akha children by the missions was continuing while the Thai government followed an ever increasing patten of human rights abuses which included murder, torture, disappearances, false arrest, extortion, mass arrests and confiscation of vast tracts of rice growing land.

In this atmosphere any effort on our part to increase literacy, protect the culture, history and language of the Akha people had to be combined with an all out effort to protect the human rights of the Akha as well.

This is and continues to be our dual effort to this time. Preservation of the Akha language as inseparable from the preservation of the Akha people. Languages don't go extinct, people go extinct.

One of our recent milestones is to have purchased a press to move forward once again with the publication of Akha language books. These books will also go to Akha who are in prison.

Some books can be seen in the downloads section of www.akha.org

We encourage donations to the Akha Book Project.
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Donations can also be made on line at PayPal using the above email.
Donations are NOT tax deductible

We invite inquiries about this project.