

Abstract for SEALS XVIII meeting in 2008

Paper title: **Kri, a Vietic language of Laos**

Sub-field: Descriptive linguistics

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Abstract:

Kri is a Vietic language spoken by a community of some 250 people in an upland valley near the Vietnamese border in Khammouane Province, Laos. The language and culture of the Kri were almost entirely undocumented until the first author made field trips to the area in 2004-6 to begin an ethnographic and linguistic description project. This paper presents an overview of current findings outlining basic structures of the language and its lexicon, and aspects of the ethnographic setting of the language. The talk will concentrate on the analysis of the phonological system, an important example of a register-terminance system, of the kind which can evolve into a 'tone' system. Description of the Kri language is important not only because it is a previously undocumented language – thus adding to the global database for human diversity – but because its archaic phonology and lexicon contain valuable clues for the study of language relatedness within the Mon-Khmer language family, and in the mainland Southeast Asia area.