

LAOS

Date of Elections: January 3, 1972

Reason for Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of the National Assembly on the normal expiration of their mandate.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Laotian Parliament is bicameral. It consists of the National Assembly and the King's Council.

The National Assembly consists of 60 Deputies elected every 5 years by universal suffrage.

The King's Council consists of 12 members: 6 of them are appointed directly by the King, the other 6 are nominated by the National Assembly and appointed by the King.

Electoral System

Any national of Laos, man or woman, who is 18 years of age or more, who resides in the country, and who is not deprived of his (her) civil and political rights qualifies as elector. Voting is not compulsory.

Any candidate for election as Deputy must be a national — of either sex — of Laos, at least 30 years of age, and must be able to read and write. Members of the civil service or of the armed forces must obtain leave without pay from actual service at least one month before the elections if they wish to stand as candidates.

The country is divided into 16 constituencies, each returning one or more Deputies. These are elected by simple plurality, in one round.

A by-election is held to fill a seat which becomes vacant between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The election campaign, which lasted one month, was vigorous but not violent. Devoid of controversial issues, all platforms defended the homeland, the monarchy, the Constitution, and religious ideas. Each candidate concentrated to a large extent on vital local needs.

Since candidates run on an individual basis and rely primarily on local support rather than outwardly supporting the platforms of political organizations, it is difficult to estimate the number of candidates per party. Among the 200 total candidates contesting the 60 seats at stake were some 94 belonging to parties, and 73 to diverse groupings.

Approximately 60 % of the electorate cast their votes. However, the *Neo Lao Hakset* and its *Pathet Lao* military arm rejected Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's invitation to participate in the elections and called the poll illegal, as they had done in the 1967 elections.

More than two-thirds of the incumbents of the previous National Assembly were defeated. Also losing were many candidates supported by the large and powerful Laotian families which have traditionally played a significant role on the political scene.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections

Number of registered voters.	913,862
Voters.	619,271 (60 %)

2. Distribution of the King's Council according to Professional Category

Princes (nobles, aristocrats).	2
Former ministers, Mandarins, high dignitaries	10
	12

3. Distribution of Deputies according to Sex

Men	58
Women.	2

60

4. Distribution of Deputies according to Age Group

30-40.	12
40-50.	34
50-70.	14

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