

# Menacing monsoons

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Studying the long rainy seasons in Indochina can help climatologists understand the accompanying and often threatening weather phenomenon and hopefully bring relief to its inhabitants.

With ominous climate changes affecting various parts of the world more than others, the [monsoon rains](#) in southeast Asia are [wreaking havoc](#) on the livelihood of communities in the region. The EU-funded project 'The impact of climate change on the southeast Asian monsoon' (ASIAN Monsoon) studied the variability of the monsoon by looking at [stable isotopes](#) in stalagmites found within the caves of Laos.

ASIAN Monsoon aimed to outline the area's vulnerability to climate change and map past climatological changes in the region. The team investigated over 20 caves in the country and conducted uranium dating

that estimated the age of most stalagmites at under 10,000 years, i.e. during the Holocene era. While some had even grown around 20,000 years ago during the last glacial period, the Holocene stalagmites bear the most impact on monsoon information.

Using oxygen and [carbon isotopes](#) from the stalagmites and comparing them to other data has helped piece together revelatory climate characteristics over a long period of time. The samples were also compared with those from Chinese caves, among other sources of information, allowing the project team to reconstruct past precipitation in the region more accurately.

The results can enable researchers and scientists to enhance our understanding of factors that affect the monsoon changes and perhaps improve prediction of trends and disasters. The more knowledge researchers have, the better their chances of helping the peoples of Indochina circumvent the menaces of the monsoon rains.

Provided by CORDIS

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