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From the Executive Director of the Center for Lao Studies:

On behalf of the Center for Lao Studies, I am pleased to announce the next issue of the Journal of Lao Studies (JLS, Volume 2 Issue 1). Since the launch of JLS in early 2010, we have had an overwhelmingly positive response from all fronts—from our Lao Studies contributors to loyal readers, including graduate students, Asian American studies professors, NGO workers and Lao Studies enthusiasts.

Our featured essays include Grabowsky and Tappe’s “Important Kings of Laos,” which provides an analytical overview of kingship, nationalism, and the importance of Lao Kings to the current political situation. Mitchell’s review article, on Waeng Phalangwan’s Lao-Isan perspective on the Lukthung music genre, highlights the Isan ethno and regional empowerment through the power of music in the midst of a strong Central Thai domination; and finally our last essay from Southiseng and Walsh’s fieldwork research reveals the state of the labor force in the growing tourist industry of a UNESCO World Heritage City, Luang Phrabang. Also included in this issue are an interview with Dr. Grant Evans conducted by Dr. Boike Rehbein and three book reviews—all within the scope of Lao Studies.

Our gratitude goes out to our main editors, Drs. Justin McDaniel and Vatthana Pholsena, CLS board, advisory board, and editorial board members, contributors, reviewers, and supporters of JLS. Without them this one-of-a-kind journal devoted to Lao Studies would not exist.

Xok Dii and enjoy!

Sincerely,

Vinya Sysamouth, Ph.D.
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Announcements:

Call for Article Submissions for the JLS:

The study of Laos and the Lao has grown significantly over the past decade. With the opening up of some historical and manuscript archives, the improvement of communication and transportation, and the launching of joint Lao-foreign research projects, Laos has attracted a number of new scholars in diverse fields of expertise. The Journal of Lao Studies (JLS) is an exciting new scholarly project which is expected to become the first and most prestigious venue for researchers who work on Laos.

We are now accepting submissions of articles, book review suggestions, review articles (extended reviews of major publications, trends in the field, or of political, social, or economic events). These submissions can cover studies on Laos, the Lao diaspora (Northeast Thailand, Europe, the Americas, Australia, and so on), or studies in regards to ethnic groups found in Laos (Hmong, Akha, Khmu, among others).

Language: Lao and English are the main languages, other languages are welcomed. Please check with the editors first before submitting articles in other languages not listed here.
Both the LOHA and SAIL programs are core projects of the CLS. We invite you to visit www.laostudies.org to find out more about these and other CLS projects.
“Important Kings of Laos”: Translation and Analysis of a Lao Cartoon Pamphlet

Volker Grabowsky (University of Hamburg, Germany) and Oliver Tappe (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany) *

Abstract
The search for national heroes and a glorious national past is a crucial aspect of nation-building strategies in many postcolonial states (cf. Anderson 1991; Smith 1999). In the case of Laos, especially the history of the old kingdom of Lan Sang provides heroic figures that are highlighted as examples for modern state leaders. Interestingly, some of the famous kings have been celebrated under the constitutional monarchy as well as under socialist rule in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR). With the re-traditionalization (cf. Evans 2002a; 2008) of Lao politics in recent years, the country faces intensified state activities dedicated to the creation of an official national hero pantheon. Most notably, the LPRP erects statues of so-called national ‘ancestors’ (Lao: banphabulut) including both prominent revolutionary leaders and outstanding kings from pre-colonial times such as Cao Anuvong (cf. Ministry of Information and Culture 2002). However, this project is inherently ambivalent since it emblematizes the LRPR's attempt of utilizing the legacy of the old Lao kingdoms and the Lao Buddhist cultural heritage as one source of historiographical and iconographical strategies of self-legitimization. The historical role of the revolutionary struggle – the hitherto main legitimatory base for the present regime – then appears ambivalent as well since the revolution of 1975 marked the end of Lao monarchic traditions and entailed a period of cultural-religious decline. Yet, the state project of uniting selected kings and revolutionaries alike into a single genealogy of ‘patriotic ancestors’ of the Lao nation emphasizes historical continuity. One striking project is a statue of the famous king of Vientiane who fought against the Siamese in the early nineteenth

* The authors would like the anonymous reviewers of the Journal of Lao Studies for their very helpful comments and suggestions.

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Important Kings of Laos

century: Cao Anuvong. He belongs to the illustrious row of heroic Lao kings from the pre-colonial past who are remembered today as brave and patriotic leaders of the so-called “Lao multi-ethnic people” (see Grabowsky forthcoming; Tappe 2008). The selection of Anuvong as a role model for the present leadership remains, however, highly problematic as his insurrection against Bangkok culminated in a crushing defeat and the almost complete destruction of Vientiane. To explore this issue, the authors here offer a close study of a lavishly illustrated booklet entitled Sat lao khon lao: adit lae pacuban (Lao nation, Lao people: Past and present). The book, written by the amateur historian Dr Phuthông Saengakhom (2000), portrays Lao history as a sequence of ‘great kings’ starting with Fa Ngum, founder of the Lao kingdom of Lan Sang. Though the twentieth-century Lao monarchs are excluded, the inclusion of Prince Phetsarat, the former viceroy of Luang Prabang and father of Lao independence and the ‘Red Prince’ Suphanuvong, figurehead of the Pathet Lao movement and the first president of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (LPDR) ensures a continuous line to Kaysone Phomvihane and his heirs (e.g., Choummaly Sayasone and Bouasone Boupavanh). The appendix to the article provides the full text of the original document.

“Unhappy the land that is in need of heroes.”
Bertolt Brecht

Introduction

In the run-up to the celebrations of the 450th anniversary of Vientiane in 2010, several projects to commemorate the great past of the Lao capital have been carried out by the ruling Lao People’s Revolutionary Party (LPRP). One striking project is a statue of the famous king of Vientiane who fought against the Siamese in the early nineteenth century: Cao Anuvong.1 He belongs to the illustrious row of heroic Lao kings from the pre-colonial past who are remembered today as brave and patriotic leaders of the so-called “Lao multi-ethnic people” (see Grabowsky forthcoming; Tappe 2008). The selection of Anuvong as a role model for the present leadership

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1 Vientiane Times, 26 June 2010. Other projects concern the renovation of the temple Vat Sisaket and the construction of a pavilion at the location of the historic city pillar (see Vientiane Times, 5 August 2009).
remains, however, highly problematic as his insurrection against Bangkok culminated in a crushing defeat and the almost complete destruction of Vientiane. In addition, the statue of this great adversary of Bangkok might cause irritation among the Thai given the improved relationship between the former class enemies in recent years.

The search for national heroes and a glorious national past is a crucial aspect of nation-building strategies in many postcolonial states (cf. Anderson 1991; Smith 1999). In the case of Laos, especially the history of the old kingdom of Lan Sang provides heroic figures that are highlighted as examples for modern state leaders. Interestingly, some of the famous kings have been celebrated under the constitutional monarchy as well as under socialist rule in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (LPDR). With the re-traditionalization (cf. Evans 2002a; 2008) of Lao politics in recent years, the country faces intensified state activities dedicated to the creation of an official national hero pantheon. Most notably, the LPRP erects statues of so-called national ‘ancestors’ (Lao: banphabulut) including both prominent revolutionary leaders and outstanding kings from pre-colonial times such as Cao Anuvong (cf. Ministry of Information and Culture 2002). However, this project in inherently ambivalent since it emblematizes the LRPR’s attempt of utilizing the legacy of the old Lao kingdoms and the Lao Buddhist cultural heritage as one source of historiographical and iconographical strategies of self-legitimization. The historical role of the revolutionary struggle – the hitherto main legitimatory base for the present regime – then appears ambivalent as well since the revolution of 1975 marked the end of Lao monarchic traditions and entailed a period of cultural-religious decline. Yet, the state project of uniting selected kings and revolutionaries alike into a single genealogy of ‘patriotic ancestors’ of the Lao nation emphasizes historical continuity.

Due to the fact that these strategies have their precendents during the time of the monarchy, it is useful to compare contemporary official choices of national heroes to the ones promoted under royalist rule. After having gained independence in 1953/54, the Royal Lao Government (RLG) adopted various historiographic and iconographic strategies to define and foster Lao national identity. This identity politics came under considerable pressure during the Lao civil war (1958–1973)
and the rising of the communist movement supported largely by ethnic minority groups. In this article, we would like to present a rare example of the aforementioned strategies of identity politics in war-torn postcolonial Laos, namely a colorful cartoon pamphlet: “Important Kings of Laos” (Pha maha kasat ong samkhan không lao) published by the royal Ministry of Information, Propaganda, and Tourism in 1970. The short booklet, comprising only 25 pages, illustrates the biographies of seven outstanding kings of the Lao past. It provides valuable insights into the RLG’s ideas of Lao national identity and of the relationship between precolonial history and present political circumstances. By analyzing the depiction and characterization of these kings, we shall furthermore discuss continuities and differences between the choice of national heroes under the RLG and the LRPR. We argue that some kings carry the potential of being timeless national ancestors regardless of the dominating political ideology whereas other kings appear as ambiguous under certain circumstances. The configuration of a national hero pantheon is a highly ideological task and linked to the respective political situation. Before focusing on the cartoon, we would like to give a short survey on Lao national historiography and iconography.  

National historiography and iconography under royalism and socialism

Shortly after independence, Lao nation-building was sustained by several projects of historiography and iconography. In 1957, the first statue of a former

\footnote{It would be an interesting topic to discuss when and how cartoons were introduced to Lao popular culture. According to our knowledge, this topic has not yet been properly researched. However, a cursory review of Lao magazines published during the 1960s show that cartoons were at least occasionally used for propaganda purposes. One striking example is the article “The infiltration and destructions of the Communists in South Vietnam” (Kan saeksüm lae bôn thamlai không khôngmunit nai wiatnam tai) published in one of the 1964 issues of Lok Patchaban (“Contemporary World”), a propaganda magazine of the Lao Royal Government. The twelve cartoons, accompanied by short explanatory texts, resemble in their style and layout the cartoons of the 1970 pamphlet.}

\footnote{Evans (2002b: 70–71) stresses that the Lao nationalism emerging in the post-World War II period owed much to earlier French endeavours to create the notion of a Lao cultural identity as “it was the French who brought the idea of the modern nation to Laos”. Ivarsson (2008) discusses how the Lao perception of the past builds on the historical narratives that came into being during the French colonial period. He also highlights the inspiration that modern Lao nationalism received from the Thai, the ‘historical enemy’ in contemporary LPDR historiography.}
king was erected in Vientiane. The king was Sai Setthathilat, who transferred the Lao capital from Luang Prabang to Vientiane around 1563 and who built the That Luang ("great stupa") for this occasion (cf. Stuart-Fox 1998). This stupa, modelled after the Chedi Luang in Chiang Mai, is regarded as the most important national symbol of the Lao and has been used to embellish banknotes and the state emblem of contemporary LPDR. To this day Sai Setthathilat is enshrined in front of the That Luang and figures prominently in the collective memory of the Lao. Further iconographic activities in the 1960s were largely confined to bronze statues of the late king Sisavang Vong (r. 1904–1959).

Parallel to the erection of Setthathilat’s statue, the Royal Lao Government commissioned the construction of the Anusavali (literally, "monument") on a hill looking down towards the Hò Kham (the former Royal, now Presidential Palace). The monument was completed in the early 1970s, though much of the interior design has been left unfinished to this day. The Anusavali was named the "Monument to the Unknown Soldier" (anusavali thahan bò mi sì) to commemorate the war dead on the royalist side of the Lao civil war. After 1975 the new communist regime thus had ambiguous feelings concerning this monument. That changed in May 1995 when the Anusavali was declared a “national heirloom” and renamed Patu Sai or the “Arch of Victory” in commemoration of the victims during the pro-Communist uprising in Vientiane on 23 August 1975 (Evans 1998: 119–120).

These iconographic endeavours coincided with the publication of the first comprehensive history of the Lao nation, entitled Phongsawadan Lao ("History of Laos"), written by Maha Sila Viravong (1905–1987). The book covers the whole period from the mythical orgins of the Lao to the beginning of French colonial rule. Maha Sila, an exceptional traditional scholar and respected by all political camps as a Lao patriot, was probably the most influential scholar in shaping modern Lao

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4 The bronze statues of Sisavang Vong in Luang Prabang and Vientiane were presents from the USSR to the Lao people after the constitution of the second coalition government of Laos (1962). Thus both statues (in front of the former royal palace in Luang Prabang and at Vat Si Müang, the site of the city pillar (lak müang) of Vientiane) were spared by the revolutionary iconoclasm of the years 1975–1979, unlike the statues of two prominent figures of the royal government, Katay Don Sasorith and Prince Bun Um (Evans 1998: 116–118). A modest statue of Kou Voravong still overlooks a garden in Savannakhet. Kou was assassinated in 1954 after he approved negotiations with the Pathet Lao.
historiography (maybe only comparable with Prince Damrong Rachanuphap in Thailand). The *Phongsawadan Lao* is based mainly on the royal chronicles of Luang Prabang and focuses on ethnic Lao culture and history – thereby sidelining regional histories of the different ethnic minorities. It has to be noted that a considerable part of Maha Sila’s work found its way into the contemporary LPDR historiography shaped by Phoumi Vongvichit (cf. Chalong 2003; Lockhart 2006).  

After the revolution of 1975, royal and Buddhist icons fell into disrespect and socialist realism dominated banknotes and propaganda billboards. However, the memorial busts of the late party leader and state president Kaysone Phomvihane, produced by North Korea and erected in the second half of the 1990s in the national, provincial and district capitals, already betrayed the resurgence of Buddhism for creating a shared identity among the Lao. Each of these Kaysone busts was placed on a pedestal decorated with lotus motifs and surmounted by a roof shaped like a nine-tiered parasol (*chattra*), a symbol of Buddhist kingship. Since 1997, Kaysone dominates the Lao Kip – in combination with Buddhist icons such as the That Luang and Vat Xiang Thong (cf. Tappe 2007). This iconographic composition represents a symbiotic relationship between post-socialist state power and Buddhist religion. It is evident here, that the LPRP links itself with the history of Lan Sang and claims the former role of the king as protector of the Lao cultural heritage. This is reflected by a lavishly illustrated booklet entitled *Sat lao khon lao: adit lae pacuban* (Lao nation, Lao people: Past and present). The book, written by the amateur historian Dr Phuthòng Saengakhom (2000), portrays Lao history as a sequence of ‘great kings’ starting with Fa Ngum, founder of the Lao kingdom of Lan

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5 Also in 1957, the RLG published a small booklet that propagated a policy of national independence and strict neutrality in the Cold War confrontation between East and West while at the same time defending an anti-communist state ideology. The cover shows the Lao royal red flag with a three-faced albino elephant in its centre. In front there is King Sisavang Vong’s portrait (r. 1905–1959). Next to him we see a Buddha image and a folded manuscript (*cia sa*) bearing the word *latthathommanun* (constitution). See Anonymous 1957.

6 The main bust in Vientiane was inaugurated on 20 November 1995. Evans (1998: 35–36) observes: “Furthermore, the spatial location of these statues across the country is revealing. Larger busts of Kaysone (1.2 m) are installed at the provincial level, while the smaller (0.75) busts are installed at the district level. (…) One can see in this layout shades of the older *miuang* structure, with smaller units being subordinate to and incorporated by larger and more central units, culminating at last in the main statues in Vientiane — in the National Assembly and in the museum.”
Sang. Though the twentieth-century Lao monarchs are excluded, the inclusion of Prince Phetsarat⁷, the former viceroy of Luang Prabang and father of Lao independence and the ‘Red Prince’ Suphanuvong, figurehead of the Pathet Lao movement and the first president of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (LPDR) ensures a continuous line to Kaysone Phomvihane and his heirs (e.g., Choummaly Sayasone and Bouasone Bouphavanh).

As mentioned before, the official configuration of a Lao national hero pantheon reveals the same strategy of creating a historical continuity from the kingdom of Lan Sang to the LPDR and a genealogy of both royal and revolutionary national ‘ancestors’. In 2002, the Ministry of Information and Culture (MIC) published a list of yet-to-built statues that illuminated the tendencies of late-socialist identity politics.⁸ The statues represent a selection of Lao patriots (nak hak sat) as examples “for the education of the national spirit of the Lao multi-ethnic people” (MIC 2002: 6).

Presently, the old statue of Setthathilat has four additional companions: Fa Ngum (1316–1370), the founder of the kingdom of Lan Sang in 1353, Kaysone Phomvihane (1920–1992) and Souphanouvong (1909–1995), the most popular protagonists of the revolutionary movement, and – as a somewhat exceptional case – the legendary hero of Khammuan, Lord Sikhottabong.⁹ Fa Ngum was honored with a statue in the city centre of Vientiane, inaugurated 5 January 2003 on the occasion of the 650th anniversary of the founding of Lan Sang. Souphanouvong’s statue was erected in his birthplace Luang Prabang in 2007. The prince is dressed in modest suit and applauds as was his habit when meeting the ‘people’ (Le Renovateur, 12 December 2007). According to the plan from 2002, a second statue for Souphanouvong will be erected in the vicinity of the That Luang (Ministry of Information and Culture 2002:

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⁷ For a critical assessment of this crucial figure of early Lao nationalism see Ivarsson and Goscha (2008) and Grabowsky’s introduction to the biography of Phetsarat written by Maha Sila (2003).

⁸ The original plan for this ambitious project, however, dates back to a party decision in 1996 (MIC 2002: 8).

⁹ The construction of this statue in Thakhaek was not part of the original plans of the government to erect statues for “national ancestors” and must be regarded as a rare example of regional history-building. Lord Sikhottabong is remembered as having saved the predecessor settlement of present-day Vientiane from ravaging elephants in the sixth century (Vientiane Times, 4 February 2009).
Kaysone, already honored with a huge statue in front of his museum in Vientiane and at his birthplace Savannakhet, will receive another one in Viengxay (Houaphan province) where he and his comrades sought shelter inside caves during the nine years of constant American bombing.

Cao Sulinyavongsa and Cao Anuvong are, besides Fa Ngum, two monarchs also to be honoured through this state cult of national heroes. The reign of the former (r. 1647–1694) is collectively remembered as the “golden age” (nyuk thòng) of Lan Sang, a period of peace and prosperity, though we possess little contemporaneous historical evidence (e.g. inscriptions) from this period. Soon after Cao Sulinyavongsa’s death, Lan Sang disintegrated into three separated kingdoms: Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Champasak. As mentioned before, Cao Anuvong launched an ill-fated uprising in 1826/27 against the Siamese who had forced the three Lao kingdoms under their suzerainty half a century earlier. The fact that his statue is prioritized over the one for Sulinyavongsa suggests that Anuvong’s reign fits better into the official historical narrative of the Lao “liberation struggle” than the peaceful and less eventful era of Sulinyavongsa.

Further memorial sites are envisaged for three members of the first post-revolutionary politburo, Phoumi Vongvichit, Phoun Siphaseut and Sisomphon Lovansay, and for the military leaders Sithon Kommadam, Faydang Lobliayao and Thao Tou. The latter three revolutionary heroes represent the ethnic minorities’ support for the national “liberation” and will be honored with statues in their respective home provinces: The Hmong military leaders Faydang and Tou – father of

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10 In 2006, a museum was opened in Souphanouvong’s former residence and office rooms close to the Ministry of Defense in Phonkheng village. Less pompous than the Kaysone Phomvihane Memorial, the museum contains photos and various objects that document the revolutionary career of the prince.

11 For a recent assessment of the present regime’s strategies of self-legitimization that link the Buddhist cultural heritage with the revolutionary legacy, see Tappe (forthcoming).

12 It can be expected that the recently deceased Nouhak Phoumsavan (1910–2008) will also be honored with a memorial in the near future since he is considered as one of the LRPR’s central figures and Kaysone’s right hand during the revolutionary struggle (Vientiane Times, 15 September 2008). Although only a few of these commemorative sites have been realized already, the Vientiane Times (22 May 2010) recently announced additional plans for statues of protagonists of ethnic uprisings during the French colonial period (Pho Kaduat, Ong Kaeo, Ong Kommadam, Cao Fa Puchai). Vietnamese intentions to donate a statue of Ho Chi Minh to be placed in the city center of Vientiane currently provoke protests among Lao exiles.
politburo member Phani Yathotou – in Xieng Khouang (Siang Khuang), Sithon as the leader of the southern Mon-Khmer-speaking groups in Salavan province. Phoumi, Phoun and Sisomphon were members of the first politburo after 1975 and belonged to the leadership of the LRPR from its beginnings in the 1950s. Moreover, Phoumi Vongvichit is regarded as the chief ideologist of the LPRP. These six prominent figures stand for the ‘anti-imperialist struggle’ against French and American domination and represent the LRPR as the leading core of the so-called ‘Lao multi-ethnic people’ (pasason lao banda phao, the leitmotif of present-day historiography).

Before analyzing the RLG’s selection of national heroes in the cartoon “Important Kings of Laos”, we would like to take a short glance at the representation of the four most popular historical kings in the Pavatsat Lao (“History of Laos”), the comprehensive history book authorized by the LRPR (MIC 2000; see Lockhart 2006). Despite its clear dedication to historical materialism and Marxist-Leninist vocabulary, the chapters on the history of Lan Sang reveal the ongoing influence of Maha Sila’s Phongsavadan. Fa Ngum, Setthathilat and Anuvong are characterized as great military leaders who managed to unite the ‘Lao nation’ to ward off external aggression or to guarantee cultural and economic prosperity. They appear as proto-revolutionary fighters on behalf of the ‘Lao multi-ethnic people’ threatened by ‘feudalists’ and ‘imperialists’ – a somewhat anachronistical transfer of revolutionary jargon into the pre-colonial past. Since Soulinyavongsa is lacking spectacular military activities, his reign is represented as a period of highly developed state-building (cf. Tappe 2008). Some of the more ambivalent aspects of these kings, such as Anuvong’s spectacular defeat at the hands of the Siamese, will be further discussed in the analysis of the cartoon.

All four kings that are now considered as ‘patriotic’ leaders of the ‘people’ in pre-colonial times belong to the pantheon described in “Important Kings of Laos”. As we will show with the following translation and analysis, there are parallels and differences to the narratives found in the Pavatsat Lao, partly explicable by the historical circumstances of the 2nd Indochina War. For an adequate assessment of the incorporation of monarchic aspects in contemporary Lao historiography as a

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13 Already during the civil war, Phoumi (1968) published an official history of the ‘liberation struggle’: Le Laos et la lutte victorieuse du peuple lao contre le neo-colonialisme americaine.
legitimatory device, it thus appears to be useful to examine how the *ancien régime* regarded its historical traditions. It will turn out that a kind of Buddhist mainstream culture – represented by ‘heroic kings’ (*vilakasat*) of the Lao past – is postulated as the basis of Lao society and culture. Moreover, "Important Kings of Laos" provides information about an interpretation of Lao history serving to legitimise the ruling regime in times of national crisis. In many respects it might contribute to a better understanding of the present Lao policy of collective remembrance and of politics of self-legitimization.

*Translation of “Important Kings of Laos”*\(^{14}\)

**Foreword by His Majesty Suvanna Phuma, Prime Minister**

Dear fellow citizens,

I feel the greatest joy at having seen the coloured historical book “Important Kings of Laos” which you are now holding in your hand.

While our fatherland is exposed to the danger of foreign attacks, we should remember the valour of our ancestors and their courage in sacrificing [themselves], as well as the heroic kings of Lan Sang. Thanks to the courage of these rulers in sacrificing [themselves], until today the Lao soil [still] belongs to us. Therefore it is the obligation of all of us to protect and defend the entire territory of the Lao kingdom so that it will not disappear from the map.

In my capacity as the leader of the government of His Majesty, the King, and as a nationalist (*nak satninyom*)\(^{15}\), I appeal to all my fellow countrymen to read this book carefully and then pass it on to [others] for reading.

The nation (*sat*) remains the nation and Laos remains Laos only if every Lao untiringly shares the burden [of national responsibility] and is willing to make

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\(^{14}\) Since we aimed at remaining close to the original in our translation, some sentences might appear odd to English native speakers.

\(^{15}\) Contemporary Lao historiography prefers the concept “patriotism” (*khuam hak sat*; literally: love to the nation) as one of the key values within official Lao national discourse (see MIC 2002: 6). The front organisation of the Communist Party was until 1975 named “Lao Patriotic Front” (*naeo lao hak sat*).
sacrifices like our ancestors once did. We descendants should unfailingly keep in mind their glorious deeds.

Vientiane, 1 January 1970

(Signature)

Cao Suvanna Phuma

(Cao Kommana)\(^{16}\)

Phacao Fa Ngum: Father of the Lao nation (B.E. 1859–1917, A.D. 1316–1374)

Although many countries exist in this world, there are not many states that are as old as the kingdom of Laos. We know too well that the founder of this kingdom was Phacao Fa Ngum.

Phacao Fa Ngum was born in the year 1859\(^{17}\) (A.D. 1316/17) of the Buddhist era in Müang Sua, the present day Luang Prabang. At that time a Lao kingdom was non-existent, but there were various polities (müang), which were kingdoms of smaller domains struggling with one another for supremacy. Müang Sua belonged to one of these polities.

The king of Müang Sua came into a conflict with his son over a concubine. So he ordered the son and grandson to leave, and so Cao Fa Ngum deserted the müang.

Cao Fa Ngum and his father boarded a boat and fled by water down the Mekong. After many weeks they reached Angkor Vat in the land of the Khmer.

Cao Fa Ngum was brought up by Pha Maha Pasaman and he learned from him the knowledge of all kinds of arts and sciences. He studied diligently and every day he studied seriously for many hours.

Cao Fa Ngum was endowed with diligence and ingenuity; thus [finally] the ruler of the Khmer kingdom gave Princess Nang Kaeo to him to be his wife.

Cao Fa Ngum cherished the hope of returning to Müang Sua in order to unite the small rival principalities (anacak). Together with his father, [Cao Fa Ngum] requested an army of 10,000 men from the ruler of the Khmer.

\(^{16}\) This is an honorific title, formerly the title of the department (kom) of agriculture.

\(^{17}\) The original says B.E. 1959, obviously a typing error.
Together with his father, the prince led an army into the territory of the present day kingdom of Laos. When the people learned that the prince was coming to unite the Lao and to stop the fighting, they gave him an overwhelming welcome.

The map shows the routes from [the land of the] Khmer that Cao Fa Ngum’s army had taken to invade and unite Laos.

Cao Fa Ngum’s father passed away during the campaign and Cao Fa Ngum succeeded in capturing Müang Sua.

Phacao Fa Ngum ascended the throne as king of Lan Sang and [thereby] he established the first kingdom of Laos in the year 1896 of the Buddhist era (A.D. 1353).

The rulers of the various müang, which were located within the kingdom of Laos, except Phanya Phao, the ruler of Müang Phai Nam, which is present-day capital Vientiane, submitted to Phacao Fa Ngum [and regarded him] as the great king (overlord) of the kingdom of Laos.

Phacao Fa Ngum hoped to unite the various müang into a united kingdom of Laos. So he mobilised [his] army to attack Müang Phai Nam, but he could not capture [it] because the city was surrounded by a thick bamboo palisade.

The prince employed a trick to capture the city. He ordered [his troops] to cast gold and silver arrow-heads and to shoot them into the rows of bamboos.

The soldiers of Müang Phai Nam saw that the gold and silver arrow-heads were more valuable than the rows of bamboos, which acted as a rampart to protect the city, so they cleared the bamboos together to recover the arrows.

Then Phacao Fa Ngum led his troops [into the city] and captured the müang without difficulty. For the first time in the history all müang could be united in a single kingdom, namely the kingdom of Lan Sang. The king moved his army further southwards, captured Müang Khorat and incorporated it into the territory under the kingdom of Lan Sang.

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18 Literally, “City of the thorny bamboo”.

As for Müang Phai Nam (the present day city of Vientiane), [the people] gave Phacao Fa Ngum big triumphal celebrations at the place where the present technical school of Vientiane is located.

Fa Ngum’s soldiers gave him a blessing [and said]: “Your Majesty has led us and made us brave warriors who could gain victory over other müang in a proud way. We invite you to ascend the throne of Lan Sang again.”

Phacao Fa Ngum warned the people to beware of the danger of an invasion by the enemy and [told them] that everyone who learned about the movements of [troops] from the enemy side should inform the country (ban-müang). He ordered: “As soon as you hear of a foreign enemy planning an attack on our kingdom, you should deliver the message and make a report; do not simply conceal this bad news!”

We should bear in mind the orders of Phacao Fa Ngum because at present North-Vietnam is giving pressure and threatening our kingdom.

Phacao Fa Ngum invited his former teacher Pha Maha Pasaman from the kingdom of the Khmer to come here to teach the Buddhist religion (pha phuttha satsana) in Laos so that the people would cease the worship of spirits (phi).

Pha Maha Pasaman, accompanied by monks and scholars, brought with them the statue of the Pha Bang, which was 1,000 years old, as well as Buddhist scriptures (khamphi pha taipidok) and a seedling of the Bodhi tree.

Many decades later Müang Sua, the capital during the reign of Phacao Fa Ngum, was renamed Nakhon Luang Prabang, after the name of this sacred (saksit) Buddha statue.

Although Phacao Fa Ngum passed away in the year 1917 of the Buddhist era (A.D. 1374), and almost 600 years have passed since then, his fame and deeds remain in the memories of all the Lao people, because he was the founder of our beloved kingdom of Laos.
Phacao Sam Saen Thai: the king who created the Lao nation (1899–1958 B.E., 1356–1415 A.D.)

Phacao Sam Saen Thai was Cao Fa Ngum’s son and he ascended the throne at the age of 18 years in the year 1917 of the Buddhist era (A.D. 1374/75).

Three years later he ordered that a register of able-bodied men for military service be compiled. It showed that there were a total of 300,000 Lao men in the census rolls. For this reason the ministers (sena-monti) gave him the name “Phanya Sam Saen Thai”\(^\text{19}\).

Phacao Sam Saen Thai, who succeeded Phacao Fa Ngum to the throne, realised that the territory of the kingdom of Lan Sang was very extensive. Unless he organised a powerful army he would not be free from danger. Hence he founded a strong military regime, which depended on all the people of the land being united in the kingdom.

The troops which protected Phacao Sam Saen Thai’s kingdom of Lan Sang were divided into various units, and these were elephant-units, cavalry, infantry, and guards for internal peace, as well as village militia.

Phacao Sam Saen Thai’s troops took care for the people and helped them in a noble way. The people praised and loved [their ruler]. The news of his valour and courage in battle spread to the neighbouring countries. Eventually no country (pathet) dared to attack [Laos].

Phacao Sam Saen Thai saw the importance of the administrative system of the state. So he promoted education, transportation and the military.

The king told his people to support the nation-state through being prepared to work and willing to pay taxes; the price of what they got from their homeland (ban-müang) was prosperity and peace.

At the present moment the organisation and the defence of the homeland ought to be given further attention. If Phacao Sam Saen Thai were able to return to look at the present kingdom of Laos, he would be proud of our soldiers and government.

\(^{19}\) “Lord of 300,000 T(h)ai/ commoners”. 

In the year 2022 of the Buddhist era (A.D. 1479/80), the ruler who had the authority (amnat) over the Vietnamese kingdom made preparations to march his army to attack Laos because he was discontented about a [certain] matter.

Phacao Sainya Cakkapat Paenpaeo had received a white elephant which was a gift given by the governor (cao müang) of Müang Kaen Thao. When the king of Vietnam learned of the news, he entrusted an envoy to ask for the hair and toenails of the elephant.

So the king ordered that the hair and toenails of the elephant be cut, and he put them in a golden casket and sent them to the Vietnamese ruler.

However, the viceroy (maha upahat) disagreed with the delivery of the hair and toenails to the Vietnamese king; instead of it he took elephant manure and put it into the casket.

The Vietnamese ruler opened the box and as he saw that it was elephant manure he was furious.

For this reason the ruler of Vietnam led an armed force of 550,000 men across the border to attack Laos.

The Vietnamese army crossed the mountains and advanced southward to the city of Luang Prabang. Indeed the Vietnamese army was able to capture various müang along the route because of its military supremacy.

On the roads of the city (müang), the sound of crying and wailing people were heard and the monks chanted prayers (sutmon) that the land could be spared from devastation.

As the strength of the Vietnamese army was immense, the Lao army lost the battle and the king fled the city of Luang Prabang.

That Cao Thaen Kham, the son of the king, disagreed that Laos became a vassal (müang khün) of Vietnam was a lucky coincidence (bun) for Laos.
Although some disagreed and considered that there was no successful way to repulse the Vietnamese, nevertheless Cao Thaen Kham recruited soldiers and commanded the troops he led to charge at Luang Prabang.

Due to the courage and determination of Cao Thaen Kham, the morale of the Lao soldiers was remarkably high. Hence, they could defeat the Vietnamese army that occupied Luang Prabang. Of the 4,000 Vietnamese army officers (nai thahan) only 600 men returned [to their country].

So the ministers crowned Cao Thaen Kham as the liberator of the nation. He ascended the throne of Laos under the name Phacao Suvanna Banlang.

Now the North Vietnamese are the ones who have invaded and threatened our country. They know perfectly well that the Lao people do not want to harm the North Vietnamese and that they desire to live in peace.

The North Vietnamese should know very well that they will be defeated and repulsed, as Cao Thaen Kham fought [against them] once in the past, and North Vietnam should be able to remember this lesson[, if they continue to molest Laos].

Phacao Phothisalalat Cao: “Solidarity is the source of strength” (1501–1550 A.D.)

After the king had ascended the throne at the age of 19 in the year 1520, he went to a monastery as a devoted Buddhist for a period [of time].

Phacao Phothisalalat was a powerful monarch because his kingdom was united. The Vietnamese king feared and respected him because the rulers of [both] kingdoms were powerful and harmoniously allied with each other. Thus the Vietnamese king sent official gifts (lasa-bannakan) to the [Lao] ruler.

When the leader of the province (khwaeng) of Siang Khwang rose in revolt, Phacao Phothisalalat defeated the rebel so as to restore order and maintain the stability of the kingdom.

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20 Upasombot describes the ceremony of ordination, or taking the vows of the Buddhist brotherhood.
In the year 1540 the king of Ayutthaya attacked Vientiane. Phacao Phothisalalat ordered King Saen Luang of Thakaek\textsuperscript{21} to send soldiers for support. King Saen Luang, who was a loyal man, sent his troops to Vientiane immediately to protect Laos, even though his kingdom had not been molested. The soldiers of both sides helped each other to fight the Ayutthayan troops [until the latter] fled in disorder.

The ministers of the city (\textit{nakhôn}) of Chiang Mai were aware of the strength and unity of the Lao kingdom. Thus they asked Phacao Phothisalalat to send [his son] Cao Setthawangso to become the [new] ruler of Chiang Mai. After the prince had been crowned the king of Chiang Mai, Phacao Phothisalalat brought the \textit{pha kaeo mòlakot} (Emerald Buddha) to Vientiane.

In 1550 Phacao Phothisalalat invited envoys of fifteen different countries to come to witness how he caught wild elephants with a lasso. Phacao Phothisalalat was very experienced in riding decoy-elephants to catch wild elephants; however, that elephant was very angry and the ruler was thrown from the back [of the decoy-elephant]. He was stomped by the elephant and passed away seven days later [because of his injuries].

Phacao Sai Setthathilat: the king who erected temples and conquered the Burmese

The Lao people often remember Phacao Sai Setthathilat as the great king who founded Vat Phra Kaeo and the That Luang in the city of Vientiane.

Now we have erected a statue of this king in front of the That Luang. Another heroic deed of the king that the Lao will never forget is the victory over the Burmese invaders.

At the moment (i.e. now), Burma is our good friend. During the time of Phacao Sai Setthathilat, however, King Bayin-naung invaded Laos.

The strength of the Burmese army was mighty. Therefore, Phacao Sai Setthathilat had to withdraw his army twice. The first time he retreated from the city

\textsuperscript{21} Maha Sila (2001: 64) calls this ruler \textit{Cao müang nakhôn} without reference to Thakaek.
of Luang Prabang [and] the second time from the city of Vientiane down to the mouth of the Nam Ngüm.22

But all the people in the country still devoted their loyalty to Phacao Sai Setthathilat. They did not submit to the Burmese without resisting.

The able-bodied men of Laos thus established guerrilla troops and lay in ambush to attack the Burmese.

The women agreed to neither provide food nor render the Burmese any help. Moreover, they spied on the movements of the Burmese troops and smuggled the news to Phacao Setthathilat.

The Burmese troops were weakened and discouraged, not only because of lack of food but also because of lack of support by the population of the surrounding land.

When Phacao Sai Setthathilat learned that the Burmese troops were demoralised, he ordered his soldiers to attack. As a result the Burmese army was defeated, many Burmese were taken prisoners of war and countless elephants were captured.

Phacao Sai Setthathilat led the Lao people to stage a rebellion against the Burmese until a victory was eventually gained. This is a lesson to teach us that when we are attacked by an enemy, even if his forces are superior, we can still destroy him as long as the Lao people show love and respect to their great king, support the army and do not collaborate with the enemy (satu). We must now remember this important lesson because we are threatened by an external enemy, and it is the invaders from North Vietnam.

Phacao Sulinyavongsa: the last great king of Laos in the ancient time (2180–2237 B.E., 1637–1694 A.D.)

After the death of Phacao Sai Setthathilat, Laos began to decline. Its power (amnat) dwindled and [the land] disintegrated not long after. The country was

22 Situated approx. 50 km east of Vientiane.
united in the era of Phacao Sulinyavongsa and the army was restored to its former
strength.

When the Lao army had regained its [former] strength and the unity of the
nation was attained, Phacao Sulinyavongsa negotiated treaties of friendship with
Thailand (Siam) and Vietnam; both countries respected the treaty that they had
concluded.

In the treaty signed between Laos and Vietnam, they agreed that houses built on
piles and with verandahs belonged to Lao territory and that houses built on ground
level belonged to Vietnamese territory.

The Vietnamese accepted the treaty because Phacao Sulinyavongsa had
established a military unit that guarded the paths along the mountains against
intrusions into Lao territory.

During the reign of Phacao Sulinyavongsa three Europeans travelled to Laos.
One of them was the Dutch tradesman Gerrit van Wuysthoff; the other two were
[Father] Leria, a Catholic priest of Italian origin, and the Portuguese [priest] de
Marini. Together the three men are regarded as the first group of Europeans who
visited Laos.

In view of the affluence and splendours that Wuysthoff, Leria, and de Marini
often encountered, they were very touched. The books they wrote provide evidence
that the kingdom of Laos was once a great nation and had a high civilisation a long
time before it became a colony.

When Phacao Sulinyavongsa passed away in the year 1698, the vast [domain of]
Laos disintegrated into three kingdoms: 1) the kingdom of Lan Sang Luang Prabang,
2) the kingdom of Lan Sang Vientiane, and 3) the kingdom of Nakhôn Champassak.

Phacao Anu (1804–1828): A fighter for the freedom and unity of the kingdom

Long after Laos had disintegrated into three kingdoms, the kings of the
respective lands had neither enough strength nor the ability to maintain their
independence (ekalat). In the year 1778 all three Lao kingdoms fell under the
authority of the Thai, and parts of the central Lao kingdom (i.e., Vientiane) were under Vietnamese control.

Phacao Anu, the ruler of the kingdom of Vientiane, read about the fame of Laos at the time when Laos was united and free from foreign domination.

Phacao Anu was dissatisfied with the foreign domination. He often thought that such a situation would continue unless the land was reunited. Hence the king decided to unite Laos and fight for independence. He launched a popular movement to battle against the Thai (Siamese).

Phacao Anu often thought that he would not be able to free Laos from the supremacy of the Thai (Siamese) and restore freedom unless he could reunite the three kingdoms. Thus he ordered his son, the ruler of Champassak, to launch the popular movement of the Lao Thoeng (Kha) and to fight against the Thai (Siamese). The king also sent a letter to Cao Manthatulat, the king of Luang Prabang, to persuade him to join the struggle for national liberation.

In 1827, Phacao Anu heard the rumours that England had attacked Bangkok and realised that a very good chance to regain freedom had come. The king led his troops against Bangkok, and his son\textsuperscript{23} led the Kha troops of the southern region [of Laos] to attack the Thai (Siamese).

However, Cao Manthatulat of Luang Prabang unfortunately could not send troops to help Cao Anu, because the troops that were protecting his territory on the northern border with Burma had been attacked by Burmese troops.

Moreover, the Thai had also occupied Vientiane and Champassak; they devastated [the city] of Vientiane and had taken away the sacred Pha Kaeo [image] of the Lao. As for Phacao Anu, he fled with his soldiers to Vietnam.

Cao Latsavong (Ngao), son of Cao Anu and military commander of the Lao, fought with Phanya Bodin, the commander of the Thai [troops]. Phanya Bòdin lost his grip and fell from his horse. Cao Latsavong had stabbed him with a short lance and hit his thigh, nailing him to the ground, and was about to strike [him] with a sword. However, the younger brother of Phanya Bòdin hurried to help [him] and

\textsuperscript{23} Yo, the ruler of Champassak.
was cut into two by Cao Latsavong, Phanya Bòdin seized the chance to free himself and Cao Latsavong was also shot from the back of the horse. The soldiers of both sides rescued their respective commanders and fled.

Phacao Anu realised that the Vietnamese and the Thai were always at war with each other. He thought that Lao neutrality and independence from the Thai and Vietnamese could lead to peace. Therefore he returned from Vietnam to negotiate with the Thai.

He achieved no results, because the Thai (Siamese) did not agree to accept Cao Anu’s compromise. As the king saw that the situation was bad, he mobilised the troops for a final battle aimed at ousting the Thai (Siamese). However, he had several dozen troops less [than the Thai], and he lost as a result. He finally saved his skin by fleeing to Siang Khwang.

The Thai (Siamese) troops finally set [the city] on fire and devastated the city of Vientiane, forcing thousands of Lao families to resettle in the northeast of Thailand.24

Phacao Anu was taken prisoner in the year 1829 at Müang Phuan in the province Siang Khwang and escorted to Bangkok,25 where he passed away broken-hearted. The hope to give the kingdom of Laos national reconciliation and freedom had to wait another 100 years before it could be fulfilled.

Later the French came and ruled over Laos for a period of more than 50 years.26

But during the whole period of partition and foreign rule all the Lao people remembered the unity and independence of their ancestors’ land under the leadership of their great kings in the good old times.

Being conscious (lit. feelings) of the greatness [of our land] in former times inspires us to unite together until independence is regained. Now [these feelings] serve as the impetus [for us] to build our country rapidly and defend it.

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24 More than 15 million ethnic Lao, one quarter of the total Thai population, live today in this region.
25 There the Lao king was kept in an iron cage where he died under pain and humiliation. See Mayouri and Pheuiphanh 1998.
26 1893–1953, a period of 60 years.
Analysis

The publication of the booklet fell in a time when the second Indochina-War (1964–1973/75) had strongly affected the Lao nation-state. Following the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam (1968), North-Vietnamese troops operated more and more on Lao territory to safeguard the supply lines – the so-called “Ho-Chi-Minh-Trail” – to the south. The United States who officially withdrew from active warfare after Richard Nixon had assumed office in 1969 intensified their massive area-bombing that accounted for 2.1 million tons of ordnance between 1964 and 1973, i.e. one bombing mission every eight minutes for nine years, turning Laos into the most bombed country in history (see Khamvongsa & Russell 2009: 282). At the same time Vang Pao’s Hmong forces were supported financially and materially by the CIA to ward off the communist Lao People’s Army which was aided by Vietnamese ‘volunteers’. Meanwhile the neutralists of Suvanna Phuma were extremely polarised, resulting in the outbreak of a grim civil war between the rightist and communist units, especially in the strategically important Plain of Jars. Lao fought against Lao, and within national minority groups like the Hmong, internecine warfare broke out as well. Unity among the Lao people was literally non-existent.

In retrospect, the long-standing Lao Prime Minister Suvanna Phuma, who almost helplessly stood up against the disintegration of the Lao nation during the 1960s, appears as a tragic figure. His decision to authorise American aerial interdiction signified that the Vientiane regime was going politically bankrupt. The regime became paralyzed by corruption and nepotism, while the communists increasingly gained sympathy among the population of the Lao highlands. It was not before the cease fire in 1973 that the communist forces started to gain control in the

27 This tendency within the US foreign policy was manifest in the so-called Nixon Doctrine (22.1.1970). It stated that the US would reduce its presence and involvement in other states. The main responsibility for defence and development should be in the hands of the respective states, although certain obligations of alliance were to be maintained (Valone 1995: 158–159). For Indochina this meant a retreat of US ground troops parallel with continuing financial support and aerial bombings.

28 Since 1959 the US intelligence recruited highlanders for reconnaissance missions into Communist controlled territories. Vang Pao, the only Hmong officer in the Royal Lao Army at that time, became the leading figure in the Hmong forces trained and supported by the CIA (Evans 2002b: 140).

29 Long-standing internal clan rivalries among the Hmong led to division into pro-communist and rightist factions (Evans 2002b: 136–139).
cities along the Mekong, during the establishment of the short-lived third coalition government (Stuart-Fox 1997: 157).

Thus, the text published on 1 January 1970 by the royal “Ministry of Information, Propaganda, and Tourism” must be read in the context of civil war and propagandistic competition. The circumstances of its publication and its wide circulation indicate that it had the authorisation of the highest governmental circles. 100,000 copies were printed, an unusually high circulation in a country with then hardly more than three million inhabitants.\textsuperscript{30} Some passages are similar to Maha Sila’s \textit{Phongsawadan Lao}, so it could be assumed that the Lao chief historian personally authorised or even edited the booklet. On the other hand, one could claim the opposite because the text includes thorough falsifications of history with which Maha Sila should have disagreed. The introduction to \textit{Important Kings of Laos}, written by Prime Minister Suvanna Phuma himself, clearly shows its pedagogical intent. It states: “The nation remains the nation and Laos remains Laos only if every Lao untiringly shares the burden [of national responsibility] and is willing to make sacrifices like our ancestors once did. We descendants should unfailingly keep in mind their glorious deeds."

An interesting aspect of the text is the inconsistent use of ‘royal language’ (\textit{lasasap}). In pre-socialist Laos this special vocabulary was used for the king and members of the high aristocracy. The use of this semantically elaborated vocabulary is worth examining, as is the use of the administrative key words that attained significance in the political arguments of the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, we would like to demonstrate how the protagonists of the “Lao struggle for freedom” (from the perspective of the royalists) are represented and which political message is transferred to the reader, especially to the Lao youth. Finally the characterisation of each ruler will be analysed – in both its historiographic as well as in its iconographic dimensions.

\textsuperscript{30} Nowadays, most books published in Laos, with a population of six millions, have a circulation of not more than a few thousand copies. Yet, even these smaller circulations often state exaggerated numbers and thus suggest that the claim for 100,000 copies of the cartoon should be taken with a pinch of salt.
Language

Compared to the Thai “royal language” (rachasap. Skt.: rāja + šapta), the Lao equivalent (lasasap) is less elaborated. The Lao language shows a less frequent and consistent use of royal vocabulary. Although the author of the text takes some effort, this language is not consistently employed. In the constitution of predicates, the use of “royal language” is reduced to the prefix song (also thong; Khmer: tròng, “shape, form”) in front of usually genuine Lao verbs. This is also the case when there is a Khmer, Sanskrit or Pali loan-word or a corresponding Lao “royal word” available. In this way the use of genuine “royal language” regarding verbs is reduced to a minimum in the present text. Among the few exceptions are:

- **savoei lasa-sombat**: savoei = “to eat, consume” (Khmer); rāja + saṃpati = “royal property” (Pali) = to rule; the genuine Lao form would be *kin müang* = “consume the polity”.

- **ansoen** (Khmer: añjoeñ) = “to ask, request” (Lao: soen). Ansoen is used for members of the royal palace and for monks and Buddha statues.

- **pasut** (Pali: pra + sūti) = “to be born, to bear” (Lao: koet).

- **sulakhot** (Pali: sura + gata) = “gone [to] the gods”, a euphemism of “to die” (Lao: tai).

In the case of the nouns, the spectrum of words classified as “royal language” is much wider. Examples:

- **lasa-olot** (Pali: rāja + urasa) = royal son (Lao: luk/luksai).

- **lasa-natda** (Pali: rāja + nattar; Skt. napṭ) = royal grand-son or nephew (Lao: lan).

- **pha bida** (Pali: braḥ + pitar) = royal father (Lao: phò).

- **lasa-banlang** (Pali: rāja + pallaṅka) = royal throne (Lao: thaen).

- **lasa-bannakan** (Skt./Pali: rāja + varṇakāra/varṇakāra) = tributes and official gifts to the king (Lao: suai).
It should be stressed again that compared to traditional historic texts the use of royal vocabulary is restricted. An excessive use of such words could be considered an obstacle for the less-educated to understand the text, and thus would have unfavourable effects on mass propaganda.

The most frequently used keywords in the administrative field are müang, pathet, anacak and kasat.

a.) The term müang reflects the central concept for polities of the Lao and other Tai people and is used here in its entire semantic width. It denotes a city (e.g. Müang Sua, the former name of Luang Prabang) as well as the whole kingdom of the Lao (Müang Lao). Often the composite ban-müang (“village” + “city/domain”) occurs in the meaning of “homeland”.

b.) The term pathet (Pali: pra + desa) means “land” or “country” but is rather seldom used with the ethnonym “Lao” here. So we find as designations for “Laos” the expressions müang lao and (lasa-)anacak lao more frequently than pathet lao. It should be mentioned that the modern expression pathet lao (“Land of the Lao”) also represents the pro-communist organisation under the leadership of the “red prince” Suphanuwong, the half-brother of the prime minister Suvanna Phuma. Pathet is used predominantly as “land” without reference to the Lao nation. So the last sentence of the text says: “The consciousness of former historic grandeur [...] is the impetus to rapidly build and defend our country (pathet).” Referring to the glory of King Sam Saen Thai it is said that it spread down to the neighbouring countries (pathet khang-khiang).

c.) The term anacak (Pali: āṇā, “command, authority” + cakka, “wheel”) is synonymous with “kingdom”. Anacak means the range of intervention of a ruler and thus has connotations similar to the Sanskrit term maṇḍala (“circle”, Lao: monthon). Usually the term anacak is part of the composite lasa-anacak, “kingdom”. However, it is also used once for the different Lao principalities (anacak nòi nòi) before Fa Ngum founded Lan Sang.

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31 As to a detailed discussion of the term müang see Grabowsky 2004: 4–9.
d.) For “ruler” and “king” there are some quite different terms. The most important are Phacao/Cao (in combination with the ruler’s name like Phacao Anu) and kasat (Skt.: kṣatriya, “ruler, lord, member of the caste of the warriors”). The usual designation for Lao kings, Cao maha sivit (“lord over the great life”), contrary to what one might expect, never occurs. This is quite unusual and needs explanation. Possibly this traditional royal designation was regarded as too “feudal” and remote for the people. The characterisation of the kings as “kings of the people” was indeed very important within the ideological dispute with the communists.

Protagonists of the Lao struggle for freedom

The Lao army (kòngthap lao) is the active organ of the Lao struggle for freedom. According to the cartoon, it will be able to gain victory over powerful enemies (Vietnamese and Burmese) as long as they have the support of all people. The reader has been repeatedly admonished toward this effect, for example in the last sentence of the chapter on King Setthathilat. His armed resistance and success in fighting back the superior military of the Burmese invaders would have shown that it is possible to defend one’s independence, “as long as the Lao people show love and respect to their great king and support the army and do not collaborate with the enemy.” (p. 18). The unity of the king, the army and the Lao people (pasason lao) is repeatedly affirmed. Although the Lao term pasason for “the people” is politically and not ethnically based, the question of the historical role of the non-Lao population should be examined.

Important Kings of Laos almost fails to mention the so-called “Kha”, a generic term used to signify the autochthonous Mon-Khmer speaking population of Laos (c. 25–30 % of the total population) and other minorities such as the Hmong. According to the Lao chronicles, the census initiated by King Sam Saen Thai at the end of the

32 This pejorative term – often translated as “slave” – is only mentioned shortly in the chapter about Cao Anu where “Kha” troops are led by Cao Anu’s son.
fourteenth century showed 300,000 Tai (or Thai) and 400,000 "Kha". However, the latter are pushed aside in *Important Kings of Laos* which singles out the Buddhist culture of the lowland Lao as the only culture relevant for the genesis of the Lao nation-state. Religious and other cultural concepts of ethnic minorities are ignored, although the cartoons frequently illustrate persons who wear the typical dress of the “Kha” and the Hmong: The lower picture on the first page of the chapter on Cao Anu shows several Hmong women. This is really an anachronism as at the beginning of the 19th century the Hmong had just started to settle on present-day Lao territory and were thus not yet part of Lao society. The lower picture on the last page of the booklet shows two Hmong (husband and wife?) but only one male Khmu wearing a slouch hat. Do these iconographic representations – perhaps unconsciously – reflect strong considerations of the Royal Lao Government for the Hmong. Though only making up ten per cent of the population, the majority of the Hmong, led by General Vang Pao, gave crucial support to the anti-communist struggle of the Vientiane government.

The ethnic diversity of the Lao people remains a thorny subject for any serious effort to construct a Lao national identity. The present-day Lao government recognises that ethnic Lao constitute only slightly more than one half of the total population. Even if other so-called ‘tribal’ Tai groups, such as the Tai Lü, the Phuthai and the Tai Yuan, are included, less than 65 per cent of the population belong to the dominant Tai-Lao-Buddhist mainstream. Recent iconographic representations of the Lao people – above all the icon of the three women dressed in traditional clothes – underline that the current regime is well aware of the ethnic balance (cf. Vatthana 2006, Rehbein 2007). Yet, the revival of Buddhism (and the culture of the ethnic Lao) could marginalise the non-Buddhist ethnic groups that constitute one third of the entire population of Laos and have been the back-bone of revolutionary forces in many regions before 1975. The plans to build memorial sites for Sithon

34 Conflicts between the central Lao government and the ethnic minorities became manifest in millenarian uprisings during the early years of the French colonial period. Later the Lao communists in their highland bases took advantage of these traditional resentments and gained popular support in outlying regions through programs of land reform and improvement of education and public health. This strategy was accompanied by the – until today only inadequately fulfilled – promise of promoting national
Kommadam, Faydang Lobliayao and Thao Tou might be only a superficial recognition of the historical inter-ethnic solidarity.

The description of Laos’ neighbours

- **Burma:** Burma is the great adversary of Sai Setthathilat (r. 1548–1571). The Burmese are shown as brutal hordes attacking Lan Sang. The official, Marxist-inspired Lao historiography calls them “Burmese feudalists” (sakdina phama) (cf. Ministry of Information and Culture 2000) whereas in our booklet they are described as rude and uncivilised – quite in contrast to the cunning Lao monarch and his brave people. However, since the end of the sixteenth century relations with the Burmese neighbour saw little conflict. The royal government after 1953 as well as the following socialist regime cultivated good relations between the neighbours.

- **Vietnam:** Contrary to the Burmese antagonists of the sixteenth century who are clearly separated from the modern Burma, the Vietnamese are mentioned repeatedly as the present enemy of Laos even in the context of former conflicts. A connection is made between former Vietnamese attacks on the Lao sovereignty and the military operations of the North Vietnamese in 1970. Moreover, the chapters with other enemies than the Vietnamese also refer to the North Vietnamese enemy and postulate bravery, courage, and unshakable loyalty to the king.

- **Siam/Thailand:** Relations with the big neighbour have always been characterised by strong rivalries, which in 1828 culminated in the devastation of Vientiane and the deportation of the population after the revolt of Cao Anu against the domination of Bangkok. Although this story dwells painfully in the collective memory of the Lao, including the royal government and the historian Maha Sila, solidarity and creating an multi-ethnic society with equal rights for all nationalities (cf. Ireson and Ireson 1991). The national census of 2000 distinguished 49 ethnic groups, distributed between the four ethno-linguistic categories Lao-Thai, Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien and Sino-Tibetan. However, the toponyms Lao Lum (“Lao of the valley”), Lao Thoeng (“Lao of the mountain slopes”) and Lao Sung (“Lao of the mountain tops”) – an assimilatoric classification already established in the fifties and officially abandoned today – are still widely used in Laos (cf. Vatthana 2006).
the Siamese get off lightly in comparison with the Vietnamese. That is no surprise, since Thailand was the most important military partner of the royal government next to the US when fighting the communists backed by North Vietnam (cf. Evans 2003).

- Khmer: The Khmer only play a role in the chapter of Cao Fa Ngum. Fa Ngum brought with him from his exile in Angkor a strong army and the Buddhist culture personified by monks and scholars – the basis of the Lao civilisation. Beyond this cultural affinity there is no hint concerning relations between Lao and Khmer and no mention of the political situation in Cambodia up to the end of 1969.35

The description of the different rulers

The choice of seven “important” Lao kings was the result of deliberation. The share of pages of each chapter may reflect the importance of the different kings in the text:

a) Fa Ngum (1316–1374): 7 pages
b) Sam Saen Thai (1356–1415): >2 pages
c) Suvanna Banlang (r. 1478–1490): 4 pages
d) Phothisalalat (r. 1501–1550): 3 pages
e) Sai Setthathilat (no years of reign given)36: 3 pages
f) Sulinyavongsa (r. 1637–1694): 2 pages
g) Phacao Anu (r. 1804–1828): 4 pages
h) French rule: 1 page

35 When the brochure was published (1 January 1970) Cambodia was not yet directly involved in the second Indochina war. In spite of secret American bombings in the sparsely populated provinces in the Cambodian Northeast to disturb the North Vietnamese “Ho-Chi-Minh Trail,” the kingdom of Cambodia kept its neutrality. This did not change until Norodom Sihanouk was overthrown by the pro-U.S. military in March 1970.

36 According to most historical sources Sai Setthathilat’s reign is dated from 1548 until 1571. See Stuart-Fox 198: 148.
“Important Kings of Laos”

Remark: Some of the dates refer to the life span of the rulers, some to the time of reign (Lao: latchakan, Skt. rāja-kāla). Both Buddhist (a, b, c, f) and Christian (d, g) eras are used. There is no recognisable logic behind it. Certain carelessness by the revising editors may be assumed.

By which criteria was this choice made from many more Lao kings (cf. the list of Lao rulers in Stuart-Fox 1998)? Why these seven “great and important” kings and not others? The following analysis of each characterisation of the rulers will give some explanation:

a) Phacao Fa Ngum: Father of the Lao nation.

This is by far the longest chapter. Here, the founder of Lan Sang is celebrated as the unifier of the obviously fragmented and warring Lao müang. Fa Ngum appears as a strong ruler with intelligence and far-sightedness which are reflected by his success in battle. The main point here is the military enterprises of Fa Ngum, though the introduction of Theravada Buddhism (via Cambodia) is also mentioned.37 In the cartoon, Fa Ngum is not described as greedy for power but as filled with the noble desire to unite Laos.38 Thus he appears as a forerunner of Suvanna Phuma in his aspiration for Lao unity. Moreover, Fa Ngum’s route to victory appears quite linear, as the map on page 2 suggests (from south to north): Starting point Angkor Thom, Pak Kop (Champassak), Müang Viang (Vientiane), Pha Nam Hung, Siang Thòng (Luang Prabang). The borders of the kingdom (from Stung Treng in Cambodia to Sipsòng Panna in China, from Dalat in the south of Vietnam to Khorat and Chiang Mai in Thailand) are not drawn on the map – unlike maps in today’s Lao National Museum.39

37 The Khmer origin of Lao Buddhism is a myth as Theravada Buddhism did not get its roots deep into Lao society prior to the mid-fifteenth century, when Buddhist monks from Lan Na came to Laos to spread the new religion (Grabowsky 2007).
38 Fa Ngum’s image as the charismatic founder of the first united Lao kingdom is still propagated by the official Lao historiography in present-day Laos (see Ministry of Information and Culture 2002).
39 This map and another one, showing the political situation in the early eighteenth century after the disintegration of Lan Sang, are obviously based on a Thai map showing the borders of the administrative circles (monthon) of the central Mekong basin. See the “historical” maps reproduced in Phuthòng 2000: 13, 33, and 56.
The conquest of Vientiane is presented with more complexity by Maha Sila, who mentions two cities. According to his account, Phanya Pao did not entrench himself in Vientiane but in the sister town of Viang Kham. Obviously the cartoon tries to suggest that the conquest of Vientiane was the result of extraordinary military tactics, so that its establishment can indirectly be traced back to Fa Ngum. There is no reference to the fact that already in the middle of the fourteenth century, the Lao had settled on both banks of the Mekong (e.g. in the region of Nong Khai and Udonthani). This could have been done out of consideration for their Thai allies, and thus indicates that the Lao Royal Government accepted the borders with her western neighbour.

In the cartoon, Fa Ngum’s inglorious end – his deposal by the aristocracy and the subsequent banishment as a result of the king’s increasingly autocratic rule (Maha Sila 2001: 48) – is not examined in detail, as mention of Fa Ngum’s downfall surely would have tainted his image as founder of the Lan Sang kingdom.

Finally, we would like to refer to some political guidelines Fa Ngum is said to have taught his subjects. The cartoon says how the king warns of enemy attacks and advises the people to bring him all relevant information. In the Phongsawadan Lao, Fa Ngum also stresses the importance of the common defence of the realm (Maha Sila 2001: 44–45). However, the appeal to collective spying is missing. Presumably the editors of the cartoon modified Fa Ngum’s principles with regard to North Vietnamese activities in Lao territory in order to make the population more sensitive to the perceived external threat.

b) Phacao Sam Saen Thai: the king who created the Lao nation.

This section deals with King Sam Saen Thai’s administrative reforms to consolidate an overexpanded kingdom (due to Fa Ngum’s conquests). The first Lao census (sam saen thai: 300,000 Tai/commoners) is credited to this king. The pamphlet introduces here the modern term “nation” (sat, Skt.: jāti) and interprets the kingdom of Lan Sang as a nation-state embodied in a powerful military, and tax and public education systems. One is reminded of Benedict Anderson’s (1988) and Thongchai Winichakul’s (1994) observation that taking a census was in many cases a prerequisite for any viable nation-state. Significantly, Sam Saen Thai is depicted in
front of the Lao national flag before 1975. Maha Sila only reports the census: the national interpretation of the Lao müang of Lan Sang is doubtless a product of nationalist discourse in Laos with its focus on the historical rooting of the present Lao nation-state.

Above all, the description of the military organisation is more detailed in the cartoon than in Maha Sila’s presentation. The glorification of the Lao military power pervades the whole text like a red thread. The army is socially and ideologically valorised – something that is understandable in times of war.

c) Suvanna Banlang: Conqueror of the Vietnamese.

Sam Saen Thai’s reign was followed by a time of internal disturbances which did not end before the middle of the fifteenth century. In 1479, the invasion by the Vietnamese (the pejorative term kaeo is used throughout the text) presented a great challenge for Lan Sang. This attack, also mentioned in contemporary Chinese sources (Ming Shilu), almost put an end to the existence of the Lao müang. In accordance with traditional Lao historiography (cf. Maha Sila 2001), victory over the hated Vietnamese is credited to the bravery of a young Lao prince who was able to reorganise Lan Sang as the “ruler of the golden throne”.

The escalation of the conflict had its origin in an argument about a white elephant that had been given to the Lao king Cakkaphat by one of his vassals. In the cartoon, the Vietnamese king claims this symbol of sovereignty and power but is opposed by the Lao upahat. The upahat provokes him by sending him a box with elephant dung, so the Vietnamese mobilise their troops and attack Laos. This story is largely similar to the Phongsawadan Lao. Maha Sila, though, writes that the Vietnamese ruler just planned to show the elephant to his people for a limited time (Maha Sila 2001: 56–58). It is obvious that the editors of the booklet wanted to describe the Vietnamese king as an arrogant aggressor. The devastation of Luang

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40 The flag shows the emblem of the Lao monarchy: a white three-headed elephant under a nine-tired parasol.
41 For Ming Shilu (The Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty) as an invaluable source of Southeast Asian history see Wade (2000).
42 This was an important precondition for the later rise of Lan Sang at the beginning of the sixteenth century.
Prabang by the Vietnamese and the counterstrike by the Lao prince is presented spectacularly. Moreover, the contribution of Lan Na to the “anti-Viet liberation struggle” is not mentioned.

The Vietnamese enemy of the royal Lao government is highlighted in this chapter. This may explain why the chapter on King Suvanna Banlang runs over four pages. The position of the Vietnamese kings is now occupied by communist North Vietnam. The cartoon even illustrates Vietnamese soldiers shooting at (Lao) women and children. Note that a recently published popular illustrated history of important Lao kings and revolutionary personalities deals with Suvanna Banlang’s reign in just three lines, without even mentioning the Vietnamese invasion.43

d) Phacao Photihsalalat Cao: “Solidarity is the source of power”.

Under this ruler, Lan Sang was consolidated as a Buddhist kingdom44 and as a regional power on an equal footing with Vietnam and Ayutthaya (Siam) respecting Lao sovereignty. In the cartoon, Vietnam in particular appears as a submissive neighbour sending gifts to the Lao king – the antithesis to the relation of Laos and Vietnam in the year 1970. The influence of Laos then reached to Chiang Mai, and Maha Sila describes Cao Phothisalalat as a self-confident king who even sought confrontation with Ayutthaya.45 In contrast, the cartoon describes this as mere defence of Laos and deals with the episode only roughly. We suppose that former conflicts with Siam were a critical issue for the RLG allied with Thailand, a situation also reflected in the subsequent chapter on Cao Anu.

A large illustration with a comparatively detailed text is dedicated to Phothisalalat’s spectacular death during an elephant hunt.46 The intention of the

43 “In A.D. 1478, Thao Thaen Kham ascended to the throne before his father’s death, because at that time his father (i.e., King Chakkapha Phaen Phaeo) was very ill. After ascension to the throne, the ministers and councillors bestowed upon him the name ‘PhaCao Suvanna Banlang’. The king ruled the country (ban-muang) only seven years when he died in the year A.D. 1485 at the age of 41” (Phuthông 2000: 21).
44 Institutionalised Buddhism was promoted and the still widespread phi-cults were opposed.
45 In this context the mention of the selfless support of Thakaek should be understood as emphasis on the ideal of the loyalty of Lao vassals.
46 The official Lao historiography (Ministry of Information and Culture 2000: 179) just mentions that the king died because of an unspecified accident.
editors here is not clear. Perhaps a dramatic scene was required for the cartoon, a scene which could somehow be embellished.

In this chapter the successor of Phothisalalat appears: his son Setthawangso, better known by his royal name Phacao Sai Setthathilat. According to Maha Sila he was called to the throne of Chiang Mai because the ruler there had died without male offspring. The cartoon ignores this detail and explains the reverence towards the prince as resulting from the power of his father’s kingdom. The chaotic situation – close to civil war – in Chiang Mai (cf. Wyatt 1984: 81–82) remains unmentioned.

e) Phacao Sai Setthathilat: the king who erected temples and conquered the Burmese.

In the first illustration the statue of Setthathilat, erected in 1957, sits in front of the That Luang. The artist exercises interpretive freedom in placing Hồ Pha Kaeo beside it. This building was erected by this popular king to house the Emerald Buddha. Today both buildings embody the capital of Vientiane as the center of the Lao nation.

The theme of this chapter is the defensive fight against the Burmese, who are portrayed as wild hordes. The fact that Burma, unlike Siam, was never able to conquer Lan Sang completely and was finally forced to leave Lao territory is extolled as a great victory. However, one should notice the fact that the three Tai kingdoms of Lan Sang, Lan Na and Ayutthaya were unable to resist the Burmese expansion because of internal disputes. Setthathilat resorted to guerilla tactics, with which he successfully repulsed the Burmese invaders from his kingdom. Perhaps this is a subtle reference to the Hmong “secret army” of Vang Pao – supported by the suspiciously frequent appearance of the characteristic Hmong head dress in the cartoon. Moreover, loyalty to the king in times of crisis is propagated, something which is especially evident in the historically questionable illustration of a Lao group praying and presenting offerings to an image of Setthathilat.
As in the case of Fa Ngum, the reader does not learn about the end of Setthathilat. However, to this day it remains obscure how the king found his death. Instead, this chapter concludes with slogans for the continued resistance of the Lao population, which is therewith called to defend the nation according to the example of Setthathilat and to stay loyal to the king. The North Vietnamese are mentioned explicitly as the aggressors against which the people must resist alongside the king and the army.

f) Phacao Sulinyavongsa: the last great king of Laos in ancient times.

As mentioned before, the era of Sulinyavongsa was characterised by a long epoch of peace. In addition, visitors (Marini, van Wuysthoff) from Europe arrived and were impressed by Lao culture and civilisation. The end of this epoch is dealt with quite briefly, though, because it is not very impressive from a military point of view. And it is indeed this military aspect which counts for the editors of the brochure. There is only a reference to the consolidation of the army as the basis of the prosperity of Lan Sang under Sulinyavongsa.

In that time Laos was on an equal footing with Vietnam and Siam – presumably an ideal image also for the Lao rulers of 1970 particularly because Laos was increasingly squeezed between its more powerful neighbours. Another reference to the Indochinese war is the comment about the protection of the border with Vietnam. It implies that in 1970 the royal government identified the intrusion of North Vietnamese soldiers into Lao territory as the main problem of the political situation of the time.

The decisive stain on the glorious image of Sulinyavongsa – his authorisation of the execution of his own son and only successor because of adultery – remains unmentioned, although (or perhaps because) this was the first step of the disintegration of Lan Sang.

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47 Maha Sila (2001: 85) tells of an ambush against Setthathilat at Müang Ongkan. The location of Müang Ongkan is still not discussed. Was it situated on Cambodian territory or should it be identified with Attapü as some scholars suggest (Phuthông 2000: 36)?

48 For the North-Vietnamese military recruitment and training activities on Lao territory see Goscha (2004) and Vatthana (2008).
g) Phacao Anu: Fighter for regaining the freedom and unity of the kingdom.

Stressed here is the patriotic goal – Lao freedom and independence – of this probably most tragic Lao king. Cao Anu (r. 1804–1828) managed to raise Vientiane to the position of most powerful vassal of Bangkok. However, his attempt to re-establish independence not only of his own principality but of all Lao mūang failed. The anti-Siamese direction of his policies is not really accentuated in the cartoon, unlike his futile diplomatic negotiations after a successful Siamese counter-offensive. Here Cao Anu appears as a diplomatic strategist characterised by farsightedness and willingness to compromise (cf. Evans 2003: 105). However, such an interpretation reflects wishful thinking rather than historical reality. And it is in stark contrast to present-day Lao historiography, which stresses Cao Anu's image as a fearless and battle-hardened warrior (Souneth 2002, Houmphan 2003). Important Kings of Laos considers the use of military means as the last choice after all other options had failed. To highlight Cao Anu’s image as a diplomat, his son Latsavong Ngao acts as a warrior. The role of king Manthathulat, the ruler of Luang Prabang, is interesting as well. His neutrality is excused with the indication of the threat to Luang Prabang from Burmese troops. This description is contrary to Maha Sila’s (1957) and present-day Lao historiography, where the treacherous “stab” by Manthathulat is stressed. The cartoon depicts a sanitized version of Cao Anu's end.

49 An illustration on page 21 shows him contemplating a map depicting the whole of mainland Southeast Asia with the single inscription “Siam”.

50 Mayouri and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn (1998), in their analysis of Cao Anu from Lao perspective, paint a contradicting image of the last king of Vientiane, who on the one hand bravely resisted the Siamese supremacy and on the other hand disciplined his troops harshly. Moreover, Maha Sila writes in his first edition of his Phongsawadan Lao (1957), which is much more detailed with regards to Cao Anu, how the Vietnamese ruler instead of supporting Cao Anu militarily recommended him a (never accomplished) visit of apology to Bangkok. This diplomatic effort of Vietnam remains unmentioned in the cartoon because they would emphasise Cao Anu’s inconsiderate behaviour due to damaged pride.

51 The official history of Laos, authorised by the LPRP (Ministry of Information and Culture 2000), dedicates a large chapter to the reign of Cao Anu and his “righteous struggle for liberation” against the “Siamese feudalists” (pp. 379–460). A propagandistic brochure about the “200 years of the great battle” of the Lao against Siamese supremacy, published during the Lao-Thai border conflicts in the 1980s, shows a map with the main military operations during the years 1827 and 1828. This map not only identifies Northeast-Thailand (Isan) as part of the Lao political and cultural space but also North-Thailand (Chiang Mai). The legend of the map says: “The Lao troops [of] Lan Na, tributary to Siam, were recruited by force to support Siam (thük bangkhap ken suai sanyam)”. Regarding the position of Luang Prabang the brochure states that a couple of thousand soldiers were sent to support Siam.
Instead of sitting in a cage, humiliated by the Siamese, he appears here guarded by two soldiers with his head proudly raised – without signs of aggression or revanchism.

h) The French colonial period is dealt with very briefly, probably because the anti-colonial movement was not led by any “heroic Lao king”. The reader receives almost no information about this time, except the reference to the memory of the merits of the old kings regarding the unity and greatness of Laos – a memory that was essential for the later re-establishment of independence. There are no explanations about colonial politics. Obviously the reader was not to get a chance to make the comparison to the American presence with its military advisors and U.S. aid.

i.) A large number of rulers have been left unrecorded in the genealogy of “heroic kings”. Between 1416 and 1442 not less than nine kings are mentioned in the Lao annals but most of them had been on the throne for very short periods of time, notably during the Queen Maha Thewi’s “reign of terror” in the 1430s. The last three decades of the sixteenth and first three decades of the seventeenth century had also seen short-lived reigns of nine more kings of whom very little is known from historical records. Since the main purpose of the cartoon was the promotion of national unity and the glorification of resistance against foreign invaders, no Lao ruler of any of the three successor states of the Lan Sang kingdom (Luang Prabang, Vientiane, and Luang Prabang) was considered worth of being depicted as “heroic king”, apart from Cao Anu for reasons explained above.

Conclusion

The cartoon analysed here describes chosen Lao kings as outstanding protagonists of the Lao struggle for sovereignty, unity and independence. They are characterised as dynamic and daring heroes. Thus we may conclude that they were to serve as models for the Lao youth. The glorification of the kings is attained by different means, for example by the frequent use of words referring to bravery and

self-sacrifice for the people and homeland (ka-han, ong-at etc.). The Lao kings personally participate in battle at the risk of their lives. Accordingly, the great victory over the Vietnamese invaders in the fifteenth century was explained with the “resolute bravery” (khwam ka-han det diao) of Suvanna Banlang, which strengthened the morale of the troops.

Even where the military aspect for the historical judgment of a ruler is of secondary importance (as for Phothisalalat), the cartoon stresses the audacity of the king. King Phothisalalat was famous for his skills in catching wild elephants. Lacking greater military challenges, finds his death when pursuing this sport. In the case of Soulinyavongsa, however, his peaceful reign is characterized as a time of economic and cultural prosperity. The king appears as an “elder statesman” caring for the well-being of his people.52

In addition, the glorification of the kings is realised by iconographic means. The kings are mostly represented at younger age as resolute, sometimes fierce-looking heroic figures with striking features. This is also the case with Cao Anu, who reached the apex of his power only at an advanced age. King Sulinyavongsa is an exception here. His long reign (almost 60 years) was completely peaceful according to the old chronicles, and is dealt with only briefly in the cartoon. His face reminds one more of an intellectual or poet than a warrior. There is a striking physical resemblance to images of the Siamese poet king Rama II (r. 1809–1824).

The veneration and loyalty (khwam conghak phakdi) of the people is a prominent leitmotif of the text. The people even called Fa Ngum to ascend the throne. And although king Setthathilat had abandoned Vientiane to organise the guerilla war against the Burmese invaders in the middle of the sixteenth century, the population of the city did not accept cooperation with the occupying power, but instead remained loyal to the king. Moreover, the text implies that Laos at present has still the potential to regain its former greatness. The memory of the heroic kings was to stimulate bravery and solidarity – two attributes that in retrospect rather were limited to the revolutionaries in the north of Laos.

52 This narrative is still present in contemporary Lao historiography. Yet, in the newly built Army Museum, King Soulinyavongsa appears on an oil painting as commander of the troops who took advantage of the lack of military confrontation to consolidate and train his army.
The fateful question is posed: Are the Lao people strong, loyal and righteous enough to resist the “enemy”? In the Buddhist context this question appears as a question of the collective karma of an entire people. Like Suvanna Banlang, who, as an emanation of the religious merit (bun) of the Lao (cf. p. 11), could successfully fight the Vietnamese, the royal government will be able to protect the country – as long as the Lao people hold to essential virtues like national solidarity and loyalty to the king.

The portrayal of the Vietnamese as the main enemy of Laos both in the past and the present is striking. What is more, while the Burmese appear as uncivilised looters – unlike the cold-blooded Vietnamese expansionists – conflicts with Siam are rather played down. Such a perspective is quite different the official historiography of contemporary Laos depicting the “Siamese feudalists” (sakdina sanyam) as the main historical enemy whereas the Vietnamese are praised for being a reliable ally for centuries.53 Consequently, Suvanna Banlang is disqualified for the official hero-pantheon of present-day Laos, as his war of resistance against the Vietnamese is in contradiction with the socialist rhetoric of a “special” historical relationship and solidarity between Laos and Vietnam.

Important Kings of the Lao gives consideration to neighbouring Thailand, for which reason the text and two maps lack any revanchism. On the first map (p. 2), showing the thrust of Fa Ngum’s military campaigns, borders – a sensitive issue in the Thai-Lao-relation even today – are totally missing. The second map (p. 20) is designed to show the division of Lan Sang into three partial kingdoms after the death of Sulinyavongsa. It shows, however, the borders of the modern Lao nation-state, and for this reason the map is anachronistic. The historical borders of Vientiane and Champassak, which reached deep into present Thai and Khmer territory, are not even indicated. It seems that at least during its final years the royalist regime considered the geo-body (cf. Thongchai 1995) of Laos as strictly confined to the borders drawn by the colonial powers. There was no territorial

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53 The Ministry of Information and Culture (2000) identifies the “Dai Viet feudalists” (sakdina dai viat) as the antagonist of Suvanna Banlang. It is crucial that this official history mentions the term “Dai Viet” corresponding to the Vietnam of the fifteenth century. In the Lao Marxist historiography, the expansionism of Vietnamese “feudalists” is not regarded as inherent to the character of the Vietnamese people but interpreted as politics against the friendship of the peoples of both countries.
Irredentism discernible towards either Thailand or Vietnam. That is in contrast to what some rightest Lao exile groups seem to advocate. The book entitled “One thousand years of Lao-Vietnamese wars” written in Thai by a Lao scholar in exile, Ngaokaen Kanimkaeo (1999), includes maps showing territorial losses to Vietnam but none concerning the much more substantial losses to Thailand/Siam. One map, reflecting the geo-political situation during the early eighteenth century, recognizes the larger part of Tonkin, sections of Annam, and even the Shan state of Chiang Tung (Kengtung) as part of the Lao lands but not a single place in present-day Thailand (Ngaokaen 1999: 29).

On the other hand, in historical maps displayed in book publications or in museums of the LPDR, the large territories lost to Siam are still acknowledged as “Lao”. Some of these maps even include the eight provinces in the far north of Thailand as “Lao Lan Na” (Ministry of Information and Culture 2000) on the grounds that they once were united with Lan Sang during the reigns of Phothisalalat and Sai Setthathilat in the sixteenth century (see Phuthong 2000: 13, 33). Of course, there is no reason why a map showing the geopolitical constellations during the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries should not be allowed to indicate the then valid political borders. However, our pamphlet does not dare to indicate any historical borders that might hurt the feelings of political elites in neighbouring countries, on whose military and economic support the Vientiane government very much relied. Such an attitude might even resemble self-denial and, at any rate, demonstrates that Lao nationalism during the royalist regime was largely defensive.

Finally, the text is a plea for solidarity among the Lao mūang to protect the sovereignty of the entire Lao nation. Disputes must not be tolerated, as the taking of action without compromise against Vientiane (by Fa Ngum) and Mūang Phuan (by Phothisalalat) clearly demonstrate. Loyalty is emphasised, personified, inter alia, by the ruler of Thakaek, with his support for Phothisalalat against Ayuthaya. The relation to the tragic failure of Suvanna Phuma’s efforts for national unity and neutrality becomes especially obvious in this context. The desired national solidarity is represented most clearly by the final image, which depicts Lao soldiers and monks gathered together harmoniously around the national flag with members of ethnic minorities. The flag with the royal emblem (three-headed white elephant below a
nine-tiered parasol) stands for the national unity of Laos under a common king – an ideal for what the kings in the cartoon fought and died.

Parallels in the historical reconstruction of the cartoon are obvious: It was the threat to Lao independence and unity that prompted most of the Lao kings to take the necessary military measures. Moreover, the cartoon-pamphlet attributes the strategies of modern nation-building to ancient kings like Sam Saen Thai. This is a reflection of the difficult situation of searching for national identity and stability in post-colonial Laos, though through the means of strong propagandistic prejudices.

Now and then, the chosen kings of Lan Sang serve as the tools to boost the status of the respective government and to legitimise its authority as heirs of the great Lao kingdom of Lan Sang. Thus, by erecting monuments of Fa Ngum and other heroic figures of the past, the Lao government today assumes the role of a defender of the Lao nation and traditional Lao culture – at the expense of the ideological construction of a socialist “multi-ethnic Lao people” (pasason lao banda phao) and again marginalizing the minorities in the national discourse. Yet, the ideal of the revolutionary struggle still pervades the official historiography of the LRPR. Because revolutionary criteria have priority within the choice of national heroes, only a careful selection of the former kings seems to be acceptable for the government. The Party increasingly appears to be symbolically close to the abolished monarchy, though. It is still hard to predict to what extent this strategy of self-legitimization by an upgrading of the royal past of Laos might undermine the legitimacy of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

The historiographic and iconographic reconstructions of Lao history and identity that are analysed in this article refer to the search for national heroes in times of social, political, and cultural crisis and change. National heroes may function as outstanding examples for the population, as ancestors of present-day rulers or as representations of central ideas and values of the national identity. In the case of Laos they represent values of traditional Buddhist statecraft (e.g., the ideal of the righteous ruler) as well as modern political and military strategies. This is the core of the relevance of former kings of Lan Sang for the Lao nation-state under the Royal Lao Government and the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party respectively.
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— 2002. ประวัติศาสตร์ของลัมซ้ง (ประวัติศาสตร์การเมืองของลัมซ้อง) 650 ปี (King Fa Ngum: founder of the united kingdom of Lan Sang 650 years ago). Vientiane.


B. In Western Languages


Study of Tourism and Labour in Luang Prabang Province

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Abstract

Luang Prabang is becoming a well-known destination for international tourists. It was officially proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage Property in 1995. Significant increases in tourist arrivals to Luang Prabang have provided opportunities to the residents of Luang Prabang to earn income and increase their knowledge and levels of experience. However, substantial gains were not sustainable due to the lack of qualified labour to supply the booming sector. This article explores the labour market of the tourism industry in Luang Prabang. It is based on 39 in-depth interviews with local people aimed at exploring problems and ways to improve the tourism and labour development in the city. The results suggest the necessity of increases in employment, either through entrepreneurial provision of accommodations, restaurants or tour operator services, or else within indirect tourism-related business. There is a need to upgrade the skills and experience of the labour market to remain competitive and a need to better balance the supply and demand of labour. There is a deficiency in terms of tourism-labour development planning, levels of individual motivation, available budget resources, and the numbers of of qualified people in tourism management in both the private and public sectors. The research findings were used to identify recommendations to strengthen the sustainable development of the labour market and tourism industry in Luang Prabang Province.

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1. Introduction

Luang Prabang is the ancient capital city of the Lan Xang Kingdom (the former kingdom of the Lao PDR) and was established some 1,200 years ago. The Mekong Tourism Investment Submit (MTIS) reported that not more than 20,000 people live in the city of Luang Prabang with a population density of 22/ km²; while the administrative region holds 61,814 households and the population increases annually by about 2.4% (Saphakdy, 2005). Many existing and potential tourist attractions are grouped in the region: representatives of the three major ethnic groups, the ancient city with numerous cultural activities and institutions, significant buildings including the National Museum, Vat Xiengthong, Vat Mai, That Chomsy, Vat Visoun, the Kouangsy Waterfall and Tham Ting. Luang Prabang was officially proclaimed and indexed as a UNESCO World Heritage Property in 1995 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations [UNESCO], 2004). One result of such international recognition has been to bring more and more tourists to the city. In 2002, 65,872 international tourists arrived, which increased to more than 133,569 international visitors in 2005, while local tourists increased from 75,697 in 2002 to 128,381 in 2005. The tourism industry has generated income for the national economy and created job opportunities for Lao people, in particular the residents of Luang Prabang. Tourism agencies, hotels, quest houses and restaurants have been established in response to the tourism boom. Jobs have been created and businesses opened by local and non-local Lao people and also some from overseas (UNESCO, 2004). Most Lao people moved from the agricultural sector into the tourism sector but there is little evidence of any consistent plan behind this movement or in terms of balancing supply and demand for labour.

2. Research Objectives

This study aimed at studying the association between the tourism industry and the labour market in Luang Prabang. The three specific objectives of the study are:

1) To explore the actual circumstances of the labour market of the tourism industry in Luang Prabang.
2) To investigate the challenges, strengths and weaknesses of the current tourism labour market in Luang Prabang.

3) To provide applicable suggestions to ensure the sustainable development of the labour market and tourism industry of Luang Prabang.

3. Literature Review

Tourism has become critical in driving economic development in many countries. Unplanned tourism development can lead to negative impacts both on society as a whole and the labour market in particular. The World Tourism Organization (WTO, n.d.) observed that tourism activities are highly dependent on the availability and quality of labour, which is the key factor in providing services and enhancing quality. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the relationship between tourism and labour.

3.1 Tourism and Labour

Tourism emerged as part of the traveling experience of the economic elites of Europe (Pearce, Morrison, & Rutledge, 1998). Subsequently, the ability to participate in tourism has become greatly broadened and mass market segments have opened, which have had significant impacts on the urban and economic development of major destinations. Tourists may be divided between local and international tourists and the latter category may be considered either international (from any overseas country) or regional (from neighbouring countries, generally making short-stay visits) tourists (Mongkhonvilay, 2005).

The labour market consists of people doing productive work for wages. UNESCO (2004) demonstrated that labour in the tourism sector involved people who are working and getting a certain wage from either or both direct and indirect tourism-related businesses. UNESCO explained that persons with salaried jobs in businesses such as handicraft production, restaurant workers, construction jobs created by the demand for new hotels, guesthouses or the expansion of the airports or other forms of transportation, internet cafes, superior quality shops and so on are engaged in the tourism labour market. WTO (n.d.) declared that tourism activities are highly dependent upon the availability and quality of labour resources. An understanding of
labour tourism markets is thus of primary importance to the tourism industry in both industrialized and developing countries. Subsequently, it is very important to assure a balance of the labour supply and demand for sustainable tourism development.

### 3.2 Job Opportunities and the Structure of the Tourism Labour Market

Tourism contributes to economic growth and job creation (OECD, n.d.). However, Christensen and Nikerson (1995) pointed out that many of these jobs are seasonal or part-time, require low levels of skill and offer wages no better than minimum wage rates. Most jobs are in the lodging industry, restaurants and bar jobs, especially in eating and drinking establishments. Many people get their first job in tourism because of the widespread availability of jobs but there is little job security or opportunity for career progression. However, while wages may be low, they are deemed better than unemployment or unpaid agricultural labour, which are principal alternatives for the Luang Prabang region.

In assessing the labour supply, the analysis normally starts with demographic data (age; income, gender, education, working year, economic activities, occupation, employment status, working scheme, average hours working, and so on (Anonymous, n.d.). According to the Labour Supply Audit (The New Orleans Jobs Initiative, 2003), the training and vocational experiences of workers are to be identified because they can provide information about their skills and potential that illustrates possible future individual career paths. For the demand for labour, it includes factors such as wage levels and earnings, skills, knowledge and abilities (SKAs) of the labour force (Anonymous, n.d.). It is reported in the National Center for Human Resource Development (NCHRD) in 2005 that there is a high demand for skilled labour since such persons can improve sales and competitiveness.

### 3.3 Tourism Management and Labour Development

Yamauchi and Lee (1999) argued for governmental intervention to help promote the tourism industry on the basis of its national culture and the natural environment. In this regard, the Lao government (GoL) has launched a program of infrastructure maintenance and installation, including road construction, telecommunications,
electricity and water supply, airports, hotels, restaurants, tourism sites, and the supply of foodstuffs and souvenirs. This is intended to assist all tourists and tourism-related businesses. At the same time, the GoL has taken into account human development, regional cultural preservation and environmental protection to make Luang Prabang unique and appealing as a long-term tourism destination (UNESCO, 2004). UNESCO also observed that proper planning should be accompanied by collaboration from relevant stakeholders, for instance the local community should be able to access information and contribute their efforts and know-how to tourism planning and management processes. There should also be collaboration from other stakeholders, including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), regional authorities, tourists and other private entities (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, n.d). Their participation helps in ensuring appropriate decision making in strengthening both tourism and labour development.

The processes of human resource development have become well-established. Human resources (HR) benefit from training and development (T&D) and undergo monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to determine progress and potential. Bohlander and Snell (2004) suggested M&E on the basis of participation and reaction to T&D. This form of systematic development is necessary if development of the tourism industry is to meet its potential in Luang Prabang.

4. Research Methodology

This research is based on a qualitative approach with a focus on naturally occurring events (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach helps create a holistic picture that reveals complexity and probes deeper into the observations made (Prongjit, 2006). Both secondary and primary data were used. Secondary data informed the primary data collection process and was also used to interrogate the findings. The primary data collection was carried out through face-to-face interviews and direct observations. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews in the city of Luang Prabang. The sampling design of this study was non-probability, meaning the targeted samples did not have an equal chance of being selected (see Table 1 below).
Table 1: Interviewing Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourism–Related Organizations</th>
<th>Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and Guesthouses</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour Operators</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives from Tourism Office, Department of Labour, Universities and NGOs.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-nine personal in-depth interviews were conducted with relevant individuals using convenience, networking and snowball methods of locating respondents. They included business tourism-related entrepreneurs, employees, tourists and also officers working in the tourism authorities (the Provincial Tourism Authority in Luang Prabang, University, and the Department of Labour in Luang Prabang) and relevant NGOs based in Luang Prabang, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV). The interviews employed both structured and semi-structured questionnaires because the authors had prepared a set of questions for use in interviews while encouraging respondents to explore issues and perspectives that were unique to their own position. Each interview took around an hour to complete. The collected information was transcribed, coded, processed and analyzed using a content analysis approach, which measures the semantic content of a communication to diagnose the findings of both primary and secondary data (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Tourist Profile in Luang Prabang

The GoL has been promoting international tourism in Laos since 1989. The total number of tourists has consequently increased, especially foreign tourists (see Table 2)
A majority of tourists were from the United Kingdom, Thailand, Germany, Australia and the United States of America. The UK had the highest number of tourists, while Thai tourists were becoming increasingly important, being 15% of the total in 2005, which was a significant rise from 2004. According to interviews, most of the international tourists enjoyed ecotourism, cycling, elephant riding, boating, hiking and home stays with local people in the targeted tourist sites. The tourists were apparently willing to recommend their families, relatives and friends to visit Luang Prabang. Some noted that they planned to visit Luang Prabang again for their holidays in the future. A couple of tourists from UK said that:

“We have been very impressed while visiting and staying in Luang Prabang. It is quiet, has a good atmosphere, and the people are friendly. We like the temples, and historical arts. Of course, we will recommend to our relatives and friends to visit here for their holidays and come here again as it is good value.”

Luang Prabang was also popular with Lao tourists because of the history and culture associated with the region, see Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Tourists</th>
<th>Number of Tourists Yearly in Luang Prabang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>75,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>65,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141,569</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Based upon the information provided by the Provincial Tourism Authority (PTA) in Luang Prabang (2006), it was found that a majority of tourists (33% and 26%) anticipated spending their holidays in Luang Prabang for two and three nights respectively. Some tourists explained during interviews that they planned to explore the natural environment and expected to relax longer in the peaceful surroundings of
Luang Prabang. Some intended to learn about ethnic minority cultures in the area. Hence, they wanted to stay longer.

The largest proportion of tourists (64%) chose to stay at the cheapest accommodations, costing less than $10 per night, while 25% preferred to stay at mid-priced accommodation at from $11 to $120 per night and the remainder chose luxury hotels costing more than $120 per night (PTA, 2006). Clearly, tourists arrive in Luang Prabang with a variety of interests and expectations. Consequently, now Laos as well as Luang Prabang has been moving from a command economy to a market economy, Lao organizations must create market-based HR and customer satisfaction mechanisms from scratch. Certainly, it is necessary for workers to be prepared to provide a variety of service levels and flexibility.

5.2 The Labour Market of Luang Prabang: Business Entrepreneur Creation

According to interviews, entrepreneurs understood that an increasing tourism sector provided them with opportunities to invest in various businesses. This coincided with the statistical evidence depicted by the Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA, 2006), which confirmed that the tourism industry of Luang Prabang has direct effects on entrepreneur creation, especially in the hotel and guesthouse industry, as well as on restaurants and tourism agencies:

- **Hotel entrepreneurs:** local and foreign entrepreneurs have been increasingly investing in hotel businesses. Hotels in Luang Prabang increased from 14 units in 2002 to 18 units by 2006. There were three types of owners: privately owned, joint ventures (JVs) and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). The most significant percentage (56%) of the hotel business is privately-owned, 11% is owned by the foreign investors, 6% is owned by the GoL, and 27% are JVs shared by the GoL, local residents and foreign investors, who are mostly British, French or Hong Kong Chinese. Some of the SOE/JV hotel managers reported that since they already had hotel and hospitality management skills and experience, they had faced few problems. They operated their businesses with a customer-oriented focus. As one hotel manager observed:
“I am the owner and manager of this hotel. I have been working in this area for more than 20 years. I started working and learning from experience since I studied overseas. Certainly, the experience and knowledge gained from my study and previous jobs helped me a lot in managing my business as well as working with the employees. Thus, it is not very difficult for me to be successful here.”

- **Guesthouse entrepreneurs:** tourism development in Luang Prabang has also had an effect on the local guesthouse sector. Guesthouses are the largest provider of accommodation in Luang Prabang. There were 114 entities in 2002 and 146 entities in 2005, with 134 guesthouses officially registered in 2006 (LNTA, 2006). Almost 99% of guesthouses were family-based businesses run by local entrepreneurs. According to interviews, some entrepreneurs owned several guesthouses simultaneously. One interviewee, who was the General Manager of the Inter-Lao Tourism Operator in Luang Prabang, remarked that most guesthouse entrepreneurs have their own land, houses or other buildings and might provide resources to others to help start their own businesses. It was observed that many new guesthouses were also under construction. It appeared that some guesthouses were capable of offering only two or three rooms to visitors, with a cost of around $3-$5. The low level of revenue available helps explain why some guesthouses have not yet been officially registered. Most guesthouse entrepreneurs appeared to run their businesses according to experience - meaning that they did not have specific managerial skills, but they were learning from doing. Nevertheless, an increase in this sector had led to an increase in employment, as had been predicted by Christensen and Nikerson (1995).

- **Restaurant entrepreneurs:** From 2002 to 2005 the number of restaurants increased from 58 to 102 units; with 12 restaurants officially registered. All were privately-owned. Around 67% of the restaurants were owned by foreign investors, with a minimum capital investment of $10,000-50,000, as well as minimum
turnover of $3,000-20,000 (LNTA, 2006). The remaining 33% were operated by local entrepreneurs, with the lowest capital investment of $2,500-5,000 and the lowest turnover of $500-1,000. Foreign-owned restaurants, therefore, appeared to have more competitive power than locally-owned ones. Based on interviews, it was found that a number of restaurants were recently established (within the past four or five months) and were being run by new entrepreneurs. Some had expanded into branches owned by existing entrepreneurs. For example, the Indo-China restaurant and two pizza restaurants had their own branches, owned by a Thai entrepreneur married to a local Luang Prabang woman. They also planned to open a spa business in the near future. The number of restaurants was expected to increase further in the future as the number of the tourists would also increase, according to an officer’s statement at the PTA. This will lead to higher employment in the sector. As competition in the city increases, it is hoped that the level of service and quality of food will also increase.

- **Tour Operation Entrepreneurs:** there were 24 tour operators in 2006, as compared to 13 in 2002. However, according to the PTA, a lack of technical capacity means it is not possible to provide accurate ownership details. Tour operators focused on such areas as traditional tourism, ecotourism, ticketing and accommodation. In addition, local entertainment facilities increased from three in 2004 to seven in 2005 (with an unknown number of unofficial facilities). These also offer generally low-skilled and low-paid jobs, although some do have better prospects.

The tourism industry has, therefore, contributed to the growth of employment and entrepreneurialism in the city, as well as foreign direct investment. There have been positive externalities associated with these changes but it is not clear that there are any mechanisms for ensuring long-term and sustainable change in the labour market. Should external environmental shocks cause tourism numbers to decline, in other words, it would be followed by decreases in employment and business revenue.
5.3 The Labour Market of Luang Prabang: Employment Opportunities

In addition to the sectors described above, it was clear that other activities had also been stimulated by increased tourism. This included personal transportation services, such as aviation, buses, cars, taxis and tuk-tuk services. Additional areas included internet cafés, spas and massage businesses, construction, food and the production of souvenirs and handicrafts. These activities should certainly be included within the overall tourism sector (UNESCO, 2004).

According to employment statistics provided by the manager of the Department of Labour in Luang Prabang, 5,389 people (1,310 were women) were employed in privately-owned tourism-related enterprises in 2005. The growth rate of employment was 1.5 % per annum above the overall rate for the private sector. He continued:

“The workers are paid in accordance with the agreement between employers and employees, and the labour policy of Laos. The minimum wage policy of Laos for each individual worker is $27 per month. This policy is reviewed and adjusted with reference to the realistic conditions of the social and economic situation of the country”.

According to the PTA, the largest source of employment in the private sector was in hotel enterprises (See Table 3). The hotels employed 685 local people (376 females and 309 males) and 30 expatriates (7 females and 23 males). The expatriates were mostly from France, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, England, Germany and Vietnam. Guesthouses were second in size, with 676 local employees (302 females and 374 males) and three male expatriate workers. Restaurants occupied third place, with employment for 233 local people (95 females and 135 males). Lastly, the tour agencies employed 185 local people (55 females and 130 males). These figures are incomplete. However, it is clear that the majority of new employment opportunities registered have gone to men rather than women.
Table 3: Tourism Employment in Private Enterprises in Luang Prabang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprises</th>
<th>Local Employments</th>
<th>Expatriate Employments</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guesthouses</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>374</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour Operators</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PTA of Luang Prabang 2006.

Interviews revealed that many new businesses relied on the managerial skills of the expatriates. Most expatriates were employed in managerial positions, such as general managers and marketing and finance; whereas most of the local people were employed in operational jobs, for example as housekeeping supervisors, frontline supervisors, cooks, maids, waiting staff and similar positions. This practice was assumed to bring advantages for local entrepreneurs as they were able to enhance their business performance due to the experienced and innovative competencies of the expatriates. However, this also suggests that there remain inadequately qualified human resources sufficient for managerial jobs.

Some persons from minority groups were also employed in the tourism industry. This included people from areas remote to Luang Prabang, people from ethnic minorities and both young and elderly persons. These persons were mostly involved in the production and retail of Lao-themed souvenirs and hand-made inventions like bed sheets and covers; scarves, pillow cases, handmade aprons, silks, lamps made of recycled paper and silver products, among others. These products may be found in every part of Luang Prabang but most commonly at the night market, which is crowded every evening with tourists and vendors. Numerous Luang Prabang residents also attempt to generate earnings from tourism-related businesses at the night market. Many employees of local government offices and private companies, for example, used their spare time to trade in the night market or similar venues. The Manager of the Department of Finance in Luang Prabang declared that the tourism industry had significantly contributed to the income generation of the province. Total revenue in the
four main sectors increased from $3,059,110 in 2002 to $5,097,742 in 2005 (Department of Finance of Luang Prabang, 2006). This is an important source of income.

5.4 The Labour Market of Luang Prabang: Labour Characteristics

The tourism labour market in Luang Prabang is seasonal. More people are employed during the high season, which lasts from September to May (prior to the rainy season). Those who were employed tended to be those with some sort of educational qualification, especially those who had completed high school or had a vocational school certificate, preferably majoring in business administration, accounting or English. Many combine studying with part-time work. Such people are found in hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and entertainment venues. Business owners interviewed repeated that it was compulsory for employees to be able to communicate in English. It was also necessary that they be honest. Other skills could be learned on the job. Tour operators preferred to hire employees who were motivated and healthy, with a good service orientation, a high level of responsibility and specific knowledge of tourism and of working in related businesses. Other useful attributes included good historical and cultural knowledge, the ability to swim and, again, English language ability. These tended not, therefore, to be entry level jobs.

It was also observed that, although demand for labour was high in a developing industry, wage rates remained stubbornly low. One employee working at a restaurant said that:

“*We are unskilled workers. We do not have power to bargain for better wages. Some employees are paid hourly, so they are not paid when they are sick. Some employees get a monthly salary with a sick leave compensation of $20-$30 per year. But we have to accept such a job opportunity as this. Otherwise, we do not know what else to do.*”

This is consistent with Christensen and Nikerson (1995), who argued that entry-level jobs in tourism tended to be seasonal, part-time and of low compensation. It was also found that those workers in hotels and tour agencies tended to get better job offers
than those in guesthouses, restaurants and entertainment facilities. Interviewees reported that employees in hotels and tour agencies tended to receive paid annual leave and bonuses on notable days such as the Lao New Year. However, other employees had their jobs terminated during the low season or else their working hours and wages were reduced. In these cases, motivation was lower and so too was commitment.

5.5 The Labour Market of Luang Prabang: Labour Development and Management

Employers and managers claimed that they provided both in-house training and off-site training for at least some of their employees. The former was generally offered to new hires and served as orientation to basic on-the-job methods. Supervisors or senior managers within the companies concerned usually provided this form of training. In restaurants and accommodation sectors, new employees were instructed to observe the other workers and then replicate what they did. Immediate feedback was generally made available. As competition has increased to some extent, it has become more important to place responsibility on skill development among employees. In a few cases, off-site training courses were offered. However, these were generally considered to be too expensive and, also, there were problems with access. It was thought that productivity gains did not justify such expenditure. One hotel and restaurant manager observed that:

“We used to invite trainers from the Luang Prabang Tourism Office or elsewhere to train our employees at our workplace for about one or two weeks for the last few years. The training courses were mostly related to housekeeping, front office, general services and so on. After that, internal training programs were to be supervised by our internal managers or seniors. We think most supervisors/managers should be able to transfer knowledge to their subordinates. Thus, we did not think we need to pay another high cost for external trainers, especially as employees often left for other jobs with higher wages after working with us for a while.”
The organisation of T&D tended to be a top-down approach, with employees rarely involved in the identification of needs or possible solutions. The practice was considered to be a cost rather than an investment and there was little effort to establish a long-term career development path. When T&D was conducted, it was generally to overcome a short-term lack of skills. Off-site training occurred rarely and, when it did happen, it was the result of co-operation between the PTA and the local branches of NGOs. Two sessions of training are held annually and the cost to employers is subsidized. Sessions were well-organized and took a systematic approach to employee development and focused on specific areas such as food preparation, flower decoration, handling complaints and improving services. However, there is a resource constraint on the training available and this is partly alleviated by the low level of advertising – many respondents, for example, were unaware that the sessions were taking place. In other cases, it was felt the sessions were held too far away or during the high season.

Some businesses sent employees for on-site training elsewhere in Luang Prabang or otherwise in Vientiane, particularly the famous tourism site at Vang Vieng. Employees could receive practical training in English and French, as well as bookkeeping and computer skills. Training was also sought in maintenance, first aid, cross-cultural issues, cultural and environmental preservation. Some employees might be sent to partner organisations in Vientiane or to Pattaya in Thailand for 30-45 days per year as a type of working visit. In larger organisations, the managers themselves wished to participate in such training sessions. Further, they might also visit other, perhaps competing businesses, in order to observe how employees there performed, what level of skill they had and how they compared with their own staff.

However, the state of T&D in the Luang Prabang tourism market may be described as pragmatic, only partly organized and lacking in planning and vision.

6. Challenges

According to interviews, challenges facing the tourism industry in Luang Prabang included migrant labour issues, weak management, low motivation among workers, poor social health and degradation of the natural environment.
In terms of migration, the manager of the Department of Labour in Luang Prabang observed that tourism had led to increased migration from rural areas and neighbouring provinces into the city. Lao persons from Xayaboury, Luang Namtha, Phongsaly, Oudomxay and Vientiane had all travelled to Luang Prabang to find work. Also, some Vietnamese and Chinese had also observed in the city taking advantage of opportunities provided by the tourism industry. There is an approximately 2% annual growth in the population of the city attributable to inward migration. Most migrants were believed to have low levels of education and to be working in unskilled manual jobs, with low hourly salaries. Jobs associated with migrant labour included construction, domestic service, waiting and dishwashing, gardening and maintenance. According to officials, this phenomenon depresses local wages generally and inspires some Luang Prabang people to move overseas in search of work themselves. Officially sanctioned schemes take Luang Prabang persons to work in the Thai factories of Khon Kaen, Songkhla and Bangkok, while others travel to Malaysia. Unofficial schemes also, of course, exist.

It was also observed that many tourism businesses were family-based, with most jobs going to family members. This made it difficult for outsiders to gain good jobs, since these were reserved and not advertised. Available jobs were for the less desirable activities which inevitably, therefore, meant that these jobs tended to be filled with less motivated people with lower levels of commitment. Even when family members were not expected to fill vacancies, senior non-family employees would use their internal knowledge of the firm to recommend their own contacts for vacancies. Again, this makes it difficult for outsiders to obtain good jobs and break into positions of responsibility. Even so, job seekers continued to walk in to establishments on the off chance that a position would be available. A manager of the Personnel Department in one hotel reported that:

“There are more than three young people coming to apply for a job every day. According to their personal résumés, many of them have student status. Some have just graduated from vocational schools; in particular, they are English majors. So, it is simpler not to advertise any vacancies, unless it is for a managerial position.”
Another common challenge was related to weak management systems. Most managers were not fully empowered to solve problems. They may have had some useful experience, on which they relied on a day-to-day basis, often rotating around several establishments for which they were responsible. These general managers often found it difficult to enforce their authority over employees in the absence of owners, whom employees knew wielded the real power. For example, some managers reported that they were not able to hire any employee with a salary of higher than $50 per month, even if excellent and immediately available candidates presented themselves. From the employee perspective, they were unhappy that their contributions were not properly monitored or evaluated. Often, they claimed they preferred to work for a foreign employer who would be more likely to have an efficient management system in place. A supervisor working in one hotel said that:

“We get a higher basic salary and learn more by working with foreign employers. Working with Lao employers gives us a lot of pressure because they rarely have clear job descriptions, and many duties are made to be the responsibility of more than one employee at the same time”.

Weak management was typically caused by the lack of good communications, coordination and cooperation among the employers, managers and two groups of employees – the morning and afternoon shifts. When employees do not appear, managers routinely have to take care of their duties themselves. Owing to inappropriate monitoring, productivity is not measured and this leads to the over-hiring of staff. Instead of one staff member being hired to be responsible for a group of 7-8 guests, therefore, two staff members were hired and this led to lower productivity and profits. Many employees were considered to be unreliable, unpunctual and unwilling to take responsibility. Further, many of the language difficulties that were observed could have been avoided with very little learning effort. Customer satisfaction could, therefore, have been increased significantly through the application of better but still very simple management techniques.
There were also some negative aspects attributed to the growth of tourism, including social health problems and degradation of the natural environment. Perhaps most disturbing for the local people was the arrival of a commercial sex industry in the city, which became operational mostly in certain establishments at night time. Although these were popular venues for some visitors, local people professed that the concept of such an industry was alien to local cultural and spiritual values. Many respondents felt that the local authorities should do something to prevent the spread of this industry.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The tourism industry is increasing and has had a positive effect on total employment. Men and women, young and old were all enthusiastic about the opportunities for higher income provided by the tourism business. However, full-time jobs were seen as largely seasonal and partly filled by migrant workers. By contrast, most local people felt they benefited more from part-time opportunities. Improving the opportunities available for local people in the industry requires development of infrastructure and regulations. In particular, to strengthen the sustainable development of the tourism industry and the labour market, there is a need for better co-ordination between such organisations as the PTA of Luang Prabang, NGOs, the private sector and representatives of the employees. There is a need for greater collection of relevant information with a view to identifying the gaps between supply and demand and feeding this information to relevant educational institutes, so as to reduce imbalances by offering incentives to people to take the courses designed to fill gaps. Since local people already recognize the opportunities the industry offers, it should not be difficult to persuade them to participate in such schemes. Another important phenomenon is relevant to the evolution of the educational system. This particularly relates to the roles of the GoL, the labour department and the PTA in promoting competition among educational institutions and in improving the quality of teaching, of curricula and of resources available for education. This should be managed with a view to maintaining the cultural and environmental integrity of Luang Prabang. There is also the need to encourage local businesspeople to improve their own managerial systems and skills, perhaps through the provision of training sessions linked with a financial provision for
future investment. This might be accompanied with a public sector initiative, organized in connection with suitable international bodies, to establish various standards in terms of regularization of personal transportation systems, health and safety practices in the workplace, evaluation systems and incentives for companies to provide better HR practices.

References


Review Article: Waeng Phalangwan - A Lao-Isan perspective on Thai Lukthung

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Abstract

In Lukthung Isan, Waeng Phalangwan (2002) makes a case for recognition of the Isan involvement in phleng lukthung, usually translated as Thai country music. The significant involvement of Isan people within the lukthung music industry has provided Isan people with an effective way of influencing Central Thai culture, when most other avenues were closed. The article examines Waeng’s Lao-Isan identity and his use of standard tropes to disguise a defiant radicalism. The centrepiece of Waeng’s argument is a revision of the history of ‘the king of Thai country music,’ Suraphon Sombatjaroen. Phalangwan redefines Suraphon’s current status as the symbol of Central Thai cultural supremacy by placing him within the context of two contemporaries, the Isan songwriters Chaloemchai Siruechai and Benjamin. Waeng’s history of Isan singers and groups of Isan songwriters in Bangkok during the late 1960s and 1970s can be cross-referenced with establishment histories to make possible a reinterpretation of the development of lukthung. The closing chapter of Lukthung Isan, detailing the existence of ‘communist’ lukthung, suggests that a re-evaluation of the counter-hegemonic potential of lukthung may be warranted.

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Isan natives are like people of African descent. We’re both discriminated against over race and colour, but what we have in common is a love of music and the ability to work hard.

TV presenter and comedian Thongchai Prasongsanti (Kreangsak 2005, 3)
The history of phleng lukthung ² (literally ‘children of the field’ but usually translated as ‘Thai country music’) is, in some ways at least, analogous to that of early rock’n’roll in America. Both genres rose from inauspicious origins to symbolise a nation and dominate its music industry. It is generally accepted that rock’n’roll developed out of blues and rhythm and blues before being turned into a lucrative business, which then excluded the original practitioners. In Lukthung Isan: Prawatsat Isan tamnan phleng lukthung (hereafter Lukthung Isan),³ Waeng Phalangwan (2002) makes a case for recognition of the Isan involvement in phleng lukthung. Waeng argues that the early participation of Isan people contributed significantly to the development of lukthung, a contribution that is as yet not widely acknowledged. Indeed this connection between lukthung and Isan culture has been downplayed or overlooked by the establishment view of Thai history, disseminated through the Thai education system and popular media.

Descended mostly from Lao and Mon-Khmer groups, the twenty-two million inhabitants of Isan comprise one-third of Thailand’s population, as well as occupying one-third of its land mass. Isan, or the Northeastern region of Thailand, has only officially been under Bangkok rule since 1827 when Rama III destroyed Vientiane and forced much of the population to migrate. At that time, ethnic Lao were transferred into areas such as the central Chao Phraya river basin area. In the late 19th century, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) consolidated Thai control over the Isan region through a program of ‘Thaiification.’ This ongoing policy de-emphasized the Lao origins of the population and included the implementation of a national school system that mandated the exclusive use of the Central Thai language and the Thai writing system (Myers 2005, 31). Throughout the twentieth century, the combination of poverty and the apparent indifference of the central authorities contributed to numerous incidents of rebellion, culminating in the communist insurgency during the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps

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² I have used the Royal Thai General System of Transcription except for established names such as Suraphon Sombatjaroen or occasionally for author’s preferred spellings.
³ ‘Isan Thai country song: The history of Isan Thai country song’. All quotations from Waeng (2002) are the author’s translations.
ironically, the stationing of American soldiers in Isan during the Vietnam War and a corresponding influx of government aid led to the improvement of infrastructure.

Throughout this review article, ‘establishment’ is used to refer to the combined hegemonic forces exerted by the Thai Royal family, military, Buddhist leadership and government (in possible descending order of power or influence). ‘Establishment history’ refers to the Royalist Nationalist history taught throughout the Thai education system. If the writings of historians supporting Central Thai cultural hegemony are broadly characterised as establishment histories, then those critical of, or expanding on, the establishment view may be described as alternative. This article is an analysis of Waeng’s alternative view and its historical, social and political ramifications. This author’s particular point of interest in lukthung is the role that it has played in facilitating the rebirth or regeneration of Isan identity and culture. The significant involvement of Isan people within the lukthung music industry has provided Isan people with an effective way of influencing Central Thai culture, when most other avenues have been closed. Thus I will comment on relevant sections of Lukthung Isan in order to demonstrate the Isan involvement in lukthung.

In my research, I have examined how the convergence of certain social and historical forces resulted in lukthung having low status in Thai society and academic writing up until the late 1990s. The first such force was the dialectic between Thai classical music (linked to the monarchy) and popular song genres (linked to Luang Phibunsongkram). The growth of an affluent Thai middle class during the 1960s and the associated increase in popularity of the monarchy tended to privilege classical Thai music and downgrade the status of popular song. A second force is the historical tendency for Thai scholars to classify lukthung as rural folk music. Third, in terms of external forces, western ethnomusicologists have generally preferred to study Thai traditional and classical music rather than popular genres. The fourth force is that the attention of western scholars influenced by Birmingham School theory has been discouraged by lukthung’s apparent lack of counter-hegemonic potential. Relevant to

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4 See Jory (2003) for further discussion.
5 For a detailed discussion of why lukthung has traditionally had low status see Mitchell (2009). This article also contains a case study of the Isan songwriter Soraphet Phinyo.
both of these forces is the information filter provided by the Thai language. Thai language texts on high culture are more likely to be translated than those on low culture. Fifth, the interest of foreign tourists in the exotic and oriental aspects of Thai culture has amplified the status of Thai classical music above more westernised and therefore more familiar genres.

However, the force with most significance for the discussion within this article is the high level of Isan involvement in the *lukthung* industry. Over the past 150 years, Isan culture has been both suppressed and appropriated in the service of nation building. The desire to create a cohesive nation state resulted in a policy of ethnic assimilation, which was accompanied by widespread discrimination against Lao-Isan people. The Lao-Isan preference for *lukthung* and *molam*\(^6\) led to both genres being accorded low status. As early as the late 1970s, *lukthung* was being designated as a uniquely Thai (rather than Lao) art form; however, after the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis, it became a source of national pride.\(^7\) Consequently, the Isan involvement in the development of *lukthung* has increasingly been appropriated by the Central Thai establishment. The publication of Waeng’s *Lukthung Isan* indicates that *lukthung* may be in the process of becoming a site of dialogue/debate for establishment and alternative views of Thai history.

Waeng’s book is particularly significant because it is the first widely published text by an Isan author to question the Thai establishment view of the history of Thai popular music. It is part of an intellectual oppositional discourse present throughout modern Thai history which has undergone periods of reinvigoration and stagnation. Patrick Jory (2003, 2) identifies three eras of “historical scholarship which questioned existing historical knowledge,”, the most recent ending during the affluent 1980s. This recent generation of historians used “Marxist socio-analysis as a lever to pry the chronicles and archives away from royalist and nationalist myth-making concerns” (Reynolds and Lysa 1983, 96). Several articles were published on *lukthung* between 1978 and 1986: Anek (1978), Payong (1984), Naowarat (1984), Suchit (1984) and

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\(^6\) Lao-Isan folk music. Used in this paper without capitalization, the term refers to the genre; used with capitalization, the term is the title for a practitioner.

\(^7\) The reasons for the rise in status of *lukthung* after 1997 are analysed in detail in Amporn (2006, 32-38) and will not be dealt with in this article.
Mitchell (1985); all more or less classified luwthung as updated Thai folk music. Arguably the most well known Thai historian, Nithi Iaosriwong, responded to these articles in 1985, arguing that luwthung was like many other forms of popular culture in that it borrowed from numerous sources including western 1940s dance music, phleng Thai sakon, Thai folk and classical music (Nithi 1985). During the 1990s, Marxist historians such as Chatthip Nartsupha and Srisak Vallibhotama turned to writing ethnohistories of Tai peoples in the region. According to Reynolds, their intention was to “show that the Central Thai represent merely one of a number of evolutionary paths and have no special claim to speak on behalf of all Tai peoples” (2002, 315). Waeng begins his popular music history with a racially connoted theory of origins that situates his work within this stream of ethnohistory. Thus Lukthung Isan may be seen as part of a new era of questioning, especially by and on behalf of, ethnic minorities, a new era influenced by the writing of professional historians such as Chatthip, Nithi and Thongchai Winichakul.

The subject matter and structure of Waeng’s book also confirms the rise of a new Isan sensibility within Thailand, represented by the opening quote from Thongchai Prasongsanti. Lukthung Isan reflects a mixture of pride in Isan achievement in the face of adversity and anger at Central Thai chauvinism. Waeng projects a unified rather than fluid identity, identifying himself as simultaneously Thai and Lao-Isan (therefore Tai), not switching between the two. Nevertheless, he appeals to readers with either establishment or oppositional leanings by employing standard tropes – a theory of origin of the Thai race, an appeal on the grounds of religious authority and a denouncement of western influence in Thailand – to disguise his defiant radicalism. Lukthung Isan indicates that the anti-establishment ideas of the previous generation of Thai professional historians have made the transition into the genre of popular history.

The centrepiece of Waeng’s argument is a revision of the history of ‘the King of Thai country music,’ Suraphon Sombatjaroen. Waeng redefines Suraphon’s current status as the symbol of Central Thai cultural supremacy by placing him within the

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8 Tai refers to such groups as the Thai, Lao, Shan, Black and White Tai. Ethnic Tai groups live in Southern China, Eastern India and parts of Vietnam in addition to the main groups in Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. All Tai groups speak tonal languages and celebrate common festivals such as Songkran (New Year) (see Reynolds 2002, 314).
context of two contemporaries, the Isan songwriters Chaloemchai Sriruecha and Benjamin. Waeng’s history of the circles of Isan songwriters in Bangkok during the late 1960s and 1970s can be cross-referenced with establishment histories to make possible a reinterpretation of the development of lukthung. The closing chapter, detailing the existence of communist lukthung, suggests that a re-evaluation of the counter-hegemonic potential of lukthung may be warranted. Each of these elements requires critical assessment and will be explained further.

**Waeng’s Isan identity**

Before continuing further, it is necessary to comment on Waeng’s use of the word Isan. Over the past decade there has been a revival in Isan identity led by the cultural markers of food and popular music (Jory 1999, 340) (Miller 2005, 97). This has been noted in establishment circles with the well-known lukthung commentator Jenphop Jopkrabuanwan stating that “molam is the type of folk music which has most influenced lukthung because Isan people have the strongest culture” (Chaba 2004, 6). Moreover, the term ‘Lao,’ which historically had been used pejoratively, has actually been reclaimed by some Isan people as a symbol of pride (Jory 1999, 341). An informative discussion of the ways in which Isan people perceive themselves and are perceived by others can be found in McCargo and Hongladarom’s ‘Contesting Isan-ness: Discourses of politics and identity in Northeast Thailand’ (2004). Waeng’s conception of what it means to be Isan is certainly more radical than any of the views expressed by McCargo and Hongladarom’s respondents. Waeng spends the first three chapters showing how ‘Lao’ came to be a pejorative term in Thailand, observing that “if Central Thai people wish to refer to products, animals or things in a derisory manner they will use the word ‘Lao’ even if the item does not originate from the North East” (53).

For Waeng, the word ‘Lao’ has had “significant historical implications and effects on Thai attitudes” (23). He sets out to show why it has simultaneously become a symbol

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9 All quotations from Chaba (2004) are the author’s translations.
of pride and a marker of neglect. In the following *lam phloen*\textsuperscript{10}, which was turned into a hit *lukthung* song for Sommainoi Duangjaroen in 1990, the inferiority complex developed by Isan people is apparent:

*I carry love from my village and bring it to a white-cheeked Bangkok girl.*

*Can you accept my love?*

*Do not be afraid of an Isan man.*

*He is 99% Thai and only 1% Lao.*

From ‘Baek rak chao krung’ (*Carry my love to the city dweller*) (55)

Waeng regards this light-hearted song as an insult and contrasts it with a Lao *lukthung* song from 1995 recorded by celebrated Lao singer Phuwiang Watthalisak. ‘Pu Jan’ (Grandfather Jan) expresses the sorrow felt by Isan and Lao people at being separated from one another:

*Khorat [Nakhon Ratchasima in Isan] and Wiangjan [Vientiane in Laos] people are the grandchildren of grandfather Jan*

*Ancient people know the story of Lao and Thai relationship before there were records*

*In the past they were united.* (56)

By citing such songs and Lao historians such as Douangsay Louangphasi, Waeng adopts an almost militant stance. A popular bumper sticker that read, “I’m glad that the car driver behind me is also Lao,” was interpreted in a positive light by Jory (1999, 340-341), but is viewed as derogatory by Waeng:

*That these stickers can be seen all over the country shows one of two things about the purchasers. Either they do not understand the humour that was originally behind the stickers, when they were adopted by taxi drivers who are mostly Isan, or they take pleasure in insulting other people.* (53)

\textsuperscript{10} Lam phloen was originally a genre of Lao theatre music. Since the 1960s it has became successful as a popular song genre and has been influenced by lukthung singing styles.
In Waeng’s opinion “Thailand is a colonial power, and Lao people have become colonized” (46). McCargo and Hongladarom show that identity for the majority of Isan people is fluid, yet throughout *Lukthung Isan*, Waeng projects a surprisingly consistent Lao-Isan ethnic identity. That his conception of ‘Isan’ appears to only include those of Lao descent is demonstrated by his careful noting of ethnicity. For example, he writes that even though Prasit Nakhonphanom was Yo\(^1\) (247) and Songkro Samattaphaphong was Phuthai (256) (both of which are Isan minorities), they were capable of writing Isan songs. Furthermore, there is no room in his history for *kantruem*, the music of Isan people of Khmer descent. Significantly, however, Waeng argues that Lao-Isan identity does not stop at the borders of the North Eastern region. In claiming Central Thais of Lao descent as Isan people, Waeng inverts the Central Thai appropriation of Isan culture. *Lukthung Isan* is thus an ethnic history laying claim to a reputedly Central Thai art form, a radical concept in Thai historiography.

**Waeng’s motivation for writing**

The preface of *Lukthung Isan* reveals that Waeng Phalangwan is the pseudonym for an unidentified journalist and documentary maker. He was born in Amphoe Kumphawapi, Udon Thani, but now lives and works in Bangkok. During the Vietnam War, the American army had a base at Udon Thani; consequently, Waeng grew up listening to western rock and country music. Like many Isan migrants, he experienced alienation and prejudice once he left his hometown:

> *When I came to Bangkok for the first time, I lived among people who looked down on Isan people. That made me very homesick. This was the first step that made me angry with people who looked down on Isan culture. I was homesick so I got into listening to lukthung and molam. Then I realised that this music was my heritage, not the western songs I grew up hearing in Udon Thani* (iv).

\(^1\) Yo and Phuthai are ethnic minorities in Isan.
That Waeng has kept his identity secret is testament to the sensitive nature of some material and demonstrates the alternative nature of his discourse. In his preface, he is explicit in his intention to expand the scope of Thai history: “I want to bring glory back to Isan people and take the opportunity to invite people who work in high positions to look at the lies of western culture” (ii). Following the last generation of Thai professional historians, Waeng’s approach is heavily influenced by Marxist theory. One of his themes is the failure of copyright to protect Isan performers, whereas Central Thai composers with higher status generally have been better protected (251). He is critical of capitalism and applies that criticism to western popular music: “The word ‘sakon’ means the kingdom of the winner. The way that they write music is because of the power of the winners, not really because of the power of the arts” (iv). He sarcastically thanks God for the IMF because “when you forget your farmers and ordinary people, God’s judgment will come upon you” (iv). Many Thai commentators blamed the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis on western investors and the capitalist system (Pasuk and Baker 2000, 193-194), and it was widely interpreted as a warning to return to traditional Thai values.

In terms of unveiling Waeng’s motivation the following sentence is revealing:

*People say that music is the international language but no one is interested in the music of Australian Aboriginals, or the music of Uganda, or the Nakha tribe in Myanmar, or the music of the Cham tribe in Cambodia and Vietnam, or the songs of Phi Thong Lueang in the Northern province of Thailand. Why is this? Because these groups do not have any political power* (iv).

This statement raises a number of issues. Waeng appears to be unaware of the interest taken by world music (meaning the genre) listeners in Aboriginal and African music. This is hardly surprising, given that a case has been made by Tony Mitchell (2001, 19) and others that world music listeners, likewise, have often not heard of Southeast Asia,

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12 See Jory (2003, 7) and Thongchai (1995, 5).
13 *Sakon* means international but can mean western. *Phleng Thai sakon* refers to the new international song genre introduced by Luang Phibunsongkram during the 1930s and 1940s. Later this genre developed into *lukthung* and *lukkrung* (western pop with Thai lyrics).
let alone *lukthung*. However, this ignorance does mark Waeng as an amateur music scholar. A more significant issue is that he equates the status of Isan people within Thailand with that of other oppressed and disenfranchised minorities elsewhere. He is an impassioned participant on an evangelical mission, not a detached academic observer. The preface makes it clear that Waeng intends to redress what he regards as past injustices by proposing an alternative history of Thai popular music.

**Waeng’s use of establishment tropes**

Waeng sets out to appeal to readers with either establishment or oppositional leanings by employing standard tropes – a theory of origin of the Thai race, an appeal on the grounds of religious authority and a denouncement of western influence in Thailand – to disguise his more radical views. To describe the *cha on chon* rhythm of ‘*Pu Jan*,’ Waeng employs imagery that might also be applied to his book: “It is as if the strong material (like a hammer blaming people who forget their origins) is covered with a layer of honey” (56). Waeng’s theory of the origins of Tai people allows him to claim moral authority and also to undermine Central Thai hegemony. Vatthana Pholsena shows how histories are used, especially in postcolonial situations, in the service of nation building to consolidate “a collective memory and identity” (2004, 236). Thai and Lao history textbooks compete to claim authority by defining a national identity that is continuous from the distant past (2004, 254). Similarly, Barry Sautman identifies the use of “mythical perceptions of the people as one race” by recent Chinese and Japanese governments (1997, 1). Since Waeng believes that *lukthung* has been appropriated by the Central Thai, he begins his historical revision by combating “the nationalist historiography that promotes a linear view of Central Thai development” (Reynolds 2002, 315).

The first chapter of *Lukthung Isan* is an attempt to find the origin of Thai people in the Tai race (Thai, Lao, Shan, Black and White Tai people (see Reynolds 2002, 314)). This is a practice ridiculed by academic historians such as Srisak Vallibhotama, who argues that “the Tai race... is a mistaken concept” (see Thongchai 1995, 107), but Waeng seeks to establish the brotherhood of all Tai people so that he can appeal for a
change of heart on the part of Central Thais. He purports to give a balanced view by referring to theories of origins from Thailand, Laos and the Thai Yai or Shan people living in Myanmar. He cites the work of Douangsay Louangphasi as an example of Lao historiography. According to Pholsena, Louangphasi is a “keen amateur historian” who “never quotes his sources or mentions any references” (2004, 239). In other words, his histories are derived more from nationalistic fervour than scientific research. In *Kumue phong sawadan Lao* (Lao historical handbook) Louangphasi asserts that Lao people settled in the Altai mountains in Mongolia over 8000 years ago and were gradually forced to migrate south (Waeng 2002, 2). What Waeng describes as a Chinese perspective (although it appears to be written by a Thai) is presented through *Lak Thai* (‘origins of the Thai’) by Wichit Matra, which tells a similar story, but changes the name Lao to Thai. *Nuea khwaen daen Sayam* by Pran Siriton is cited to present the Shan or Thai Yai14 myth of origins. Waeng chooses his sources carefully to build an alternative perspective that, he hopes, will be acceptable to most readers:

> It is interesting to observe that all three accounts explain the history of origin by classification but do not mention the other two nations that remain to this day. Thus Lao history explains only Lao origin and only mentions Thai origin a little. The Chinese account incorrectly changes Lao to Thai - therein it means the same thing. Furthermore the Thai Yai account refers only to Tai and does not specify that Tai, Thai and Lao are the same people. Bringing all three accounts together, however, allows us to know that Tai, Thai and Lao are definitely the same people (2002, 7).

As yet archaeological support for the theory that Tai people existed together as a single nation in Mongolia thousands of years ago is not forthcoming. Indeed, as Pholsena writes: “As far as the origins of the Tai-speaking peoples are concerned, it is most unlikely that they were ever within a thousand miles of the Altai Mountains” (2004, 240). She cites recent studies in linguistics, history and comparative anthropology that

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14 Waeng sometimes uses Tai to refer specifically to Thai Yai or the Shan people of Myanmar.
suggest that the original Tai homeland occupied an area extending from Western Guangxi and Southeastern Yunnan into Northern Vietnam and Northeastern Laos. Similarly Martin Stuart-Fox concludes that it is “unlikely ... that whoever the Chinese referred to as the Ai-Lao were directly ancestral to the Tai-Lao who founded the Kingdom of Lan Xang well over a millennium later” (1998, 23). Waeng's theory of origins is almost certainly not accurate, but it serves his purpose by asserting that Thai, Lao and Shan people are related and therefore should show loyalty to one another. Waeng's awareness of the contested nature of his subject area is impressive. He understands that the question of ownership of lukthung is not limited to disputes over the ownership of individual songs; the cultural heritage of his people (the Isan people) and the cultural integrity of all Tai people are at stake.

After establishing the brotherhood of Tai people, Waeng appeals to his readers on the basis of common religious belief. As is the case in the majority of Thai social commentary, there is significant reference to Buddhist teaching (“Because we are Buddhist we should not accept anyone looking down on any other nation” (iii)), but in Lukthung Isan, religion is also linked to ethnicity:

_I have been able to stay with Thai Yai, Thai and Lao people and have been able to practise the hit and khlong. I am Isan. I believe that Thai, Tai and Lao people all emigrated from the south of China._ (31)

Chapter 2 details the 12 hit (monthly festivals) and 14 khlong (rules) that were practiced by Thai, Lao and other Tai people in the past. The decline in popularity of some of these festivals and rules in modern Thailand is viewed by Waeng as a decline in religious devotion. Chapter 6 details the increasingly important role of the Isan region in providing the Buddhist leadership for Thailand. This phenomenon, providing Isan people with one access point into Thai hegemonic structures, may partially account for the recent resurgence in expressions of ethnic and regional culture (see Jory 1999). Throughout Lukthung Isan the morality of Lao people is compared favourably to that of the Central Thai (who, according to Waeng, have been corrupted by western influence), and such comparisons are often framed in religious terms:
Songkran used to be considered the New Year of Thailand, but now the Christian New Year is more celebrated. Laos still holds to the Brahman Buddhist beliefs from India. Thais again are separated from Lao and Tai people.

Thus for Waeng his identity and kinship with fellow Tai is measured by devotion to Buddhist law.

The third trope employed by Phalangwan to broaden his appeal and strengthen his authority is criticism of western influence on Thai culture. Lukthung Isan begins with the kind of generalized attack on farang (Caucasians) that is typical of Thai popular intellectualism. Although Waeng is surprisingly forthright in his criticism of Thai culture and government, it is the encroaching Western culture that initially receives his strongest condemnation. Referring to the ‘inferior, shallow and absentminded Thai Government offices that are supposed to protect Thai culture’ he declares:

They are not capable of seeing the insidious culture destroying process that has permeated Thai society whereby the unique elements of culture are being destroyed. This is because it has been ingeniously implanted to encourage ordinary people to think, ‘Despise Lao - respect farang’.

In this first chapter it appears that westerners are blamed for most of the problems in Thai society, apparently even plotting to convince Thais to accept a quota of at least 50 percent of luk khrung (Eurasian) in their television presenters and actors. ‘Blaming the farang’ is a common trope in Thai literature, usually deployed when calling for a return to traditional Thai values. In an article tracing the historical and cultural constructions of farang by Thais, Pattana Kitiarsa identifies a “typical Thai conservative and nationalist standpoint” in which farang are portrayed as “one of the evil roots of the country’s economic, political and cultural woes.” He observes a trend within Thai

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15 See Pattana (2005, 4).
intellectualism of nationally accusing immoral white foreigners of preying on the innocent Thai (2005, 4). This trend extends from Prince Damrong in the nineteenth century to Luang Wichit and Pridi Phanomyong in the early years of constitutional monarchy and more recently Sulak Sivaraksa and Theerayuth Boonmi.16

Yet despite his trenchant criticism of the Thai establishment Waeng is careful to emphasise throughout the text that he is adding to Thai history, not destroying it. He wants young Thais to know the details of their culture:

There are several mountains in Thailand and neighbouring countries such as Phu Phan, Sankalakhiri, Phanom Dong Rak, Banthat, etc. Asking Thai students for the names of these mountains will only cause a shake of the head because they do not know them (27).

This is a fairly standard complaint – as shown by the following comment by Jenphop Jopkrabuanwan:

We spend most of the time trying to remember the stories of the Nile River and the Red Sea... If we take a turn to ask about the Ping, Wang, Yom, or Nan Rivers in Thailand the students don’t understand or don’t know much about them (Chaba 2004, 4).

Such criticisms of the education system are often made as part of nationalistic denunciations of western influence on Thai culture. Actually the lack of focus on Thai history and geography in the education system is a legacy of 150 years of modernisation and is also in the interests of the powerful Central Thai hegemonic forces that continue to mould public opinion. Jory identifies two dominant forms of history being consumed by the Thai public: the Royalist Nationalist history taught in the schools, which has rewritten key events such as the 1932 coup and avoids others such as the massacre of October 1976; and products of the commercial media in the form of

16 See Pattana (2005, 38-39) for further discussion of this trope.
movies, TV dramas, and even advertisements (2003: 4). In the opening chapter, Waeng criticises both forms of history: “The Thai education programme has lead Thais to disengage from their neighbours,” and “an effective force for western culture and propaganda is television” (4). Since the Thai commercial media is heavily influenced and controlled by establishment institutions, it is not difficult to understand why western influence is often used as a scapegoat.

Case study: An alternative view of Suraphon Sombatjaroen and the development of phleng to

The centrepiece of Waeng’s argument that the Isan involvement in lukthung has been downplayed and underestimated is an explanation of the relationship between Suraphon and two Isan contemporaries, Chaloemchai Sriruecha and Benjamin. Suraphon Sombatjaroen (1925 – 1968), known as ‘the King of Thai country music,’ has become a legendary figure in Thailand, dominating all discussion of early lukthung. He was born in Suphanburi in Central Thailand (also the birthplace of Phumphuang Duangjan and Sayan Sanya). Suraphon’s father worked for the government, and he had a better education than most singers. After studying at technical college, he became a teacher before joining first the navy, then the army, and finally the air force. He established his own ramwong\textsuperscript{17} band while in the air force and gradually changed to the emerging genre of lukthung. By the time he was murdered in 1968, reportedly at the behest of a jealous husband, he was the biggest music star in Thailand.\textsuperscript{18} After his death some of his fans committed suicide because they could not imagine life without him (Anek,1978, 62).

By questioning elements of the Suraphon myth, Waeng risks angering the local politicians and citizens of Suphanburi, as well as establishment forces. When a history Masters student Saipin Kaewngamprasert proposed that there was no evidence for the existence of ‘Thao Suranari,’ the heroine who helped suppress a Lao ‘revolt’ in Nakhon

\textsuperscript{17} Popular Thai folk dance in which men and women dance in a circle; developed during Phibunsongkram’s period of influence.

\textsuperscript{18} Information found in Siriphon (2004, 242-247)
Ratchasima (Khorat) during the reign of Rama III, the citizens of Khorat protested. Subsequently Saipin went into hiding and was later transferred to another university (Jory 2003, 6). Thailands popular media (television, film and newspapers) regularly present the romantic image of Suraphon as an individual genius killed in his prime. For example, when then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra announced in September 2002 that he would like to stay in power for 16 years, he was alluding to Suraphons Sip Hok Pi Haeng Khwam Lang (sixteen years of our past). Thanong Khanthong responded with a discussion of Suraphons life (which subtly made the point that 16 years of Thaksin could be more bitter than sweet for Thailands people). Khanthongs paragraph detailing Suraphons life demonstrates the key elements of the Suraphon myth:

_Suraphol died on August 16, 1968 from gunshot wounds, leaving a rich repertoire of luk thung songs that embodied the spirit of the 1960s when Elvis Presley and the Beatles were rocking the world with their electrifying performances. But Suraphol, who came from a humble background in Suphan Buri, had his own special way of crooning the songs he composed by himself. His music was rich in style and his lyrics reflected the changes Thai society was undergoing at that time._ (2002, 1)

By comparing Suraphon to Elvis, Khanthong displays the ambiguous positioning of _farang_ by Thai writers (Pattana 2005, 43). The desire to have a home grown Elvis coupled with the prestige conveyed by indirect comparison with the Beatles is balanced by the implied superiority of authentic Thai music (“His music was rich in style”). Suraphon is credited with a unique performance style, and it is stressed that he wrote all of his own songs.

Possibly the most sensational claim in _Lukthung Isan_ is that Suraphon Sombatjaroen did not compose all of the songs that bear his name. Waeng makes the convincing point, confirmed by the songwriter Surin Paksiri (162), that Suraphon had no Lao ancestry, could not speak Isan and when he sang Isan words (in an attempt to appeal to the large Isan lukthung audience) they were often mispronounced. For

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19 Jory gives two recent examples of Thai historians forced into hiding by regional forces rather than central government forces (2003, 6).
example, in his first song to be published, ‘Namta Lao Wiang’ (‘tears of a Lao girl’), the line ‘Khoi khoei wao sao chao thoeng huean (mid tone)’ (‘I used to speak with you girl in the house’) contains the Isan words khoi = I, wao = speak and huean = house, but Suraphon mispronounces the latter as ‘huean’ (falling tone) which means a kind of skin disease or leprosy (216). The Thai education system during the 1940s and 1950s so discouraged the speaking of Isan that the idea that Suraphon could have written Isan lyrics without considerable assistance is not credible (216). One of the few Isan members of Suraphon’s band was his close friend Chaloemchai Sriruecha, an established Isan ramwong singer and songwriter originally from Roi Et. Chaloemchai was an alcoholic who was happy, according to this book, to relinquish ownership of his songs if he was able to keep drinking (220). Waeng concludes that some of the early songs upon which Suraphon built his popularity with Isan fans, such as ‘Namta Lao Wiang’ and ‘Khong plom’ (‘fake things’), were most probably written or co-written by Chaloemchai (210). Support for this claim can be found in Siriphon, who records Suraphon’s comments regarding his early work, although Chaloemchai’s name is not mentioned:

‘Chu chok song kuman’\(^20\) was my first song to be performed. My friend helped me with the melody and presented it to To Ngek Chuang company. I received 400 baht (2004, 244).\(^ {21}\)

Waeng also questions the originality of Suraphon’s legendary stage movement, suggesting that he imitated Chaloemchai’s habit of shaking the microphone stand (214).

Tamthong Chokchana, born in Ubon Ratchathani and otherwise known as ’Benjamin’, rivalled Suraphon for popularity until he enlisted in the Thai army in order to serve in Korea. During his absence, Suraphon became the unrivalled superstar of lukthung. It was competition between Benjamin, Suraphon and Phongsri Woranut (Suraphon’s most famous protégé) that led to the popularising of the concept of dueling songs (phleng to or phleng ke). Siriphon makes reference to this dispute in passing -

\(^{20}\) *Chu Chok* was the gluttonous man who borrowed Sidhaatha’s children but treated them badly.

\(^{21}\) All quotations from Siriphon (2004) are the author’s translations.
“Before he [Suraphon] sang dueling songs with Phongsri Woranut he sang them with Benjamin because Benjamin thought that Suraphon had copied his style of singing” - but asserts, without providing the song lyrics, that “Suraphon was the first person to compose dueling songs using the same lyrics” (2004, 246). Siriphon also suggests that it was the use of phleng to with its interplay between male and female singers that possibly made the Suraphon Sombatjaroen Band so famous (2004, 247). This shows why the detail provided by Waeng is so important for a full understanding of the development of lukthung. Initially Suraphon wrote the song ‘Kaeo luem dong’ (parrot forgets the jungle) to complain about Phongsri Woranut leaving his band, and Phongsri responded through the song ‘Salika luem phrai’ (blackbird forgets the forest) that Surapon was talking nonsense. Then Benjamin wrote the song ‘Ya thiang kan loei’ (don’t argue) denouncing Suraphon for attacking Phongsri and for copying his singing style. Suraphon responded with ‘Sip niu kho khama’ (ten fingers ask for forgiveness) telling Benjamin not to interfere in the affairs of young people and denying that he had copied Benjamin’s voice (200-201).

Close analysis of the lyrics reveals how the singers inspired and played off each other. Benjamin begins by continuing the bird imagery employed by Suraphon and Phongsri:

Father Nok Salika blamed her
Forgot the partner and when they used to fly togerher
You forget the sky and fly down in the dirt
You forget everything, even the person who trained you.
(lines 7-10 ‘Ya thiang kan loei’

Benjamin makes it obvious who he is referring to by alluding to the names of the songs in line 15: “luem dong luem prai…” (forget jungle, forget forest): His criticism becomes progressively harsher, “In your stomach how many coils are there? / Get your intestines out to give to the crows” (lines 17-18) before he insults Suraphon by warning him not

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22 All lyrics on pages13 and 14 are taken from Waeng (2002, 200-201).
to pick on a woman ("We are male, do not fight with a woman / This brings no credit upon you" (lines 21-22)) and by accusing him of copying his style of singing: “Even my voice people want to copy / Get a reference to work with my voice” (lines 27-28). He then asks Suraphon to consider the audience who buy their records:

*Have pity on them when they buy them...*

*They spend lots of money on the singers who are complaining*

*It’s funny isn’t it?* (laughing) (lines 34-36)

The end of the song appeals to national pride, “The story of music is the honour of Thailand / If there is too much (arguing) it will not be good” (lines 43-44), subtly making the point that Suraphon is being un-Thai.

Suraphon’s response begins with the declaration that he does not want to sing *lae* (the style chosen by Benjamin) but has been forced to do so. That he does so very skilfully demonstrates pointed false modesty, as do lines 5-6 (‘Sip niu kho khama’): ‘I am a junior singer you may know / Not like the teacher who is a skilled composer.’ Suraphon wishes to be considered the underdog by the audience and to show that he is not reaching above his station. He counters Benjamin’s insults with, “You can see the lice on other people’s heads / But there are also lice hiding on your head” (lines 11-12) and the deliciously pointed barb, “Don’t speak everywhere my teacher / The children will get annoyed and will pull out your white hair” (lines 28-29). He questions Benjamin’s right to interfere in his friendly argument with Phongsri: “If you want to blame the children you must do it the right way / If I love my cow, I tie it up but if I love my child, I teach him right... / Try hard to teach composing” (lines 15,16,19). This appears to be a reference to Suraphon’s past request to become Benjamin’s student. Benjamin rejected him and then was not able to accept it when Suraphon became famous (202). As for the accusation that he had copied Benjamin’s voice, Suraphon declares that “if the children become famous, you should be proud / If the children sing like you, you should applaud” (lines 32-33) and sarcastically queries the idea that it is really possible to copy someone else, “Well the voice of a person / It is difficult to find the same / If they wish to copy, Thailand will have only artists” (lines 35-38). His final
remark, “I still love my honour as an artist” (line 41), is a defence against Benjamin’s charge that he is disgracing Thailand.

Waeng and Anek Nawikmun: Expanding the field of discourse

Throughout *Lukthung Isan*, Waeng provides information on Isan singers and songwriters that cannot be found in establishment histories. Cross-referencing between Waeng and establishment writers such as Anek Nawikmun expands the total field of discourse and allows for a more critical analysis of the available information. For example, in *Phleng nok sathawat* (Songs outside the century) Anek compiles lists of *lukthung* and *lukkrung*\(^{23}\) singers (1978, 66-67). Anek’s expressed purpose is to compare the places of birth of *lukthung* singers to that of *lukkrung* singers, in order to demonstrate a strict rural/urban divide. In one of the few English language articles on *lukthung*, Amporn Jirattikorn (2006) chooses to interpret the list as evidence that *lukthung* is a Central Thai art form:

> Western scholars studying Thai popular music often argue that *lukthung* comes from Isaan, or northeastern Thailand, which is linked to Lao ethnicity. Most Thais recognize, however, that *lukthung* developed out of central Thai folk traditions, and for the first two or three decades had little Isaan input. It was only with the later influx of Isaan people into the writing and production of *lukthung* that the music came to be associated by some with this region and its traditions. Anake (sic) (1978) lists the thirty most popular *lukthung* singers in the 1970s. All are from central Thailand (47).

Amporn, however, is mistaken in her last comment; Saksayam Phetchompu is listed as coming from Mahasarakam and Sonchai Mekwichian from Nakhon Ratchasima, both Isan provinces. Furthermore, Anek does not claim that his list is exhaustive or that it is a

\(^{23}\) Literally ‘children of the city’. *Lukkrung* combines western popular music from the 1940s -1950s with Thai lyrics sung without the *luk kho* (heavy vibrato) and *uean* (melodic embellishment on a vocable or melisma) of *lukthung*. 
list of the most popular singers from the 1970s (Suraphon Sombatjaroen died in 1968). A closer analysis, using information provided by Waeng, reveals the true extent of Isan involvement in the early lukthung industry and shows how an Isan perspective is able to expand the overall field of discourse.

A major problem for those wishing to classify lukthung as an exclusively Central Thai art form is the significant Isan populations of Bangkok and some Central Thai provinces. Waeng reports that Suphanburi had so many people of Lao origin that it was nicknamed 'Lao Suphan' (168). Although Waiphot Phetsuphan is not of Lao descent, when growing up he had contact with Lao speaking people in Suphanburi and so is able to sing fluently in Isan. Phanom Nopphon and Cholati Tarnthong (both on Anek’s list) were born in Chonburi but had Lao ancestry, which is why they were able to compose and sing well in Isan (177). The well known songwriter Sombat Bunsiri was born in Prachinburi but always ‘introduced himself loudly as “Lao Prachin” because of his Ubon Ratchathani ancestors’ (250). Despite almost two centuries of forced integration, most families with Lao ancestry still speak Isan at home and are proud of their Lao musical heritage (see Hesse-Swain 2006, 264-265).

After the death of Suraphon, the most popular band was that led by Sayan Sanya. However, his popularity was rivalled by Saksayam Phetchomp’s ‘Lukthung Isan’ band, which was given this name by the Isan songwriter and DJ Surin Paksiri in 1973, the first recorded use of the term (323). The two groups joined forces to become the top grossing show at the Lumphini Boxing stage. Surin named their show: ‘Lukthung Isan pata lukthung phak klang’ (Competition between Northeast and Central Thai country music). Saksayam was thereafter known by the title ‘Kunpon phleng lukthung haeng khwaen daen Isan’ (lukthung genius of the Isan region). Waeng records that Saksayam’s most popular song was ‘Tam nong klap Sarakam’ (Bring the girl back to Mahasarakam), which catalogued the names of the provinces in Isan so that “Isan people felt that this was their song” (317). Waeng provides a list of 27 popular Isan lukthung singers from the 1970s including Dao Bandon, who was one of the first to incorporate distorted electric guitar into his band. Waeng suggests that it was actually the withdrawal rather than the presence of most American troops from bases in Isan such as Udon Thani in 1973 that propelled the blending of rock with lukthung and molam. While the
Americans were in Thailand, they were entertained by Thai bands such as The Impossibles who played western pop music sung in English for the soldiers and sung in Thai for a Thai audience (Hayes 2004, 29). Once the soldiers left, many of these bands had no work and returned to playing *lukthung* and *molam* incorporating western techniques they had learned (319).

The 1970s were certainly a golden period for Isan *lukthung* singers and songwriters from Isan were just as common. There were two influential circles of Isan songwriters in Bangkok during the early 1970s. The largest group, consisting of the students of *khru* (teacher) Kor Kaeoprasoet, included Loet Srichok, Wichian Sitthisong, Samson Na Mueangsri, Samran Arom and Chor Kachai, all of whom wrote songs for the famous singers on Anek’s list, especially Waiphot Phetsupan, Phloen Phromdaen and Chai Mueangsing (239-245, 258). The second group included Surin Paksiri, Sanya Jurapon, also known as San Silapasit, Prasit Nakhonphanom and Songkro Samathaphaphong (255). The existence of these groups proves that *lukthung* song writing was taken very seriously by Isan people and was viewed as a viable career path as early as the 1960s. When Anek’s list is cross-referenced with *Lukthung Isan*, it is clear that the majority of famous *lukthung* singers in the 1960s and 1970s were performing songs written by Isan songwriters, often using Isan expressions and phrases to appeal to the majority Isan audience (such as ‘Khit hot ai nae doe’ (Do you miss me?) sung by Thepphon Phetubon). Phalangwan provides many examples of *lukthung* songs which use Isan words and phrases and, according to him, predate Surapon (although this is difficult to verify because no dates are provided in the appendix).24 The fact that songwriters were writing in this way from the early 1950s indicates that a key demographic for *lukthung*, even at that time, was Isan people. During this period anything Isan was despised by the elite Central Thai, so the Thai establishment claim that “*lukthung* developed out of central Thai folk traditions, and for the first two or three decades had little Isan input” (Amporn 2006, 47) must be considered questionable.

24 According to Waeng the first songwriter to popularize the use of Isan in *lukthung* songs was Pong Prida (2002, 164).
'Communist *luuk tung*

The final chapter of the body of *Lukthung Isan* provides insight into the little known subgenre of ‘communist lukthung’, termed *phleng phuphan* in Thai. *Phleng phuea chiwit*, or ‘songs for life,’ and its origins among the student demonstrators during the 1970s are well known, but the use of *lukthung* by Isan communists has never been publicised in Thailand. A possible reason for this is that the October generation (the university students from Bangkok who produced songs for life) were quickly rehabilitated back into Thai society and today wield considerable political power. Phalangwan states that most of his information comes from the book *Siang phleng jak Phuphan* (songs from Phu Phan) written by Khaen Sarika, an editor and columnist who took part in the Isan insurgency during the 1970s (493). This book appears to be out of print but, in 2003, the Collective of Thai Revolutionary Songs Project published a large volume commemorating the use of music by the Thai communist party, which contained chapters written by Khaen Sarika.

The use of *lukthung* by communists usually took the form of *nuea plaeng* (adapted lyrics). Isan insurgents with experience in songwriting put communist lyrics to well known *lukthung* songs sung by popular singers such as Salika Kingthong (no.28 in Anek’s list) and Yodrak Salakjai. The most prolific communist songwriter was ‘Phloeng Nalak’ a forest guerrilla who wrote more than 200 *lukthung* songs criticising the government with such lines as “the government’s power comes from the barrel of a gun” (495). Sonchai Mekwichian’s popular song ‘Khon ngam luem ngai’ (beautiful girl forgets easily) was changed into ‘Tuen thoed chaona Thai’ (please wake up Thai farmers) (500). Yutthasak Chanrali, of 156 Company, used the slow and sad melody of ‘Faen ja yu nai’ (where are you darling?) by Saengsuri Rungrot for his song ‘Pha Chan’ (sheer cliff), which celebrated the exploits of his Company against the Thai soldiers:

> This sheer cliff has a story.
> It is a story about arresting thieves who came to make trouble.

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25 ‘Songs of Phuphan.’ Phu Phan is a mountain area near Sakhon Nakhon in Isan.
The enemy came to the cliff like a crazy man.
They wanted to kill people on the cliff.
The sound of the gun never disappeared.
Screaming and the sound of the wounded reverberated throughout the earth.
When the echo ended there was only the sound of the dying.
Bring the people again and pity the people who are slaves.
The master uses the slaves but never sees the truth.
The sheer cliff bit the enemy and they rolled down like monkeys.
Just as the people say: rolling over and over.
What they say is the truth. (501)

Yutthasak sees the Thai government soldiers as invaders of peaceful communities and portrays the guerillas as enforcing the law, a complete inversion of the establishment history. An excerpt from *The Musical Compositions of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej* reveals the Royalist Nationalist view of songs for life and the October conflict:

*They were particularly apt at a time of social and political awareness in the 1970 (sic). The songs accompanied students as they travelled upcountry to participate in volunteer development camps and for the government officials, soldiers and police assigned to protect and patrol the borders the songs strengthened their resolve to carry out their duties.* (1996, 110)

Apart from the startling suggestion that the students and soldiers were on the same side, there is no mention of Isan people or the peasant class. In this version of Thai history, the students have been rehabilitated and their music officially celebrated. In marked contrast, the lower classes and their music have been ignored.

Ironically, the communist *lukthung* songs were banned, not only by the government, but by the senior members of the Thai communist party, who decreed that only Chinese songs were to be sung (505). The *lukthung* songs were thought to be too commercial and the cha cha rhythm unsuitable for marching (495). Nevertheless, Waeng reports that the songs were extremely popular among many of the guerrillas
who defied orders not to listen to ‘enemy radio’ so that they could keep contact with *lukthung* (500). Khaen Salika asserts that the insurgents were more motivated when they listened to *lukthung*:

*When the young people at Ban Suankorp sang ‘From the ricefield' in the style of ramwong or lukthung (with lyrics like ‘Get him to cut off his head / Receive the karma that he's made') and you heard what they were singing it made you feel more courageous than the marching songs.* (Wat 2003, 459)

Since *phleng phuphan* were not allowed to be broadcast through either the government or guerilla radio stations, it is not surprising that little is known about the sub-genre. Unlike the students from the elite Thammasart and Chulalongkorn Universities, Isan peasants who took part in the insurgency have not been able to be as open about their involvement. Thus the songs that they preferred during the days of struggle have not been remembered in the wider community.

**Conclusion**

Some western writers have wondered why *phleng lukthung* has not been more overtly dissident considering its working class demographic. For example, Craig Lockard surveyed the popular music genres of Thailand for counter-hegemonic discourses and concluded that *lukthung* “could probably not serve as a model for musicians interested in more overt protest music” (1998, 191) (although access to the information found in *Lukthung Isan* might have changed his mind). Lockard’s excellent overview of Thai popular music has drawn some criticism. Mitchell points out that Lockard “pays more regard to socially and politically inflected song lyrics than to the more difficult and devious issues of musical syncretisms” (2001, 19). Certainly the seeming absence of protest in commercial *lukthung* should lead to a discussion of why it was not able to serve as protest music - because of the fragile socio-economic position of Isan musicians and because of the strict censorship that the music attracted, no doubt as a result of its strong Isan origins. Yet it is also true that the issue of protest cannot be
examined until the question of historiography has been addressed. Examining commercial lukthung for signs of revolution has been a futile exercise when the imprint of Central Thai hegemony was so strong. Once the field of discourse has been expanded to include alternative views of Thai popular music history and English translations of key Thai texts, a study of counter-hegemonic content in lukthung becomes more viable.

Just as the need to acknowledge African Americans for their contributions to the formation of rock ‘n’ roll was resisted for many years in America, so have Isan people been denied credit for their part in the history of lukthung. The case study of Suraphon Sombatjaroen demonstrates that selective and discriminatory history is poor history. The King of Thai country music was only able to ascend the throne (as Waeng would put it) because of the help he received from his friend Chaloemchai Sriruecha and his competition with Benjamin. Lukthung Isan provides the historical context and detail necessary to understand how a performer of the calibre of Suraphon was able to develop. The myth of Suraphon as an individual genius who rose from poverty to become the King of Thai country music before dying a tragically early death is a very un-Thai construct, a construct heavily influenced by western tropes of the Romantic artist. In reality he was not an individual genius but rather he developed his musical ability in competition with other talented performers, many of whom were Isan people. The contributions of Isan musicians are keys to understanding the development of lukthung. Lukthung Isan records the stories of these forgotten musicians and, as such, deserves to be widely read.

In closing, a parallel can be drawn between the cultural conditions of today and the reign of King Mongkut. In 1865 the King proclaimed a ban on Lao musical performance because he was afraid that Lao musical culture would completely supplant Siamese genres:

_Thais have abandoned their own entertainments... Both men and women now play laokaen [morlam] throughout the kingdom... We cannot give priority to Lao entertainments. Laokaen must serve the Thai; the Thai have never been the Lao’s servants_ (Found in Miller 1985, 39).
Isan music is again heard throughout Thailand in the forms of *phleng lukthung* and *molam sing*; it is important that Isan people receive credit for their contributions to Thai culture. Waeng Phalangwan can be seen as an Isan music history counterpart to anti-establishment historians such as Chatthip Nartsupha, creating a viable alternative discourse that includes the stories of Isan musicians and consequently communicates a more complete, more realistic view of the history of *phleng lukthung*. 
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Interview with Grant Evans

The interview was conducted by Boike Rehbein on March 1, 2009

Q: Why did you get interested in Laos?
A: In terms of it becoming an academic interest, it was on the horizon in the 1970s. But well before that there were two other factors, firstly the increasing orientation of Australia towards Asia and secondly, of course, the Vietnam War. The earliest time I remember being interested in things Lao was in the early 1960s after the Kong Le coup when I started reading *Time* magazine. Articles in the magazine reported on the coup and asked about the consequences, e.g. would US President Kennedy intervene or would he not intervene? Around the same time, my father brought home the book *The Ugly American*, which I still have. The novel is based on a fictitious country called Sarkhan, which is a mixture of Laos and Thailand. The book which styled itself as fiction based on fact delivers a reflection on the consequences of American foreign aid – the stupid, clumsy things the Americans were doing, causing them to lose to the communists, I suppose. The book appeared in 1959 and I read it around 3 years later at the early age of 14, and it left a rather strong impression on me. It brought up questions on development and foreign aid and, of course, Laos even though I do not remember how I visualized it. All of this was prior to what we now call the Vietnam War, which came on top of it in the mid 1960s. The issue that arose then was the possibility of conscription, the possibility of going to Indochina and getting killed there. My brother-in-law was conscripted after marrying my sister and then went off to Vietnam, so one had to think about it.

Q: How did this translate into an academic interest?
A: I entered university in 1968 and was involved in something we might call a peace movement and we were reading about Vietnam. Of course, Laos floated into the picture occasionally. In retrospect, we knew very little on the entire issue right until

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the end of Australian involvement in 1972 – but we asserted the little we knew very strongly. After 1975, all of this drifted away, and I started to do a PhD thesis on the Southwest Pacific involving fieldwork in Papua-New Guinea. It was partly a critique of leftist views of colonialism based on a more sophisticated new-leftist view of colonialism. Indochina remained in the background with issues like refugees and the Khmer Rouge in the news, but I focused on the Southwest Pacific. Then it all came back into the picture, partly through prompting by my friend Kelvin Rowley, after Vietnam had invaded Cambodia and China had invaded Vietnam. We had to ask: Why was the red brotherhood at war? In 1979, Kelvin suggested that we go to Indochina to do a book on this question. I had other things to do but I had always been interested in the area and topics like nationalism and communism. So we came to this part of the world, first to Thailand where Kelvin did interviews with refugees at the Cambodian border, while I interviewed refugees from Luang Phrabang in Chiang Rai. Then we travelled to Hanoi. After that, I travelled to Cambodia, then back to Hanoi and finally to Laos. Kelvin had to go back to Australia but he remained the driving force behind the book *Red Brotherhood at War*. He focused more on Cambodia, while I focused more on Laos. So I came to Laos in the beginning of 1980. The next thing that happened was the ‘yellow rain’ allegations involving the Hmong. While we were working on the book *Red Brotherhood at War*, I started coming back to Laos to do research among Hmong refugees in camps along the border. I also went into Laos and there I spoke with Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvath who was head of department two of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and explained to him that this was an issue they could not ignore and had to address. I asked him if they would let me do research inside of Laos. He understood the international implications because he was a recent returnee from the Sorbonne. The book *Yellow Rainmakers* took me further into Laos and then I became interested in all the debates on Laos as well as communism and development. The issue that was of particular interest to me was collectivization. So I stopped all my research on the Pacific, put all the papers I had collected into plastic bags and started working on this part of the world. I just kept two books, one on tropical geography and one on rumour. The topic of rumour plays an important role in the ‘yellow rain’ book and many years later I wrote a long article on a rumour that swept through Hong Kong in the early 1990s.

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Q: So you had already abandoned any radical fantasies before coming to Laos?
A: Well, my interest was both academic and political. Kelvin and I had never been part of movements like the Maoists, for example, but rather something that might be described as the New Left, which had a stronger intellectual orientation. We already had a critique of nationalism, as opposed to the Maoists. But a central question in *Red Brotherhood at War* was why did the whole thing go sour? We were primarily against war, so we were interested in the question why the Vietnam War was succeeded by a war between communists. Of course, the answer was nationalism. And when we came to all of these countries we brought with us an anti-Stalinist perspective involving a critique of central planning, political repression, atrocities etc. All of these issues merged in my first research in Indochina. We had the theory, but the one thing we did not have was, of course, the experience of being here. Because to experience full-on communism is kind of a shock actually. If you went to Thailand, which was formally a military dictatorship at the time, life was pretty relaxed and easy. I had been to New Guinea, East Timor and other places before coming to Indochina. But landing in Hanoi was strikingly different. The first thing you realize is the pervasiveness of the state. This, of course, was the period of high Stalinism. And the entire region was in a state of emergency and high alert. Compared to Vietnam and Cambodia, arriving in Laos was much more relaxed in spite of the tensions with China and Thailand, the refugees, the Hmong situation, etc. But it was still strictly controlled and the only place foreigners were allowed to stay was the Lane Xang Hotel. Fortunately, one of the few other guests in the hotel was a journalist from the Japanese Communist Party newspaper, *Akhahata*, and I was able to tag along with him to a Tai Dam village not far from Km 52. Other than that, we could not move much. All roads had barriers and police checkpoints. And there was no research being done. Indeed, this was completely out of the picture. The foreign ministry completely controlled what I was doing. It was a strange atmosphere. People were whispering to me, “Can you get me out of here to Australia?”, and these sorts things. Of course, I had experienced this in Vietnam and Cambodia before coming to Laos. This entire experience of high communism was very important and had a strong impact on me. At this point, I decided to throw my old thesis away and
do my thesis on Laos. And the thing that interested me most was collectivization, both as a theoretical issue and in terms of fieldwork.

Q: So how did this research develop?
A: The first problem to be solved for my fieldwork was to convince the Lao to allow me to actually do fieldwork. I had already convinced Pheuiphanh and had done some fieldwork for *The Yellow Rainmakers*. The result was rather favourable to the Lao. They did not fully understand it or even read it but they seemed to think, “Oh, so you can put together a rather sophisticated argument combating Cold War propaganda.” This especially intrigued Pheuiphanh, who had gotten his PhD from the Sorbonne. So he took a chance. I told him that I wanted to do some fieldwork after I had already studied some of the cooperatives up in Xieng Khuang. But I now had to do some sustained fieldwork, which was virtually impossible to do at the time up in the mountains. So I thought about a place close to Vientiane. And this worked out because Kaysone Phomvihane had just given a speech on Don Dou village being sort of an exemplary cooperative village. In my memory, that is the reason why I chose that area in Hatxayfong district. The idea was to compare cooperatives set up in three different villages, and that is what I did. So the issue was to convince Pheuiphanh to give me the *laissez-passer* and then I had to go out there every day by motorbike for a couple of months. They asked me if I had anybody to go with me. There actually was this one Lao who had come back from Australia and was working in a state mining company at the time. Friends back in Australia hooked me up with him. He took time off to work as my assistant and interpreter as my Lao was still pretty basic back then. Even today you need someone to accompany you when you do research in the villages. But I got lucky, and this guy, Phuvieng, was interesting and he was interested in theoretical issues.

Q: The rest of the story is described in *Lao Peasants under Socialism*.4
A: Right. The interesting thing was how quickly the official account of the cooperatives collapsed. It was like a Potemkin village situation. They claimed that everyone was enthusiastic and everyone was behind the party. But after only two days in the field that story had disintegrated. The village of Don Dou had already had

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several delegations paraded through it, from North Korea, Vietnam and elsewhere. Journalists who went there for a couple of hours could be told almost anything you like. But if someone comes back the next day and the next day, it becomes more difficult to sustain the facade. People then had to adjust their stories. So if you asked them, “Why is this person not in the cooperative?”, they had to be honest about it and tell you why he was not. From village to village the story was slightly different. Don Dou was a village of people that mostly had come from other parts of Laos and Northeastern Thailand, while the other villages were more established. So they had different attitudes to one another, different histories and different attitudes towards the land.

Q: If we look at your early books from a contemporary perspective, could we still learn something from them even though they were somewhat topical in nature?
A: As far as The Yellow Rainmakers is concerned, I still find the issue of rumour most interesting. Even though I did not do it as well as I would like to have done, I still think what I wrote is of enduring interest. And it is an interesting exercise in academic problem solving. But because it is topical in that it relates to the Cold War setting, many people will probably not go back to it. As far as the Red Brotherhood at War is concerned, there again I would change many things but the abiding interest of the book is the discussion of communism and nationalism.

Lao Peasants under Socialism is much more theoretical and there are several interesting theoretical issues in it, in particular the discussion of the nature of cooperation. If you want to organize cooperation in units larger than the family, how do you do it? Thus the epigram I took from Marx and Engels right at the start of the book: “The setting up of a collective economy is predicated upon the development of machinery, upon the utilization of natural resources, and of many other productive forces...” Without all kinds of accompanying changes, collectivization just leads back to a sort of feudalism and that is what happened in Russia and China. So how do you get economies of scale in a peasant economy if nothing else changes? Why should you even get together? And the answer is that there is no point, because peasant agriculture is as efficient as it can be. Interestingly, last year there were discussions in Laos on reviving cooperatives – not state cooperatives of course, but marketing cooperative as a form of organizing agriculture and undertaken voluntarily. As we
know from Europe, there have always been cooperatives of various sorts in agriculture. And I discuss this toward the end of the book. All of these arguments from the book remain of interest. Furthermore, the book retains its interest as a documentation of the period. There is no other book like this on that period in Laos.

Q: One thing that distinguishes your work from most other books on Laos is that you relate Laos to a bigger picture both in a theoretical and in a geographical sense. What difference, do you think, does that bigger picture make in the assessment of what is happening in Laos?
A: I think it is impossible to write on Laos without being well read about elsewhere and other issues. If you wished to write on socialism in Laos, you had to read stuff on Europe and on China. There was simply nothing on Laos that you could read. To get some sort of theoretical comparative perspective, you were compelled to go beyond Laos. And the bulk of anthropological work has been done elsewhere too. Even if you want to study the specificity of Laos, you would never understand it by just looking at Laos.

Q: You are implying that there is something specific about Laos. What could it be?
A: If we take nations as relevant units of analysis, all of them are unique, especially since the project of the nation state is to make its unit unique. But there are all kinds of specificities below the nation state and above it. None of these levels has theoretical priority. For example it is impossible to study Lao Buddhism without studying the region. There are both local and regional manifestations of Buddhism, and now there are national manifestations as well. And it seems to me that all of these are historically conditioned. In all regional studies there is a tendency toward nationalism, to look only at the nation state. This can even amount to a kind of national chauvinism. For example, people writing on Laos usually know the literature on Thailand. This is not reciprocated by Thai scholars. There are good scholars of on Lao Buddhism, such as Archaimbault, but he is hardly acknowledged by Thai scholars. You find very few people working on Thailand who use Laos as sort of a natural point of comparison. Of course, there is often also an inverted chauvinism on the part of the Lao. One of the difficulties studying Laos is the ethnocentrism of the Lao. For ethnic Lao, the natural point of comparison is with the Thai
but for all the other ethnic groups not necessarily. For the Hmong the point of comparison would be with China because the majority of them are living there. Or if you are a Black Tai in Laos, you are part of the majority because you are put in the Lao Lum category and you speak a language that is cognate to speakers of the national language. If you are a Black Tai in Vietnam, however, this is not the case. And so on.

Q: You implied that the larger framework to understand socialist Laos was the Soviet bloc.

A: Yes, up until 1991 when the constitution was drafted. The constitution quite literally constituted the nation state and ended the Vietnamese ‘neo-colonial’ period. Compared to the Vietnamese neo-colonial period, the American neo-colonial period prior to 1975 was very ramshackle. Socialist Laos was very well organized compared to that as you had a large military presence and a very strict control of the party. The term neo-colonialism, a favourite of the Lao Party, is in fact not very appropriate and I use it here polemically. There are all sorts of informal controls in the contemporary world that can hardly be subsumed under this single term neo-colonialism – a category that I believe is more confusing than useful.

Q: If we now look at Laos, we can no longer understand it within the Soviet framework but we only understand it in the framework of a globalized world. Do you think that the new elites in Laos could only rise due to globalization or would they have appeared just on the basis of internal dynamics?

A: The key to it was the collapse of orthodox communism, and this is something that actually comes from the outside. If you go back to the high communist period, there was not much independent economic activity. What happened with the reforms in the few party-rulled states that remain, is that the party had to give up its monopoly of the distribution of goods. It still distributes political positions and some economic privileges but not to the degree it did in the past. And that is what happens with the “opening-up”, as the socialist states call it: new forces become active and people are no longer totally dependent on the party-state to get rich and powerful. So the party loses its monopoly of power and privilege. And with foreign investment, the picture does become globalized. The other way it becomes globalized is through joining organizations like ASEAN, and its member states are committed to Laos’ stability. In
other words, even if the Lao state wanted to collapse, they would not let it collapse. Finally, globalization has entered Laos in all the well-known forms, international organizations, NGOs, travel, media and so on. There is no going back. As a consequence, the dynamic here has become much more complicated. In the past, the Lao party maintained unity by distributing privileges relatively evenly and that has been a relatively simple exercise. This is no longer the case because the picture has become too complicated with many different international players on the scene – China, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, etc. So my prediction is that with the current economic crisis, for the first time some members of the elite may lose out, and that may lead to brawling over privileges within the party. In that sense, globalization has changed the game, even for the party itself.

Q: We know that research on Laos is not widely read within Laos. That is a bit different with your *Short History of Laos*, as it has been translated into Lao. What were some reactions from the Lao to it?

A: Generally, reactions from inside Laos were very positive, from all kinds of people. Several people told me they started reading it and simply could not stop before they had finished it. The main question addressed to me was: “How do you know all of this?” They were puzzled by how one could get access to such broad information. They enjoyed reading the book, I think, because they are starved of information. They know that the party line does not tell the whole story and my book filled in some of the blank spots. Another positive reaction derived from the fact that the book does not hit you over the head with Party politics. Some people have picked me up on small details and have told me that the name of a person in a picture is not quite right, etc. But there has been no real critique of the book. Of course, there was one major negative reaction to the book. When I applied for a new visa in 2007 through the Ecole francais d’extreme-orient, the foreign ministry rejected the application because I had written material critical of the Lao government. So, I cannot officially do research in Laos now. It was a risk to have the book translated but the reactions have been very positive. Maybe even the people in the Foreign Ministry who rejected my visa application are secretly reading it with pleasure.
Q: How does the new book *The Last Century of Lao Royalty* relate to the history book?\(^5\)

A: The new book is a direct outgrowth of the book on *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance*.\(^6\) This earlier book had several motivations. One motivation was that I had been working in Laos long enough to be surrounded by young people who could not remember what I remembered, and I was surprised to realise that I myself had become a repository of memory. A second one was to document and analyze the distortion and manipulation of memory by the new regime. There is an important section on Lao royalty in the book, and as I had been interviewing people and saw pictures on their walls concerning royalty I slowly started to think I should do a book on it. But I still had not decided what kind of book to write. So even while writing the book on *Ritual and Remembrance*, I started gathering material for a future book on the Lao royalty. I finally gave the manuscript, which turned out to be a documentary history, to Silkworm Books in 2005.

Q: When you handed the manuscript to Silkworm did you think it may be risky to publish a book on Lao royalty, possibly even more risky than publishing the *Short History* in Lao? But this may have changed.

A: I think it has changed in several fundamental ways. As I argued in *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance*, after the collapse of communism all kinds of elements from the royalist regime come back into the picture by default. No one was more shocked than me when the statue of Fa Ngum was erected. I could not have predicted this event even from my own book. Here were people carrying out rituals implying the presence of the king or at least of his spirit. Another argument of *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance* had to do with Luang Phrabang and its ‘museumisation’. Once you create a heritage city, that heritage carries a whole lot of baggage with it. So, with a reversion to old style nationalism many aspects of the royal past could not help but re-emerge. My book, I suppose, is just one manifestation of this. But another element came into play with the first ASEAN meeting here in Laos in 2005. This is when Laos was truly fully recognized as a

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modern nation state by the others, and in a sense by the Lao government itself. All the insecurity and vague sense of illegitimacy that had been there beforehand disappeared. Therefore, it could allow discordant themes to come to the surface because they could be interpreted as some kind of manifestation of tradition. And this is where my book on Lao royalty comes in. Lao can look at it and confront their heritage. There is nothing in the book that is problematic or threatening. And there is nothing that is threatening the LPDR in reality either. I think that is good. Hopefully, the relaxation will lead to an expanded space for discussion. These days there are public discussions in the Monument Books store in Vientiane. This was completely unthinkable even a few years ago. The authoritarian state has become more liberal. But it has a long way to go.

Q: The current economic crisis might become a trigger for a political crisis.
A: Unlike in China, there is no real threat to the leadership from below. In Laos, we will not see people marching to the party headquarters and burning it down – at least not for another 20 years. The main threat to stability in Laos is the elite itself. This is where all of these regimes have been vulnerable. All the regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed from the top down. It really depends how elite differences work themselves out here in Laos.

Q: There are an increasing number of publications by young scholars on Laos. What would you recommend to young academics starting to work on Laos now?
A: Yes, there has been terrific work by young sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, ecologists and others on Laos. It is increasingly becoming a rich field. But there are three glaring absences in the field. There is very little historical work. Given the huge lacunae in Lao history, it is a pity that so few historians are working on Laos. You name any period of Lao history, there is virtually nobody working on it. And that includes archaeology. There is a lot to be learnt from archaeology here given the sparsity of written sources. Another area that is absolutely fundamental is politics. Since Joseph Zasloff retired, there has been no political scientist working on Lao politics. And by politics I also mean the Lao military. You and I can have a general discussion on Lao politics now but we are short of the empirical details. I do not understand why there is no interest because there many people working on Thai
politics or on Vietnam but there is nobody on Laos. Finally, there are no economists. Ever since the book by Yves Bourdet in 2000,7 no serious book on the Lao economy has come out. As for anthropology, most anthropologists working on Laos do not know enough history. The discussions on minorities are insufficiently comparative, and people do not adopt the wider perspective that we talked about earlier. Of course, it still is difficult to do research in Laos, and government restrictions often dictate the areas and approaches chosen. For example, a lot of research is often conducted in conjunction with an aid project, and so on.

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BOOK REVIEWS


Reviewed by

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There have been a number of books written about the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and their information gathering and paramilitary operations in Laos following the second Geneva Convention of 1962, which was supposed to insure Laos' neutrality. These operations continued at least up until the Peace Agreement of 1973 that brought an end to the ‘Secret War’ in Laos, or at least American direct involvement in it. However, most have focused on northern Laos, particularly activities involving irregular forces under the command of the infamous ethnic Hmong General Vang Pao (i.e. Hamilton-Merritt 1992; Parker 1995; Robbins 2000; Warner 2006). As Briggs puts it,

“The war in the north, at Long Tieng in support of Vang Pao and the Hmong people, received the most publicity and is the best known. Some Hmong were able to leave Laos and settle outside the country, including in the United States. The world does not know much about the people in southern Laos, who also worked with us.”

This is important, as I have noticed that many younger generation Hmong in America, and even US military veterans from the American war in Vietnam, are under the mistaken impression that only the Hmong were serious about engaging in paramilitary military operations against communist forces in Laos. Certainly there were also people...
from other ethnic groups, including the Lao, who were equally serious in their support of the American war effort.

Only Kenneth Conboy’s (1995) *Shadow War: The CIA’s Secret War in Laos*, pays considerable attention to other parts of the country. There is now, however, a new book that documents the personal experiences of one American CIA case officer who was based in Pakse, in southern Laos, from 1970-72, where he specialized in intelligence gathering activities involving mainly ethnic minority (non-Hmong people from Mon-Khmer language speaking groups in southern Laos) irregular paramilitary soldiers along the Ho Chi Minh Trail to the east near the border with Vietnam. This case officer, the author of the book, is Thomas Leo Briggs, a university graduate in History who ended up as a military police officer in Vietnam prior to joining the CIA and being assigned to work in Laos.

Briggs’ book, unlike Conboy’s, does not attempt to provide a comprehensive history of the CIA’s covert operations in Laos. Instead, this 32-year veteran of US government service presents the story of his personal experiences in Laos. Briggs’ autobiographical account of his two years in Laos is indeed detailed, fascinating and informative, and those interested in better understanding what life was like for case officers working in southern Laos in the early 1970s will find this book a valuable addition to their libraries. It certainly does not duplicate previous works on the ‘Secret War’ in Laos.

Briggs’ story is particularly interesting because he was not an “ammo-humper”, as he refers to some case officers who were particularly interested in direct combat with the North Vietnamese and their Pathet Lao allies (see Eckhardt (1999) and Parker (1995) for examples of what Briggs is talking about). Briggs apparently rarely if ever fired shots during his time in Laos, although he was apparently a skilled marksman, and did carry guns in the field. He mainly operated out of bases on the Boloven Plateau, which he commuted to and from by plane on a daily basis. He lived with his wife in Pakse. For Briggs, the focus was on generating useful data that could be used in support of the US-supported war effort.

Soon after Briggs’ arrival in Laos, he learned that for various reasons the ‘roadwatch’ teams that he was assigned to direct were not collecting very useful data.
He therefore looked for new ways to usefully utilize the teams for gathering intelligence. He eventually came upon the idea of cajoling them into either inducing the defection or literally 'grabbing' enemy North Vietnamese soldiers from near the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He offered rewards of up to US$1,000 to members of his teams for each liver officer they could bring in, with smaller amounts being paid for lower level soldiers. He was not particularly interested in capturing Lao soldiers, since he believed that they tended to know little about the type of detailed information about North Vietnamese order of battle information and other specific intelligence that he was particularly interested in obtaining. Although some roadwatchers dared not attempt such actions, the plan nonetheless worked, and during his time in Laos some of the teams under his direction were able to deliver a number of North Vietnamese soldiers, either willingly or against their will. Most eventually agreed to provide useful intelligence, although those up the chain did not always make good use of the information provided to them.

The author claim that he did not authorize any torture or other extreme measures that violated the prisoners’ fundamental rights, although he is careful to qualify these claims by not denying that the Royal Lao Army military that he worked with might have used more extreme measures for getting prisoners ‘to talk’. In any case, some prisoners apparently provided useful information quite willingly. Others required more ‘persuasion’. The book does describe one case in which an uncooperative Vietnamese prisoner who was deemed to be obsessed with cleanliness was threatened with being denied certain privileges that would have significantly affected his ability to remain so clean.

Although I suspect that many will find this book interesting, since it fills an important gap in our understanding of US secret operations in Laos in the early 1970s, it is not without its weaknesses. To begin with, it is written for those who already understand clearly how the CIA ended up as the lead agency in Laos after 1962. I think it would have benefited from at least a few pages of ‘big-picture’ background information about the war and the American involvement in Laos early on. For example, the author does not explain that the US army was not able to openly operate in Laos after 1962 because the Geneva Conventions specified that Laos was to be a neutral country without any foreign troops operating on her soil. Nor does he explain that
neither the North Vietnamese nor the Americans abided by the conditions of the Geneva Conventions. He does not explicitly state the Americans wanted to appear as if they were abiding by the conditions, but it is well documented that that is why they ended up sending hundreds of plain-clothed American CIA operatives into Laos to direct or otherwise support covert paramilitary operations against communist forces there; in order to disguise the illegality of their presence in Laos according to the international treaty. The North Vietnamese were even more blatant in their violation of the Geneva Conventions, with thousands of troops freely operating on Lao soil. The Vietnamese also used the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos as their main artery for moving troops, arms and other military supplies vital for their war efforts in South Vietnam. The US responded with intense aerial bombardment, thus leaving Laos as the most intensely bombed country in history.

Considering that the Ravens, the US plains-clothed airmen who supported military operations in Laos (see Robbins 2000), are discussed extensively in the book, some background about them should also have been included early-on in the book.

There are also some historical inaccuracies included in the book. For example, Briggs claims that Laos was partitioned in 1962. In fact, that occurred during the First Geneva Conventions eight years earlier, in 1954, when Phongsaly and Sam Neua Provinces were given over the communist Pathet Laos as temporary safe areas, in preparation for establishing a coalition government for national reconciliation.

Another rather minor quibble, which is more of an occasional distraction than a serious detriment to the book, relates to the various small grammatical, spelling and other writing errors and typos included in the book. There is also some unnecessary repetition. For example, in the first few pages of the book the author mentions three times that CIA operations in Laos served their purposes in diverting valuable North Vietnamese military resources to Laos, thus making them unavailable to the war in South Vietnam, where they would have been used against US forces. These errors could have easily been avoided had the book been subjected to rigorous proof editing by a professional copy editor.

Also, the author incorrectly refers to the Lane Xang Hotel in Vientiane as the 'Lane Xiang Hotel'. He also incorrectly claims that Lao people simply burn all their rice
stubble after harvesting. In fact this actually occurs quite rarely. The author seems to be confused or mistaken about this. In addition, the authors’ understanding of Lao language is clearly quite limited, although he claims to have learned Lao from his colleagues. This is evident from his claim that the word “shotgun” was chosen because it was easy for Lao language speakers to pronounce. He seems unaware that there is no “sh” sound in Lao. If he was looking for an easy word for Lao-language speakers to pronounce, he certainly could have done better than ‘shotgun’!

Another quibble I have is with the way Briggs deals with the issue of CIA censorship of parts of the book. Of course, it was necessary for Briggs to pass his book through the agency for editing, since he was contractually committed to keeping information he collected secret. The problem, for me, is the way Briggs deals with the issue in the book. Instead of simply stating that he was obliged to do this, which would have been acceptable, he claims that CIA censorship is not hiding information from the public, but is simply about keeping information that should be classified from entering the public domain. In fact, CIA censorship does indeed hide information from the public, whether justified or not. To deny this does is not very helpful. However, it may well be that keeping some information from the public, such as full names of people involved, including those Lao Nationals that worked with the CIA, is prudent. Maybe it was just a matter of wording, but this section could have been presently more credibly.

The author also makes the rather unbelievable and epistemologically questionable claim that the CIA “did not cause any cultural clashes with the population of Laos” (pg. 3). There is no doubt that many would find such an extreme statement much too definitive, considering that the CIA were essentially in charge of the lives of large numbers of ethnic minorities who worked for them. Again, a more nuanced treatment of this issue would have been appropriate. Briggs does, however, acknowledge the importance of culture in mediating the circumstances of the conflict.

It seems similarly one-sided when Briggs states, on page 328, that, “For the peasants, the CIA led activity provided well-paid employment, brought money into the country, and bolstered the economy. I do not recall any peasant uprisings against the Royal Lao Government or calls by the peasants against the Royal Lao Government.”
This certainly represents, at best, a rather naive statement, considering that most of the ethnic minorities in the far east of the country had long been fully cooperating with the Pathet Lao despite considerable risks to themselves and their families. How could unarmed or poorly armed villagers in government-controlled areas have been expected to rise up against the military power of the (almost totally US financed) Royal Lao Army, if they had wanted to? More subtle treatment of this issue would have considerably increased the author's credibility.

Another serious problem with the book is the way it ends. Up until the last 50 or so pages the book flows quite well as a single story, but then Briggs chooses to include, apparently as an afterthought, a lengthy discussion about the importance of US intelligence operations generally, and the need to improve them. In this section the author strays away from discussing his experiences in Laos, or even directly linking what happened in Laos to US intelligence issues, and instead dwells on challenges amongst the US intelligence community, sometimes referring to places as diverse as Germany, Afghanistan and Iraq. It is not that what he writes is irrelevant or that it is not potentially interesting or important, but it does not, I believe, belong in this book (at least not such a lengthy discussion). The author would have done better to have refrained from including all the information in the book. Instead, he should have crafted a stand-alone article to explain his various ideas about US intelligence policies and practices, which he is clearly passionate about. For those of us who are more interested in what happened in Laos, this last section is more of a distraction. It is an anti-climax. It does not fit well with the rest of the book. A much shorter summary of his ideas about the lessons learned from Laos would have been tolerable, even useful. It appears that the author might have been afraid that if he did not include his general thoughts in the book, they might not have ended up in print anywhere. A good editor would have pointed this out to the author, but he apparently did not have one. That is a shame.

This book could have been a very good book, had it received the editorial support that it deserved, but while it will still be of interest to scholars and others studying US CIA operations in Laos, the deficiencies mentioned above detract significantly from the overall product. This book is a prime example of why academic
publishers have peer review processes and rigorous content and proof editing associated with them: it does make a difference.

In addition, the positioning of the author is sometimes a bit disturbing, and this will probably be especially evident to non-Americans like me (I am a Canadian). The book is written in a very ‘American-centric’ way, which might not be surprising since the author is American. However, for non-American readers one sometimes wonders why, for example, so much effort is put into saving American lives as compared to their Lao counterparts? Aren’t all lives of equal value? This emphasis is especially clear in the part of the book where the extraction of a crashed American Raven pilot and his Lao ‘backseater’ near Paksong is described. This positioning is also evident in various other parts of the book, including in the chapter where Briggs discusses Americans missing in action in Laos. There was clearly much less concern for the Lao than Americans, although Briggs evidently had strong feelings for many of his colleagues, especially his Thai assistants/translators. In fairness, he also acknowledges that the Americans used the people in Laos, and that when it was expedient, they simply abandoned them. Briggs also disagreed with putting the lives of so many paramilitary forces in danger through using them for conventional military battles, a practice that became increasingly common later in the war, and led to large numbers of casualties. He makes it clear at various points in the book that America’s objectives in Laos had little to do with specifically helping the Lao. Instead, American interests were the main motivation for US involvement in Laos, although that that does not mean that individual case officers, such as Briggs, did not develop personal relations with some of their Lao colleagues.

In that the book is written by an American CIA operative, it is difficult to assess what the roadwatchers thought of Briggs, who used the code-name ‘Chanh’ when in Laos. Some probably liked him, but at least one apparently accidentally blew himself up and killed another roadwatcher with a grenade at the same time when he was planning to use against Briggs if he had refused to pay him and his team for a mission that they were involved in! Briggs was apparently quite strict in trying to prevent roadwatchers from cheating him by not actually conducting the operations that they claimed they were involved with. That probably hurt his popularity significantly, for better or worse. Crucially, the lack of commitment to operations attributed to many of the Lao
roadwatchers clearly illustrates that they felt that they were involved in a US war rather a war of their own. My interviews with ethnic Brao roadwatchers also indicate that this was the case.

From my own research on the ethnic Brao people who worked at one of the PS (Pakse Sites) that the author worked with, PS-7 at Kong My, in southeastern Attapeu Province, I would also have expected to have heard more about some other issues, such as the presence of large numbers of ‘ghost soldiers’ (soldiers on the payroll but not really in existence), which from my own interviews with Brao informants, certainly existed before the arrival of Briggs, and presumably afterwards as well. Was Briggs aware of this? Briggs does, however, write about how he photographed all the roadwatchers soon after he first arrived. However, from the account in the book, this was apparently done primarily to insure that the families of those killed in action were provided with appropriate death benefits.

Still, to be fair, I enjoyed reading this book and despite its deficiencies I would still recommend it to others with a particular interest in the history of US involvement in the ‘Secret War’ in Laos. In particular, the detailed accounts of the author’s interactions with his Thai assistants and Lao roadwatchers are both well informed, rare in the literature, and fun to read, and there are also a few good action sections included in the book as well, which keeps it from becoming a dull read. Crucially, the author is quite analytical, which is refreshing when compared to some ‘war story’ authors from the Vietnam War era. He does provide some interesting and useful insights into intelligence collecting operations in Laos, and globally, and he is not afraid to criticize those activities that he considers to be poor quality, or in some cases even totally useless.
References


Reviewed by

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There is not much literature on Laos in the social sciences, especially in economics and political sciences. Young researchers working in these fields are desperately needed. Oliver Tappe is a young researcher who might be able to fill some gaps in the field of political sciences even though he is an anthropologist and historian by training. This book is his PhD thesis in anthropology, supervised by Volker Grabowsky, who is mainly an historian. It was completed in 2007 and published in 2008. As it is in German, not too many scholars outside of Europe seem to have taken notice of it.

Most PhD theses are formalistic. At first glance, this book seems to be a typical PhD thesis: theory and methodology chapters to start with, followed by two long empirical chapters plus an appendix of almost 100 pages comprising pictures, texts, questionnaires and glossary. However, the first glance is deceiving. This book is a great contribution to Lao Studies. Were it not for the formal criteria of a German PhD process, it might have become basic reading on Laos. It is one of the very few books that combine careful, thorough and well-informed empirical research with an original theoretical language. In contrast to most theses, the theory chapter is vital for the empirical argument and is not just included to meet imaginary academic standards. In this regard, the book presents us with true social science instead of the generic descriptive anecdotes typical of “Lao studies” until recently. It represents a new generation of Lao scholars who have moved beyond Orientalism on the one hand and compilations on the other.
The book deals with the construction of a Lao nation state on the symbolic level. It focuses on the writing of national history (“historiography”) and on national symbols (“iconography”). There is literature on both issues, and most of the facts treated by Tappe can be found elsewhere. The book’s virtue lies in the attempt at a comprehensive collection that is theoretically interpreted. Tappe interprets the symbolic construction of the Lao nation state as a “topography,” a spatialized configuration of movable elements (p. 8). The organs of the nation state develop the topography of images and narratives as a “reflection” of the nation, a “representation” (Paul Ricoeur) of real entities and history (p. 309). Technologies of power are used to construct an image, or rather a configuration of images, that represent the polity in the way desired by the organs of the nation state, i.e. the Lao Revolutionary Party (p. 33). Tappe interprets the images as “icons” (Charles S. Peirce) that refer to an object and to an interpretation (instead of just to an object). Against this theoretical background, he proposes to analyze the topography of icons that the Lao Revolutionary Party is constructing in order to consolidate its power and to form a convincing image of the nation state.

The analysis of official Lao historiography (pp. 61-241) reveals the “struggle” (kaan tor suu) leading to freedom and development as the guiding thread (pp. 52-61). In order to reconfirm this and to construct images of identification, the official historiography tells stories of national “heroes” (pp. 80-99). Tappe proves his point on the basis of Lao text books (such as Suneth’s well-known history), schoolbooks and government publications. He compares the official publications with popular images based on an original survey and comes to the result that official historiography is largely successful as popular heroes are almost identical with the official ones. However, there are two interesting exceptions. Phetsarat and Sisavang Vong are still regarded as heroes by many Lao even though they are absent from the official pantheon. Tappe explains this by Phetsarat’s image as saksit and Sisavang Vong’s manifold iconographic presence (pp. 186-190). He also adds that the two most important heroes in official historiography are collectives: the people and the party. Heroes, people and party are merged to form one uniform and unidirectional narrative of the great struggle. Tappe exemplifies this argument with regard to the story of the escape from Phonkheng prison (pp. 209-234).
The interpretation of official Lao iconography (pp. 242-307) deals with monuments and museums as well as posters, stamps, maps and money. The most important point is the shift from a purely socialist register of icons to an inclusion of Buddhist and even Royalist images (p. 296). The topography of places (including museums, monuments and busts) relevant to nationally mobilized memory also replicates the pre-socialist muang-structure (p. 304). Tappe interprets the entire topography of the nation state as an attempt to construct a representation that integrates effective icons into a consistent narrative of the national struggle for freedom and development from Fa Ngum to the present.

For those illiterate in German, several papers by the authors are and will be published containing aspects of the book. I am sure that he will continue to develop his line of thought and publish relevant texts in English in the near future.
Evans, Grant. *The Last Century of Lao Royalty: A Documentary History*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009. pp. 430+xv. [This review first appeared in the *Aséanie* vol. 23 (Juin 2009): 226-228; it has been reprinted here with their permission.]

Reviewed by

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Ever since having a chance to sit and talk with Grant Evans in 2005 in Vientiane, I have eagerly anticipated this book. This major “documentary history” of the last century of Lao Royalty has been in development for many years. It has been well-worth the wait; however, it is not what I expected. Thinking I would be reading a straightforward political history of the Lao Royal family in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I approached this book for its information. I planned to read it, in Heidegger’s terms, as a “document,” not a piece that would “work” on me (i.e. spurn thought, rethink assumptions, etc.). I was wrong. This is a provocative, often non-linear, even emotionally moving study of not just the politics, but the rituals, “symbolics,” and internal conflicts of the Lao Royal family. Furthermore, it is not just told through descriptive prose, but through hundreds of photographs, translations of interviews, rare documents, memoirs, portraits, case studies, and even political cartoons. As the author states in the introduction, this is a “recovery of memory,”(3) and he states that “more formal histories of Lao royalty are hopefully in the process of being written by others. Although I have written a short history of Laos, my interests are fundamentally anthropological.”(4) This anthropological approach to history writing is illuminating, because it takes individual voices (memoirs, interviews, rumors, family photographs) and their emotional content seriously. It is not a history of great men and big ideas, but of misgivings, mistakes, contradictions, constructed memories, apprehensions, and anxieties.

The archive of the former palace of Luang Phrabang is not opened to foreigners yet and so Evans carried around a handheld scanner for years in the field collecting
photographs, stories, documents, and reflections to add to the more formal political and social history of Laos since the late nineteenth century. The bureaucratic fact that Evans had to scurry around the peripheries for years, rather than start in the archival center, is, I believe, what makes this book so valuable. Of course the readers learns much about King Sisavang Vong, Prince Phetsarath, King Sisavang Vatthana, Princes Souphanouvong and Souvanna Phouma, but his anthropological method allowed him to concentrate on many influential people that have been left out of previous studies including Phaya Khammo Vilai, Princess Savivan, Prince Boun Oum na Champassak, Ouan Ratthikoun, Tiao Khamman Rattana, Chao Sai Kham, among others. He also includes a chapter where three very different vignettes and rare documents and interviews are offered. Chapter Seven on King Sisavang Vatthana contains a description of the “Harvest Festival” of 1968 by Harlan Rosacker (given in a personal communication to Grant Evans) in which the ambassadors of the Soviet Union, Australia, and South Vietnam were entertained, played cards, and had cocktails at King Sisavang Vatthana’s gardens north of Luang Prabang with “U.S. government employees”. These are important historical moments during the cold war which wouldn’t make it into many studies. Besides this description, this single chapter also includes a short history of Chaleunsilp Phia Sing, a courtier to the king who was also an accomplished chef, royal master of ceremonies, choreographer, painter, and poet; as well as, an interview by Evans with a servant of the king who was witness to his arrest by the communist party in 1975 (see pp. 222-224). Including short documents like this adds vibrancy to this history and allows multiple voices to be heard. In this way, Evans expands the very idea of royalty outside of close blood relations and formal titles. He includes descriptions of the work of people whose work allowed the royalty to sustain itself during a very turbulent colonial and post-colonial period up to 1975 (and beyond outside of Laos). These include seemingly minor figures who played important roles like Prince Souk Vongsak, and those brought under the parasol of royal power like the Hmong representative Touby Lyfoung and Princess Khamla from the Phuan aristocracy. He even has an entire section on (Prince) Tiao Somsanith who is still struggling in 2009 to revive the art of gold-thread embroidering in France.
The diplomatic historian need not worry, of course there are chapters on Princes Souphanouvong and Souvanna Phouma. However, these are stories easily found in bits and pieces elsewhere. Instead, let me highlight two particularly interesting chapters which include information not found easily. Chapter four, The Front Palace and Maha Ouparat Tiao Phetsarath, offers a biography of perhaps the most important royal intellectual of the twentieth century including rich descriptions of his meetings with foreign dignataries and his travels replete with rare photographs and other primary documents. However, it also includes a 1957 interview with him, S.E. Katay’s D. Sasorith’s speech at the prince’s funeral, a description of his family’s inheritance dispute, and even a description of the “Rituals for the Phi Cult of the Vang Na in Luang Phrabang” by Khamman Vongkot Rattana (translated by Evans from a 1971 issue of the Bulletin des Amis du Royaume Lao) followed by short studies of Tiao Seng Sourichan, Tiao Khampong Vongkot, and others. Chapter 13, Royal Portraits, is, in my opinion, the most important of the entire book. It includes interviews (and rare photographs) with some of the last royal witnesses to major events in the twentieth century including Princess Khampin who became a Buddhist nun, Princess Savivan, Princess Manilai, Princess Ouanna Rangsy, and Prince Soulivong conducted either in France or Laos. These candid conversations not only are important historical accounts, but also reveal the ways in which the royal family has either struggled to remain in Laos or have led complicated and bittersweet decades outside of Laos. Evans has done a great service traveling across the globe recording these stories.

This book is not solely about particulars though, Evans offers in the introduction and scattered at different points in other sections of the book a broader reflection on the place of the Lao royalty in the history of twentieth century royalty in general. He makes short, but important comparative references to the Cambodian, British, and Thai royal families. He also shows the differences between the Champassak and Luang Phrabang royal family’s respective reactions and fortunes over the last 100 plus years. This shows the diversity of attitudes towards royalty in Laos, as well as erode the historical timelessness and integrity of both the “nation” of Laos and the Lao royalty. As part of these comparative exercises in the introduction, though, I would have liked to
learn more about the very idea of royalty as an historical phenomenon in Southeast Asia. I did not expect and would not think necessary a literature review of the oft-cited theories of Wolters, Mus, Tambiah, and others on the nature of Southeast Asian charisma and power, but was eager to read more about what, if anything, made the nature of Lao royalty (legalistically, historically, ritually, aesthetically) seriously distinct from Thai and Cambodian royalty. Of course, there are sections on the unique royal style of silk, the royal “symbolics” displayed at the That Luang festival, royal funerals, and weddings. These details offer a rare glimpse into the daily personal, political, and ritual lives of many members of the royal family over time, but a greater attempt to compare these activities to similar religious rituals and political actions of the Chakri or Sihanouk family would have been illuminating. This does not take away from the depth and breadth of this book though. Indeed, these additional comparative exercises may have taken Evans too far afield and unnecessarily added to what is already a massive tome. So little has been written about the Lao royal family compared to the Thai and Cambodian (and Burmese for that matter) royalty, that Evans may have made the right choice and concentrated on the Lao. The Lao are often referred to as the “little brother” (nong) of the Thai and their rituals, cultural aesthetics, literature, architecture, etc. is seen has derivative of the Thai and Khmer. Evans reveals that there is much we can learn from the history and choices of Lao royal family and this history outside of its connections to and relationships with its neighbors.

I have not enjoyed a book in the field so thoroughly in a long time. The photographs, clear prose, organization, translations, and wide ranging evidence makes this book essential for any student of Laos and ideal for undergraduate and graduate courses on Southeast Asian history, Cold War Politics, Global Marxism, Royal History, and Southeast Asian performance and culture.
សាមារ

ប្រការលេខ៦ កញ្ញ សឹម្រៀស ថ្មីល ២០២៣

ដែលបានមកពីពាណិជ្ជកម្មថ្មីល សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិក និងត្រឹមតែត្រូវបានបញ្ចាក់ថា “ដំណោះស្រាយអំពីការបង្កើតការងារថ្មីល” មិនបានឈ្មោះឈ្មោះរបស់អ្នកទេ។

ក្នុងឆ្នាំ១៩២៣ អ្នកបានបញ្ជាក់ថា “មានបញ្ហានៃការសោតភាពអាមេរិក” ចុងក្រោយក្នុងការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍ គណៈប្រតិបត្តិការពោលវិទ្យាសាស្ត្រ និងសេវាដោយសារឯកសាររបស់ប្រទេសអាមេរិក នឹងការប្រឈមពោលដ៏ធំ។

ឈប់ការស្មាតហ្វូតប្រទេសអាមេរិក អ្នកបានបញ្ជាក់ថា “មានបញ្ហានៃការសោតភាពអាមេរិក” ចុងក្រោយក្នុងការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍ គណៈប្រតិបត្តិការពោលវិទ្យាសាស្ត្រ និងសេវាដោយសារឯកសាររបស់ប្រទេសអាមេរិក នឹងការប្រឈមពោលដ៏ធំ។

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ព្រះអង្គារ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ ។

( ស. ១ មិថុនា - ១ សីហា )

ព្រះអង្គារទេស្រីបស្រ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ នៅវិទ្យាល័យដែលមានដំណើរការក្នុងជីវិត និងសារធាតុរបស់វាដ៏មានសុទ្ធភាព ដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងដំបូង និងបានបង្កើតឡើងវិជ្ជារយៈពេលការងារនេះ។ ក្នុងប្រយ័ត្ននេះ ទេស្រីបស្រ បានលើកលៀងព្រឹត្តិការណ៍និងប្រការកម្មវិធីដ៏វិជ្ជារយៈពេលការងារនេះ ដែលទេស្រីបស្រ បានសរសេរឲ្យសាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ បានដឹងឲ្យមិនប្រឈមក្នុងការងារនេះ។

ប្រជាជនព្រះអង្គារទេស្រីបស្រ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ គឺជាព្រះអង្គារដ៏មានសុខភាព និងសុទ្ធភាព ដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងដំបូង និងបានបង្កើតឡើងវិជ្ជារយៈពេលការងារនេះ ដែលទេស្រីបស្រ បានសរសេរឲ្យសាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ បានដឹងឲ្យមិនប្រឈមក្នុងការងារនេះ។

ប្រជាជនព្រះអង្គារទេស្រីបស្រ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ គឺជាព្រះអង្គារដ៏មានសុខភាព និងសុទ្ធភាព ដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងដំបូង និងបានបង្កើតឡើងវិជ្ជារយៈពេលការងារនេះ ដែលទេស្រីបស្រ បានសរសេរឲ្យសាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ បានដឹងឲ្យមិនប្រឈមក្នុងការងារនេះ។

ប្រជាជនព្រះអង្គារទេស្រីបស្រ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ គឺជាព្រះអង្គារដ៏មានសុខភាព និងសុទ្ធភាព ដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងដំបូង និងបានបង្កើតឡើងវិជ្ជារយៈពេលការងារនេះ ដែលទេស្រីបស្រ បានសរសេរឲ្យសាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ បានដឹងឲ្យមិនប្រឈមក្នុងការងារនេះ។

ប្រជាជនព្រះអង្គារទេស្រីបស្រ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ គឺជាព្រះអង្គារដ៏មានសុខភាព និងសុទ្ធភាព ដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងដំបូង និងបានបង្កើតឡើងវិជ្ជារយៈពេលការងារនេះ ដែលទេស្រីបស្រ បានសរសេរឲ្យសាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ បានដឹងឲ្យមិនប្រឈមក្នុងការងារនេះ។

ប្រជាជនព្រះអង្គារទេស្រីបស្រ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ គឺជាព្រះអង្គារដ៏មានសុខភាព និងសុទ្ធភាព ដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងដំបូង និងបានបង្កើតឡើងវិជ្ជារយៈពេលការងារនេះ ដែលទេស្រីបស្រ បានសរសេរឲ្យសាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ បានដឹងឲ្យមិនប្រឈមក្នុងការងារនេះ។

ប្រជាជនព្រះអង្គារទេស្រីបស្រ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ គឺជាព្រះអង្គារដ៏មានសុខភាព និងសុទ្ធភាព ដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងដំបូង និងបានបង្កើតឡើងវិជ្ជារយៈពេលការងារនេះ ដែលទេស្រីបស្រ បានសរសេរឲ្យសាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ បានដឹងឲ្យមិនប្រឈមក្នុងការងារនេះ។

ប្រជាជនព្រះអង្គារទេស្រីបស្រ សាមាស្ត្រីបស្រ គឺជាព្រះអង្គារដ៏មានសុខភាព និងសុទ្ធភាព ដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងដំបូង និងបានបង្កើតឡើក
 Orleans នរោត្តមសាលាដែលអាចដើរបានដ៏អស្ចារ្យ និងមានការផ្តល់ការជួនជាតិរបស់គ្រូពីរជាមួយនឹងប្រទេសបារាំង គឺជាអត្ថបទដ៏ជាប់ពីការលក់នូវចន្លោះរបស់អ្នកទៅក្នុងប្រទេសនេះ។

ដើម្បីការពារតំនិញដ៏ប្រសើរសុីមានការប្រកួតប្រជុំអំពីការផ្តល់ការជួនជាតិពីអ្នកបំផុតជាមួយនឹងអ្នកបំផុត។

គ្រប់គ្រាន់ទោសនិយោគប្រកួតប្រជុំអំពីការផ្តល់ការជួនជាតិនេះឬអ្នកបំផុត។

ដើម្បីយកថាមពលពីប្រទេសបារាំង វាអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់ដែលអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់អ្នកទៅក្នុងប្រទេសបារាំង។

ដើម្បីការពារប្រជាជនរបស់ដែលជួនជាតិនេះអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់អ្នកទៅក្នុងប្រទេសបារាំង។

ដើម្បីយកថាមពលពីប្រទេសបារាំង វាអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់ដែលអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់អ្នកទៅក្នុងប្រទេសបារាំង។

ដើម្បីការពារប្រជាជនរបស់ដែលជួនជាតិនេះអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់អ្នកទៅក្នុងប្រទេសបារាំង។

ដើម្បីយកថាមពលពីប្រទេសបារាំង វាអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់ដែលអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់អ្នកទៅក្នុងប្រទេសបារាំង។

ដើម្បីការពារប្រជាជនរបស់ដែលជួនជាតិនេះអាចស្វែងរកការជួនជាតិរបស់អ្នកទៅក្នុងប្រទេសបារាំង។
សូមសូ្ងនេះគឺជាអាយុមិត្តលេខារបស់យើង ប៉ុន្តែយើងមិនទទួលសុ្ងឬសុ្ងសៀវភៅទេ។ ប្រសិទ្ធិនេះគឺជាមុនដើម្បីសំខានូលការសុ្ងជីវិតរបស់យើងបង្កើតបាន។ ប្រសិទ្ធិនេះឬសុ្ងសៀវភៅនឹងជាកិរិយាស័ត្រដែលយើងក៏បានប្រើប្រាស់។
នេះគឺជាសូត្រសម្រាប់ដែលបានមានការដឹកនាំដោយអាទិត្យភាព។ ដូច្នេះ កន្លែងដែលមានអាទិត្យភាព គឺជាទូកភាព។

មានទម្រង់ដឹកនាំដោយអាទិត្យភាព។ កន្លែងដែលមានអាទិត្យភាព គឺជាសូត្រសម្រាប់ដែលបានមានការដឹកនាំដោយអាទិត្យភាព។

ដូច្នេះ កន្លែងដែលមានអាទិត្យភាព គឺជាអាទិត្យភាព។

ដូច្នេះ កន្លែងដែលមានអាទិត្យភាព គឺជាអាទិត្យភាព។

ដូច្នេះ កន្លែងដែលមានអាទិត្យភាព គឺជាអាទិត្យភាព។

ដូច្នេះ កន្លែងដែលមានអាទិត្យភាព គឺជាអាទិត្យភាព។

ដូច្នេះ កន្លែងដែលមានអាទិត្យភាព គឺជាអាទិត្យភាព។
៖ ប្រែថ្មីសមាជមាតី
បារាំងមូលិនលំប៉ុន
(ស.រ.កុង - ១៣នាក់)

មាតី​សមាជ​មាតីrection បឹង​ឈូត​ំង់​ដាច់​ខដ្ឋ
សម្រាប់​ក្មេង​អក្ទង់ក្មេង​មិន​មាន​ប្រការ
ត្រូវ​ធ្វើ​បក្ស​ស្រួល​ច្រើន​អតីត
ប្រយុទ្ធក្រោម​នេះ​ទៀត​ដែល​សង្គម​នឹង
ធ្វើក្មេង​អក្សរ​អក្សរ​នេឡើង
សម្រាប់​ក្មេង​អក្ទង់ក្មេង

សេចក្តីដាច់ខដ្ឋមាតីរួមហ៊ុន
សម្រាប់​ក្មេង​អក្ទង់ក្មេងកាស់ច្រើន
សម្រាប់​ក្មេង​ក្មេងអក្សរ​នេឡើង
ប្រយុទ្ធក្រោម​នេឡើង
សម្រាប់​ក្មេង​អក្ទង់ក្មេង
ប្រយុទ្ធក្រោម​នេឡើង
ប្រយុទ្ធក្រោម​នេឡើង
ប្រយុទ្ធក្រោម​នេឡើង
ប្រមូលិន់​ជាតិ​នេឡើង
ប្រុងប្រាក់​ជាតិ‌នឹង​នេឡើង
ប្រយុទ្ធក្រោម​នេឡើង
ការអនុវត្តន៍ផ្ទុកអាហារសម្រាប់សេដ្ឋកិច្ចក្នុងក្រោយស្ទើរលេងនៅក្នុងសង្គ្រាម។

នៅពេលដែលមានសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

នៅលើក្រោយស្ទើរលេងរៀង។

ចំណុចចម្លើយដែលឈានសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

ក្រញេងៗក្នុងសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

ជាមួយនឹងសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

សេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

ក្នុងសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

ជាមួយនឹងសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

ប្រការសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

សេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

ជាមួយនឹងសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

ប្រការសេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

សេវារឹងច្រៀងថ្ម។

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ជាមួយនឹgements
ព្រះវិហារបុរស (ណាម្ាា)
អំពូលសម្រាប់ (អ.ស. ១៩៤១-១៩៤៨)

នៅស. ២០៦៥ បានទទួលមកប្រយុទ្ធដំបូងរបស់វាបានប្រងារនៅក្នុងក្រុងកែវវងក្រុងហិរញ្ញវត្ថុមានស្រែស្វែងមកពីអាមេរិក

នៅពេលវេលាប្រយុទ្ធដំបូង បានប្រការាចរសើសជាច្រើនដូចជាភាសាស្វែងមកពីអាមេរិក បានប្រការាចរសើសជាច្រើនដូចជាជនជាតិអាមេរិក

នៅពេលវេលាប្រយុទ្ធដំបូង បានប្រការាចរសើសជាច្រើនដូចជាភាសាស្វែងមកពីអាមេរិក បានប្រការាចរសើសជាច្រើនដូចជាជនជាតិអាមេរិក
ប្រសិទ្ធភាពនេះអាចប្រឈមតទោស តាមស្ថានភាពស្ថានភាពរបស់អ្នក និងអ្នកដែលមានធាតុសម្រាប់អត្ថបទនេះ។

តួអង្គទាំងអស់នៅក្នុងប្រយោគនេះជាងមិនដឹងអំពីអត្ថបទប៉ុណ្ណៀត។

ប្រាកដថ្នាក់ជាតិត្រូវបានប្រការពីការប្រឈមតទោស និងអ្នកដែលមានធាតុសម្រាប់អត្ថបទនេះ។
ក្នុងរយៈពេលមួយចំនួន បុគ្គលិកកុម្មុយ្វួរាន់ក្នុងក្រុងប៉េងែោ បានត្រូវបានដែលមកដល់ហើយបានការពារ។ ការនេះបានក្លាយជាការប្រកួតប្រជែងរវាងប្រការនីស្តអន្តរជាតិនិងប្រការនីស្តកុម្មុយ្វួរាន់។

ឬបីក្លាយដើម្បីក្លាយជាការប្រកួតប្រជែងនិងការប្រកួតប្រជែងដែលមកដល់។

អាចឈ្មោះដើម្បីក្លាយជាការប្រកួតប្រជែងនិងការប្រកួតប្រជែងដែលមកដល់។

ដោយប្រឈមដែលមកក្លាយជាការប្រកួតប្រជែងនិងការប្រកួតប្រជែងដែលមកដល់។

ដោយប្រឈមដែលមកក្លាយជាការប្រកួតប្រជែងនិងការប្រកួតប្រជែងដែលមកដល់។
នរោត្តមការណ៍ បានក្លាយជាសម្រាប់ពេលវេលារបស់ចុងក្រោយ។ អត្តប្រវត្តិត្រូវបានការពារជាមួយក្រុមលេខយុត្តិធម្មតាប្រជាជនពេលដែលអាចក្លាយជាសម្រាប់ប្រជាជនទាំងអស់របស់ពិភពលោក។ វាមានសកម្មភាពអស់ដោយស្រាលស្មើច្រើនក្នុងសង្គ្រាមជាតិការពារ។ ហើយក្នុងអំឡុងពេលនេះ នរោត្តមការណ៍បានប្រការពីការប្រកួតប្រជែងនៃការមើលីកនៃអ្វីណាមួយប្រទេស។ ក្នុងតំបន់នេះ នរោត្តមការណ៍បានប្រការពីការប្រកួតប្រជែងនៃការជួយជាតិអំពីវិស័យនៃជនជាតិ។
នៅក្នុងប្រយោគខាងក្រោមបានជាបញ្ចប់នៅប្រជុំក្នុងមហាវត្តន៍។

ពីរៀងរាល់ថ្ងៃ គាត់បានស្វែងរកឲ្យឈរដល់ប្រជុំក្នុងមហាវត្តន៍
នៅពេលដែលព្រះបាទបានឈរដល់វត្ត។ នៅពេលដែលព្រះបាទមកដល់
ដោយក្រុមអ្នករួមចោល គាត់ជួបជុំឈ្មោះសុខិសស្ត្រី។ គាត់បានស្រេចថា
គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។
គាត់បានជួបជុំឈ្មោះសុខិសស្រីថា។

មកលែងប្រយោគដែលមានសូមសិនដូចគ្នា គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍
ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។ គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍
ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។

មានសូមសិនដូចគ្នា គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។
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មានសូមសិនដូចគ្នា គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។
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មានសូមសិនដូចគ្នា គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។
គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។

មានសូមសិនដូចគ្នា គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។
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គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។

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គ្រួសារនេះមានប្រយោជន៍ជាច្រើនដូចជាក្រុមអ្នកជួបជុំ។
ប្រយោគនេះសំដីសុំអត្ថប្រយោជន៍ ដែលមានប្រយោជន៍ពិសេស ប្រយោគនេះមានការសរសេរជាភាសាខ្មែរ ហើយត្រូវបានប្រឈមប្រាស់ដើម្បីបង្កើតប្រយោជន៍ផ្សេងៗ។
แพร่เจ้าใหญ่เล็กถิ่น
ก. สันทันสำราญ แย้มสุวรรณภูมิ

ประจำชั้น.medium is medium
และเจ้าสมเด็จ

ยังจุดบันทึกในลูกค้าเป็นของอังคารโดย
หาทหารชิงช้าที่

สามัญมันที่มีเป็นมือจารีต
เมื่อมีบัตรแล้วได้รับเชร์

ขอ ขออภัยว่ามีข้อความนี้ไม่เรียก
ให้ฉันทบทวนสรรพสิ่ง

ขออภัยว่ามีข้อความนี้ไม่เรียก
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ให้ฉันทบทวนสรรพสิ่ง

ขออภัยว่ามีข้อความนี้ไม่เรียก
ให้ฉันทบทวนสรรพสิ่ง

ขออภัยว่ามีข้อความนี้ไม่เรียก
ให้ฉันทบทวนสรรพสิ่ذلك
ប្រកបដោយនេះមានឬមិនមានអត្ថបទលីកុត្ដាមុនមិនមាន។ សូមជួយ គឺជាក្លិនអាទិភោជនីឬមនុស្សក្បាត់មកសុីវត្ថុល្អរបស់បុគ្គលអាចសួរឡើង។

ជាទូទៅស៊ីប្តុកប្លង់មកសុីវត្ថុល្អរបស់បុគ្គលច្រើន

មានប្រកបដោយនេះប្លង់មកសុីវត្ថុល្អរបស់បុគ្គលអាចសួរឡើង។
អគ្គប្រឹមាណមានឈ្នះនៅមានដែល
យើងដឹងអំពីការបង្កើតប្រកួតប្រជែង
សម្រាប់ប្រជាជននេះតាំងពីពេលដែល
បានណែនាំមួយត្រូវបាននាំយក
ដោយក្នុងប្រកួតប្រជែង។
ងាត់ក្រេងមុខមុខក្រោយក្រុងក្រោយតូចទេ សេចក្តីស្នីប្រឹកប្រភេទ ស្រប់ ក្រុងតូចតូចខ្លួនឯង នំគការណ៍របស់វាអ្នក ចុះបញ្ចូលមុខ ជាគោលនយោបារបន្តវាមុខព្រះអង្គ។ ក្រុងតូចតូចខ្លួនឯង ឆ្លាស់ប្រាំជាងមុខព្រះអង្គ។
វោលវៀងជ័យ ខេមរោក-បឹងថ្មី
មាត់ដំបូងបរិសិទ្រ័យហិរញ្ញវត្ថុ
និង សមាជិកនៃប្រតិបត្តិកម្ម
អគគោលកម្ម

ដំណាក់ការថ្មីស្រប់គិតទៅជាមួយនឹង
ទូទៅមួយៗប្រការការចូលចិត្តល្បីសមាស
របស់ស្តីបន្ទាប់ពីត្រូវបានបង្កើតឡើងជាន់
គឺបង្ហាញពីប្រការការសន្តិរង្វង់និងប្រការ
គោលការណ៍ប្រការការចូលចិត្តល្បីសមាស

ភ្ជាប់ដំណាក់ការប្រវត្តិសាលាគ្រប់គ្រង
ដែលបានផ្តល់ឱ្យផ្ទៃដែលមាត់ដំបូងបរិសិទ្រ័យ
ជាមួយនឹងឱ្យមាត់ដំបូងបរិសិទ្រ័យហិរញ្ញវត្ថុ
អំពីអំពីគោលការណ៍ប្រការការចូលចិត្តល្បីសមាស
ប្រហែលជាសីត្រំបន់សារមុនអ្នកនេះនំអីលំបែងជាតិពីការឆ្លងកាត់អំពីបរិស្ថានក្នុងវិស័យសម្រេចអាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា។ ទើបអាចធ្វើឲ្យប្រជាជនអាជាតិអាកាស់ប្រយោជន៍អំពីរបៀបរាង្គបញ្ចប់ប្រជាជន។

ដើម្បីបង្កើតការស្វែងយល់ប្រេបង្គុំរបស់អ្នកនេះតាមរយៈពេលដល់នេះ តើអ្នកនិស្សេងត្រូវប្រការមកឲ្យអ្នកដោះស្លាប់ទៅកាន់ប្រជាជន។

ដើម្បីកំពុងបង្កើតការស្វែងយល់ប្រេបង្គុំរបស់អ្នកនេះតាមរយៈពេលដល់នេះ តើអ្នកនិស្សេងត្រូវប្រការមកឲ្យអ្នកដោះស្លាប់ទៅកាន់ប្រជាជន។

ដើម្បីកំពុងបង្កើតការស្វែងយល់ប្រេបង្គុំរបស់អ្នកនេះតាមរយៈពេលដល់នេះ តើអ្នកនិស្សេងត្រូវប្រការមកឲ្យអ្នកដោះស្លាប់ទៅកាន់ប្រជាជន។
ដង្វះខ្ញុំ (១៩០៩) មាន់រឿងមួយនៃប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្រមហារបាយបាយនេះ ដែលប្រយុទ្ធដោយោះដ្ឋាន ដែលមានពោធ ម៉ាយជុំៗ ដែលវាស៊ីលឹតមានដើម្បីបង់ប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្ររបៀបណាម្រូ មានខ្លួនឯងបារីជូននៃរដ្ឋបាលរបស់អាស៊ីអាហ្វ្រិក និងមានឡុងអេស្លាតដើម្បីបង់វិស័យប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្រ។ ដើម្បីប្រការនេះអំពីការជួង ឬការបង្កើតរឿងខ្ញុំបានប្រការនៃវិស័យប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្រ។ សម្រាប់ការស្វែងរក និងប្រការ និងការបង្កើតរឿងខ្ញុំបានប្រការនៃវិស័យប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្រ។
ភាពយន្តបោះឆ្នេរអេស្រាតារាយពីមួយរយៈពេលជនប unheard story from the past day in the history of people