



ການປະຊຸມນາໆຊາດ ລາວສຶກສາ ຄັ້ງທີ ໓

Third International Conference on Lao Studies
July 14-16, 2010
Khon Kaen, Thailand

ABSTRACTS

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Tones and Lexical Variation in Lao (Nampua), Spoken in Nan Province, Northern Thailand

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Abstract

The people in Nampua village, Wieng Sa district, Nan province in Northern Thailand have been told that their ancestors migrated from Vientiane, Lao PDR and their mother tongue is Vientiane Lao. According to the only existing written record, their ancestors migrated from Luang Prabang since the beginning of the Thonburi Period (around 1769 A.D.). While there has been confusion about in which Lao language group their mother tongue belongs to, the lexical variation has also been found in their language.

This paper aims to present the tones and the lexical variation in Lao (Nampua). The wordlists are composed of 240 lexical items for checking the tones and 800 lexical items for checking the lexical variation. The data are collected from three age-groups of speakers: older (60 up), middle (35-50), and younger (15-25). The data from a total of 15 Lao (Nampua) speakers were analyzed both auditorily and instrumentally.

The result of the tone analysis reveals that the people in Nampua village actually speak Luang Prabang Lao, not Vientiane Lao. The lexical analysis shows that a number of lexical items in Lao (Nampua) are different from Lao, spoken in Lao PDR. The lexical variation occurs by means of the following linguistic processes: phonetic variation, vowel weakening, syllable reduction, lexical mixture, lexical items with semantic shift, lexical borrowing, and the creation of new lexical items. A number of lexical items are rarely used and some are completely lost from the young generation's lexicon. The tendency of the Lao language maintenance in the village will also be discussed.

Keywords: Lao tones, Lao vocabulary, Lao lexical items, lexical variation

Conflict Resolution in the Mekong Basin: The Politics of Water in Riparian Nations

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Abstract

Beginning in the 1950s, with assistance of the United States, various international agencies were created to encourage multi-lateral development of the basin's resources, but international conflicts in the region retarded significantly any ability to create cooperative efforts at multilateral development. In addition, the emergence of China as a power in control of the upper reaches of the basin (the Lançang) has made various entities such as ECAFE (Economic Commission on Asia and the Far East), the Mekong Committee, and even the Mekong Project ineffective for continued planning and development by the original four participating nations: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. Each nation has specific interests in the pattern of development and experiences threats from directions that such development might take. Vietnam, for example, is especially vulnerable to stanching water flows in the Mekong, because any reduction in fresh water sources increases salinity of the Mekong in its delta, the major area of rice production. As a result of conflicting interests, development of the Mekong, itself, has made little progress. The Chinese, however, have proceeded to impound both mainstream and tributary waters within their boundaries without regard to interests of other riparian nations, already with significant impacts on downstream flows of the Mekong. This unilateralism (and, in some cases, bilateral agreements) among riparian nations has emerged as a major concern of environmentalists and activists.

Keywords: governance, sovereignty, transnational boundaries

The Lam Nam Oon Irrigation Project: Isan's "Outstanding" Irrigation Success Story?

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Conceived in 1963 as a multipurpose initiative —primarily for irrigation and flood control, with additional benefits flowing from domestic water supply, fishing and recreation— the Lam Nam Oon Irrigation Project (LNOIP) in Isan's Sakhon Nakhon Province was funded by a concessionary loan from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to the Government of Thailand. LNOIP was sited —probably not coincidentally— within a known area of anti-state opposition and Isan regionalism, and the nearby Phu Phan hill range was a seat of the Communist Party of Thailand's (CPT) failed insurgency during the 1960s-1970s. Construction was completed in 1973 and was followed in 1977-85 by an "Integrated Rural Development" project, also USAID-supported; which was immediately supplanted by the two-year "Agriculture Technology Transfer" project; thence the "Integrated Agro-Production and Marketing" scheme.

The aggregate objective of all of these was promoting agribusiness and contract farming, in an apparent bid to stimulate uptake of the under-used irrigation system and allow market entry of US multi-nationals. Subsequent USAID evaluation missions cited increases of 2,900% in participating households, and 2,400% in agricultural production between 1985 and 1993. Among the laudatory responses was LNOIP's being awarded in 1996 as the "all-Thailand outstanding irrigation project". Even now, given the putative successes in farmer participation and irrigation uptake, LNOIP periodically serves as the venue for Royal Irrigation Department staff training and is seen as a "model" irrigation system. Four decades on the project was revisited to review the LNOIP's actual outcomes more critically: discovering that the earlier glowing assessments led not towards a more robust approach by USAID, but rather to the institutional de-emphasis of post-facto project evaluation, and raises some troubling questions about regional irrigation futures.

Keywords: Isan; irrigation development; post-facto evaluation; agribusiness; state simplification

Well-being, Social Constructions and the Water Resources Development Imperative in Isan

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Abstract

Both the Ninth and Tenth (2007-2011) National and Economic Social Development Plans of Thailand have privileged the concept of “well-being” (yuu-dee mee suk) of the populace as being important, embedded in a narrative of “people-centered development” and the royal-associated “sufficiency economy” philosophy. Over the past decade or so, a number of studies have been conducted concerning locally-situated understandings of well-being in communities in Northeast and Southern Thailand which have found that “water” ranks highly in the perceptions of respondents about livelihood categories essential to well-being. However, this broad categorization does not specifically account for the potential major uses to which water is used or its management, whether for domestic, agricultural, cultural or environmental purposes. Despite this general perception of strong links between water and well-being, few studies appear to have explored the specific ways in which Thai people frame well-being requirements around various sub-components of the water sector, either locally or nationally.

This paper reviews the well-being and sustainable development literature referring specifically to Northeastern Thailand (Isan) and relates it to some more recent research examining the perceptions of Lao Isan people on basic water resources management issues and framings of water resources crises in the same region. At the same time it looks critically at the present water resources development discourse, paradigms, policies and plans for Lao Isan and examines some of the inherent contradictions that result. It takes the case of the Nam Songkhram Basin to illustrate how practice, policy and state-led planning of water resources that may be poorly situation-cognisant of local socio-ecological realities has led to productivity declines in the agriculture, fisheries and wetlands-resources sectors in recent years, while conflicts and tensions over water resources have increased. It raises questions about the underlying assumptions that have been used to justify a continual expansion of irrigated and intensified agriculture across Isan and examines the competing narratives that variously support or contests the dominant paradigm.

Keywords: well-being; Sufficiency Economy; water resources; sustainable development; Northeast Thailand; development discourse

Lao Patients Seeking Health Care in Thailand

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Abstract

Cross border issues are often analysed from the point of view of commercial relations and work migrations. The objective of this article is to study movements on both sides of the border between Lao PDR and Thailand from an original point of view; one which focuses on health care and more particularly on the Lao people who seek health care in Thailand.

Research conducted by Richard Pottier shows that in 1973 the practice of crossing the Mekong to seek health care in Thailand already existed among people living in border regions, more particularly in Tha Dūa area, located approximately 30 kilometres from the centre of Vientiane.

The issues today are: first, whether this practice still exists; if it is influenced by the development of transport infrastructure on both sides of the border; and thus if the amount of movement has increased. Between 2005 and 2007, in five different Lao border areas (Bokeo, Vientiane capital, Bolikhamsai, Savannakhet and Champassak provinces) surveys were carried out to quantify these health movements and to understand the motives of the Lao patients who use Thai facilities. We propose to present here the results of this research.

Keywords: cross-border, health seeking behaviour, Lao PDR, Thailand

Lao Textiles in Classic Literature
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Abstract

This paper will reflect the history of the traditional weaving of Lao people. It will particularly give the terminology/vocabulary of the motifs /patterns which still in use at present time.

The paper includes the extract from both oral and written literature such as lullabies, the love/courting song, folktales etc. and the three master pieces of Lao written literatures. First is the story of Thao Hung-Thao Cheung, an epic of the early Xiengthong dynasty (the 13-14th century AD). Second one is the story of Vetsantra jartaka (a canon of Lord Buddha) composed in the golden era of Xiengthong(14-15th century AD) and the last one is Sang SinXay, an epic of golden period of Vientiane dynasty (16th century).

The oral traditional literature mirror the main role of Lao women in the textiles production /weaving which became a personal – decisive attribute of both high rank and ordinary women in Lao society.

While written literature is providing the richness of colouring and dyeing of the textiles and dressing used by the main characters. In the 2nd story, the description about motifs and designs are exceptionally complicated. It tells us the kind of raw material used in the weaving: cotton, silk, tree-barks-plant and lotus-fibre. Such information has never been notified in other written works. The depictions on designs, motifs, colours and dyes caused a feeling of moving and animation. For instance, when speaking on horse pattern, It was said that the animal lifted his two front legs, as he is starting to run. In the pattern of loving course (flirting), the girl is described as a divorcee. Similarly for the colour, the poem usually gave an equivalent material for instance, green like the wing of the green beetle, red as the Fang (flame tree or Royal Poinciana) wood juice in a copper cup, or the colour of sunset's light...

Such intricate description on colours and designs reflected obviously a good knowledge and skill in weaving of Lao women.

Keywords: Lao textiles, oral literature, written literature, Lao woman

***Sinsai* is Alive and Well in the Isan Heartland**

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The *Sinsai* story is one of the most popular narratives in the Isan's central provinces, or what I call the Isan Heartland (Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, Roi Et, Kalasin), where it is re-enacted both in mural painting and shadow theater. It appears to have originated in Laos and shares many motifs with the local Rama story, *Pha Lak Pha Lam*. Its main character, Sinsai, is a prince and a bodhisattva. Like the Rama story, *Sinsai* involves the abduction of a princess by a *yaksha* (giant) who has fallen in love with her. And, like the Rama epic, it is full of extraordinary events and characters whose heroic actions and sexual prowess are aided by their magical powers.

In *Sinsai* however, it is not the abducted woman's consort, but her three nephews who rescue her. They all have magical attributes: Sinsai, the most human-looking of the trio, holds a sword and bow and arrow (which he was born with); Siho is a *khotchasi* (a mythical lion-like animal with elephant tusks and trunk); and Sang Thong has a body that is part-human, part-conch.

In course of the long search and rescue mission, numerous adventures, romantic encounters, magical transformations, and battles ensue. In the end, the giant is finally killed and the family is reunited in the royal city.

The present paper will examine the portrayal of the story in murals at Wat Sanuanwari Photharam and Wat Chaisi in Khon Kaen province and the way in which these murals still play a significant role in disseminating local Buddhist teachings. It will also comment on the extent to which the story is known through the Isan Heartland's shadow play performances.

Keywords: *Sinsai* story, Isan Heartland, mural painting, romantic encounters, Buddhist teachings

Language Vitality and the Ethnic Tourism Development of the Lao Ethnic Groups in the Western Region of Thailand

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Abstract

This paper is part of the research project entitled “Ethnicity Language Culture and Ethnic Tourism Development” which aims to explore the language use and language attitudes of ethnic groups in the western region of Thailand in order to reach the ultimate goal, that is, ethnic tourism development. The research sites include seven provinces, namely, Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, Phetchaburi, Suphanburi, Nakhonpathom, Samutsakorn, and Samutsongkhram. The paper sets its goals to explore the language vitality of Lao ethnic groups in order to evaluate the development of sustainable ethnic tourism in the region. A qualitative method combined with a quantitative method is used for this research. Two kinds of guided questionnaires were constructed for data collection, i.e., community and personal questionnaires.

It was found that there are six major Lao ethnic groups in the seven provinces, that is, Lao Song Dam, Lao Yuan, Lao Phuan, Lao Khrang, Lao Vieng and Lao Tay. The analysis of the language use and attitude of these Lao ethnic groups shows that Lao Song Dam speakers have the most language vitality of all provinces except Samutsongkhram province where few Lao Song Dam speakers reside. Next to Lao Song Dam are Lao Khrang speakers who mostly reside in Nakhonpathom Province. Other Lao ethnic groups, namely, Lao Yuan, Lao Phuan, Lao Vieng, and Lao Tay have moderate language vitality.

The findings of the language vitality of the five Lao ethnic groups are used to determine a prospective sustainable ethnic tourism plan. Lao Song Dam and Lao Khrang people are strongly united because of their strong language vitality and preservation of some cultural traits such as ritual practices and costumes. Therefore the ethnic tourism can be developed in those areas where the majority of these two Lao ethnic groups reside.

Keywords: language vitality, language use, language attitude, Lao Song Dam, (Thai Song Dam), Lao Yuan (Thai Yuan), Lao Phuan (Thai Phuan), Lao Khrang, Lao Vieng, and Lao Tay, ethnic tourism development

Creating Many Narratives: Prince Vessantara Scrolls in Lowland Laos and Northeast Thailand

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(Double Presentation)

Part I – Introduction (jointly presented)

The single most important Theravada Buddhist festival in Lowland Laos and Northeast Thailand is the Bun Phrawet, celebrating the life of Prince Wetsandorn before his karma was reborn as Siddhartha Goutama, who became the Buddha. The festival commands pride of place in village merit-making activities, just as the Vessantara Jataka, emphasizing generosity, establishes a vision of Buddhist morality that pervades Thai-Lao and Lowland Lao culture. *Phaa yao Phra Wet*, long painted scrolls depicting the Prince's life, constitute unique Thai-Lao and Lao contributions to Southeast Asian culture and art. During the festival, many villagers collectively carry these 40-50 meter long scrolls from the "forest" back to the "city," accompanying Prince Wetsandorn and his family – painted on the scroll and represented by specially-chosen villagers – on their triumphal return. Following the procession, the scrolls are hung around the *sala wat*, helping establish the special space for the recitation of the story.

Part II – Creating a Moral Community (Sandra Cate)

The scrolls and the other items of material culture (*khruang rooy*, *khruang phan*, "100's and 1000's of things") provide opportunities for merit-making, not only for their sponsors, but for those involved with their production and use. We claim that, while the scrolls depict the life of the Buddha-to-be, performing with the scrolls actively (re)creates the moral community (re)formed at the end of the story, conflating past with present. These performances thus mediate social, spiritual, and political relations, acting as catalysts and "agents" in the process of transferring merit to families and the community as a whole.

In examining this issue, the paper also examines the status of the scroll as an object. Relying on ethnographic evidence concerning this scroll and other Buddhist ceremonies involving thread as a means of transmitting sacred power, we can see how Thai-Lao and lowland Lao actively create both their social world and their moral universe.

Part III – Asserting Political Loyalties (Leedom Lefferts)

Additionally, the authors hypothesize that, especially among the Thai-Lao of Northeast Thailand, the performative use of these scrolls and the accompanying artifacts used in the festival give voice to the subaltern position of the Thai-Lao in the dominant political system of Bangkok colonialism under which they have lived for over a century. For these people, the scroll procession and festival assert allegiance to the Thai monarchy, reinforce ideals of good governance, and establish the agency of loyal subjects through their preferred narrative.

Performances such as the procession and the material culture of the Bun Phrawet are as significant as the recitation of the story itself in understanding its central place in Lao and Thai-Lao culture.

This joint paper builds on over 40 years of fieldwork in Northeast Thailand and Lowland Laos, including recent intensive studies of the scrolls and their festivals.

Woman is Food: Conceptual Metaphor on Female in Lao Songs

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Abstract

“Woman is food” is one of conceptual metaphors that is found in Lao songs. Woman’s domain is understood and expressed metaphorically in term of food domain. They have literal meaning referred to eating, cooking or tasting food. The constituent conceptual element of food corresponds to conceptual element of woman.

Food nourishes the body and the mind. Food consumption and cooking are activities in daily life. Similarly, woman is essential and important for human existence. Women are the barer of life. In Lao culture, woman is expected to cook food in order to take care of the household whereas it is not man’ duty to do. Therefore food domain conceptualized woman domain.

Keywords: metaphor, Lao songs, woman

Dimensional Space in the Mekong Novel with the Relationship between Thailand - Laos

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Abstract

The story "Mekong" of Pongpol Adireksarn used the penname "Paul Adirex", it can be present the relationships of the characters associated with the Mekong space, a key area in the process of connecting events. From start to finish that suggests of the chapter authors have tried to create meaning by using the dimensions of space as a set.

Therefore, this article analyzes of Mekong novel in matters of relationships between places and characters suggest that the relationship of Thailand - Lao to link by the Mekong River. As the space of life-style, spiritual, civilization and beliefs. The study found that the Mekong novel use the area of Thailand is life space, while the area of Lao is dead space. Which representation of the characters, when the characters cross the Mekong river to Thailand for to live. When the characters want to return back to the Lao side, the chapter also shows that they were often faced with various threats until the loss or death at least.

Keywords: Mekong space, dimensions of space

Types of Thai Loanwords in the Lao Language
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Abstract

Language contact between Thai and Lao occurring in the present day shows more and more the Thai loanwords borrowed into Lao society. This article aims to study the types of Thai loanwords used in the Lao language. The data are collected from Lao-Lao dictionaries and Lao mass media. The finding found that there are three types of borrowing; loan word, loan blend and loan translation. The first type is found the most. The loan word type itself has two different characteristics which are the borrowing of the different words of each language and the borrowing of the cognate. The last one is the borrowing of meaning from Thai for the more using in a context in Lao society.

There are two ways of Thai loanwords accessing to Lao. Both ways are the mono word and the compound word. The mono word is a complete word which is ready to use but the compound word cannot be divided into an individual word. It is always used in a compound word form.

The important factors that play crucial roles of the borrowing from Thai into Lao are 1) the traveling between Thai and Lao people, especially in border area and 2) the receiving of the Thai mass media, especially from the Thai TV programs watched by Lao people. These factors make Lao people understand Thai words and they can use them in daily life including communicating with Thai people.

Keywords: borrowing, Lao language, Thai loanword

Man and ghost's Relationship with the Modern Way

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Abstract

This article aims to present cultural change in Ban sai village's Community, Sai thani, Vientiane, Laos Democratic republic, the study on traditional in Bun Khgrypradebdin and Bun Khao-salark. Methods of research, both religious ceremony merit with both empirical and interviews to gather information to analyze the impact of a merger between tradition and modern in the area of religious ceremony, a tradition under the rapidly changing context of Laos

Ban sai village, Sai thani was a traditional and historic communities associated with the history of Wiang Mon Community. A legend was told that Ban sai village was a ruler of the area to Ghost witchcraft rituals before battle. Therefore, the area of Ban sai village as defined in the sacred area used to be associated with the power structure of state government tradition. There are also legends and traditions of Sai thani's associated with Vientiane's historic ties.

Ban sai village has the effect of both the rural and the city. Although religious ceremony will be held to have inherited a traditional way of tradition from the same ancestor, but the way consumers look of the community rely on the market are more. Religious ceremony into a area shows the format of the traditional way and see the details of the changes in the way of production and consumption within the context of modern.

9th month of the traditional or Bun Khgrypradebdin are traditional religious ceremony at Ban sai village, observe each other to inherit from the past to the present. Bun Khgrypradebdin. Is merit to the ancestral spirits and ghosts wander. Each family would bring food, pool snack, piece of fruit or smoking tobacco, wrapped in banana leaves to prepare and cart combination to the temple at about three o'clock to the monks chanting ceremony dedicated to the deceased soul.

10th month of the traditional or Bun khao-salark a traditional religious ceremony at Ban sai people observes the same long tradition of the 9th month of the traditional. Bun khao-salark aim of offering food to Buddhist monks called "Pha khao thip", dedicate merit to ancestors or soul of a deceased family member. Each family will have to write articles that offer directory dedicated to their deceased. Bun Khao-salark considered significant merit for the family. It's be congregating relative though, be alive and that pass away go to already.

Both Bun Khgrypradebdin and Bun khao-salark are areas as the relationship between life today and life after death. The relationship between man and spirit although the idea of Bun Khgrypradebdin and Bun khao-salark are a religious ceremony that will inherit the tradition, but the details vary from specific food and life of the community changed to rely on market are more. In addition, various foods will be purchased from the market then. Villagers are increasingly popular with merit by money.

Keywords: Bun Khgrypradebdin, Bun Khao-salark, traditional religious, religious

A Study of Mo Yao Healers: Traditional Health Care of Ethnic Phutai in NE-Thailand

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Abstract

Phutai is an ethnic group closely related to Thai and Lao and living in NE-Thailand and Mid-Laos. *Mo yao* is a traditional healer, *mo*, conducting health-care using a method called *yao*.

This study has been conducted by nurses at Khao Wong Hospital, Kalasin, in corporation with local community leaders and a group of *mo yao* in a study area covering 16 villages. The study included:

1. The *yao* method: The *mo yao* generally consists of female ‘shamans’ curing by dancing and singing and using ceremonial methods and utensils.
2. Factors and conditions determining that *mo yao* has maintained until today: Belief in local spirits (*phi*), the local community participate in regulated spirit ceremonies, and the *mo yao* have a strong social network throughout the area.
3. The relationship between *mo yao* and the local community: The *mo yao* are highly respected local people, mostly farmers, who mediates between the spirit-world and the mundane.
4. How to maintain and strengthen the local wisdom preserved in the *yao* method by making local villagers confident in their *mo yao* heritage and by making modern doctors realize that the methods of the *mo yao* can be incorporated in modern governmental medical health-care in a holistic perspective. A succeeding project at the hospital has the aim of utilizing traditional and modern medicine.

Keywords: health care, healing, shamanism, *mo yao*, Phutai

Buddhism and its Impact in Laos

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Abstract

Buddhism, as state religion of Laos, has been recognized since the 14th century i.e. the establishment of the royal kingdom. Buddhism has influenced the history, literature, and art along with legal, educational, economic and social institutions. Individual perception, philosophy, and culture came under the influence so much that the religious sphere alone could reflect the periods of cultural renaissance and decline in Laos.

Theravada form of Buddhism, influenced by countries like Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar and India, has played a significant role in the life of Lao people. This form of Buddhism has deep-rooted impact in the Lao culture and is reflected in worshipping places, language, art, literature, and performing arts. Sanskrit and Pali influence is abundant in classical literature, inscriptions, and language. The Animism practiced has led to a harmonious coexistence with Buddhism.

The arrival of Buddhism in Laos and shaping up of it by the South East Asian countries remains incomplete without its impact on various aspects of life. A close examination reveals the fascinating influence of Indian culture, more apparent in the new millennium where, by its look-east policy, India strives to be the power to reckon with in the region. The philosophical significance of Theravadas influenced social life too. Theravadas, propagate the path to renunciation, or realization of the four noble truths specifying the causes of sufferings and the eight fold paths leading to Nirvana. The paper aims at establishing the impact of religious values in the social culture.

Keywords: Buddhism, Theravada, region, Laos

Gender Relations in Cultural Tourism of Phutai Ethnic Group from Laos in Northeast of Thailand

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Abstract

This research concerns social change in the relationship between male and female genders in the Phu Tai community, an ethnic group in northeast Thailand. The new context of socio-economic and modern culture as well as commercial cultural management and cultural tourism, have reshaped social relation between men and women. The area scope of the research is within the village of Khok Kong, Kutwa sub-district, Kuchinarai district, Kalasin province, Thailand.

Phu Tai is one of ethnic group that has moved from Laos to Thailand. This Phu Tai community was listed by the Thai government economic development for communal cultural tourism. This project affects the community in its productive systems, social norms, and gender relations. The Phu Tai community has changed their ways of making a living. They have adopted selling services in the tourism industry combined with traditional land cultivation practices.

The custom of spatial usage among women in the community has changed. Phu Tai women used to be “inside” the house, but now are “outside,” i.e., in public. They participate directly in economic activity. The traditional work of the Phu Tai woman within her own space formerly was not involved with the family’s monetary income. Now her work situation/space has changed to provide service for tourists which directly contributes to family income, thus, providing economic value to the family and to the community. At the same time, the relationships between Phu Tai women and men, as generated in the context of cultural tourism, has been both rebalanced and beneficial.

This social phenomenon is a reflection of communal adjustment to a new social environment which is not directly controlled by the Thai state. The community, however, has come up with their own social adjustment. They use custom, culture, and communal intelligence to form the new gender relationship which fit within the context of development in productive capitalism through communal cultural tourism.

Keywords: gender relations, cultural tourism, gender roles, local tradition, negotiation

Childhoods in Transition: Impacts of Economical, Demographical and Sociological Changes on Northern Lao Children's Lives

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Abstract

Rural communities of Northern Laos have to adapt to changes brought about by the Lao economy's liberal turn, by diverse developmental policies backed by NGOs and by the economic pressure of their Chinese neighbour. These changes concern the economic, demographic and educational fields.

Based on a long time field research among a non Buddhist, rice growing Tai Dam minority of Northern Laos, this paper proposes to explore the impact of such mutations as birth rate reduction, household *mononuclearization*, intensified schooling, commercialization of the economy on children's daily lives and futures.

As their environment is rapidly extending away from the village, children's social spaces, activities and aspirations no longer merge with their elders'. I will then address the question, crucial to the villagers, of the formation of a generation gap impairing the conditions, modalities and content of knowledge transmission and hence Tai identity.

Keywords: Tai Dam, change, identity, childhood, knowledge, transmission, generation gap

National and Region in Tension: Reflections on the 2009 SEA Games in Laos

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Abstract

Celebrated by the Lao government as a regional coming out, the 2009 SEA Games were a sparkling success. The national team won 33 gold medals, surpassing its pre-games target and smashing its previous best. Criticised beforehand for their reduced size and dependence on foreign help, organisation was roundly praised. Perhaps most of all, public enthusiasm provided unprecedented consolidation of Lao national symbols, as official and popular forms of nationalism rolled into one.

The irony, of course, is that the SEA Games aim to promote regional ‘solidarity, friendship and peace’ rather than national motifs. While there was widespread knowledge of the games’ regional message, the strength of nationalist motifs in the SEA Games arguably left little oxygen for the regional dimension. Controversies were few but there were inevitable complaints of dishonest judging and competitions provided as much opportunity to ridicule rivals as they did to express friendship.

What to make of the paradox? Based on ethnographic research conducted in Vientiane, this paper argues that the very significance of the SEA Games was the tension between national and regional themes. Rather than reducing to one or the other, the SEA Games realised both simultaneously, perhaps explaining their endurance, adaptability and increasing importance in the region since 1959. This paper will examine different elements and perspectives of the games – symbols, rituals, organisation, competitions, media coverage, athletes, spectators, journalists, organisers, etc – to propose how the balance was maintained.

Keywords: 2009 SEA Games, Vientiane, nationalism, regionalism, sport

The Role of Traditional Ritual in Cultural Maintenance and Tourism in Phutai Village

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Abstract

This paper examines the interaction between traditional ritual and tourism in Phutai village at Nong Sung district, Mukdahan Province. It aims to investigate how the maintenance of traditional ritual can contribute to tourist promotion and cultural heritage management for the host communities. The data collection used a qualitative research approach, drawing on both primary and secondary source. The field research covered oral (local) history, field visits, observation, interviews and photography.

It was found that Phutai community has strong culture in the preservation of traditional ritual. Phutai people realize that their young generation should understand Phutai culture and appreciate their identity. Moreover, they think that their culture should provide an opportunity to others to understand them. Eventually, they manage their community as a tourist attraction with traditional ritual. It considered to be authentic or traditional are more likely to attract visitors. They admire Phutai cultural heritage in the concept of “cultural significance” in determining information regarding culture that can be applied in field study of human values and ideologies that embrace historical, social, and aesthetic values.

Keywords: cultural heritage, traditional ritual, cultural maintenance, cultural tourism, cultural significance, Phutai

The Emergence of Civil Society in Laos

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Abstract

Lao PDR's development process is directly linked to the country's integration in the market economy and the structural adjustment policies imposed by multilateral institutions. The main objective of the Lao government, as stated in the 6th Five Year Plan (2006-2010) is poverty alleviation. In this context, the emergence of civil society organizations results from both the pressures from international donors and international actors and by the government needs for associations to achieve its objective of poverty alleviation by 2020.

This paper questions the emergence and changing nature of civil society in Laos through the analysis of the political settings and the cultural factors underlying the political opening that is allowing the emergence of civil society organizations in Laos. In order to achieve this endeavour, we will firstly review the main steps of the political opening that allowed laying the basis for an embryo of civil society in Laos. Secondly, we will present case studies of the strategies implemented by diverse actors actively involved in this context of opening; providing an original analysis of the recent steps toward increased plurality and opening of the public space in Lao PDR in the context of foreign driven development and the Lao government poverty alleviation strategy.

Keywords: civil society, organization, Laos

A Study of Theme in Lao Folktale: A Systemic Functional Grammar Perspective

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Abstract

Theme represents the way in which information is distributed in a sentence. Halliday (1985) gave the definition of theme that theme is given information serving as “the point of departure” of a message. The given information is the information which has already been mentioned somewhere in the text, or it is shared or mutual knowledge from the immediate context. In other words, theme typically contains familiar, old or given information. Theme provides the settings for the remainder of the sentence. This paper attempts to seek the answers:

- 1) how the structure of narrative discourse of Lao folk tale is organized in terms of theme;
- 2) what kinds of themes that are often used in storytelling and the last one goes on; and
- 3) how theme functions in Lao folk tale. In this paper, a systemic functional grammar is proposed to account for narrative discourse analysis of Lao folk tale specially focusing on theme.

The data used in this paper are collected from ນິທານພື້ນບ້ານ ຊຸດ ພະຍາຄັນຄາກ. There are five stories of Lao folk tales used in this paper. The following are 1) ໜອງເຕົ້າຄຳ (Nong Tao Kham) 2) ພູນາງລາວ (Phu Nang Lao) 3) ຕາດຫົວຄົນ (Tad Hua Khon) 4) ພູໂລງ (Phu Long) 5) ພູສະເພົາສະພອງ (Phu Saphaosaphorng). All folktales here are sages or local legends. The findings reveal that the structure of narrative discourses of Lao folktale are organized by ordering textual theme, interpersonal theme, topical theme and probably textual theme again, respectively. Although there are a variety of types of themes, the textual theme is most salient, while the interpersonal theme is rarely found. For the topical themes, the marked topical themes lie on time setting while the subjects of unmarked topical theme are often omitted. The function of themes here generally provides the settings for the remainder of the sentence and so forth.

Keywords: discourse analysis, theme, Systemic Functional Grammar, Lao folk tale

Prabang Myths: Sacred Narratives and Cultural Meaning

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Abstract

The Prabang is a sacred Buddha image which is nationally revered by the people of Laos. The image is now seated in Luang Prabang city. The Prabang plays an important part in Lao society, politic and culture. The Prabang is also inferred as a sacred symbol which identifies the characteristic of Laos. This article aims to explore and interpret the myths as well as rituals in association with probing that reflects social ideology through a framework of the symbolic and cultural interpretation.

The analysis shows that the myths and rituals in association with the Prabang signify social ideology under Lao process of thoughts which can be divided into four thinking patterns: 1) meanings conveyed through locations associated with naming of places, monarchy system of the Lao Kingdom, 2) meanings conveyed to place of origin of the Prabang which indicates racial relation of the people in Southeast Asia, 3) meaning conveyed through characteristic and posture of the Prabang statue which indicate the power as the ruler of the Kingdom, and, 4) meanings conveyed through role which is related to ideas of prosperity and fertility. This paper reflects the significance of the Prabang as a symbol of sacredness implied in the myths and rituals in which social ideology is hidden.

Keywords: Prabang, myths, symbol of sacredness, cultural interpretation

Cash Economy and Sexual Practice in Rural Lao PDR

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Abstract

Mobile phones, motorbikes, mass media and cash have changed the relationship villagers in northern Lao PDR have with sexual partners. In the past, sexual practice among villagers led to family strength. Today, a spreading cash economy in remote areas has made sexual contact more of a consumer commodity. Young men and women accept sexual partners without anticipation of marriage. Local men and transients offset responsibility for impregnating a girl by paying a fee of 1 million to 3 million kip (US \$118 - \$335). With an intermediary's help, a young woman can sell her first sex for 500,000 kip (\$US59), equal to what trained public school teachers or day labourers make in a month. As rural areas open to industrial agriculture, mineral extraction and infrastructure projects, opportunities arise for men to sell their labour for cash. Girls with little or no education can easily become engaged in providing sexual service to local men and migrant workers. Sexual service providers (SSP) working in simple beer shops may earn as much as 2 million kip (US\$236) per month, money that can support the education of siblings or access to healthcare for parents. Entrepreneurial older women serve as intermediaries, earning more in a week than families earn in months. With the sale of sexual services playing a key role, the unstoppable march of the cash economy is redefining rural villages and exposing them to a higher risk of unwanted pregnancies and irreversible social change.

Keywords: new sexual economy, cash economy

First Steps towards Revitalizing Lao Isan Literacy

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Abstract

This paper documents first steps towards revitalizing Lao Isan (Lao) as a language of literacy in Northeast Thailand, part of the Lao Isan Languages Maintenance and Revitalization Programme. It presents an account of the design, installation and reception of three multilingual Thai-English-Lao Isan signs in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Khon Kaen University, viz., a utilitarian canteen sign, a quasi-official sign for the Student Union, and the official main sign of the Faculty. The latter presents one of the first official multilingual signs featuring the Lao Isan language known to exist in Thailand. The paper documents the background to the study, the piloting process, and design aspects, together with the results of the study phase, comprising the results of observation, interviewing and surveying of student and faculty opinion. The paper also details future planned research to develop on the findings.

Keywords: Northeast Thailand, Lao Isan, multilingualism, language maintenance, language revitalization, multilingual landscape

Building Resilient Livelihoods in Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Affected Communities in the Lao PDR: Assessing the Contribution of UXO Removal

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Abstract

Lao PDR remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Per capita, it is also the most heavily UXO contaminated. Most of this contamination is in rural areas where the majority of households rely on subsistence farming. Lao PDR is also going through an important transition as the market extends to previously remote areas with subsistence livelihoods shifting to a monetised one. In this context, rural households will need a broad range of livelihood assets to stay agriculturally resilient.

Using qualitative and quantitative surveys in highly UXO contaminated areas, with a sample from Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien and Lao-Tai populations, the purpose of this paper, is to examine how formal UXO clearance programs interact with this livelihood transition. The paper suggests that UXO clearance contributes to accumulation of five livelihood assets (social, physical, finance, human and environmental assets). The way in which UXO clearance impacts on these assets however, and how benefits are derived, is mediated by five contextual factors: 1) access to assets; 2) market opportunities; 3) institutional arrangements; 4) community ownership and 5) the vulnerability context. Individual interactions with released livelihood assets are also an important factor in how benefits accumulate. These contextual and individual factors mean that while general statements can be made about the contribution of UXO clearance to the livelihood platform, the way in which benefits accrue is neither simple nor linear. Further, impacts may not be sustained over time if contextual factors change. The study also suggests that for a full accounting of return on investment of UXO clearance, a holistic approach is required.

Keywords: UXO contamination and removal, agriculturally resilient livelihoods, livelihood transition

Traditional Disease Treatments from Palm Leaf Manuscripts in Laos

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Abstract

In an effort to preserve traditional medicine knowledge and to uncover new information about disease treatment in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, linguistic experts have scanned centuries-old medical palm leaf manuscripts for disease entries. Simultaneously, 58 contemporary traditional healers have been interviewed regarding the diseases for which patients are presently seeking treatment. A list of more than 9400 diseases has resulted, shedding valuable light into the medical history and the traditional medicine heritage of the people of Laos, as well as providing an index for faster research into specific diseases and their traditional treatments. The results of this dual research method indicate that a great deal of the traditional healing art in Laos is well preserved and practiced today, in particular as it relates to the use of plants for traditional therapy.

Keywords: epidemiology, traditional medicine knowledge, palm leaf manuscripts, medical ethnobotany

Lao University Students' Multilingual Literacy Practices –a Preliminary Account

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Abstract

Both literacy in Lao and proficiency in English continue to be positioned by the Lao government and international development organizations as a key to human resources development in Laos and therefore to the social and economic development of the nation. This paper presents preliminary data from a case study of six Lao students studying English in the English BA Program in the English Department, Faculty of Letters (FOL), National University of Laos (NUOL) as well as an overview of the English Department within the context of the FOL and NUOL. A social practices of literacy perspective is used to identify and better understand students' reading and writing based activities in Lao, English, or other languages both inside and outside of the classroom. A social view of literacy conceptualizes literacy not as a skill set, but as a social and cultural activity that is shaped by and shapes the context within which it takes place. Often this practice involves engaging with or producing written texts, though what constitutes a text has increasingly been defined more broadly than printed material.

It is hoped that better understanding of Lao students' literacy activities will provide insight into more appropriate and more effective teaching approaches and materials development as well as provide data concerning Lao university students' multilingual, multimodal literacy activities and how they may or may not be applicable to the development of "academic literacy" in Lao and/or English at the post-secondary level.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, multilingual literacies, social practices of literacy, post-secondary education

A Protective Spirit in Lao-Tai Textiles: The *Pii Nyak* and its Indian Antecedents

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Abstract

In Lao-Tai textiles, one of the most powerfully protective images is that of the *pii nyak*, depicted with a diamond head attached to two coiled arms or arms of serpent (*ngueak*) heads. This image, with its crested head, double diamond eyes, and long earrings, appears on women's head cloths, shaman's healing shawls, and indigo and white blankets used to wrap mother and baby for warmth against the cold. Weavers believe the *pii nyak* to be an evil spirit living in the forest who will attack and eat strangers on their travels; they also believe that when tamed as a design within a textile this evil spirit can afford great protection to the wearer.

While the term *pii* is clear as a term for "spirit," the term *nyak* has old antecedents that are obscure. *Nyaks* appear in the Lao epic *Sinxay* as cannibalistic ogres who are half human, half demon who can travel in mid-air, and have distorted faces, protruding eyes, and frizzy hair. In the epic, the hero *Sinxay* fights against the *nyaks*, with the help of an elephant-lion figure known as a *siho*. Some scholars suggest that *nyaks* are related to the Indian *yaka*, an ancient vegetative divinity whose strong, stout form appears as a powerful guardian figure connected with *nagas* in all major Indian religions. The Indian *yaksha*, however, has a dark side for he can be exceedingly malevolent, especially as an eater of children.

This paper explores two questions: first, is the *nyak* a Lao version of the old Indian *yaksha* and, if so, how are they connected? And, second, what connection do *nyaks* have to *naaks* or *nagas*? Both questions rest on historical encounters that may have taken place between Lao-Tai culture and Indian culture as a result either of trade along the Southwest Silk Route and/or the movement of Khmer culture into northern regions of the SEA peninsula.

The answers to these questions will help explain where the *pii nyak* comes from, why its form is what it is, and what it means when used in Lao-Tai textiles today. The image is clearly of great import, registering strong emotion when weavers and wearers encounter it in discussion.

Keywords: *Pii nyak*, *Yaksha*, *naga*, *Sinxay*, Northeastern Lao textiles

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment in Lao PDR: An Assessment of the First Decade (2000-2010)

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Abstract

How in terms of sustainability is the Lao PDR coping with the present swell of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in hydropower, mining, and industry? How is the environment itself coping? Wherever FDI projects are underway, are the local rural poor and hilltribe peoples demonstrably better or worse off as a result of these investments? How has their food security situation been changing and has disposable family income risen substantively? Are the risks, benefits, and costs of land use change and infrastructure development being duly distributed amongst rural stakeholders?

The Government of Lao PDR has enacted regulations and decrees ostensibly covering large projects mandating environmental and social impact assessments (E/SIA) which would address resettlement and compensation for PAPs, and not least ethnic minorities, and has issued public participation guidelines. Are such E/SIAs routinely being performed; and if so, are they benefiting the country and helping to rectify inequality, to reverse ecological degradation, and to achieve sustainable development? How may government agencies at all levels themselves benefit from implementing EIA? Can the newly-formed Water Resources and Environment Administration (WREA) administer impact assessment regulations and enforce them duly? Are Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects also properly subject to impact assessment; are donor agencies seeing positive or negative results; and by which methodologies have they determined that. This review focuses on the state of environmental management and on social equity for project-affected persons (PAPs).

We will provide an analysis and update of the Lao PDR's environmental laws and regulations, particularly those dealing with formal impact assessment. Their strengths, weaknesses, deficiencies, and needs are analyzed by comparing the Lao PDR's regulatory and institutional arrangements with those of other Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) countries, concluding with suggestions towards correcting defects and improving implementation.

Keywords: Lao PDR, SEIA, GMS environment, WREA, sustainable development

Impacts of Land and Forest Policies on the Livelihoods of Ethnic Minorities in Lao PDR

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Abstract

In the past decade, Lao PDR has adopted land and forest policies aimed at poverty reduction, most notably the program of land use planning and land allocation (LUP/LA). This program aimed at allocating individual land plots and protecting the country's forest resources. Recently, many studies have analyzed the impacts of the LUP/LA program on rural livelihoods, showing that several of the expected results have not been achieved. These studies report that LUP/LA has been helped to delineate village boundaries and resource use zones, has also reduced land conflicts, and has improved forest protection. Yet, land allocation has reduced agricultural and forest use area available to upland households. Often, this has resulted in decreased agricultural yields and insecure livelihoods.

In addition to confirming the results of these previous research, this study examines the issue of land allocation to foreign investors in the form of land concessions. The results of these land concessions have put further pressure on upland minorities' livelihoods by increasing land scarcity and reducing forest area which is vital their livelihoods. Furthermore, villagers' lands have often been lost to the investors – sometimes without any or with too little compensation – leaving villagers as day laborers on their own land with no alternatives. This study intends to contribute to a better understanding of how institutional arrangements governing ethnic minorities' rights to access and control over land and forest impact on their livelihoods, based on a field study in 5 ethnic minority villages in Sekong province.

Keywords: land policy, land rights, land concessions, land titles, Lao PDR

Buddhism and Lao Society: An Overview

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Abstract

Theravada literally means “the teaching of the elders”. In theravada, the cause of human existence and suffering is identified as craving, which carries with it the defilements. There are three stages of defilements-1) during the stage of passivity, the defilement lies dormant 2)it will manifest itself through the impact of sensory stimulus 3)after gathering strength, defilement will reach the stage of transgression. Theravada also discusses four noble truths and three characters of all conditioned phenomena. Through practice, one can achieve four stage of enlightenment :-Streams, Enterers , Once-Returners, Non-Returners and Arahants.

IMAGE OF WISE WOMEN IN LAOS:

A number of Theradin Jataks concern virtuous or wise women. Story 194 tells about a woman who saves her husband from a cruel king by calling on the God to help the power of her own virtue.

THE ROLL OF LAY LIFE IN LAOS:

Their activities are termed as merit making. It includes offering food and other basic necessities to monks. They act as trustees for their for their temples.

LAOS IN MODERN ERA:

The main concern is whether Buddhism will bloom more and more and its implication will succeed in modern world.

Keywords: Theravada Buddhism, woman, Lay life, Laos

**Chiang (Xiang) Toponyms in Laos and the Middle Mekong Region:
Historical Linguistics and GIS Enquiries**

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Abstract

This paper is an extension of recent research on the “Chain of Chiang” in the Middle Mekong region that extends from Kengtung, Burma and Chiang Rung (Xieng Hung) in Sipsongpanna (Yunnan), China, through the various chiang in northern Thailand and finally linking up to present-day Xieng Khuoang in northern Laos and numerous chiang in northwest Vietnam. A GIS study of chiang patterns reveals small clusters of chiang elsewhere in Laos. The challenge is to provide explanations for the distribution of this special toponym. Historical linguistics can offer some suggestions, and settlement histories also furnish insights into what ultimately is a social phenomenon: naming places—who does it and why.

Keywords: Chiang, Xiang, Toponyms, historical linguistics, GIS study

Impacts of the Land Forest Allocation Program on Swidden Farmers' Livelihoods and Roles of "External" Actors: A Study on Community-based Watershed Management in Oudomxay Province

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Abstract

Forest management policies, which aim at preservation of forests, often ended up with the mal-use of forest resources. The purpose of this study is to reveal the mechanism of failures of forest management policies, and to come up with recommendations regarding roles of NGOs and international organizations.

Since the mid-1990s, the Lao Government has conducted the Land Forest Allocation (LFA) throughout Laos, with the purpose of allocating agricultural land for communities and of demarcating land, forest and village boundaries. However, various actors involved with LFA, often emphasized one particular purpose and neglect others. Moreover, some actors utilized LFA to achieve their own separate purposes. It often causes confusion in local people's use of land and forest.

In Pak Beng District of Oudomxay Province in the Northern Laos, most people make a living on upland swidden agriculture. Villagers used to estimate forest recovery based on their experience, and allocated agricultural land to each family after their discussion every year. However, the local government used LFA and implemented various policies such as the establishment of watershed area for a hydropower dam, village resettlement, and village consolidation. They triggered the shortage of agricultural land for villagers, who had no choice but to cut the period of swidden agricultural cycle, and mal-use the forest resources.

To solve these negative impacts caused by LFA, and to create a new forest management system, "external" actors, who can be less affected by local interest, could play their roles to adjust various interests, and to modify the power balance.

Keywords: forest management, external actor, NGOs, Land Forest Allocation Program, swidden agriculture / shifting cultivation, northern Laos

Healing Music, the Multiethnic Lao Khap Lam Folk Music in Southern Laos

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the multiethnic and dynamics of Lao Khap Lam folk singers in a village in southern Laos, based on the primary sources collected during the anthropological research in southern Laos. The villagers are consisted of So, Phutai and Lao, immigrated into the area about 200 years ago, who developed their traditions and customs under the influence of the two religions; animism and Theravada Buddhism. Due to the historical and economical experience such as civil war, social revolution and emigration, the villagers speak the two languages of Lao and Mon-Khmer language mixedly.

After the harvest time in November, the celebrations take place in the village. For example, animal offerings to numerous spirits associated with the force of the nature are sacrificed. And the biggest celebrations are held to honor the ancestor by the cult of the shamans. In the celebrations, “Mo Lam”, Lao folk singers take an active role in participating religious practices. The villagers dance and sing with accompany of the sound of a free-reed mouth organ “Khaen”, a drum “Gong”, a Lao guitar “Kajapii” and go through healing music throughout the night.

In this presentation, the background of the research village and the multiethnic Lao Khap Lam folk music are first reviewed. In the second part, the history of the research village and the dairy activities of “Mo Lam” will be presented. In conclusion, the summary of the present study and then suggestion for future research are indicated.

Keywords: music, multiethnic/multilinguistic, Mon-khmer

Case Studies of Rural Development and Clean Agriculture in Lao PDR

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Abstract

This presentation examines life strategies of small farmers who engage in “clean agriculture” in Lao PDR. In 2004, the Department of Agriculture (DOA) launched a project for the "Promotion of Organic Farming and Marketing Project in Lao PDR" (PROFIL) which was supported by HELVETAS, a Swiss Association for International Cooperation. PROFIL tried to develop regional and international market opportunities for Lao organic products and supported local organic farmers.

I conducted two rounds of research in 3 villages in Vientiane Capital area in 2008. The “clean agriculture” is one of new challenges for farmers. Thus, the focal point of this research is to observe how local organic farmers adapt to a new system and cope with its problems. Clean agriculture may contribute to the household food security and the balance of household income and expenditure. However, it is difficult for small farmers to introduce a new method of farming if the cost of change is high.

This presentation analyzes the reasons given by farmers who changed their farming methods. This research aims to clarify the local systems and practices that not only promote sustainable agriculture but also empower small farmers in choosing and designing strategies for themselves.

Keywords: clean agriculture, small farmers, Lao PDR, PROFIL

Final Particles in Vientiane Laos
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Abstract

This paper examines Lao final particles used in the Vientiane capital of Laos, by considering their meaning and function in the sentence. R.L. Trask's "sentence type" theory (1993) is applied to four types of sentence in which Vientiane Lao final particles occur: statements, commands, questions and exclamations.

The declarative particles occur in statements, and are divided into four categories: information, contradiction, supposition, and criticism. The interrogative particles occur in questions, and are divided into four categories: yes-no questions, content questions, rhetorical questions, and follow-on questions. The imperative particles occur in commands, and are divided into ten categories: order, request, persuasion, invitation, warning, permissive, urgency, encouragement, suggestion, and blessing. The three exclamative particles occur in exclamations, and express the speaker's feelings of astonishment, or exuberance.

Keyword: particles, Vientiane Lao

“Buddhist-mindedness” in Sixteenth Century Lan Xang

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Abstract

Contrary to conventional understanding, many historians now assert that the establishment of the specifically *Buddhist* kingdom of Lan Xang owes its origins to King Vixun in the early 16th c., rather than to Fa Ngum in the mid-14th. While Fa Ngum may have orchestrated a tribute-based unification of *Muang Lao* and probably endeavored to establish a Buddhist monastic presence in Xieng Dong Xieng Thong to legitimate his rule, it was not until the reign of Vixun (1501-1520), followed immediately by the reign of his son Phothisarath, that the symbolism of the royal regalia, the ritual life of a royal *mandala* center, and a royal ethically-based discourse of kingship became unambiguously Theravada Buddhist in substance.

In this paper, I will not only describe this political transformation of Lao kingship to an emergent and thorough-going Theravada Buddhist discourse, a “Buddhist-mindedness” (in the same way that Clifford Geertz meant “religious-mindedness”), but I will illustrate how, despite Phothisarath’s efforts to eliminate the worship of *phi* (spirits), the legacy of spirit veneration was sustained, perhaps unwittingly, in at least two crucial ways: 1) in the ritual veneration of royal ancestors (especially Vixun) who replaced, at least in function, the former guardian spirits/deities of Luang Phrabang; and 2) in the ritual veneration of the Phrabang, the royal legitimating image of the Buddha, whose worship amounted to a propitiation of a powerful *mandala phi*.

Keywords: Buddhist-mindedness, Lan Xang, King Vixun, symbolism, mandala, political transformation, Theravada Buddhist discourse

Meaning of the Mekong River in the Myths and Rituals of Thai-Lao Border Communities

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Abstract

The Mekong is one of the longest and most magnificent rivers in the world, and at its operated borderlines between Thailand and Laos. The Mekong is seen not only as a source of livelihood but also a sacred entity with cultural and spiritual significance of Thai and Lao people. Moreover, this is often seen as a river of mysteries; its diverse ecology and the cultures.

This article aims at studying concerns of the “myth and ritual of the Mekong River” of riparian peoples in their landscape, historical, social and cultural contexts. The study indicates that, on one hand, the result found is that the myth and ritual reflects the relationship between the Thai and Lao people. On the other hand, the Mekong that compelled them to make up these myth and rituals as then became cultural space and played a role in the formation of a collective consciousness for Thai and Lao in the same ethnicity.

Thus, the analysis of the myth and ritual of the Mekong portrays the processes of confronting, regaining and representation to as it is seen not only of “*borderline*” but became “*centerline*” as the negotiating space and ethnic identity construction of the Thai and the Lao.

Keywords: Mekong, myth, ritual, Thai-Lao border

Land Use Planning for Who? The Irrelevance of Land Use Planning in the Context of Large-scale Land Concessions in Lao PDR

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Lao PDR

Abstract

Rural communities in Lao PDR are heavily dependent on natural resources to meet their livelihood needs, as such the management of natural resources including forests is of great importance to the development of Lao PDR. Since 1996 the Land Use Planning and Land Allocation (LUPLA) policy has been the primary mechanism for providing basic land and forest zoning at the village level as a means to achieve sustainable forest management. Although LUPLA had been conducted in 7,130 villages by 2005, large-scale land concessions for plantations development in the last five years have posed a major threat to sustainable forest management and the protection of natural resources for rural communities.

While LUPLA has the potential to be used as a tool to guide appropriate areas for land concessions, and to protect resource rich areas from land concessions, such planning has been largely irrelevant for guiding concessions development over the past five years.

This paper uses various village-level case studies of central Laos to argue that the LUPLA process has only been a tool to control and manage village use of forestlands, with little regard to outside concessions development. This paper will further show how the failure to regulate concessionary land acquisition has led to the destruction of forest areas and natural resources at the village level. As the concessions boom continues to deepen in Laos, the paper provides a timely reminder of the urgent need to address and regulate the land acquisition process for land concessions in Lao PDR.

Keywords: land use planning, land allocation, land concessions, Lao PDR

Water is Ready for Coming to You: On Symbolism of Wetting Game in Laos

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Abstract

Water and people as two mutual-competing subjects Every Laotian may spontaneously reply inquiry that there are only two seasons in this country, dry and rainy seasons. In general, people define dry season October till April, and the other five months being considered as rainy season. Weather is extremely different in these two seasons based on lacking rain or heavy downpour instead of low or high temperature. Tropical hot days all year long appeared in the whole of country. People have experienced almost without bit of water dropping down from the sky in dry season, but seeing mighty torrent all the time through entire rainy season. In this paper, I would argue that in Laos, a traditional Theravada Buddhism country, water and human being, one is natural material and the other is cultural bearers, have developed a special relation of ecological game which indicates story of reluctant symbiosis in a teasing atmosphere between these two mutual-competing subjects.

Keywords: symbolism, water resource, Song Kan festival, Mekong, Muang Sing, Buddha-watered, splashing/sprinkling economics

**Manuscript Literature of Laos - A Preliminary Analysis Based on Texts
Found in the Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts**
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Digital Library of Lao manuscripts
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Abstract

In 2007, the National Library of Laos began a three-year project to digitise over 1,000 rolls of microfilm copies of manuscripts from throughout the country and to make its national literary heritage freely available via the Internet. The bi-lingual web application, the Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts (DLLM), can be viewed at www.laomanuscripts.net. When completed, users will be able to search and download approximately 12,000 texts, giving a total of almost 500,000 digital images containing 3-4 million manuscript folios.

In addition to manuscripts from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, the collection contains a wide range of works about history, traditional law and customs, astrology, magic, mythology and rituals, traditional medicine and healing, grammar and lexicography, as well as poetry and epic stories, folk tales and romances, etc. While the vast majority is in Lao Tham script, a considerable number of holographs are in the ancient secular Lao Buhan, Lan Na, Tai Lue, Tai Nuea, and Khom scripts.

The aim of the digital library is to complement ongoing manuscript preservation work in Laos by making this extensive collection of primary sources easily accessible and to facilitate the study of Lao literature and culture within Laos and overseas.

This paper will present work on the Digital Library inventory in historical context, together with a preliminary analysis of manuscripts found in the collection, illustrated by selected examples which may be of particular interest to scholars.

Keywords: literature, manuscript, digital library

The Earliest Lao Glossary in the *Hua-Yi Yi-Yu*

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Abstract

The earliest extensive source on Lao language is a “Glossary of the *Pa-Poh* language” (a language spoken in an area south of Meng La (chin. *Gan yai*) and north of Phrae/Sukhothai (chin. *Bo-le*)) created during the Ming Dynasty by the Chinese government’s Bureau of Translators (*Siyi Guan*) and the Bureau of Interpreters (*Huitong Guan*). The glossary forms one volume of the *Hua-Yi Yi-Yu*, a multilingual dictionary that was prepared at the end of the 14th century A.D. in order to help the imperial government officials and tradesmen to communicate with foreign nations or ethnic minorities.

The British Library holds a reprint of the *Hua-Yi Yi-Yu* produced during the Qing Dynasty, including the Lao glossary. The book was acquired by the British Museum in 1885 A.D. and later transferred to the British Library. Although a reprint, it can be assumed that the original printing blocs cut in the 14th century were being re-used.

The glossary, which has 108 pages, is divided into various thematic sections like astronomy, geography, seasons, flora, fauna, humans, verbs, numbers, etc. For each Lao word, a Chinese translation is given, and the pronunciation of each Lao word is represented with a Chinese character as well.

In my research, I will analyse the vocabulary and the pronunciation of significant Lao words as represented in the glossary, and compare it with modern Lao. I will also compare the script used in the glossary with the *Ramkhamhaeng* script, the *Li Thai* script and the *Lao Buhan* script. The analysis of this earliest and extremely rare glossary of Lao language aims to shed more light on the state of Lao culture and society at the end of the 14th century A.D.

Keywords: Lao glossary, Hua-Yi Yi-Yu, Meng La, multilingual dictionary, Lao words, Ramkhamhaeng script

**Contamination of Arsenic and other Trace Elements in Tube Wells,
along Sebanfai River**

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Abstract

The contamination of arsenic in Groundwater, focus on tube well where it is anticipate that groundwater arsenic is more likely to be a significant health issue.

Among 5 tube wells were detected total arsenic in ppb of several tube wells with average: 55, 10, 100, and 10, 10 ppb in B. Bung Se, B. Phonethan, Thadokham, Keng Phosy and B.Phak Phua respectively.

Key words: arsenic contamination in groundwater

Moral Teachings in Sang Sin Xay Epic

Dara Kanlaya

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Abstract

In my presentation, I will talk about moral teachings in Sang Sin Xay Epic. I will focus on chapter 6 'The Marriage'. When King Kusaraj married the seven daughters of the wealthy man of Champa Kingdom, the mother gave advises to her daughters concerning the art of family life.

Secondly, in chapter 11 'The War with Naga'. When Sinxay won the war, Naga asked him some advises on how to rule the Kingdom. Here, Sinxay's teachings were related to administration, law and justice.

To conclude, I will point out that, as Sang Sin Xay was written during the reign of Surignavongsa when Buddhism was widely practiced in Lan Xang, the moral in Sang Sin Xay was then based on Buddhist culture.

Keywords: moral teaching, Sang Sin Xay, Buddhism, Lao literature

Poetry Reading and Folk Singing (Chanting) and Lao Youth Today

Daravong Kanlagna

Poetry Reading and Folk Singing Project

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Abstract

According to traditional belief, Lao literature is considered to be one of eighteen types of art. Literature is the best of culture and a symbol of the civilization of a nation. In the words of Maha Sila Viravong (Literature for Education, 1960), “The reason for Lao people being praised for their gentleness, honesty and culture is owing to their traditional love of literature.” In the realm of literature, poetry is unique. Every nation and ethnicity may exchange and borrow verbal and written forms from one another, but only people of the same ethnicity would have a deep understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of their own poetry.

This presentation will focus on a project whose overall aim is to provide the opportunity for Lao children to learn and practice reading and singing Lao poetry by using some of the most important literary works of Laos, such as the great epic of Thao Hung, Thao Cheung, Sang Sin Xay, Wessantra Jataka, Maha Keo’s poems, and other works. Our hope is to revive, preserve and promote these works so that school children know the value of this priceless heritage which our forefathers and scholars have worked so hard to produce and preserve. It would be wonderful to see Sang SinSay brought back into the school curriculum and to expand this project throughout the country. After just four years of implementation of this project, today more than 300 children can perform on stage altogether more than 1,500 lines of the 360 year-old poetry of Sang SinSay. The project has been extended to two junior high-schools and two children centers in two provinces.

Keywords: Lao poetry, Lao literature, poetry reading, Lao youth, education, Sang Sin Xay

Gender in Lao Skilled Labor Development: A Case Study of Lao Women-Men Participated in Labor Market after Training in 2007 at Lao–Korea Vocational Development Center, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

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Abstract

This research paper studies on gender analysis through Skilled Labor Development Policy under government policies. According to the context of Lao training promotion to encourage Lao women and men access to this field equally, however in practicing shows that women and men are interested in different forms of training.

In Laos, women make up half of the total population and comprise half of the major labor force in the country. Lao women play an important role in all spheres of the development of the country especially in the economic and social areas. In fact, the Lao constitution guarantees their rights to participate on equal footing with men. However, the number of Lao women in training programs is still low when compared with the number of men. This indicates that women are not perceived on the equal footing with men when it comes to training programs as well as to labor markets.

Majority, Lao women access to labor markets after training program it aims that men and women are different in terms of sexes and biological differences. This fact cannot be changed because it is natural which is different from gender that refers to assigned role of men and women by the society. The strict notions of male and female roles that existed in the society often base on biological differences in reproductive functions and are often reflected in complex patterns of ideas, practices and cultural experiences. In addition, the division of work on the basic of sex is one of the important tools to perpetuate this socially ascribed gender role.

Keywords: gender, labor, skilled labor, training, vocational development, Lao, Korea, skilled labor development policy

Trans-Mekong Peregrinations Mahā Silā's Considerations on Lao Buddhism

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Abstract

Through his written work as prolific as it is diversified, Mahā Silā Viravongs (1905-1987), the most famous scholar of modern Laos, was an immense promoter of the Lao culture, in a country lately established in its borders by colonial France, and which endeavoured to be distinguished from close Siam. However, the scholar started his apprenticeship inside the great Siamese religious reforms which aimed to purge regional Buddhism of all that was not in conformity with the new orthodoxy of Bangkok. Born in Siamese Isan, trained in the cities of Ubon Rachathani and Bangkok under the high *Dhammayuttikanikāya* authorities, nothing could imply that Mahā Silā would become the uncontested emblem of the “Lao culture”.

Considering Mahā Silā Viravongs' publications, this essay attempts to draw the position, in the matter of Buddhism, of this major character of Lao modern History, and to show how he moved on from a strong attachment to pure orthodoxy to a deep interest for Lao vernacular religious culture with all its originality.

Keywords: Trans-Mekong, peregrination, Mahā Silā Viravongs, Buddhism, Lao modern history

Road Connectivity and Gendered Mobility in Attapeu, Luang Namtha and Bokeo Provinces

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Abstract

Under rapid road construction in Laos, formerly “remote” villages are now located beside highways. Road connectivities are expected to improve the mobility of people and increase their access to market hence expand their livelihood options. This paper critically examines this assumption, and demonstrates how road construction had different impact on mobility of women and men and among different ethnic groups. The paper presents the findings from three different provinces and analyzes how gender ideology and ethnicity affects the outcome of infrastructure development. Under regional economic integration, such differences have profound impact on how women and men see their mobility and their space, as well as their position in the cross border commodity chain.

Keywords: gender, mobility, transportation, regional economic integration

Land Concessions, Land Tenure, and Livelihood Change: Plantation Development in Attapeu Province, Southern Laos

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Abstract

In December 2009, the Lao government hosted the 25th Southeast Asian Games, a major regional sporting event intended to showcase the country's economic development. Yet, the games can be seen on their own as a project of national development requiring massive doses of financial aid from neighboring countries to meet the event's infrastructural needs. Such immense and quickly provisioned aid required the Lao government to grant a variety of different concessions to multiple donor countries. One such example was the financing and construction of a US\$19 million athlete's village by a Vietnamese company in exchange for the rights to harvest timber and plant rubber on a 10,000-hectare plot of land in Attapeu province, southern Laos.

Due to the project's high priority, it was implemented rapidly and without regard to local land use practices. Despite differing degrees of private and communal land tenure, both forest and agricultural land was allotted to and appropriated by to the company. Large percentages of village and household land have been cleared, resulting in the loss of villagers' primary source of income and food security. Without land resources, farmers have become dependent upon plantation employment for subsistence. These land losses by smallholders to land concessions are largely due to a lack of tenure security in Laos. As a result, farming households are undergoing a shift from land- to labor-based livelihoods. This paper explores these complex relationships in order to understand ways in which to improve land tenure and livelihood security in Laos.

Keywords: land concessions, plantations, land tenure, livelihood change, Laos

The Impact of Development Fund Project on Gender, Gender Role and Relations: A Case Study of Saving Group in Lao People's Democratic Republic

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Abstract

This paper is an analytical study of Development Fund Project implementation in Lao PDR under government policy to bring women into development in order to improve women life and empower women. The researcher has emphasized analysis the impact of Development Fund Project to women and brings to transformation gender division of labor and gender relations as well as to empower women have equal status as men in making decision, access and control over resources.

Development Fund Project was created under government's development policy with a goal to help the rural poor especially women who lack of opportunity accessing the bank and micro finance. This project is responsible and implemented by Lao Women's Union in central and rural levels. Project's objective is to help poor women access to credit resource and borrow money to invest in their product and increase women income in order to improve women living condition and empower women have equity with men and reduce women's subordinate from men.

The Development Fund project emerges in Lao society context in 1990s and spread widely now. There are various category of project implementation depend on each socio context and development fund's committee. The process of project implement aims at increase women work and income which a government trend to increase GDP and bring Lao PDR lease off poverty and bring women to development.

Keywords: Development Fund Project, gender, gender role, gender relation, Lao Woman's Union, micro finance, saving group, Lao PDR

Being *Sabaai*: Lao Conceptualizations of Health

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Abstract

Many aspects shape health and well-being in Lao society. Lao make distinctions between being *sabaai* (well being) and that of *sukapop* (biological wellness). Identification of these and other phrases and words is complemented by key notions of family support, having intact *khuan*, possessing strength and resistance, practicing the Three Cleans, believing in *phii* (spirits), experiencing karma, eating the right foods, and living with *thammasat* (nature) in order to initiate an understanding of what it means to a Lao person to be healthy. This paper describes Lao conceptualizations of health as a starting point by which to comprehend the complexity of Lao medical culture.

Keywords: Laos, health, well-being, medical culture

Seven Approaches to Rural Poverty in the Lao PDR

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Abstract

Poverty reduction, poverty alleviation, poverty eradication: this is the latest dominant fashion of the international development industry. For the purpose of a country case study on this subject, I have condensed the results of intense discussions about rural poverty during my seminars in 10 Lao provinces into seven hypotheses which I will present here and then offer my comments based on my own observations.

Poverty reduction strategies should vary from province to province due to local circumstances and local resource endowment. This paper will focus mainly on the two northern provinces Houaphan and Phongsaly, supposedly among the poorest provinces in the country. A comparison would be useful with the southern group of poor provinces, namely Sekong and Attapeu. Note that all these provinces are "double land-locked" and that their per capita incomes differ sharply in comparison to the other provinces along the Mekong river and the provinces which have a land border with Thailand, namely Champassak and Sayabouri.

Keywords: rural poverty, lack of arable land, shortage of labour, size of markets, surplus production, material and social infrastructure, chronic poverty, bureaucratic obstacles, government failure, hardware and software inputs, persistent inequality

Boonkumkhaoyai: An Exemplary Model of Buddhist Economy and Dhammic Socialism

Dipti Mahanta

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Abstract

In Northeast Thailand, or Isan, there are twelve distinct ceremonies known as *Prapheni Heet Sibsong* that mark the entire lunar calendar. Each of these ceremonies is an occasion for merit-making, observance of the precepts, and cultivation of morality (*sīla*), meditation (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Based strictly on Buddhist principles, each ceremony in the entire corpus of *Prapheni Heet Sibsong* points towards a gradual progress along the spiritual path, and has since time immemorial formed the warp and woof of the traditional Lao-Isan way of life. Although Isan is generally regarded as the poorest and the most backward region in the country, a close look at how the northeasterners have entwined their lives with the twelve-month tradition reveals the richness of the Buddhist ethico-religious and cultural heritage that has remained intact to the present day. In this paper we focus on one unique ceremony, Boonkumkhaoyai (previously known as “Boonkhunlarn”), literally translated into English as “merit-making by offering the giant paddy heap”, that marks the second lunar month and falls approximately in the month of January. It is an ancient traditional ceremony that is held at the end of the harvest season in order to create harmony and mutual co-existence among all people in the village.

In Boonkumkhaoyai, villagers co-operate to form the giant paddy heap by donating unhusked rice for the purpose of supporting and promoting various projects related to community welfare, propagation of Buddhism and Lao-Isan culture. Viewed from the socio-ethical perspective, this particular agro-based ritualistic ceremony seems to epitomize the culture of merit-making ingrained in the traditional Lao-Isan way of life. Although merit-making in some urban and cosmopolitan settings has been adversely affected by the rapid modernization, consumerist culture and capitalistic mode of growth that took place in the last few decades, Isan people, on the other hand, have successfully preserved the culture of merit-making by still adhering to its pristine values and practicing it within the folds of *Prapheni Heet Sibsong*. Therefore, merit-making still exists as a spontaneously thriving tradition and has not yet turned out to be a fetish and a means to ‘bartering’ of merit. In this paper we analyse various socio-ethical principles that form the foundational base of Boonkumkhaoyai. Through our analysis we aim at showing that Isan peasantry’s inherent zeal to practice generosity at a communal level for the welfare of the entire community and society at large brings into fusion two distinct trends of the Buddhist *weltanschauung*, namely, Buddhist economy and Dhammic Socialism.

Keywords: buddhist economy, dhammic socialism, merit-making

**The Role of Lao Didactic Literature on Lao Society During the Period
of LanXang Kingdom**

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Abstract

The didactic literature is one of many types of Lao literature. It is the heritage of intellectual which scholars of Lanxang period wrote and left for their beloved motherland and its people. This essay/article will focus on the significance and roles of didactic literature in the way of Lao people's lives from the past until now in term of costumes, traditions, believes, morality to live together in peace, forming values and ideals.

Keywords: didactic literature, Lao literature

**Shifting Cultivation Stabilisation Pilot Project: Post-facto Evaluation
of the Xam Neua (Lao PDR) Roadways Component**

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Abstract

In cooperation with the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, the Asian Development Bank undertook several projects in the late 1990s building all-weather roads to isolated communities in the Xam Neua District of Huaphanh Province previously accessible only by foot. A larger objective was reducing the opium trade by making it practical to bring alternate agricultural products to markets. The initial environmental evaluation (IEE) concluded that the predictable negative impacts —especially on the waterways alongside which the new roads were generally aligned— would be insignificant, providing that best engineering practices were applied. An environmental mitigation action plan (EMAP) was accordingly produced and agreed, but later fieldwork showed the construction then underway was far from optimal. The Project was mostly completed by 2004. An Effectiveness Survey conducted soon thereafter was regarded as itself of poor quality, and disappeared from institutional memory.

Driven explicitly as contributions to this panel on post-facto evaluation, separate Rapid Rural Appraisals of the Shifting Cultivation Stabilisation Pilot Project were recently undertaken. Mann's research showed that while the recommended storm overflow channels had mostly gone missing, the civil works component was not seen to have resulted in significant environmental damage to the main waterways, and villagers ascribe the decline in fish production to over-harvesting. While agricultural outcomes were mixed at best, social impacts were regarded as generally beneficial. (Doussantousse's research is still underway.)

Keywords: Lao PDR, shifting cultivation stabilisation, opium suppression, roadway construction best practices, post-facto evaluation

Development in the Lao PDR: The Links between International Trade and Poverty Reduction

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Abstract

International trade is very important for economic and social development. During the past 30 years, international trade has been developed rapidly. On average the volume of global trade is increasing at a rate 10% higher than global GDP growth. Due to the rapid growth in international trade, economic is the most interested topic worldwide. Moreover, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have produced various reports which show direct and indirect links between increased international trade and poverty reduction.

Lao PDR is one among the smallest countries in Asia. The international trade is having more crucial part for the development, particularly after 1986. The government of Lao PDR introduced their reformation or Renovation Policy known as jin-ta-na-kan mai (New Imagination), which was considered as far-reaching reform with the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism or market economic mechanism system in order to achieve sustainable economic growth.

Experiences of poverty reduction in developing and developed countries in the regions show that a high economic growth rate is required in order to reduce poverty, required clear development strategies, integration with the regional economy, trade and more investment. However, no country has been able to eradicate poverty entirely.

This paper aims to examine theories linking between international trade and poverty reduction and to show how international trade can affect poverty reduction in Lao PDR through the development of productive capacities and how it can directly affect the poor.

Keywords: Poverty Reduction, international trade

Community-based Orthography Development for the So in Thailand

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Abstract

This paper describes the process among the So community in Kusuman district (Sakon Nakhon province, Thailand) of efforts to produce a useable orthography, based on the Thai alphabet. The So have expressed interest in preserving their language in written form and promoting So literacy skills. Initial orthography work was begun among the So more than 30 years ago, but it was never widely used. In March 2008 a community language committee was formed by several respected So community members to re-examine the So writing system, and to together choose an acceptable writing system based on sound linguistic principles. This committee met regularly and made tentative choices for all consonant and vowel sounds, and also chose keywords for illustrating each sound. After reading and writing practice, and working together for consistency in writing using the trial orthography, the committee then developed test sentences with varied spelling options for ten difficult features (i.e. those which differ from the Thai sound system). Testing was carried out among students and adults in several So villages. The committee is currently processing test results in order to make final choices.

A strength of the process has been the cooperation between the local community and academic linguists with experience in the So language. Trial materials distributed in So villages and at So events have been received with much interest. The next steps will be to retest a few uncertain areas, then present the proposed writing system to the larger community for acceptance, and begin preparing further materials for distribution and teaching.

Keywords: orthography, development, Isan, cross-border ethnic group

**Introducing Innovations: The Commercialization of Phu-Tai
Textiles of Savannakhet**

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Abstract

This presentation examines the commercialization of Phu-Tai hand-woven textile production in Savannakhet, Province, Laos. Phu-Tai women are renowned for their technical ability and creativity reflected in the textiles they produce. Many continue to weave cloth for domestic use, but some have begun to sell their weavings commercially. Using the study of Malay textiles in Sumatra, Indonesia, as a model, the different types of innovations introduced in the commercial production of hand-spun and naturally dyed cotton textiles and their effects on the producers and products are discussed. One private business has introduced innovations in the production, merchandizing, and marketing of Phu-Tai cotton.

In production, changes have occurred in the dyeing processes. The business has not only revitalized old recipes of natural dyes but has created new ones to increase the color range. The centralization of the dyeing process has also occurred for consistency in color. Regarding one type of merchandizing innovation, the range of products has expanded to include foreign styles, such as Japanese and Western bedding. In the marketing of Phu-Tai cotton cloth in a commercial sector dominated by Lao silk, the distinctiveness of the cloths as symbols of Phu-Tai identity and the health properties are promoted.

The results of the innovations in commercial production of hand-woven cloth in this case are not a decline in skills or artistry but may be viewed as improvements. Commercial textile production has allowed Phu-Tai women to earn income, leading to increased social wellbeing not only for the weavers but also for their household members.

Keywords: Phu-Tai, hand-woven textile production, identity, Savannakhet, Laos

Will Future Hydropower Reservoirs in the Lao PDR be “Super Reservoirs”?

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Hydropower developers must address several issues besides technical and economical feasibility, such as socio-economy, relocation of villagers living in areas to be inundated, biomass removal, downstream water quantity and quality and environmental issues, including water quality in the reservoir and its carbon footprint. This paper focuses on the environmental and ecological aspects. After all, inundation is replacement of one ecosystem (a terrestrial system) with another ecosystem (an aquatic system). Applying computer simulation tools it appears that reservoirs come in various flavors. Most reservoirs start with bad water quality and low greenhouse gas emissions. A few reservoirs do the opposite and have reasonable water quality but emit substantial amounts of methane, and some reservoirs even suffer from both bad water and bad carbon footprint.

The paper details the reasons for this behavior. A small number of reservoirs may exist, however, that appear to be ideal from an environmental point of view by having the properties of a “super” reservoir. Super reservoirs have sufficient dissolved oxygen all year round at all depths in order to sustain aquatic life, and they are carbon sinks that can sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as efficiently as the replaced forest did. Conditions for this to happen are quantified using a mathematical model and the question is raised whether future Lao hydro reservoirs will be such super reservoirs. A couple of tentative answers are given. The aspiration is to provide guidelines for future hydropower proponents and their consultants on how best to achieve these ideal reservoir conditions.

Keywords: hydropower; computer simulation; water quality; greenhouse gas emissions; Nam Theun 2

The Role of Livestock in Changing Upland Livelihoods in Northern Lao PDR

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Abstract

Livestock production in the Lao PDR is playing an increasingly important role in securing rural household income and improving livelihoods in the northern uplands. Traditional systems of low input, free grazing of cattle, buffalo, goats, pigs, and chickens are being replaced by closer management practices. These practices ensure adequate feeds, vaccination, clean water, housing, and controlled breeding. As a result, farmers are benefiting from rapid animal liveweight gains, labour saving and more regular income from sales (both domestic and export). The impact on households is profound; enabling children to attend school, the purchase of clothes, medicines and household items; house repairs and construction; investment in agricultural equipment and motorbikes; stocks of rice and replacement of animals sold.

This paper describes action research conducted over nine years in Xieng Khouang, Huaphan and Luang Prabang provinces to facilitate and evaluate livestock development in selected districts. The project team work with district livestock staff and farmers from Hmong, Khmu, Tai Deng, Tai Dam, Lao Phuan and Lao Loum ethnic Lao groups. Villages and ethnic groups vary in their motivation and capacity to improve livestock production as well as preferences for keeping particular livestock. These differences will be highlighted in the paper along with our research on how to tailor livestock services to poor and remote ethnic farmers in the uplands. The paper concludes with a discussion on future challenges and opportunities for upland farmers engaging in livestock production for the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

Keywords: livestock production, upland livelihoods, action research, ethnic groups

History and Culture of Laos in the Eyes of Some Indian Writers

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Abstract

Laos, the focus of international power-politics since the Second World War was the center of fascinating politico-cultural development since the ancient period. Geographically located in a remote hill and forest-clad area the country withstood many political ups and downs. Still the great Buddhist nation managed to maintain their identity

The Indo-Chinese peninsula was ruled by Funan, the first great empire of South East Asia. Its extent was from the South China Sea to the northern part of modern Thailand. Laos was a part of that Empire. Probably at that early age of the Christian era she established cultural contact with India. It is said that a Buddhist shrine was established there during the rule of the Indian emperor Ashoka. During the 1st century A.D. The country came under the auspices of Mahayana Buddhism from China.

Funanese rule introduced Sanskrit culture yet indigenous religious and cultural practices held the ground. The next powerful empire in the region was that of Champa. Some experts observed that a Cham kingdom was established at Wat Phu in Laos.

By the 6th century A.D. the supremacy of Funan was subverted by Chenla. The kings of Chenla were devout followers Shaivism (a Hindu concept) and Wat Phu was the nucleus of the country. By the 8th century A.D. the country was divided into Land Chenla with its capital at Sherthapura and Water Chenla with its kingdom at Aninditapura. Land Chenla comprised of modern Laos. It was a powerful kingdom and maintained diplomatic relationship with China. After a Thai interregnum Laos became independent under the leadership of Fa Ngun. He founded the Lan Xang Kingdom. In this way after long subjugation Laos acquired independence by the middle of the 14th century and created its own socio-cultural environment.

A selective study of the writings of the Indian scholars on Lao History and culture show a tendency to highlight the areas of cultural interaction between the two countries. In India a research institute known as the Greater India Society was founded in 1926 Rabindranath Tagore. It was a galaxy of Indian scholars who researched in various aspects of South East Asian history.

The findings of Archaeological excavations facilitated their work. It was evident that India and South East Asia developed a cultural and commercial relationship since pre-Christian era. In the present paper a selective study will be made to show how the Lao history and culture presented a rich area of research in India. Prof. R.C. Majumdar a pioneer of the studies on Indo-China referred to the early history of Laos. One may get adequate materials from his work. Prof. H.B. Sarkar, highlighted the basic traits of the Lao Literature. He showed how the Indian epic and Pauranic literature made a deep imprint on them.

The trend was carried out by Profs Adhir Chakraborty and P.P. Mishra. The later scholar made a brilliant discussion on the literature, inscriptions and architecture of the country and pointed at the affinities with India. Other aspects of Lao culture are analysed by Profs S.P. Sehgal, S. Sahai N.K. Singh. Sehgal made an interesting study on the Lao life, language and religion. Sahai made a valuable contribution in the studies of the Lao literature and showed how the story of the Ramayana and Purana influenced it. Singh discussed on the Theravada Buddhism of Laos. In conclusion it may be pointed out that the limited studies made by the Indian scholars have created more queries on the subject and possibilities of opening future field of research.

Keywords: political history of Laos, role of Buddhism, role of Saivism, Indian focus on Lao history, Lao literature

Economic Development and Lifestyle in a Village in Southern Laos

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Abstract

Since the end of last century, Lao PDR has been struggling to escape from poverty and realizing modernization, by adopting policies toward economic development such as opening doors to foreign investors; accepting aid, and cooperating with foreign countries and various international organizations. The word, “phatthana” (development) seemed to penetrate through to even ordinary villagers who used to live by subsistence agriculture.

In the last decade, since I first conducted fieldwork in a village of Southern Laos where most villagers practiced slash and burn agriculture, the present village view has greatly changed: many villagers today have motorbikes and cellular phones, and satellite dishes and private wells with electric pumps are not rare; while in 1998-99 these things were totally absent in the village. Apparently, the villagers are enjoying a certain economic prosperity which was brought to them in the past 10 years. However, we often hear them complaining about their poverty just like as before. What is/are the reason(s) of the gap between the apparent prosperity and villagers’ feeling of poverty? What has changed or unchanged in their situation?

This presentation will focus on influences of government policies and global society including international organizations; and discuss changes the villagers have been experiencing, as well as unchanged aspects of their lifestyle: economic activities or mode of production and consumption; way of thinking, which constitute their dispositions or habitus.

Keywords: economic development, production, consumption, lifestyle, habitus, Southern Laos

Rubber Plantations in Luangnamtha Province, Lao PDR
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Abstract

For industry tree plantations in Lao PDR, the government promotes a contract farming model intended to benefit smallholding farmers. Throughout much of the country this form is not implemented. However, this is not the case in Luangnamtha (LNT) province of northwestern Lao PDR, which has great potential for rubber production due to sharing a border with China, which can provide technical support as well as a market for rubber production. Between 2000 and 2001 Hatnyao village of LNT was able to successfully grow and sell rubber, which created a rumor that spread to others in the area and caused a rubber boom throughout the province. The success of Hatnyao has convinced the LNT government that rubber planting is key to overcoming poverty in the province. In 2003 and 2006 the provincial government issued documents regulating the management of rubber plantations, especially promoting the use of contract farming instead of estate-style plantations, also known as land concessions. However, in implementation there are many cases that do not comply with the government policy in terms of economic and environmental aspects, as well as related to the use of contract farming, thus leading to many land concessions. This paper is comes from the State Land Lease and Concession Inventory Report which has summarized statistics, made field observations, and analyzed provincial government documents on rubber plantations, contract farming, and land concessions in LNT.

Keywords: rubber plantations, plantation policy, land leasing fees, plantation density, Luangnamtha, Laos

Population Change and its Causes in a Relocated Village of Southeastern Laos

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Abstract

A retrospective interview survey on change in household members between 1980 and 2009 was conducted in a village on the Bolaven Plateau, Southeastern Laos. The villagers were relocated in 1996 from mountainous area near the Vietnam border to the current location. In total 106 out of the 120 families (population: 1,010 at 2009) of the village were studied. Information on birth, death, out and in-migration, pregnancy, use of contraception, miscarriage/stillbirth/abortion was collected. Main results were as follows:

- 1) Many women had their first child at about the age of 18 years old,
- 2) The typical birth intervals were traditionally two to three years,
- 3) Accordingly, many women over 40 years old had high lifetime fertility of around ten children,
- 4) Modern contraception was introduced after the relocation,
- 5) Recently, most women gave birth at the district hospital or the provincial hospital,
- 6) As the results, few women of childbearing age of their 20s and 30s have more than four children, and,
- 7) Infant mortality has been reduced after the relocation in accordance with easier access to the public health services and market economy. In the beginning, relocation had positive effects on population increase with the decline of child mortality and constant high fertility, while there was some increase in adult mortality. Then, the fertility started declining, slightly. Whether fertility continues to decline or not would be of great interest in relation with persistence and sustainable development of the relocated community.

Keywords: lifetime fertility, infant mortality, relocated community, Kantu/ Katu people

The Identity of Hero in Lao Myth

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Abstract

According to the myth appeared in Lao culture survey, it is revealed that there are plenty of hero image performers which presented in various types and could reflect the importance and the meaning of Lao culture interestingly.

This research article aims to study hero identity in Lao myth. This study presents that heroes were always given names along with the conception of sky which could be identified the relation and dimension in religion which is connected to supernatural concept. In the birth of Lao heroes in Lao myth, it was always related to the might of righteousness, namely a person who had more power and magic than ordinary people. Furthermore, his appearance normally shows his leadership as being a cultural builder thorough social Lao supporter. This article presents the vision and meaning of hero dimension in Lao culture which has been inherited up until today.

Keywords: identity, heroes, myth, Lao

The Royal Spirit Myth in Lao and the Creation of Sacred Identity

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Abstract

The myth of royal spirits in Lao is a story about the spirits of sacred persons who were royal members and played significant roles in Lao society when they were alive. Those people might exist in the history or just in the imagination of Lao people. This study aimed to analyze, based on the concept of symbols and cultural interpretation, the creation of sacred identity of Lao royal spirits in Dansai District, Loei Province.

The findings showed that the Lao royal spirit myth played significant roles in constructing the sacred space in Thai-Lao border communities at Dansai where the center of the sacred cities is. Pra That Si Song Rak and Phon Chai temple have been bound together as the sacred places of Muang Dansai since the ancient time. Spirit houses, rivers, sacred space for ritual of Lao royal spirits, myths, and ritual for those spirits all are symbols reflecting cultural communication through persons, priority and time. Tradition, ritual, color, costume, and language are symbols indicating power, social class, mental culture, kinship system, and practice rules for the ancient Lao royal members. These symbols altogether are factors for setting the sacred space of spirits linking the state relationship across the border of Thailand and Laos.

Keywords: myth, royal spirits, sacred space, the interpretation of cultures

**Tonal Systems of of Tai Languages in Nam Pow Basin, Khamkuat district,
Bolikhambxai Province, Laos People's Democratic Republic**

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Abstract

This research aims at analyzing the tonal systems of of Tai Languages in Nam Pow basin, Khamkuet district, Bolikhambxai province, Laos People's Democratic Republic to prove their genetic relationship. These Tai dialects consist of Laos (in Khamkuet district), Tai-mot, Tai-thang, Tai-moei, Phu-tai and Nho. Fieldworks on Tai dialects data collecting have been conducted. The lists of vocabularies were made and the tonal systems were analyzed.

The findings reveal that the development of tones, the tonal mergers and splits, can be used as criteria to subgroup the Tai dialects. Four tones are hypothesized to be in Proto-Tai tonal system (by Fung Kui Ly (1977)), i.e., *A *B *C which are appeared in Live-Syllables and *D which are appeared in Dead-Syllable. Presently, there are some sound changes on the initial consonants of Tai dialects, affecting the tonal mergers and splits of Tai dialects. From the analysis of those 6 Tai dialects, it is found that there are 8 tones in Tai-mod, Tai-thang, Tai-moei, Phu-tai's tonal systems and there are 9 tones in Lao and Nho's tonal systems. The tonal mergers and splits of Tai-mot, Tai-thang, Tai-moei, Phoo-tai and Nho are exhibited in 2 ways and Lao in 3 ways.

From those evidences above, it is concluded that Tai-mod has a close genetic relationship to Tai-moei, and Phu-tai has a close genetic relationship to Nho.

Keywords: tonal systems, Tai dialects

About Some Lexical, Morphematic or Syntactical Variations in Phu Tai Language

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Abstract

Being a grammarian and an ethnolinguist by formation, the presenter who has been interacting with many Phu Tai informants for 3 years in Northeastern Thailand (Kalasin, Mukdahan, Nakhon Phanom, Sakol Nakhon provinces) and in Laos will deal with some linguistic variations of Phu tai language. This presentation, leaving aside the tonematic variations of Phu Tai, will concentrate on some lexical, morphematic or syntactical differences.

The opinion of the presenter is that only a few lexical, morphematic or syntactical variations of Phu Tai can help trace local linguistic particularities or authentically Phu Tai features. Present Phu Tai appears as being a language having coexisting lexemes, morphemes or patterns, some of them being present in one of the varieties of Lao or in other Tai languages or dialects. In fact studying the lexical, morphematic or syntactical variations of Phu Tai language mostly indicates the absence of one or another of the available lexemes, morphemes or patterns.

Keywords: Phu Tai, linguistic variations, dialectology, Isoglosses, linguistic mapping, Kalasin Rajabhat University, northeastern Thailand, Kalasin, Mukdahan, Nakhon Phanom, Sakol Nakhon, Laos, Savannakhet, Khammouan

The Lao Discourse on Nationhood and Nationalism
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Abstract

This paper discusses how the Lao people think about their nation by analysing historical documents as well as current discourses on Lao nationhood and nationalism. This study also takes into consideration the general national consciousness of the poly-ethnic Lao people. The paper studies the process of nation-building with emphasis on the political leadership at different levels, especially the evolution of the national consciousness during crucial stages of the recent Lao history. External factors will be included in the analysis as well. The aim is to demonstrate how these phenomena have evolved from the past until present and brought about both positive and negative consequences determining the destiny of the Lao nation and its identity. Finally, the paper raises the question how the Lao discourse on nationhood and nationalism might develop in the future.

Keywords: Lao nationalism, Lao history

Bun Ban sai: Way of the Lao Tradition in a Modern Context

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Abstract

Ban sai village, Sai thani, Vientiane is a historic village with social, economic and political change in Laos.

The elders of Ban sai referred legend of Ban sai to verify that the original community development along with Vientiane as Sai Thani former center of worship of traditional importance, as important when the Rocket Festival will be the rockets first from Sai Thani. And during the traditional, often use Sai Thani to sacrifice before the prince of Vientiane to fight against which shows the importance of space in traditional ways.

The transition from state socialism to have made the traditional system of thought and traditional beliefs are important to reduce down. And then, Laos changed to republican democracy. Context of developing into a modern and political freedom are more. The governments focus on rehabilitation of cultural heritage to promote national identity. Ban Sai people focused on participation in religious ceremony tradition. Measure and therefore merit the area inherited a legendary tradition since ancient place that is based on beliefs about the soul or spirit and faith in Buddhism. However, it was found that the context of the modern ways of production and consumption based on the market. Made the details of philanthropy has changed in many parts and stressed the importance of monetary system and modern consumption as a direct result of the capitalist system that is rapidly expanding in Vientiane.

The context restored national identity. Ban Sai people focused on bringing the past back to confirm the story of their older. Legend links the sacred space of the sacred space of Ban Sai and Vientiane. Including bringing stories about where various the compiler to generate pride in the manner and means of promoting cultural tourism as well.

Keywords: restored national identity, traditional system

Some Important Linguistic Features of Politeness in Lao

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Abstract

There are so many kinds and levels of politeness that can be conveyed through all languages around the world. The different ways of language use is a reflection of complex societies and result in positive or negative politeness in human social interaction.

There is no single world rule to address positive or negative politeness. It really depends on the way or system in which languages are usually used.

Lao is the national language of Lao People's Democratic republic which is located in Southeast Asia. Lao culture is different from others in terms of expressing politeness. The address norms of politeness in Lao are indeed rather complicated, and depend up on speaker-listener relationship in particular circumstances. Lao has its own specific features for expressing politeness such as terms of address, pronoun usage, kinship terms some particular lexical items and the use of final particle after question words in interrogative statement.

1. Address terms: Lao people address each other by title plus first name in formal circumstances.
2. Pronoun usage: Lao personal pronouns employ many variants in each person depending on the status of the interlocutors.
3. Kinship terms: Kinship terms are also used with people other than speakers' relatives.
4. Some particular lexical items: Many variants of one word depending on their meaning in particular context.
5. The use of final particle after question words in interrogative statement.

All of these norms are so important in Lao social communication because all of they are not the only mean of expressing and referring to social relationship, but they are also important ways of signaling salient aspects of the culture.

Keywords: Lao, linguistics, politeness

Religious Belief of Present Lao Ethnic
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Abstract

Religious belief of Lao ethnic in present day is somewhat mixed. Meaning three systems of belief (animism, Brahmins, Buddhism) are considered as traditional belief. Most traditional festivals and/or ceremonies celebrate throughout the country are firmly mixed. In other words, it is very difficult to say which one belongs to animism, Brahmins, or Buddhism. Lao ethnic do so because the teaching of mentioned religions provide or support each other, especially teaching on daily practice. Furthermore, many Buddhist temples provide part of its own land to spirit altar.

Historically, the conditions of birth of three religions are different; and the teachings are also different. Later on, Brahmins and animist belief adopt each other. Finally, new-mixed belief is formed and become social value. When Buddhism was introduced to Laos, indigenous people had their own belief, but Buddhism also did the same way Brahmins did. Meaning new culture has been formed and recognized as traditional events. Most festivals *boun* (“ບຸນ” in Lao) celebrate in Laos reflect various beliefs.

By studying various ceremonies in Laos today, some animist ceremonies have disappeared. However, it should be considered that Lao people choose various beliefs giving them profit in order to form social belief. In other words, three kinds of belief are practiced together at the same time. One ceremony consists of many activities reflecting animism, Brahmins, and Buddhism.

Keywords: religious belief, Lao ethnic, Buddhism

Factors Influencing Capacity Building for Livestock Development in Lao PDR: Strategies to improve Outcomes for Upland Rural Development

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Abstract

Upland farmers in the Lao PDR are dependent upon government, non-government and private organisations for agricultural advice and support. To improve livestock production, farmers need effective extension or advisory services. However, district extension staff working in remote areas are limited in both quantity and quality. Improving the knowledge and skills of extension staff working with upland rural communities is a key goal of the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

This paper describes a study of the factors influencing capacity building of livestock extension staff in upland northern provinces. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 Livestock Project Managers, 2 Provincial Coordinators, 10 District Heads and 20 District Extension Officers during 2008 and 2009. Factors included availability of funding, the support and influence of provincial and district managers, individual staff ownership and motivation, representation of women and ethnic minorities, opportunities for further study, family support and commitment, influence of farmers and farmer groups, having good examples in the field, and staff relocation.

A strategy is recommended to improve staff capacity building and outcomes for rural development. Managers need to select representative staff that are motivated and committed. Building effective teams and providing opportunities and rewards equally to district extension staff is also important. Capacity building can be further strengthened by partnerships between government, non-government, development organisations, private sector and other stakeholders. The research suggests that investment to build the capacity of district livestock extension staff can return benefits quickly to organisations and communities, particularly in remote areas.

Keywords: capacity building, livestock development, extension, mentoring

**Communicating Gender in Ponglang Performances: Space,
Sound and Power in Lao Isan Society**

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Abstract

Any art form elaborates its owners' thought, relationship and power relation in different ways. Folk Performances are cultural texts which encode some latent meanings. Those meanings are by no mean featureless, but rather remain crucial roles to sustain the social structure and cultural norms. In order to understand some significant characters of Lao Isan society through this musical performance, this study analyzes how musical instruments are performed and how the sound controls over all stage performances. Also, how male and female performers are organized and how gender relations are represented. Then, to what extent, social control and cultural norms in Lao Isan society are attained.

Findings show that male playing musical instruments controls over the stage performances, especially females' dance while female performing remains significant self-control over their dance. Women's space at the front of the stage indicates their importance in the society even they are secretly controlled by men. Young girls performing at the edge of the stage and their music imitation elaborates their additional role in the performance and the real society. In *Ponglang* performance, though women are mainly presented with their beautiful dance but the actual control is men who produce controlling rhythm and melody. These findings may suggest that, in the real Lao Isan society, women are acting or living under the inconspicuous power that is exercised exclusively by men.

Keywords: arts, Lao Isan, music, Ponglang performance, gender

Lao Listeners and Prospective Roles of Border Radio

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Abstract

This paper draws on qualitative and quantitative research to explore the current status of border radio in Nong Khai province; to investigate Lao's exposure to border radio; and to produce a guideline to promote the role of border radio in strengthening the Thai-Lao relations.

The research found that the current Thai border radio plays roles in strengthening Thai-Lao relations such as 1) by playing music that both Thais and Lao like, 2) by advertising both Thai and Lao products and services, and, 3) by promoting both Thai and Lao cultures and traditions-related contents. The majority of Lao respondents listen to Thai radio. They expressed that the reason they listen to Thai radio is for entertainment, news and information, and they think it is useful for getting news, and information and entertainment. They also feel positive about Thailand because they listen to Thai radio. Those who do not listen to Thai radio stated that they do not have radio receivers and only watched Thai television.

Although the majority of Lao respondents said that the current border radio has done well, they expressed that desirable roles of radio in strengthening the relationship between Thailand and Laos include 1) disseminating information, and, 2) providing entertainment. Undesirable roles of border radio include presenting bad things with rude and using satirical, insulting, mocking, and dishonoring words as well as referring to Laos in a negative way.

From a participatory international communication concept, it is important for Thailand and Laos to cooperate in media participation for the development of the two countries and to enhance the Thai-Lao relations. However, a dialogue from both Thai and Lao leaders needs to be arranged. Cooperative radio programs are also needed and the programs need sufficient budget.

Keywords: Lao listeners, border radio, Thai-Lao relations, participatory international communication

Art of Dissent
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Wall paintings are the creation of a definite intent. The walls are a controlled public space and there are costs involved in the creation that must be met. This means that they are the specific document of some person or group of people who had the authority and the resources to create public statements.

In the centres of great power, such as central Thailand, painting was not creative originally but was didactic, part of a specific controlled tradition with rules and formulas. Freedom of expression for the artist emerged only in the lower registers where they could portray the world they experienced, the everyday life of people which is almost always turning in the opposite direction from the greater worlds above. The friction of distance, however, erodes control and we see across the Khorat Plateau differences emerge, differences which have most often been explained as the quaint ignorance of folk art.

Reading the paintings as historical documents, they are the narratives of a particular person or group of people who could decide, and who by the choice of a story or scene were able to encode meanings that went beyond the presentation of an obvious orthodoxy. Similarly the paintings are also documents of a specific place, meaning shifting as it is being discerned through the history and experience of the viewer. On the Khorat Plateau we see a remarkable repetition of a relatively small number of stories and scenes that could be seen as an attempt by the disempowered local elites to write back against the dominant narrative.

Most of the wall paintings we see today are relatively recent, coming from the first half of the twentieth century CE. Does the choice of presenting these stories, or specific scenes from them, coming as it does more than one hundred and fifty years after the first conquest of the Khorat Plateau, but before development of infrastructures that facilitated control represent the maintenance of the alternative narrative and does their recognition in specific places even today display the continuing power of the everyday resistance of people (subalterns) reminding us that they have not consented to dominance.

Keywords: wall paintings, alternative narrative, historical documents

**Effects of the “Lançang-Jiang Cascade” (Yunnan, PRC) during the 2010
Record Drought: Down-basin Hydraulic, Institutional,
and Agro-ecological Considerations**

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Of the eight hydroelectric projects planned for the Lançang-Jiang in the PRC —the Upper Mekong— three are operational and the fourth, the Xiaowan scheme, is now filling its reservoir, an order of magnitude larger than the combined existing impoundments. With the unusually early ending of the 2009 monsoon, record low flows even far downstream, along Mekong reaches little influenced by the Yunnan component (c. 16% of the annual total discharge to the South China Sea), are now being recorded. There is no question that a basin-wide drought is underway, which cannot be expected to much ease before June 2010, and problems meeting existing agricultural and municipal demands on Mekong mainstream waters are certain to worsen. Throughout the lower riparian countries, public anger against the PRC is already evident on the assumption that the Lançang-Jiang dams are largely to blame.

The Chinese claim that they too are suffering from drought. However once the Yunnan cascade is completed, an engineered release regime can reduce monsoonal flood flows and increase dry season discharge throughout the Mekong’s entire course, advantaging both agriculture and water transport. Possibly true, but this doesn’t speak to near-term impacts from filling the reservoirs, which may extend through the next decade or longer. The Nuozhadu project, just above the existing Jinghong dam, has been under construction since 2006; and will create an impoundment half again as large, volumetrically, as Xioawan’s, with which its filling may be partly concurrent.

Keywords: Yunnan cascade, Mekong drought, Xiaowan dam, Nuozhadu dam, lower riparians

Health Risk at the Thai-Lao Border
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Abstract

The research focuses on the health risk at the Thai-Lao Border. The study aims are

1. To present health risk situations at the Thai-Lao Border.
2. To describe how government, local organizations and communities manage these health risk.
3. To determine factors and processes needed to support integrate management health risk on Thai-Lao Border.

The study also aims to apply the concept of risk theory and human security to analyze the negative impacts of modernity and globalization; with closer interaction of human activities within economic, political, cultural and other social spheres and along spatial, temporal and cognitive dimension. Globalization is changing the nature of risk and how societies handle risk.

One of the effect of globalization is the spread of diseases and the potential for devastating new diseases to ravage humanity such as SAR or avian flu. Population movement between northeastern Thailand and Laos PDR gives rise to risk situations for the spread of HIV/AIDS and communities health risk. The rapidly increasing movement of people and goods mean that many “Third world” diseases are now threatening the developed world.

This research examines the hidden damages that confront people with social and health risk. In this paper I will apply qualitative and quantitative research methodology and will conduct in-depth interviews and observation with activists from government, local organizations and communities to explore the present social and health risk on Thai-Lao border area and examine how the people and communities confront and adjust to these situations. The analysis will propose a concept of health risk management health risk assessment and provide practical guideline for policies for the border area.

Keywords: globalization, modernity, risk society, health risk and human security

Regional Development and its Implications on Lao PDR

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Abstract

Since the past three decades, Mekong Region has entered into the new era of development, resulting in the transition not only physical aspect, but also socio-political dimensions of the countries of this region. This paper examines changes regarding regional development and its implications on Laos PDR. It will argue that changes of physical landscape following to development project could either enhance or weaken wellbeing of specific groups of population. The regional development has brought ranges of new actors into Laos, such as investors, multi-national corporate, etc. With the new entering into the New Economic Mechanism, it raises concern of to whether the new set mechanism will be sufficient for governing these actors. The empirical analysis of this paper will be based on two important development issues in Laos; these are hydropower development and land concession.

Keywords: Mekong Region, socio-political dimensions, regional development, physical landscape

The Ethnic Consciousness in Cultural Practices of the Phu Tai

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Abstract

This paper is a part of the doctoral research titled “Ethnic Consciousness in Cultural Practice of Phu Tai”. It will argue that studies concerned with ethnic consciousness are largely centered around homogeneity, such as being the same or common in kin or blood line, way of life, language, tradition and culture and share historical experience. These are recognized to be the ground for ethnic consciousness under which ethnic identity was created. However, the spread of capitalism, modernity, modern education that employed to integrate Phu Tai ethnic into the united nation state, have resulted in the complexity and difficulty of maintaining ethnic identity. In response to this, the Phu Tai ethnic group invented traditions and different types of cultural practices and create social space to continue ethnic identity and maintain ethnicity for young generation. The invention of tradition and cultural practice are significantly based on Phu Tai ethnic consciousness.

Keywords: Phu Tai, ethnic consciousness

Social and Environmental Risk Management in the Thai Lao Border Area

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Abstract

The border area where the Mekong River runs between Thailand and Laos has become a channel of economic and social development. Before the implementation of development projects, the ecosystem in this area was pristine. That is very rich in its biodiversity and had been sustaining the livelihood of local people and communities along the river. This area is considered one of the most important wildlife sanctuaries in Southeast Asia (Southeast Asia Rivers Network, 2006). The local people who live along the river have confronted and try to adjust to the new environment and their livelihood. They are uncertain of their future. They have lost some of their cultures and traditional lifestyles. They confront a lot of social problems, such as crimes, debts, drug, etc. The current social environment does not adequately support the wellbeing of the local people along the river. The locals may confront severe social and environmental risks due to the development taking place (Thai Baan Research, 2004).

This paper describes a research project in sociology that applies concept of modernity, risk society, social risk and environmental risk to analyze the negative impacts of modernity. It examines the hidden damages that confront people with social and environmental risks. The objective of this qualitative study is to explore the present social and environment risks along the Mekong River, Thai-Lao border area, and examine how the people and community confront and adjust to these situations.

Keywords: risk management

Paintings of Europeans in Lao and Isan Buddhist Temple Murals

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In Buddhist Southeast Asia, temple murals have been a salient religious expression for centuries. A more sharply focused approach to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Lao temple paintings could teach us much about pre-modern customs, particularly where there appear depictions of European figures embedded within the traditional Buddhist narratives. Indeed, when read as historical documents, such murals can reveal important aspects of local and regional history. Using these European figures as central elements, this paper will explore their role in expressing a specific local context, and as also indicative of the inter-relations of style, technique and craftsmanship when comparing Lao wall paintings in Vientiane, to those of several temple interiors or exteriors Lanna and Isan. This historic period is critical insofar as it witnessed first the demise of Lao royal patronage of Vientiane's Buddhist temples, and later the subsequent renaissance of Lao religious art under French colonial rule.

Keywords: temple murals, pre-modern customs, European figures

Social Differentiation of Ideas and Practices of a Good Life in Laos

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Abstract

Amartya Sen has asked why one should study social inequality. He answered that members of a society do not enjoy equal chances to lead a life they consider good. Capabilities to lead a life that is cherished in a particular society are unevenly distributed. Therefore, some people are in a position to lead a better life than others. This paper discusses Sen's argument with regard to Laos. Social differentiation of capabilities to lead a life reckoned good by Lao standards has increased rapidly over the past 20 years. However, ideas of a good life have also become differentiated. Sen has ignored this aspect of differentiation, which will be discussed in the paper as well. A sketch of Lao social structure will be followed by a discussion of the definitions of a good life by various social groups and symbolic struggles between groups. The paper closes with an overview of the social differentiation of capabilities to lead a life respectively considered as good. As research on parts of the paper has just begun, some aspects of the topic will be more elaborated than others.

Keywords: good life, social differentiation of capabilities

Matri-lifestyles and Globalization in Lao PDR: Gains, Downsides and Meaning of Lao Matriliny

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Abstract

Laos is one of the very few countries left in the world in which matrilineal residence patterns, matrilineal kinship and inheritance patterns still exist for a large group of women belonging to the ethnic majority of the Lao (Tai Kadai) community. Also some ethnic minorities in the South-and in the North of Laos have matrilineal social systems. This social organisation and culture generate a powerful role of women.

In studies, conducted in Laos in 1995 and 1998, we found a gradual undermining of the great matrilineal Lao tradition as a result of land legislation and the male dominated adjudication of land titling. As a follow-up, I conducted a small snow-ball study in November 2009, mainly in Vientiane, in which I interviewed Lao women, which whom I had worked in development projects in Laos since 1994. The focus was on their perception of the positive and negative impact of globalization on the matrilineal system. What is the strength and sustainability of the matri socio-cultural system? What are the important changes in the matrilineal context? My paper will show that the matri-lifestyle in Vientiane is still very strong, and blooming in times of globalisation.

Who gains of matriliny? The immense gains, for women as well as for men in Laos and the world, will be illustrated in a comparative perspective. The horrible atrocities and discrimination against women and girls in patriarchal and patrilineal Asian countries as China and India are almost unknown in matri-lifestyle environments.

Many gender studies and gender MDG3 project reports show a stunning lack of knowledge and awareness of the meaning of the Lao matrilineal/matrilocal cultural heritage for gender equality and reduction of poverty. In official government studies almost no effort is made to differentiate between the two socio-cultural systems, with all its bi-shades in between. It is urgently required to adjust this methodology. Otherwise, it will be impossible to empower the right target group of women.

Keywords: Matriliny, Globalization, matrilineal residence, Lao woman

The Identity Construction in Lowland Lao's Folk Tale

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Abstract

This thesis aims to study the identity construction in Lowland Laotian's folk tale by employing the role of folk tale and the identity analysis theory as a base of study. The findings demonstrate that Lowland Laotian's folk tale played a major role in constructing their identity in two major phases. The first phase denotes the ethnic identity construction in original social and cultural context. The Lowland Laotian in the past define themselves through ancient folk tales and the genesis of world creation.

They claimed to be the direct descendants of the King of the Celestial Taen, thereby a superior race who assumed the power to rule others. The second phase sees identity construction within the modern social and cultural context. This took place after the political change in 1975 which Laos then became Lao People's Democratic Republic, dominated by the Marxist.

The identity construction during this period corresponded with the government's nation development scheme which aimed to create the "Modern Laotian". The government presented such identity by selectively retelling and rewriting the classic folk tale and championed such group as orphans with hardship and the struggling working class. This method not only worked as a continuation and preservation of the ancient classic folk tales but also coincide with the new Marxist-led government's development plan. The identity construction within this period was therefore specifically political and emphasized class identity. This means that the identity in Lowland Laotian's folk tale is dynamic, and will change according to social and political context.

Keywords: construction identity, ethnic identity, Lowland Lao's folk tale

Writing Community: Water Project Proposal & Tactical Knowledge in Rural Isan Development

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Abstract

The past decade of water development in the Mekong River basin saw an emergence and the increasing roles of researches under the rubric of Tai Baan—or villagers’ research. Focusing on subsistence economy, nature conservation, and moral traditions, these pieces of research suggested the nature of the communities as resilient, apolitical, and communitarian—especially in the cases where development projects deemed to threaten the livelihood of local people.

This paper argues that while it is strategically important to promote the conservationist credentials of local knowledge in Tai Baan research, there is a risk that such knowledge become ‘selectively packaged’ so as to exclude what are seen to be discordant elements. The paper calls for a greater flexibility for villagers to use their local knowledge for various purposes, including development advocacy, hence creating better chance of local participation in development projects, and empowering local communities at large.

Through a close reading of project proposal written by villagers of Ban Nawaeng, a Mekong riparian community of northeastern Thailand, this paper offers some empirical insight into the dynamics of local knowledge and practice in relation to community struggle for the state’s water development. The paper argues that project proposal is a bureaucratized field whereby local knowledge is being articulated—but for the manipulation of power and resources.

A simplified narrative on community, articulated through the writing of people’s project proposals, has proven to be a useful apparatus in rendering the community ‘legible’ to the eyes of the state. In Ban Nawaeng, local knowledge has been strategically used as a political apparatus not to resist but to engage with the state’s development projects, thus an outward-orientation of local knowledge. In addition, when writing a proposal, the villagers have also reconstructed their community in a way that suit not only the state’s expectations but also to serve their own aspiration in community development.

Keywords: local knowledge, politics of rural development, water projects, modern community

**Perceptions of Tourism Impacts among Rural Communities in Luang Namtha,
Luang Prabang, Khammouane and Champasak, Lao PDR**

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Abstract

The number of international tourist arrivals to Lao PDR reached 1.74 million in 2008, generating approximately US\$275 million in foreign exchange and 18,000 domestic jobs, thus firmly establishing tourism as one of the country's main engines of economic growth. Though the majority of Lao PDR's tourism activity is centered on visitation to natural, cultural and historic attractions in Vientiane Capital and the two UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Luang Prabang and Vat Phou Champasak, organized "community-based" tours to rural ethnic villages are also quite popular. Many of the country's existing community-based tour programs were deliberately established by the Government in cooperation with tour operators and international development partners such as UNESCO and the Asian Development Bank, based on the premise that this type of tourism, when properly executed, can help spread the economic benefits of tourism to rural areas and minimize negative social impacts by strengthening the role of participating communities in tourism planning and management.

In an attempt to better understand local people's satisfaction with community-based tourism and gauge their perception of tourism-related impacts, a standard survey was administered to a sample of 361 families living in 12 rural villages that participated in the ADB-financed Mekong Tourism Development Project's (2003-2008) community-based tourism development component. This paper presents the results of the survey and explores some of the factors that may have contributed to substantial variation in how ethnic Lao, Khmu, Hmong and Lanten families perceive tourism is impacting their communities.

Keywords: Tourism, Economic Growth, Ethnic Communities, Lao PDR

Ethno-history of Phongsaly Province: a Margin Integration Process

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Abstract

I propose to present the first elements of a research program on ethno-history and inter-ethnic relations in Phongsaly Province. This project is based on a diachronic approach on ethnicity in this northernmost province of the Lao PDR. The research does not focus on a specific social or cultural group, but rather on a geographical area, the province of Phongsaly. Through this decision, the aim is to conceptualize together all groups (around 30) living in the area, based on the assumption there exist common dynamics unifying these various groups, despite their difference. Collections of ethnographic and historic data are an important part of the project, targeting this unknown area (only one academic anthological research has been done in the province). I will present general but new information of the ethnic diversity of the province. Then I would like to show the progressive building up of this area as an entity, through interaction between groups, and between these groups and central power.

Keywords: Northern Laos, Phongsaly, ethnohistory, ethnic diversity, national integration

Presentation of the Research Project “Development and Socio-cultural Change among the Khmu of Vieng Phouka (Luang Namtha Province)”

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Abstract

Within the last decades Laos managed a remarkable transition towards economic growth and prosperity. Laos' strategic position in the midst of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) has meant that it had to develop from a land-locked to a land-linked country. Large scale foreign investments and infrastructure projects have assisted in this transition. Today, the Lao PDR is on the verge of joining the WTO and is well placed to achieve its goal to graduate from its current least developed country (LDC) status by 2020.

Development projects in the countryside intend to integrate rural populations - most of them belong to one of Laos' 49 ethnic groups- into the growing economy of the Lao PDR. Highway No3, which links Thailand to China and runs across Vieng Phouka (Luang Namtha Province), opened up in 2008 and can be considered as one of the most important trade routes within the GMS. After the ethnic Lao, the Khmu are one of the second largest ethnic groups within Lao PDR. In Vieng Phouka they build the majority with ca. 80%. This project focuses on the impacts of the road on the live strategies and identities of Khmu people living in this area.

The Lao government supports different development strategies for the improvement of rural livelihoods within the country. Projects like the eradication of opium, the replacement of slash-and-burn by wet-rice cultivation, the introduction of cash crops and a community-based tourism industry are implemented to stabilize and better the lives of ethnic groups who were primarily dependant upon subsistence rice farming heretofore. In order to understand the deep transformations effected by these development projects, it is necessary to analyze their impacts from the emic perspective of the target groups of such programs, themselves. As an important “gate to modernity”, a source of luxury goods and an entrance to education and modern health care, the highway plays an increasing role within the daily lives of the Khmu in Vieng Phouka. The question, in which way modern structures and institutions (market economy, streets, schools, hospitals, etc.) are used to enhance peoples' spiritual and economic well-being, needs further investigation from their own perspectives. This project argues that, especially the Khmu, are able to combine traditional and modern lifestyles to enhance their lives without loosing their own cultural identity. However, it is not clear yet, in which way people manage to integrate these two different aspects of live.

Keywords: emic perspective, a land-locked, a land-linked

Rural Development and Strategies for Sustainable Agrarian Livelihood: A Case Study of Ban Huaxieng, Xaithany District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

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Abstract

This research aims to explore how rural development under the policy of market-oriented economy effects local people intern of economic, social and cultural practice, and how they adapt themselves to those changes to sustain their livelihood strategies through focusing on Ban Huaxieng, Xaithany district as a case study. This study analyzes both primary data and secondary data, and applies both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Four methods are applied for primary data: household survey, participant observation, life history and in-depth interview. This research focuses on three main parts: first, Ban Huaxieng and policy implementation of rural development; second, livelihood diversification as new livelihood strategies; and third, changing social and cultural practices under development.

As a result of analyzing this case study, two main finding are discovered. Firstly, diversification of livelihood is considered as new livelihood strategies under rural development along with the mechanism of market economy. Secondary, rural development can improve living condition but creates contradiction; particularly, development under the market mechanism has created unintended consequences, which can endanger some agrarian households' sustainable livelihood.

Keywords: rural development, livelihood strategies, livelihood diversification

Way of Establishment of Champassak Kingdom and the Role of Women

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Abstract

Similar to many other müang (principality) in Laos, Champassak does not possess abundant records of its distant past. In particular the history of its emergence is unclear to us. Consequently, to talk about the early part of Champassak, in particular its pre-history, we have to rely heavily on “sources” from various types of stories, legends, fables, and fairy tales. However, the aim of this paper is not to discuss such stories, but to talk about the establishment of the Kingdom of Champassak. Various types of stories mentioned above indicates the difficulty in talking about the history of Champassak. In Chulasangkat 1040 (A.D.1678), after King Soulinya Vongsa passed away, the court of Vieng Chan was in a state of chaos. Consequently, Than Phakhu (a senior monk) and his followers led the King’s wife (queen) who was pregnant and her royalists secretly escaped from Vieng Chan. They travelled month after month southward until reaching inside the territory of Kung Pathaipet, present Cambodia. However, they did not find any place to be suitable to establish a new müang. Finally, Than Phakhu decided to lead his followers to return via the Mekong River upstream. They passed and stayed at a number of islands. Wherever he found a suitable place for establishing a future müang, he ordered his subjects to settle there; and appointed a reliable follower to be governor of that müang.

The pre-Champassak polity was governed by Nang Phao, and her daughter, Nang Phaeng succeeded her when she was old. Like her mother, Nang Phaeng was a devout Buddhist. She invited Than Phakhu to live in a region under her control and have Buddhism flourish throughout the territory of pre-Champassak. Then, she requested Than Phakhu to be a keeper for her polity and subjects. Not many years after being a keeper for the polity, Than Phakhu found his new task was not suitable for him. He decided to establish a new müang called the Kingdom of Champassak. And, of course, the son of the queen who was born during the escape from Vieng Chan was crowned as the first King of Champassak. The Champassak chronicle indicates the way of establishment of Champassak Kingdom involves with Buddhist belief. In other words, before the emergence of this kingdom, there was a senior monk who was respected as a good monk to find suitable place to become a future müang. However, three women who contributed to this process should be strongly mentioned were the queen, Nang Phao, and Nang Phaeng. It is a pity; these three women were not mentioned after the emergence of Champassak Kingdom.

Keywords: Champassak Kingdom, Buddhism

The Construction of Lao Women's Identity by the Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic Since 1975 to Present

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Abstract

What women are, how they live, or how they deal with people in society in different situation or how they deal with men does not depend on their sex, but it depend on the meaning of "Women," which is constructed from society. Thus, women's identities in each society are different and diverse because of many factors and complexities that define gender and identities for women.

Similarly Lao women's identities which do not depend on the essence of women but on the construction of meaning for "Lao women identities" which is influenced and understood from the concept of "Women" in Lao society. This research aims to study the construction of Lao women's identities by the government of Lao People's Democratic Republic from 1975 to present, because during this period the Lao government intensively used the media in the process of constructing a new identity for women that influences greatly recognition of femininity of "Lao women" in Lao society.

The objectives of this research are:

1. To study the role of the government in the construction of meaning of "Lao women"
2. To study the reaction of Lao women from various social status, ethnicities and ages to the identities constructed by the Lao government.

This research reveals that the present Lao government has constructed the Nation State many times and each period its characteristics are different. Thus, every period the government constructs a new national identity and this national identity has an effect on the construction of Lao women identity.

From 1975 to the present the Lao Government had constructed many identities of Lao women following changes in context and conditions of the politics, economics, and society that allow Lao women to take part in constructing the Nation State, for example between 1975-1985 characteristics of Lao women were "beauty and brave". And these characteristics of this period and policies are found in Lao literature, music, and costumes. When Lao shifted from a socialist to a capitalist society and opened its doors to new ideas through "The new economic mechanism" (NEM) in 1986, Laos has opened its doors and received investment from international agencies and tourists from different cultures, religion, and nationalities. Therefore, Lao women are defined as protector of Lao culture and traditions." For example, "Lao women must wear "pha sin."

However, the process of construction of Lao women's identities allows us to see the ambiguity of the Lao government in the meanings of "Lao women". This construction also allows us to see how Lao nationalism works toward Lao women. Moreover, it opens space to see the power relations in a variety of dimensions such as gender, class, and age and it reveals reactions of Lao women to the construction of identities in response with national identities known as "Peace, Independence, Unity, Democracy and Prosperity".

Keywords: Lao woman, identity, identity construction, Lao PDR

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Abstract

This paper on the Cheuang of the Kmhmu' examines written sources and relevant Kmhmu' oral traditions in Laos, concentrating mainly on three questions leading to a new look on the identity of Cheuang.

1. What is the Cheuang phenomena.

Talking of Cheung inevitably leads to issues of wars. Did Cheuang exist really as a historical figure and who was this Cheuang that permeates all accounts of history and entire culture and oral literature the Kmhmu' since ancient times. Due to the hidden character, and language barriers, researchers of Cheuang never knew who or what Cheuang really was or meant.

2. Who is Cheuang the person, or (Khun Cheuang) really?

In the Kmhmu' language Cheuang means something like "leader" or "king" while Rook (rawk) has the meaning of citizen, or ordinary people (pasason). Cheuang, as leader of the Kmhmu' doesn't refer to just one but various personalities living during many eras and reigns until today. Sometimes the Lao-Thai today refer to the Kmhmu' as "the Cheuang".

3. Cheuang's place in the Kmhmu' people's hearts and minds.

Kmhmu' people like to talk about Cheuang. This is manifested in their legends or Myths about Cheuang. There is also a particular ritual tradition called "the Cheuang/Ñhi tradition". Moreover Cheuang often gets referred to in traditional Kmhmu' sung poetry: Teum. Common belief considers Cheuang as integrated part of Kmhmu' Culture and Tradition as well as a leader and Kmhmu'hero.

Keywords: Kmhmu' people's, Cheuang, Kmhmu'hero

The Transition of Rice Rituals in Laos
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Abstract

This work aims to explore the transformation of rice rituals in Laos, namely the beliefs and the role of rice in Lao society as well as the changes in planting, harvesting, consumption and exchange rituals. The study focuses on one village (Huaxieng), where systematic observation, participant observation and qualitative interviews were conducted. These anthropological methods were combined with a quantitative survey and theories of social differentiation as well as historical and philological research.

The study has found that the rice has always played a central role in the life of Lao and as a consequence, a rich heritage of rituals, knowledge and proverbs has developed around the production, consumption and exchange of rice. Rice is totally intertwined with every aspect of Lao people's everyday lives, influencing their world views, beliefs, and kinship system, and in fact, their entire intangible culture. The belief in and performance of rice rituals have been changing over time. The transformation is related to day by day changes (microchanges) as well as structural changes (macrochanges).

Keywords: microchanges, macrochanges, rice rituals

State-making in the Cambodian-Lao Borderlands

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Abstract

The regulation of international borders offers a useful means to study the rather abstract process of state-making. Daily practices in the borderlands can provide a localized solidity to states and their limits. This process of material and symbolic production is especially important when the same territory has belonged to different states. This paper explores such a case and looks at how the Cambodian and Lao states are mutually constituted through practices along their shared boundary. I draw on ethnographic fieldwork with Khmer-Lao villagers living near the Lao border in Stung Treng Province, northeastern Cambodia, and visits to nearby areas of Attapeu Province, southern Lao PDR.

The Cambodian and Lao states make the international border into a physical reality through soldier and police checkpoints as well as through the organisation of development and administrative interventions. At the same time, cross-border trade and family connections entangles the aspirations of rural villagers with their experiences of past wars, the Khmer Rouge, extensive cross-border mobility, expansion of modern markets and the intricacies of post-conflict governments. Desires for prosperity and development are key aspects shaping Khmer-Lao villagers' border engagements, and are thus critical for understanding ongoing experiences of political incorporation and state-making in these borderlands.

Keywords: Cambodia-Lao border, cross-border practices, rural livelihoods, state-making

Linking Food Security and Conservation. Capacity and Sustainability of Enclave Villages Within Nakai Nam Theun National Protected Area (Lao PDR)

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Abstract

This paper explores livelihood options and their potential impact (positive and negative) on the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of enclaved families and biodiversity within Nakai-Nam Theun National Protected Area (NNT NPA) in southern Lao PDR. The author will work with one Brou village (Korbong village) within the NNT NPA and the Watershed Management Protection Authority (responsible for the management and protection of the NPA) to develop suitable livelihood options.

The Brou are the largest and latest ethnic group to arrive in the watershed, comprising approximately 60 % of the total watershed population. They still rely heavily on forest resources in addition to swidden rice production. The paper discusses the methods that will be used to accomplish the project objectives established by the villagers and government staff, whose primary aim is to ensure food security for upland farmers who live in protected areas in Laos. The question of how to maintain food security with conservation outcomes is not new. Our question is how to select or adaptive livelihood options for Korbong villagers to reduce potential negative social, economic and environmental impact on the wellbeing of families and the on the flora and fauna within NNT NPA.

Keywords: food security, sustainable development, livelihood, The Brou, watershed management

Plants Used in Traditional Medicines of Laos: Potential Source of New Bioactive Compounds

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Abstract

Plant-based traditional medicines of Laos serve as the core of primary health care in this country. In this context, the presence of bioactive chemical compounds in plants is the underlying basis for the use of these traditional medicinal plants for disease treatment. Such bioactive compounds also represent a source for the discovery of new modern medicines. Considering that the plant diversity of the country is extremely rich, comparable to that of Vietnam, where more than 12,000 plant species have been recorded, it is expected that a great number of plants of Laos represent a source of new bioactive compounds. To prove this point, our research has focused on compiling data on the uses of plants for medical treatment through field ethnobotanical interviews, followed by documentation and taxonomic identification of the plants collected, and experimental laboratory studies to test each plant against HIV, cancer, tuberculosis, and malaria disease systems. In the event of activity, follow-up chemical analysis to isolate the active compounds was undertaken. Within a period of 10 years we documented more than 900 plant species used in the traditional medicine practices of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Experimental laboratory data to date indicate that further studies could eventually lead to further discovery of other bioactive compounds that may serve as potential candidates for development into new medicines.

Keywords: Lao traditional medicinal plants, primary health care, bioactive compounds, ethnobotany, taxonomic identification, HIV, cancer, tuberculosis, malaria

Preliminary Toxicology Screening of Lao Medicinal Plants

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Abstract

Plants have been used for medicinal purposes since prehistoric times. Such continual human use has likely resulted in the elimination of at least many acutely toxic species from the pharmacopoeia. However, toxicity concerns remain with herbal medicines. Some herbs may have chronic toxicity that is not noted by common observation, while other toxic herbs may be used in small doses for specific medicinal purposes by experienced practitioners. If herbs of either class become more widely used, without the supervision of practitioners, problems of toxicity may result. We have critically reviewed a set of several hundred Lao medicinal plants for toxicity, using preliminary assessments such as books on medicinal and toxic plants, and accessing scientific literature on the plants through computer databases. Information derived from this effort supplements and strengthens data obtained through laboratory experiments to explore traditional medicinal plants of Laos as potential sources of new pharmaceuticals. Data on the presence, identity and specific toxicities of plants investigated will be presented.

Keywords: Lao traditional medicinal plants, pharmacopoeia, herbal medicine, toxicity, scientific literature

The Mekong Giant Catfish in the Thai-Lao Culture

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Abstract

The Giant catfish is one type of native animal to the Mekong basin in the Southeast Asia that has long had a lot of important things with Thai and Lao peoples in Mekong River area. *Pa Beuk* or the Mekong Giant catfish is represented in culture and belief had reveal several aspects of the relationship between nature and the supernatural being. The analysis of the symbolic meaning and function of the Mekong Giant catfish in Thai and Lao culture presented in this research paper is based on significant myths, rituals, and certain beliefs; in order to examine the relationship between the Mekong Giant catfish and the Thai-Lao people at the Mekong Border as well as the symbolic meaning of the Mekong Giant catfish in Thai-Lao culture.

The Study finds that the cultures related to the Mekong Giant catfish in Thai-Lao society are largely based on the fish's specific characteristics as a supernatural being have 4 meaning; first, as power of supreme being of water; second, as kingship of Laos; third, as representative of fertility; and fourth, as concerning of the holy and the dharma. The article also analysis the significance of the Mekong Giant catfish as major cultural symbols in particular religious rites. Furthermore, Belief event bring relatives who usually live far away back to the borderland and hence create social network between Thai-Lao. Finally Giant catfish is a symbol of rich natural resources, river, water and fertility of the Thai-Lao Society.

Keywords: Mekong giant catfish, Mekong River, Thai-Lao, culture

The Process of Social Construction of Motherhood in the Context of the Lao Transforming Society: A Case Study of a Woman's Biography

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Abstract

This paper is an analytical study of the experience of a Phuan woman as a mother. The researcher has emphasized analysis of the process of creating motherhood under the structure of Lao and Phuan society. Factors influencing the way of life of Phuan and Lao woman include state policy, Lao society, Phuan society, culture, ceremonies, and beliefs.

Motherhood is constructed through policies, development, and education. The state has a policy of population development and birth control through various projects and education. Phuan motherhood in three generations has changed from traditional motherhood into modern motherhood.

Phuan motherhood is constructed by Phuan society through processes of socialization such as ceremonies and beliefs. Comparing the changes experienced by women over three generations, my grandmother lived the real Phuan way, following the traditional laws of Phuan society, including the way of raising children and traditional gender roles. It was expected of women in both my Grandmother's and my Mother's generation that they should be good wife and good mother as defined by Phuan traditions. These traditions have changed in my generation. The way of mothering and way of life has been increasingly influenced by the outside world.

The construction of motherhood by various institutions under patriarchal societies--Phuan and Lao societies--is a very complex process. This process of motherhood construction aims at controlling women's roles, behavior and bodies.

Keywords: motherhood, Phuan and Lao woman, social construction, socialization

***Le Vessantara Jataka* dans le Contexte Religieux et Artistique Laotien: le Décor Sculpté dans les Temples Bouddhiques de Vientiane et Luang Prabang**

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Ainsi que le soulignait Louis Finot dans les années, le *Vessantara Jataka* est un des textes les plus prisés dans la littérature religieuse bouddhique au Laos. De nombreuses copies de textes pâlis en témoignent à la bibliothèque Nationale de Vientiane en témoignent. Ces derniers constituent un support textuel de récitations donnant lieu à de grandes fêtes en milieu rural et urbain. Illustrant une des dix vertus de la morale bouddhique " la générosité" par le don, cette vie antérieure du Buddha (547^{ème}), elle a de ce fait inspiré un certain nombre de peintures dans le but d'illustrer les lectures, et aussi dans le cadre de décors en reliefs animant l'extérieur du sanctuaire. Notre propos sera donc de voir quels sont les liens entre ces différentes expressions artistiques: peintures, objets rituels et particulièrement le décor sculpté.

Nous étudierons notamment le rôle de la commande royal dans les années soixante dans le cadre de la réalisation de certains décors sculptés réalisés à Luang Prabang et à Vientiane. Afin de renforcer notre propos, nous analyserons, certains décors sculptés de temples de Chiang Mai. Nous verrons comment la vertu du don est un moteur de création artistique.

**Culture Landscape of Communities in Vangvieng District
in the Globalization Context**

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the changes of culture landscape characteristic and situation of communities in Vangvieng district, Vientiane province, Lao People's Democratic Republic in globalization context. Material for discussion was derived from observation and interviews with the local residents in Urban community and Vernacular communities along the national road 13 north in Vangvieng district area. This study illustrates a way to apprehend and compare the settlement patterns, land use, living condition, new culture space formation on local culture space and culture landscape along the banks of Numsong River which is the main river for eco-tourism of the district. This paper utilizes an anthropology of space as a method for observation.

Keywords: culture landscape, Vangvieng, Laos communities, globalization

The Components of Address Terms in the Lao Language

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Abstract

There is a variety of communication modes in the Lao language in order to meet people's needs in society including skills of message creation, message carrier and circumstance. As for this essay will focus on "The Components of Address Terms in Lao". According to the result of the study for the usage of Lao in people's real life, the researcher can notice that the address terms are basics in the beginning of conversation between the communicator and the communicator's partner. The finding of the study reveal that there are nine models/categories of components of address terms in Lao: name, kinship term, title or rank, occupation, position, pronominal word, gender particle, emotive phrase and ending particle.

Keywords: components of address terms, Lao language

Economic Convergence inside Laos?

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Abstract

Recent economic progress in the low-income, transitional economy of Laos has raised concerns over regional disparities among policy makers, academicians, and donor communities, especially between rural and urban economies. To address this important economic issue, this paper investigates recent economic development in Laos, focusing particularly on whether the regional economies inside the country have been converging or diverging. Using household consumption and income data covering 1997 - 2007, convergence was examined in two main regional classifications: rural-urban and administrative regions.

The convergence question was first explored by analyzing economic data of the intangibles—the monetary values of household consumption and income. Then, the results were verified by analyzing data measuring tangible changes that have taken place—the electrification and household ownership of vehicles, mobile phones, refrigerators, and electric rice cookers. There is strong evidence for convergence, contradicting the conventional wisdom as describes in the Khuznets Curve that economic inequality increases as low-income economies grow before it reverses after a certain average income is attained. Whether or not the economic convergence inside Laos will continue to persist as the economy continues to grow over time, the empirical evidence from Laos suggests that the Khuznets Curve only describes a common characteristic of economic development under a certain set of economic policies and is unnecessarily a path that all developing economies must experience. The economic policy significance of this finding is discussed towards the end.

Keywords: regional economics, economic convergence, economic development, economy in transition, Laos

Understanding and Strengthening the Health of Family Businesses in Laos

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Abstract

Small businesses in Laos are defined as having fewer than 20 employees, with total assets not exceeding US\$25,000 and annual turnover not exceeding US\$40,000. More than 90% are family-business and are concentrated in retail, handicrafts and personal services sectors. More than half are female-owned and managed, although baseline information about business and family management are limited. This paper reports on quantitative research aimed at understanding work practices, family issues and impact on education for principally female-owned small family businesses in a range of activities. Most such businesses remain based at or very close to home, with any growth managed by hiring additional family members. Firms were run on traditional lines, while workers were generally low-paid and low-skilled. Management decisions are generally taken by senior family members depending on their existing prejudices and distributing rewards based on relationships, honesty and loyalty. Although family businesses in Laos are still largely disorganized, they play critical roles in creating job opportunities and boosting household income for local residents as well as helping family members to utilize their existing talents, time and resources. In promoting this sector, the Government of Laos has significant roles in developing policies, establishing a relevant governing agency and encouraging training and involvement from the private sectors and from key international organizations.

Keywords: family business, business development, entrepreneur development, Laos

**Southern Laos in the Regional Economy: The Effects of Commercial Agriculture on
Ethnic Groups Livelihood**

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Abstract

In southern Laos, subsistence farming, particularly swidden cultivation, combined with hunting and gathering, remains as a core feature of ethnic-minority livelihoods, despite heavy pressure from the state and the government's relocation policy implementation in an attempt to stabilize or eradicate swidden practice.

The massive changes that have been occurring in southern Laos, includes promotion of large-scale corporate-controlled industrial agriculture, in particular investment from neighboring countries, Vietnam and Thailand, have increased. These dynamics have affected ethnic farmers, whose livelihoods were already in transition as a result of the domestic policies. Large-scale rubber tree plantations have been promoted through state land concessions, driving the ethnic minorities out of their swidden farms, most people in the plantation project areas have lost almost all of their swidden land, thus aggravating land scarcity problem. Their livelihoods have drastically changed. Villagers are increasingly relying on wage labor from foreign rubber companies, earned as laborers on their previously owned lands, to buy rice to consume instead of growing rice for themselves. As a result, some previous landowners have been forced to resettle their families in another province where they can find suitable land to grow rice, a major staple in the diet of people in Laos.

Keywords: commercial agriculture, ethnic, Laos

Thailand-Laos Contract Farming: Some Reflections from the Lao's Farmers

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Abstract

Contract farming between Thailand and Laos has been undertaken within the contexts of regional cooperation of what the so-called ACMECS initiatives. In the case of Champasak and Ubon Ratchathani provinces, the contract agreement is implemented through the establishment of the sister cities policy.

This paper presents the concerns and reflections of the Lao farmers who grow cabbage under cross border contract farming. Based on the field observations, it was found that many farmers had little known about what was about contract farming. They had no chance to participate in the agreed plan with authorities to grow cabbages. They had only been encouraged by the authorities to grow this crop and sold it across the border to the Thai traders. They had to invest more on land, labor and other resources to produce the crop while the economic return was lower. They could not be able to make a plan what was the amount of cabbage they could grow each year. Therefore, the Lao farmers expressed their concerns that cross border contract farming procedures needed to be reviewed.

Keywords: contract farming, Laos, people's livelihoods

The Consumption of Pla-Daek (Fermented Fish) among New Generation of Laotians in Vientiane

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Abstract

The globalization has had a significant impact on Lao economy, society and culture. Foreign investments as well as relentless campaign by international corporations seeking higher volume, wider market and profits have changed the established culture. Traditional ways of consumption in particular has been considerably influenced by such a phenomenon. Even the unique style of eating Pla-Daek (fermented fish), which has been main ingredient of most dishes for centuries, has been reacted differently by the youngsters and seniors.

This research emphasizes the viewpoints on the original and alternative consumption of Pla-Daek by a new generation of Laotians residing in 4 villages of Vientiane City. These villages are Baan Ponpapao, Baan Sihom, Baan Ponpanao and Baan Sisomchuun. What had been found empirically in this study is that the new trend of Pla-Daek consumption among Lao youngsters has been widely recognized by other groups of consumer. This cultural transformation reveals a combination of localization and modernization arisen from the rapid growth of capitalism in the globalization epoch in Lao PDR.

Keywords: globalization, Pla-Daek

Laos Proverbs: Gender Status and the Communication of Cultural Meaning

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Abstract

This paper examines how gender status of men and women is reflected through the use of language in Laos proverbs. Given that culture is constituted from the use of different symbolic resources to communicate different meanings, this study interprets how meaning is hidden in the language wisdom. It was found that not only Laos proverbs could reflect the ethos and culture of the society of which mottos for a living were taught or provided, but they could also communicate the hidden meaning which reflected gender differentials of the society. That is, women are considered as being social inferior in terms of status, role, right, responsibility and power, and they are treated as subaltern group in the patriarchal society. The use of language in this kind of literature was dominated by the patriarchy system which was in turn influenced by different cultural circumstances. Thus, the myth of society is an important condition which impedes efficient self-development in women. The study of proverbs related to the Communication of Cultural Meaning helps bring to light the social thought and culture in the complex and diverse dimensions.

Keywords: proverbs, gender status, cultural meaning, patriarchy

Perspectives on Lao Literary Works: Short Stories

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Abstract

According to content analysis of Lao short stories between 1979-1987 A.D., covering 22 stories. It was found that social change is the most popular theme. Other themes include living condition, economic condition and occupation. Laos being an agrarian society, farm animals are frequently mentioned.

There are 8 points with high frequency of appearance: society (59 percent), living (50 percent), patriotism (50 percent), morality (49 percent), social change (45 percent), parenting (44 percent), occupation (39 percent), and young love (37 percent).

The most common contents are on government, patriotism and society.

Keywords: short story, literary works, literature, content analysis, Lao

**The Formulation of Cooperation Network in Aspects of Education
and Medical Care of University in Laos and University
of the Ryukyus, Japan**

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Abstract

National University of Laos is the only one national university which has 11 faculties covering almost all academic area in Laos. It has received aid or assistance from many developed countries since it is still on a learning curve after it was established through Liberation in 1975 and also Chintanakan Mai (New Thinking) in 1990. Japan helped on setting up centers for human resource development, centered mainly Japanese language teachers and business training, coordinated by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) there.

In this trend, University of the Ryukyus practiced “JICA Public Health Project” which was about prevention from infection of virus, bacteria, and parasite from 1992 October to 1998. As the next step, University of the Ryukyus conducted “JICA Setthathirath Hospital Improvement Project” from 1999 to 2004 and there were many doctors and nurses from Faculty of Medicine of the university to visit Laos while the university invited many doctors from Setthathirath Hospital to transfer medical technology. Addition to those actions, we concluded MOU in 2005 and have promoted research activities in all fields such as medicine, education, engineering and so on.

University of the Health Sciences is the university organized with faculties of medicine and health science which split off from National University of Laos in 2007. Moreover, University of the Ryukyus donated new building of elementary school attached to National University of Laos through Okinawa-Laos Friendship Association in 2009 and now giving a help to enforce the function of the university-attached elementary school. These two universities in Laos are Satellite Office of University of the Ryukyus.

Based on all the experiences mentioned so far, I would like to analyze my theme at the point of view of Global Sociology.

Keywords: cooperation network, education, medical care, university

A Study of 'si?' in Lao
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Abstract

'si?' is a colloquial functional word preceding a main verb in the sentence. Previously, it has been regarded as functional word that indicates the future. However, there are many sentences which are not relevant to the future. The purpose of the study is to find out and indicate the function of 'si?' in Lao.

The study will first describe various sentences which has 'si?' in order to make clear the occurrence of it. The data recognizes that it is not the time marker. 'si?' is not the functional word used to express time directly. There are no occurrences in the sentences expressing the truth. The occurrence of it depends on the modality of the speaker. In other words, it can be said that 'si?' is used when the speaker recognizes that the event is "irrealis". Since the future is not existing yet. In this sense, 'si?' often can be used in the future sentence.

This study concludes with remarks on the semantic property of 'si?', and this semantic property is not inconsistent with the structure of the sentence in Lao.

Keywords: functional word, sentence, semantic property

History of the Modern Health System in Laos

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Abstract

The paper analyses the historical development of the modern health system in Laos. To date there is no history of the Lao health system.

The paper maps out a social, cultural and policy approach to the analysis of health and the development of the health system in Laos during the period 1949-2000. The history of the health system in Laos has been marked by extreme diversity, given the nation's experience of changing foreign influence and domination over the past century. Laos has experienced periods of colonialism, post-colonialism, war, and post-war peaceful economic development. This has involved a number of key international donors who have introduced differing political, cultural and technical approaches to the delivery of health care.

The paper examines the social, cultural and political frameworks of the various periods of external influence, and explores the differing health care models and their supporting ideologies which have been adopted, adapted, discarded and reinvented in Laos during the period 1949-2000.

It questions how the various frameworks have interacted with the delivery of health services, people's health-seeking behavior and health outcomes in Laos, and to what extent political change within the health system has been at the expense of the basic health needs of the Lao population.

Keywords: history, health, Laos

Lao Oral History Archive (LOHA)
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Abstract

The Center for Lao Studies (CLS) is currently launching a Lao Oral History Archive (LOHA), which will document the experiences of Lao refugees in the U.S. through audio and video digital media. CLS will also scan and archive photos and documents directly related to interviewees' involvement or personal loss during the secret war in Laos, their experiences in the refugee camps, and transition in the U.S. Through this project we will also create an on-line public archive, featuring interviews, videos, and historical documents. LOHA has been designed by a team of prominent Lao scholars and Lao-Americans. These experts are intimately familiar with the history and contemporary realities of Lao refugee communities throughout the U.S.

This paper will present ten stories from Lao American families and their life challenges who are currently living in United States, mainly in Minnesota and the San Francisco Bay Area. The presenter will also analyze trends and themes that emerged from the interviews.

Keywords: oral history, Lao diaspora, Lao American, refugees, war

Language and Gender: Final Particles in Lao Isan Language

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Abstract

Final particles are very interesting to study because they make sentences sound more natural and their meanings clearer. Through the usage of final particles, emotions, feelings, politeness, status, and speaker's attitudes towards the listeners are expressed. Failure to use final particles or abusing the use of final particles can create misunderstanding between the speakers and the listeners. This research analyzes final particles in conversational Lao Isan Language used in the Isan region of Thailand. The data were collected from TV dramas, and conversations among native speakers. The syllable structure, the use of final particles, as well as their free variations are discussed. Sociolinguistic concepts, the social factors that influence the selection of usage of these final particles, were also included in the analysis. The study finds that social factors involved in the selection of the usage of final particles are genders of the speakers, the status of the speakers and listeners, the intimacy between the speakers and listeners. Degree of politeness expressed through the usage of final particles is also considered. Other factors that are found to influence the selection of final particles are situations, objectives of verbal communication, feelings, and most of all-sentence modes, which include statements, questions, commands as well as warnings, and requests as well as persuasions. There are free variations in some tones, some initial consonants, and some vowels of final particles.

Keywords: language and gender, Lao Isan language, and final particle

Viengxay as Birthplace of the Lao PDR

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Abstract

Houaphanh Province – located in the mountainous northeast of Laos adjacent to Vietnam – is considered as the cradle of the Lao revolution. During the continuous American air bombing between 1964 and 1973, the leaders of the communist movement hid inside large caves near the town of Viengxay. Here, a few kilometers beyond the provincial capital Sam Neua, a proper cave city with more than 20,000 inhabitants emerged. The revolutionaries built commando centers, warehouses, schools, hospitals and factories inside the karst mountains. After the successful revolution and establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975, the new leaders of the country moved to Vientiane, leaving behind empty administrative buildings and isolated re-education camps.

For at least two decades, Houaphanh Province was a peripheral region with restricted access and shrouded in secrecy. It was not before the relaxing political climate of the 90s and the pragmatic turn of the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party that the province was opened for visitors. The 'hidden city' of Viengxay is now promoted as a promising tourism destination. In particular, domestic tourism is rapidly increasing and Lao people from all over the country visit the so-called 'Birthplace of the Lao PDR'.

In my presentation, I would like to explore the role of Viengxay as one of the most important lieux de mémoire of present-day Laos. Revolutionary memory is still an important element of official Lao commemorative politics.

The liberation struggle of the 'Lao multi-ethnic people' is the leitmotif of contemporary Lao historiography. Viengxay stands emblematically for the constant struggle of a small country against foreign aggressors and for inter-ethnic solidarity. Thus, the former cave city is predisposed as a historical showcase for both Lao and foreign visitors. Since the tourism sector is a target of international development aid, economic and ideological interests overlap in Viengxay. Moreover, recent tendencies such as the inauguration of a Buddhist temple and the construction of a monument for late president Kaysone Phomvihane illustrate the mechanisms of turning Viengxay into an upland counterpart of the political and cultural center Vientiane. The interplay between center and periphery in the domains of Lao nation-building, legitimization politics, and development will be discussed in this context.

Keywords: Viengxay, caves, Second Indochina War, Lao People's Revolutionary Party, history, memory, tourism

State Land Lease and Concession Inventory in Lao PDR
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Abstract

Recently, the Lao government has opened its doors to foreign investment in land, a type of investment that is known as state land concessions. In the past, no body of government recorded statistics related to land concessions and thus it was difficult to know how projects had been implemented. Therefore, the government created the National Land Management Authority (NLMA) to be the central regulatory body related to land investment.

This study is aimed at collecting data related to state land leases and concessions from line agencies at central and local levels in Laos. It also intends to assess social, economic, environmental, and legal impacts. In addition to summarizing data from different agencies, the study team has also directly visited the concession area of every project in order to observe the progress and impact of projects and try to produce concession boundaries for each project by using GPS. This study has been ongoing since late 2008 by started in Vientiane province as a pilot project and then continuing to Luangnamtha, Xayabouri and Luangprabang provinces. Now, the teams are working in Chamapsak and Saravan provinces and will have completed its work throughout the whole country by the end of this year.

The result of this study will show the statistics of state land leases and concession in Laos, industrial tree plantation investment pattern in Laos, case studies on social, economic, environment, legal and implementation in different provinces, and recommendations to the government.

Keywords: land lease, land concession and industrial tree plantation pattern

The Thein Legend
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Abstract

Back ground of the legend

The Thein legend is an oral literature told amongst the Lao ethnic people in the ancient days. Whence I was a little boy about 60 years ago, I used to be told the legend by many old people especially my grandfather Bounma who was about 50 years of age at that time. Since then, the time passed by, I did not pay attention to this legend. Recently, one day in April 2005, I noticed a stone artifact in the Lao National Museum in Vientiane capital city of Laos that reminded me about the legend I was told before. From that day, I began studying about the artifacts similar to the one I saw in the National Museum in Vientiane, e.g. the stone artifacts from the Phou Khao Leep Mountain in Laungprabang Province, the star ceramic from Ban Chiang, the bronze drums. I found that most of the artifacts made by the ancient Lao people about 3000 years ago related to the Thein legend. From my study I had written this Thein legend for discussion.

The context of the legend

Long time ago, there was a Thein world in the heaven that the king of the Thein called Phangathein who ruled his heaven kingdom happily. One day the Phangathein sent some of his Thein people to settle on earth. The Thein people who descent from the heaven and had settled on earth became laymen without any magic from the heaven they used to have before. When they live in the heaven, they had their mystical body (invisible body) that they can live without any material product, but automatically satisfying their happiness life as they desired.

The Thein people who had their settlement on earth, then became the Lao ancestors up to now. The Lao ancestors had to earn their living as laymen, e.g. collecting forestry products, digging and plowing the soil for growing rice, fruit trees for their food. At the beginning period of their settlement, human can go to the thein world (the heaven) by climbing up along the Keua Khao Khad (meritorious vine), bridging between the earth and heaven to report to the Thein king and ask somethings they need for their living on earth. The Phangathein gave them many things they asked, but later he ordered to cut the meritorious vine for preventing human climbing up to the Thein world, because some lazy people climbed up too often and asked for too many things they unnecessarily desired.

Since the meritorious vine was cut, human can not go to the Thein world again. They have to perform some activities for worship the Phangathein in order to get some help, e.g. asking for rain fall, for getting rid of disease. They also devised some artifacts for their worship ceremony, e.g. the stone artifacts at the Phou Khao Leep mountain, the bronze drums discovered in many places, the star ceramic at Ban Chiang. Up to now some activities concerning the Thein worship are still performed, e.g. rocket festival in some areas, Phifa praying (lam song Phifa) for getting rid of disease in rural areas. The Lao ancestors believed that their sole would go back to the Thein world after death, if they had performed goodness and avoided guilt while living on earth. From this belief the Lao ancestors tried to do goodness and avoided guilt for the purpose of going back to the heaven after death. This belief has much influence to the culture and civilization of the Lao ethnic people.

Keywords: Thein Legend, myth, literature, Lao

Lao Traditional Law in Lao Studies

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Abstract

This paper surveys the studies of Lao traditional law in Lao, Thai, and English languages. The details of the survey include the primary sources of Lao traditional law, the academic works, their authors, and methodologies. The analysis of Lao traditional law in the context of Lao studies is done to estimate the significant of this important Lao heritage.

Keywords: Lao traditional law

**Impacts of Recent Rubber Investment on Land Tenure and Livelihoods:
a Case Study from Oudomxai Province, Laos**

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Abstract

Land use rights in Laos for agricultural and forest lands have been allocated by the state to rural villages and local households through the Land and Forest Allocation procedures, and to private sector business investors (both foreign and domestic) through concession agreements and various forms of “cooperative” lease arrangement. Over the last decade, the relationship between these approaches to land allocation has increasingly raised questions about the impacts of private sector agribusiness investment on rural livelihoods and associated issues relating to the tenure security of rural households. The rapid increase in the development of rubber plantations in recent years has played a special role in this debate. This study examines the broad transition from rural village and household-oriented land allocation to land allocation oriented toward foreign investors. The research is based on interviews and the review of documentary evidence collected in 2007 and 2008 in Oudomxai Province, where allocation of agricultural and forest land to villages and households took place in the late 1990s, and where rubber plantation development is currently occurring at a rapid pace using a variety of approaches.

Keywords: rubber, foreign investment, land tenure, livelihood change, Laos

Ksingmun: Ethnic and Language
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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to introduce about the Ksingmun Ethnic and its language which is one of the 49 Ethnics in Lao PDR. There are two main parts of this research. The first part is introduced the background of Ksingmun ethnic; the second outlined its Language.

The first part will be talked about the location, its population, its social life that involve the respect of their relations, its life style, and also its house style. The second part will be pointed out the characteristics of the Ksingmun language by generally describing the systems of its phonology, morphology and syntax.

Keywords: Ksingmun language, ethnic, Lao PDR

**Transnational Community, Boundary and Belonging:
A Study of Lao Migrants in Thailand**
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Abstract

Based on an ongoing multi-sited ethnographic research in Lao PDR and Thailand, this research explores and analyses the ways transnational migrant workers from Lao PDR to Thailand construct transnational community. Transnational migrants from Lao PDR, though living in the boundary of the Thai state, belong to their home community in Lao PDR socially, culturally and economically. Even though they lived and worked far away from home, the idea of community generates a sense of belonging across physical national border. This sense of belonging generates a boundary, which informs its Lao members that they are similar, and at the same time, different from Thais. For Lao workers working in Thailand, national identity has more meaning to them than ethnic identity. Migrants' transnational ties with their community of origin fortify their group boundary within Thailand and across national border. Thai state's policy on undocumented cross-border migrants hinders the assimilation of Lao migrants with Thai society, which strengthens the boundary and in turn reinforce transnational ties of Lao migrants with their home communities.

Keywords: transnational migration, transnational community, border, boundary, belonging, Lao PDR, Thailand

**Nation Building Process in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR),
1975-1991**

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Abstract

This research was influenced by the premise that despite other nations adapting capitalism as their guiding ideology in nation building, Laos has still maintained socialism as her guiding ideology in nation building. The development of socialism in the Lao PDR is an example of nation building, which truly understands the internal problems of her country and searches for a way to create peace for her citizens. Nation building is a daunting endeavor for any nation in the world whether developed or underdeveloped. It is even worse in the case of developing countries, which have experienced different philosophies or ideologies of governance.

Although there is plenty of published literature on nation building in developing countries, there is limited published literature on nation building on the Lao PDR. The French from 1893 to 1949 colonized this nation like many other colonized nations. The Indochina war further constrained the development of Lao PDR. As a small land-locked country which was a French protectorate up to 1949, Laos was least favored and has undergone through different political ideologies under the influence of America, Laos partially embraced capitalism up to 1975 when it firmly shifted to communism through Russia and China's influence. Under this backdrop, this paper will investigate the different political ideologies that have influenced the process of nation building in the Lao People's Democratic Republic from 1975 to 1991.

Keywords: Laos: history and politic, 1975-1991, nation-building

Is a Financial Subsidy a Form of Power?

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Abstract

A financial subsidy for the poor or developing countries is often considered as a “spray of oxygen” economically speaking at a first glance. But when we analyse it from a strategic point of view of transformation, isn't this subsidy a way to acquire some kind of power in a country such as Laos? What would be the danger for the country that receives it? What is the donor country looking for by helping?

To illustrate the above, we are using the case study of the Province of Khammouane in the centre part of Laos and the Region of Rhône Alpe in France.

A financial subsidy is a force of transformation but it is also a form of intervention in some cases involuntarily. It has its rules and “tempo”. Moreover, its aims are not acceptable in all cases, depending on which side of the fence one stands.

Its application is not clear right at the beginning, neither is it explicit to the multiple actors. Because each partner has his own vision and various operational modes of function, at times very different from one another.

Keywords: financial subsidy, power, fair trade, solidarity, trust

Revitalization of Folktales and Storytelling Traditions by Young People

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Abstract

This research on Revitalization of Folktales and Storytelling Traditions by Young People is derived from an ongoing cultural preservation project supported by a grant from the Western Languages and Linguistics Department, Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty, Mahasarakham University. The objectives of the research are threefold: to encourage young people to take an active role in the preservation and revitalization of folktales and storytelling traditions; to encourage young people to realize the significance of folktales and storytellers in their communities; finally, to train young people to collect, select, adapt, and tell stories. The research duration was between July and September 2009 and the research sites covered three secondary schools and one elementary school, namely, Nachuek Phitthayasan, Wiangwongkot-witthayakhom school, Sakonrajwitthayanukun school, and Anuban Nongkhai.

The subjects of the research are 20-50 students and 1-5 teachers from each of the school plus 43 university students registered in the course entitled, "Independent Study in Literature (Folktales and Storytelling) as research assistants. The researcher and the assistants visited schools twice: the first time to give a workshop on the folktales and how to collect them; the second visit to give a workshop on adaptation of folktales for telling and how to bring the students' folktales to life using story-theater style. In each visit, one to 20 university students joined the visit, to lead the school students in all activities. After the first visit, the school students went to their communities to search for traditional storytellers and interview them. Each student was asked to interview at least one storyteller. In the second workshop, the students learned how to select and adapt folktales into a story-theater as well as presenting their stories in story-theater style. The results of the research were most satisfying. The 308 students were able to identify 117 storytellers, collect 154 folktales of 14 folktale types, and 20 were adapted and performed. The research project is successful as it achieved the three objectives: one, young students took active roles in collecting stories from their elders; two, the young people realized the significance of folktales and storytelling tradition as evident in the numbers of stories they collected; three, the young people were able to collect folktales, to select appropriate stories, to adapt them for telling, and to tell the stories in lively styles.

Keywords: storytelling traditions, folktale

The Human Security after a Great Transformation Functions of Community-groups in Rural Northeast Thailand

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Abstract

This research aims to examine how people in rural northeast Thailand, particularly landless farmers, have coped with and survived market-economy penetration. I call attention specifically to the formations of community-groups.

Landless farmers have greatly increased since 1970s, as a result of the population increase, disappearance of frontiers and the continued practice of equal division of land among the inheritors. Additionally, the highly labour-saving urban formal sector has failed to absorb these “surplus” labours, leaving most of them surviving in rural areas. In the mean time, the economic boom of the early 90s accelerated the penetration of market economy into the rural area where these landless farmers decisively lack the means – cash income – of procuring goods and services. Thus, how to secure access to goods and services has become a critical issue.

My observations in one village in Khon Kaen Province reveal that the villagers since the 1990s have organized over 15 community-groups such as “community-bank” or “community-market” as an important means to supplement the lack of cash income. These groups often help the villagers reduce the transaction costs when they access the market.

By focusing on the workings of social relationship called “Yart-Sanit” or “close relatives”, this presentation evaluates: 1) how they turn conventional social relations into community-groups; 2) the degree to which the community-groups help reduce the cost of procuring goods and services for the villagers; and 3) who can and who cannot benefit from this extra market factor. Throughout this presentation, I would like to demonstrate an important issue regarding human security which has much in common with other regions in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: human security, northeast Thailand, landless farmers, community-groups

The Naga in Lao-Tai Textile
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Abstract

Lao textile has been well-known amongst the scholars and researchers for many years. Especially Lao-Tai textile has the pattern of the big Naga snake which is attractive and outstanding. The primary objective of this presentation is to discuss on the Naga in Lao - Tai Textile. A common design is the Naga which is related to Lao people's belief. Naga is considered as an affinitive animal to Buddhism and a big snake which realizes responsibility, good and bad, as well as we human beings do.

The Naga also has an influence on Lao people's imagination and takes a role in the myth and history of the Lao people. In the history of Lang Xang kingdom or "Phongsavadan", the Naga was the creator of Vientiane city. Therefore, the design of the Naga often appears in Buddhist religious belief and the artistic works.

This presentation focuses on only the textile of Lao-Tai group people as they are well-known as a skilled weaver in expressing the Naga in their textile. In this presentation, I will first narrow Lao belief, literature and Buddhism related to Naga. In the second part, I will demonstrate many kinds of motifs of Lao textiles which focus on the variety of the Naga's 28 designs. Finally, I will discuss some of the traditional motif of the Naga textile which is disappearing due to the historical and economic impacts.

Keywords: Lao-Tai groups, textile, art

**Rubber Investments and Market Linkages in Lao PDR:
Approaches for Sustainability**
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Abstract

Lao PDR is experiencing a rapid and largely uncontrolled expansion of rubber cultivation, largely due to growth in demand for rubber from China and Vietnam. Some industry experts predict that the area of rubber plantations in Lao will grow to some 300,000 hectares by 2020, if not before.

This study is the result of collaborative research undertaken by IUCN Lao PDR with NERI and other partners in Lao PDR, China, Thailand and Vietnam, with support from Sumernet. It aims to better understand the scale, scope and linkages of investments in rubber in Lao PDR, as well as explore approaches for the more sustainable development of rubber. Using desk studies and fieldwork, this study examines the investment trends, market linkages and business models that are driving rubber development.

This study shows that the Lao rubber sector is closely linked to the rubber sectors of China and Vietnam, with financing, technology and marketing, as well as demand being supplied by these countries. These investors thus have important influence over the trajectory of rubber development in Lao PDR. The investment and business models utilized in the Lao rubber sector, face similar challenges in ensuring that rubber leads to positive and sustainable outcomes for the Lao people. Unless challenges related to land alienation, benefit-sharing, labour supply, food security and environmental protection are addressed, the disadvantages may outweigh the benefits of rubber cultivation in Lao PDR.

Keywords: rubber, foreign investment, sustainability, Lao PDR

Challenges of Economic Stress on Chinese Entrepreneurs and Their Families in Laos

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Abstract

The Chinese are increasing in number in Laos as new inter-governmental agreements permit labour migration for infrastructure development. Entrepreneurs have been accompanying migrants and establishing their own businesses, alongside the long-standing businesses established over the years by ethnic Chinese in the country. Many industrial sectors are involved. Problems that Chinese entrepreneurs face include language issues and discrimination, as well as lack of business infrastructure and support services. Additionally, Lao consumers are primarily motivated by price alone and have little interest in exploring new brands or products. While these business management related issues are clear, what is not clear is the impact that conducting business on such a basis has on additional family members, who are also commonly employed within the business.

Key informants were Chinese entrepreneurs and their family members in the capital city of Vientiane and they were interviewed personally with a view to understanding what stresses there may be on family members doing business in an environment which is not entirely friendly or welcoming, especially under conditions of global economic crisis. Competition is intensifying as increasing numbers of Thai and Vietnamese entrepreneurs are seeking to establish a foothold in the Lao market. Many Chinese entrepreneurs have, as a result of these changing conditions, been forced to offer better deals for customers, thereby restricting profits. This has had a follow-through effect on family members.

Keywords: economic stress, Chinese entrepreneurs, Laos

Mind Sustainable Development
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Abstract

The sustainable development is the world policy which mostly pays attention directly to local communities. Sustainable development is supposed to support good quality of local people's life, generating income, good local governance, and mindful of the environment. The latest solutions for solving various problems in the present days, creates more doubts than answers. All methods are important, but the most important of all should be focused on the heart and mind. The mind is the center and starting point of every action. The mind is the base of sustainable development. A healthy mind leads to good quality of life.

Rural communities at Sakhon Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom Provinces support these hypotheses. Meaning of mind sustainable is authentic carried through Heed Sib Song (12 rituals), rice field activities; mutual assistance between families and classmates, and engaged in communities daily life such like eating meals together, offering merit to monks at early morning. These behaviors are explained by psychology phenomena; togetherness, self-perception, social loafing, openness, companionate, love, co-actors and archetype as collective unconscious as the indicators of psyche balancing of local people who express the happiness from inner of their mind, strengthen sustainable life.

Keywords: mind sustainable development, behavior, collective, unconscious, inner self

A “Lao” Princess in the Siamese Court: Princess Dara Rasami and Siamese Perceptions of Lao and Lan Na Identity

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Abstract

Within a growing scholarship on Asian “palace women,” my research focuses upon a figure who embodied “Lao” ethnic identity within the Siamese palace from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries: Chao Dara Rasami of Chiang Mai. As a consort to Siam’s king Rama V (Chulalongkorn), Dara Rasami played a critical part in cementing relations between her home kingdom, Lan Na, and Siam. Siamese descriptions of Dara Rasami and her entourage as “Chao Lao” are problematic, however, as they do not differentiate between Lan Na and Lao identities. What were the markers of Dara Rasami’s ethnic difference, and to what extent should her identity be considered “Lao” versus “Lan Na”? What historical connections between Lan Na and Lao cultures did Dara Rasami embody?

Keywords: Lan Na, Lao, palace women, ethnic identity

Mekong to Mississippi: Achieving Lao Socio-Cultural Sustainability in Southwestern Louisiana through Urban Design

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Abstract

Maintaining cultural identity in the face of globalization and mainstream cultural assimilation proves challenging for second-generation Lao immigrants in America. The changing urban landscape and everyday demands of post-modern society exacerbate the abandonment of traditional Lao socio-cultural bonds which promote an ethnic Lao immigrant identity. In their 30-year history in Iberia Parish, Louisiana, Lao immigrants have continually reasserted identity through various social, economic, and cultural modes connected to a set of embedded relations or ecologies.

A unique set of adapted spatial typologies which reinforced Lao village culture and social networks on multiple scales emerged from the translation of the ecologies. The basis for analysis includes: previous papers written on this community and the author's own testimony as a 1.5 generation immigrant reared within the Louisiana Lao diaspora—all sources re-seen through the lens of architectural and urban design theory. Mappings, diagrams, and photo-montages help explain the cultural shifts and consciousness of one generation to the next. As the next step for retaining the community's collective cultural memory, the author proposes a design framework for producing a new set of adapted typologies which meet the challenges of cultural sustainability in the 21st century.

Keywords: urban patterns; socio-cultural sustainability; rural ecologies; architectural prosthetics, ecological framework, second-generation immigrant adaptation

Contextual Tonal Variations in Vientiane Lao

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Abstract

This study examines acoustic variations of lexical tones in Vientiane Lao under the influence of different tonal contexts. All 25 possible bi-tonal sequences emerging from the five lexical tones in Lao are recorded and their time course of fundamental frequency (F0) contours are measured. By examining the patterns of the F0 contours, this study explores the direction and the nature of contextual tonal variations in Lao: That is, it is discussed whether Lao tones are more influenced by preceding tones (carry-over effects) or by following tones (anticipatory effects), and whether these effects are assimilatory or dissimilatory.

The results of this study indicate that the patterns of contextual tonal variations in Lao mostly agree with the patterns in other tone languages. Concerning the directionality, carry-over effects are greater in magnitude than anticipatory effects. Concerning the nature of the effects, carry-over effects are assimilatory, the onset of the F0 contour of a tone is high when preceded by a tone with a high offset, and is low when preceded by a tone with a low offset. On the other hand, anticipatory effects are mostly dissimilatory in nature: The offset of the F0 contour of a tone is low when followed by a tone with a high F0 value, and is high when preceded by a tone without a high F0 value.

Keywords: Lao, tone, F0 contour, contextual variation

The Lao Literature “Rama Story” in Mural Painting in Isan, Thailand

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at identifying the work of local literature depicted in the mural paintings on the outside of the *sima* at two central Isan temples. Both Wat Sa Bua Kaeo in Khon Kaen and Wat Pa Rerai in Mahasarakham depict a local Lao version of the Rama epic. The issue here is whether the literary work depicted is the Phra Lam Chadok or the Phra Lak Phra Lam.

The study includes information from previous research, literature, and field work for a comparative analysis of the literature and the paintings.

The results of the research indicate that at both *wats*, the story depicted is the Phra Lam Chadok and not the Phra Lak Phra Lam. Even though the two versions of the story are very similar, there are differences in the content that can be seen in the murals.

Keywords: Isan murals, Lao literature, Phra Lam Chadok, Phra Lak Phra Lam