

# Research Agenda for the Lao People's Democratic Republic

Geoffrey C. Gunn

## Abstract

*It has to be said that just as Laos is one of the least developed countries of Southeast Asia, a product of war and revolution as much colonial neglect, it is also one of the least studied countries. The purpose of this article is two-fold. First, to sketch the broad lines of the development problem facing Laos under the stewardship of the People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and, second, to reach some understanding of the actual state of social science research on Laos. Looking to the future, the article also offers certain speculations as to the priorities for a research agenda on this country, especially given the looming ecological crisis confronting this profoundly polyethnic society as it joins the growth economies of the region, albeit on unequal terms.*

It is fair to say that, as the millennium draws to a close, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) has survived. It not only prevailed by force majeure over its rivals in the former Kingdom of Laos, but has survived the threats of armed resistance from a variety of disaffected individuals and groups who openly challenged the legitimacy of the new order through the 1970s and 1980s, it has survived the radical Khmer Rouge which formerly ruled Democratic Kampuchea, and it has survived the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In other

words, twenty years or so onwards, the revolution has been institutionalised. An entire school generation has grown up under the LPDR flag, singing the LPDR anthem, learning its slogans, enduring its austerities, and ostensibly offering its support. How was this possible?

The answers are complex but have much to do with the ability of the ruling party to win international legitimacy from the West as much as from its erstwhile socialist backers. Yet, its legitimacy in the eyes of its anti-communist ASEAN neighbours was always much more suspect. The history of Thai-Lao relations was illustrative in this sense. Notably beginning with bans on the export of “strategic” goods (1975–89), to border closures (1976–77, June–August 1980, January–February 1981), and to outright border war (1987–88). It is not the same as saying that the ASEAN countries saw to overthrow the regime, but there is no question that Vientiane was long treated in the ASEAN capitals as some kind of Southeast Asian pariah. Not even Laos’s embrace of the New Economic Mechanism changed this attitude, rather it was the sea change wrought by diplomatic negotiations over the Cambodian question, particularly under Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan that offered the olive branch to the LPDR. The Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia of September 1991, the disaggregation of Hanoi’s Indochina Federation, and the emergence of more sovereign and Western-tending regimes in both Vientiane and Phnom Penh, must be seen as the essential watershed in the two-decade history of the LPDR. The symbolism of the so called Mittaphab or Friendship Bridge spanning the Mekong seems to say it all. Commenced in November 1991, and financed by Australian aid money, the Bridge was officially opened in April 1994, albeit, not without many official and unofficial reservations as to what kind of “pollution” the new communication link would facilitate.

But, with Vientiane poised to follow Vietnam as a member of ASEAN in its own right, the questions that must now be asked about Laos—indeed, a crisis that will inevitably be confronted by the regime—concerns the survival of the communist party in Laos as we know it, and, indeed, the survival of Laos as we know it; that is a country occupying a specific “historical-ecological” niche in Southeast Asia, which, despite the ravages of US bombing and the scars of war, has managed to survive into the late twentieth century as a treasure trove of cultures and little societies.

The first question (or crisis), then, suggests an agenda of research and inquiry as to political participation in Laos, namely as to whether the LPRP can maintain its political hegemony indefinitely and, *pace* China and Vietnam, whether, the kinds of economic changes that the regime wishes to introduce will also have consequences for the political aspirations of people hitherto outside the formal decision-making process? In other words, have new “strategic” classes and groups emerged in Laos as a consequence of the revival of the market system, as seems to have been the case in Vietnam? What then are the limits to political tolerance and dissent in Laos? How will the age-old question of minority participation be mediated? How does Laos answer its Western critics as to human rights infringements? Do the old socialist slogans still have relevance in the present conjuncture? How will the Party seek to mediate the new information media? Will Laos’s accession to ASEAN offer yet another shield against the bogey of outside interference? Or, will Laos embrace under ASEAN tutelage another variant of military-guided authoritarianism? Indeed, will the kind of political authoritarianism embraced by the ruling party invite unwanted comparisons with the Kingdom of Laos or, more likely, with neighbouring Thailand, which at this writing appears to have shaken of its military-dominated

political system? We can summarise this subset of questions as those concerning political and human rights. This kind of conceptualisation calls down a range of enquiry that literally embraces the social sciences.

The second question, already a crisis, concerns the man–nature equilibrium. This discussion centres on the relationship between development and environment. While, under the Kingdom of Laos, a form of rentier economy emerged based upon the recycling of aid largesse derived from the American presence, development was a restricted concept. While the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the battles that beset the communist and anti–communist forces in the Plain of Jars wreaked a special kind of ecological destruction, in some cases even deliberate, those parts of the country under the control of the Kingdom actually suffered a kind of de–development. To some extent the restoration of peace and the stewardship by the LPRP reversed development priorities. Agriculture and the drive to cooperativization took priority. But so did the tendency of the state, especially hostage to Soviet bloc models along with advisers, to increase extraction. This often took the form of agricultural or forest product deliveries. Economic rehabilitation and recovery took precedence over ecological balance, much less “sustainable” development. The penchant for big projects (the Ngam Ngum dam), already set in train in the pre–1975 period, met with approval under socialist planning. Today it is the role of the Lao military in the logging business in central Laos astride the main road linking Thailand with Vietnam, that merits attention, not only for its management of this resource but the way the military have emerged—as in some other Southeast Asian states—as economic brokers and beneficiaries in their own right. The military–managed Mountainous Area Development Company headed by the French–trained Major–General Cheng Saygnavong,

and which answers directly to the prime minister, is the key business unit in this respect.<sup>1)</sup>

There is not then much in the World Bank reports dating from this era on the environmental problems raised by macro-economic planning. In fact, the LPDR distinguishes itself for much of this fifteen year period as being impervious to the attentions of independent researchers. While it is true that the "Vietnam War" syndrome, ended much official patronage for research on Indochina, relegating Indochinese studies in the West to a kind of academic backwater, it is also the case that bona fide and even well intentioned journalists were simply denied visas or otherwise made to feel unwelcome. Again, while such security concerns may have been legitimate, the result is a staggering dearth of independent scholarship on post-1975 Laos. Neither did the think-tanks and universities of the ASEAN countries offer tangible support for Laos studies. The production of official and semi-official Embassy and agency reports hardly makes up for this lacunae. Neither did the emergence in the late 1985 of an official National Institute for Social Sciences alongside other official institutes under the umbrella of either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism entirely remedy the research needs of outsiders, much less those inside the country. In any case, the social science institute was closed down in 1992 after a flurry of activity which also saw Laos make first contacts with Western researchers and merged with the present Institute on Research and Culture under the Ministry of Information and Culture.

Undoubtedly, the opening to the West and the solicitation of foreign investment has radically altered development priorities, but also highlighted Laos' vulnerability at the hands of outsiders. Bigger projects are on the drawing boards. Laos, perhaps along with Myanmar, is now seen as the last

eldorado, or at least the last frontier through which ASEAN-style economic triumphalism has yet to penetrate. Land-locked Laos will, in this vision, be reborn, as the hub of a new pan-Asian communication link, connecting China with Southeast Asia, Thailand with Vietnam. For energy starved Thailand, hydroelectricity generated from Laos will be a natural. With Thailand and even Vietnam ratcheting up the economic scale, Laos (along with Myanmar) will remain the last Southeast Asian labour reserve and marketplace. An example is the December 1994 UNDP-sponsored "run-of-river" hydropower study which recommended that the world's tenth longest river—the Mekong—be transformed into a staircase of reservoirs. Some 500 miles of the Mekong would be converted from a free flowing river to a slack water reservoir. The project proposes 100 major dams. Obviously the displacement of people along with the marine environment envisaged by this project would be enormous. Additionally another seven or eight hydro-electric projects are slated for tributaries of the Mekong in Khammouane and Attopeu provinces in the south and southeast. In any case, as Chapman and Hinton have written in an overview of the consequences of recent dam construction in the upper Mekong in China and in Laos, both the Chinese and Lao authorities, along with commercial interests concerned, have been reticent about publicising their intentions. The reason; the politics of international environmentalism.<sup>2)</sup> Clearly, much responsibility rests with the work of the ill-starred but reactivated Mekong Secretariat of Interim Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the lower Mekong Basin.

While, in the past, ADB projects ran from shifting cultivation stabilization, to small-scale community-managed irrigation, to primary health care, from around 1992, as Chapman has flagged, the ABB emerged as a "self-ap-

pointed supra-national development broker for the Mekong basin". In part he is referring to the role of the ADB, along with the UNDP, and other international agencies in pushing "Economic Quadrangle" discussions between China, Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, especially over transport corridors in the upper Mekong. While the development and environmental consequences of this initiative is great, Chapman also warns that owing to Laos' marginal economic power alongside China and Thailand, the potential for economic conflict, as much cooperation, already exists.<sup>3)</sup> In any case, to restore perspective, there is much more room in Laos for community or village-level interventions, especially in consideration of the palpably widening gap between rural and urban incomes. This is all the more apparent when one considers the bare statistics, notably the fact that half the population live below a poverty line set at US\$12 of income or goods a month, that average life expectancy is 51 years, and that nearly half the children under five suffer stunted growth from chronic malnutrition. In this respect the activities of many of the fifty or so NGOs currently active inside Laos are salutary.<sup>4)</sup>

Clearly, the ecological and human consequences of these massive transformations have to be carefully studied. Is it enough to accept the bland assurances of government planners or international agencies? Too often, and the examples from around the world are numerous, the answer is no. But, in a country like Laos, where civil society is ground down or non-existent, where an academic tradition is but a memory, where an independent press does not exist, who will blow the whistle on administrative malfeasance in a system where the state can do know wrong? Education is part of the answer. But if it is only education to move up the consumption chain a la the ASEAN countries, then the priorities might be wrong. The

establishment of a UNESCO-sponsored chair in environmental education in the University of Hanoi, is a move that could also be followed by Laos when its own National University opens its doors.

But the trends are contradictory. Contra the claims of those supporting a version of “constructive engagement” with Vientiane from within ASEAN, Japan, and even such Western countries as Australia, the “new thinking” or shift to the market has not demonstrably brought with it any appreciable political opening. True, there has been a dramatic shift in leadership away from the revolutionary generation to a younger more technocratic generation. With the passing in recent years of Premier Kaysone Phomvihane (died, November 1992), Phoumi Vongvichit (died January 1994), Phoune Siphaseut (died 1994), and Prince Souphanouvong (died January 1995), Nouhak Phoumsavanh, who assumed the Presidency, remains the last of the old guard, and last of the Lao rebels against French colonialism who formed the first resistance government in August 1950.

Yet, in the run up to the landmark sixth party congress, real power remained in the hands of Prime Minister and economic boss, Khamtay Siphandone, who also serves as general-secretary of the LPRP, and veteran Pathet Lao fighter, Choummaly Sayasone, commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Some speculated that the Party would seek to reinvent itself as some kind of authoritarian-nationalist version of Indonesia's Golkar or Burma's Union Solidarity and Development Association, but that prediction proved premature.<sup>5)</sup> In fact, conservatives tightened their grip. Khamtay was reconfirmed as general-secretary of the party and the logical choice to replace the ageing Nouhak as president, leaving the prime ministership open to Choummaly Sayasone, representing the conservative faction. Loser in the reshuffle was pro-reform Deputy Prime Minister Khamphoui



Keoboulapha, and head of the former powerful State committee for Planning and Cooperation, dumped from the central committee and the politburo. While Khamphoui will retain his cabinet position, foreign investments will now be overseen by a newly created State Planning Committee. Yet, in all this, we have not seen in Laos a complete generational change from those revolutionaries who owed their loyalties to Hanoi via the old Indochinese Communist Party, to a younger group which for convenience might be labelled technocrats. To the contrary, many of the younger generation owe their careers to their revolutionary credentials and backgrounds. Nevertheless, it would seem, the problems of running a more complex market economy, not to mention the kind of skills required to navigate the ASEAN landscape, will necessarily impel change on its own terms. This being the case, we cannot preclude some turbulence as pressures build up between reformists, or those who would argue that the risk of further pursuing the economic opening is one that must be borne, and the conservatives, who would argue that a further opening would not only endanger national sovereignty but would also imperil Party hegemony. This crossing of, or at least, blurring of lines, as it were, is no way better demonstrated than by the rise of Kaysone's son, Saysomphone Phomvihane, promoted in 1995 from governor of Savannakhet province to Finance Minister replacing Khamxay Souphanouvong, eldest surviving son of the former president, who became minister in the Prime Minister's office.

Objectively, the LPDR remains a one party state. Unlike even the case of Vietnam as US State Department reports unfailingly point out,<sup>6)</sup> the party's leadership imposes broad controls on Laos's (1995 figures) 4.5 million people. Even with the adoption of the constitution in 1991, National Assembly elections in December 1992, and a government reorganisation in

February 1993, there has been very little easing of restrictions on basic freedoms. The right to privacy and the right of citizens to change their government are absent. Jail conditions remain harsh especially for those accused of hostility to the regime. Certainly that has been the lot of three former government officials arrested in 1990 for advocating a multiparty system and criticising restrictions on political liberties. While it is understood that the mass "reeducation camps" of the 1970s and 1980s have been emptied, new arrests, trials, and convictions are frequently not announced, and it is impossible to determine exactly the number of remaining political prisoners. It was only in 1993 that the government began publishing an official gazette providing for a systematic means for disseminating laws, decrees and regulations. Not surprisingly, newspapers, radio, and television, are "instruments of the Government, reflecting its views", although to be sure Thai radio and television has always attracted a huge audience in Laos. Academic freedom, the report continues, "remains tightly controlled", while the government "restricts and monitors the activities of Western scholars doing research in Laos". The government attitude to the minorities of Laos is still basically integrationist and minorities are underrepresented at the elite level, although women's lot may be better, at least in terms of representation in government. A labour code exists but is not effectively enforced. While Laos is not unique in the way it seeks to control the activities of its citizens, and indeed, some of this also applies to some ASEAN countries, the question would also have to be asked, is this socialism even by its own criteria, as it certainly is not democracy? True, also that in recent years, restrictions on Buddhist religious gatherings has been eased and Buddhist religion and ceremonies respected, restrictions on foreign travel eased, and access for overseas Lao facilitated (with the excep-

tion of some thirty persons associated with the old regime and convicted in absentia).

## Research in the Balance

That Laos is one of the least studied countries of Asia is something of a cliché, although to be sure that wasn't always so. In any case Laos is moderately well served by bibliographical studies. While Pierre-Bernard Lafont's *Bibliographie du Laos (1964-78)*<sup>7)</sup> is undoubtedly the most comprehensive bibliography on Laos and a starting point for research on Laos, it is complete only up until 1975. The three major bibliographies on Laos have been published in the post-1975 period; namely Keyes, 1979<sup>8)</sup>; Sage and Henchy, 1986<sup>9)</sup>; and Cordell, 1991<sup>10)</sup>; have gone far in providing ready compendium on the state of knowledge in Laos. The latter, for example, offers 548 richly annotated entries, drawn from mainly French and English writing on Laos. Yet there is much overlapping in these bibliographies just as there are serious lacunae. We lack, for example, some overview as to the state of social science research either inside Laos or on the outside. We also lack a reasonable agenda for independent research inside Laos. For one, we await even a compilation of the books and pamphlets that have gushed from the vernacular, albeit, official press in Vientiane. We await some announcement from Vientiane, not just as to research agendas and priorities, but as to just what social science research has been accomplished inside the country in the last two decades.

It is some relief then that, in December 1993, the L'Institut de recherches sur la culture (IRC) of the LPDR Ministry of Information and Culture hosted with the cooperation of Professor Pierre-Bernard Lafont, doyen of

Laos studies at Sorbonne, an international gathering of scholars of Laos, in part, to address these issues. These problems were addressed both thematically, eg. geography, language, ethnology, and, with reference to national research or research on Laos carried out in such countries as the US, France, Australia, Thailand and Japan.<sup>11)</sup>

In what appears to be the most honest and open accounting of officialised research in Laos, Kampheng Ketavong<sup>12)</sup> has written that since its foundation in 1983, the IRC has published 22 books, 8 films, 3 conference reports, and organised nine colloquium and expositions. No comprehensive bibliography is offered, but work so far includes, in history, Lao translations of “classics” including R.P Marini, in linguistics, the publication of a Lao-Russian dictionary, with a Khmu-Lao and Khmer-Lao dictionary in process. While some of this research on linguistics has been conducted with foreign partners, obviously Laos is an ethnological museum of living and dying languages (and cultures), whose study by qualified outsiders might, may well, in some cases, be the last opportunity to record these traditions. Compilations of Lao literature are a welcome addition but pale alongside the urgency of recording oral literatures and conducting fine grained ethnographies also including ethno-musicology, ethno-botany, and related disciplines. The LPDR does not need to be told such matters, as the IRC is well established and, no doubt benefited in its formative stages by cooperation from the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries. But to survive and thrive Laos must join the world scientific community in this sense. The risk that not all research on Laos conducted by foreigners will be rose-tinted is a fact that the regime will have to bear, if anything is to be achieved in this respect.

Doubtless, political and cultural histories of Laos can be written well

into the next century from the documentary collections of the West, but as Laos has now entered an era of change, even accelerated change, and because of what Laos is, a social formation embedded in a “natural economy”, or in different language, a nation of subsistence farmers, Laos has a lot to lose on its way to becoming some mirror image of, or at least some appendage of the ASEAN economic ensemble. More the urgency that we can look forward to “more unfettered research in the future”, as the Hong Kong-based Australian scholar, Grant Evans, wishes in the introduction to his *Lao Peasants under Socialism*.<sup>13)</sup> Aside from the formalist ILO-sponsored monograph of Khan and Lee [*Employment and Development in Laos*, Bangkok, 1980]<sup>14)</sup> and the inevitable World Bank reports, Evans' work is the first ethnography of post-1975 Lao conducted at the level of household production, albeit on the Vientiane Plain. Likewise, Evans' research conducted on the Upland Tai of Houa Phan in 1988 harks back to the researches of Izikowitz and Deydier in the late 1930s and 1950s, respectively.<sup>15)</sup> Research of this kind in Yunnan, Vietnam, and Laos, it might be said, has never been so accessible, yet has never been so difficult. Colonial administrators and missionaries once had the luxury of time to learn languages and dialects. Today, it almost goes without saying, we wrestle with short-term visa applications, busy lives, and the research priorities of our employers.

Various conclusions can be read out of this published collection. From Joseph J. Zasloff's presentation,<sup>16)</sup> research on Laos post-1975 in the US is dominated by political science, in other words a preoccupation with making sense of how things in Laos turned out—or how things went wrong—from, basically an American perspective. Relative to a similar genre of American writing on Vietnam, we can say that American Laos scholarship, including

the writings of Zasloff and his various collaborators, has always been relatively dispassionate [with M. Brown, *Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930–1985*,<sup>17)</sup> 1986 and with L. Unger (eds), *Laos: Beyond the Revolution*, 1991].<sup>18)</sup> Not so in American political imagination, though, especially if we consider the myth-making over “yellow rain”,<sup>19)</sup> the MIAs, the controversial role and status of the Hmong in Laos,<sup>20)</sup> and concern over the illegal narcotics trade.

Yet, as veteran American Laos-watcher Arthur Dommen has surveyed in a separate essay,<sup>21)</sup> a treasure trove of material awaits analysis in the American archives reaching back to the activities of the OSS. He comments that, “It is surprising in view of the amount of information available to U.S. officials in Laos and in Washington that their effort to come to terms with Laotian nationalism after independence, I think, a failure on the whole”. While, he laments, that the State department has only proceeded at a “tortoise-like” pace in declassifying documents on Laos and that the CIA only has plans to declassify, this has not held back publishing interest in this area. Witness, the paperback version of Christopher Robbins, *The Ravens: The Men who Flew in America’s Secret War*, 1987<sup>22)</sup> and the scholarly work by Timothy N. Castles, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: US Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government 1955–1975*, 1993, described on the blurb by William E. Colby, CIA Director (1973–1976) as “balanced and accurate”.<sup>23)</sup>

By contrast, from the essay by Bernard Gay,<sup>24)</sup> one gets the sense that French scholarship on Laos appears to have recoiled into historical studies, including the study of religion and literature. In a sense this orientation builds upon the French tradition of scholarship on Laos and France of course retains the best archival records and collections relating to Indochina. In this respect the France-based Cercle de Culture et de Recher-

ches Laotiennes which published the journal *Peninsule* is exemplary.<sup>25)</sup> A useful example of this genre of research made relevant to the contemporary scene is Bernard Gay, *Histoire des frontieres de la peninsule indochinoise. La nouvelle frontiere lao-vietnamienne. Les accords de 1977-1993* (1994).<sup>26)</sup> Another, albeit in the discipline of geography, is the publication of Christian Taillard, *Le Laos: strategies d'un Etat-tampon*, 1989.<sup>27)</sup> But it owes to another member of the Cercle de Culture, Amphay Dore, for the first book-length study of the Pathet Lao takeover and early years of the new regime, *Le Partage de Mekong*, otherwise a sensitive first person account of the end of an epoch by one who knew Lao culture from the inside.<sup>28)</sup>

In Australia,<sup>29)</sup> Laos research—which is considerable in volume—turns on the activity of individuals, rather than institutions; Stuart-Fox on history and politics, [*Laos: Politics, Economics and Society*, Frances Pinter, London, 1986,<sup>30)</sup> William Worner on economics.<sup>31)</sup> Hmong scholar Gary Lee on the Hmong,<sup>32)</sup> and Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn on Lao history and culture [*Kith and Kin Politics: The Relationship between Laos and Thailand*, Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers, 1994].<sup>33)</sup> In Japan, such research hardly exists outside of governmental agencies.<sup>34)</sup> In Thailand,<sup>35)</sup> and ASEAN, the scholarly environment has not always been favourable, although the publishing industry in Bangkok, has been supportive. In this sense, Thailand serves as a surrogate press for scholarly publishing on Laos.

The contrast with Russian language research on Laos could not be greater. According to Alexis Filimonov, since the 1950s more than 300 books and articles devoted to Laos were published in the former Soviet Union. To this end and with major Soviet ideological goals in mind, the full resources of numerous academies and institutes were mobilised, addressing

the full range of social and natural sciences.<sup>36)</sup> Going by the listings of Soviet era research in the US publication *Doctoral Dissertations on Asia*, Laos together with Vietnam became the object of considerable scientific study in such fields as geology, forestry, agronomy, ethnology, socialist theory and practice, and economic management. As far as quantity is concerned the number of dissertations on Laos and Vietnam undertaken in Eastern bloc countries exceeded those undertaken in in the West up until the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>37)</sup> One of the few attempts to deconstruct the overall orientation of Vietnamese (and Lao) communist social science, at least in one discipline, owes to Grant Evans.<sup>38)</sup> Yet, this is an endeavour that future ethnologists working in Laos and Vietnam must also come to terms with, if they are to cut through the thicket of ideological biases that still beset this scholarly terrain.<sup>39)</sup>

While much research on Laos was actually constructed around national priorities and/or mediated by national institutions, whether consciously or not, Laos remains a field for social science understanding in its own right, just as social science willy nilly has policy implications, even if it just remains as a reference point or reserve of knowledge. As one Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the LPDR told the author at a Peace Conference in Nagasaki in 1995, the kind of research prioritised by his government was that which would help Laos to economically develop. Few would disagree, but this begs all the other points I have made above as to the uses of social science and the traps and pitfalls of economic development without social science and without participation writ large.



## Notes

1. Ted Bardacke, "Soldiers take the lead in Laos economy", *Financial Times* (London), 6 June 1996, p.6.
2. E.C. Chapman and Peter Hinton, "Recent dam construction on the Mekong in Yunnan and Laos and its consequences", *Thai-Yunnan Project Newsletter*, Department of Anthropology, Australian National University, No.22, September 1993, pp.5-10.
3. E.C. Chapman, "Plans and realities in the development of trans-Mekong corridors: reflections from recent fieldwork in the Upper Mekong Corridor", *Thai-Yunnan Newsletter*, Department of Anthropology, Australian National University, No.29, June 1995, pp. 10-17.
4. See Denis D. Gray, "Laotians succumb to lure and pitfalls of capitalism", *Japan Times*, 14 June 1996, p.19. Big picture views of development questions from outside the international agencies are definitely lacking, but see W. Randell Ireson and Carol J. Ireson, "Laos: Marxism in a subsistence rural economy", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol.21, Nos. 2-4, 1989, pp.59-75, and Jonathan Rigg, "Managing Dependency in a Reforming Economy: The Lao PDR", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.17, No.2, September 1995, pp.147-72.
5. Bertil Litner, "Shedding its skin: Communist Party seeks to define a new role", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 March 1996.
6. Laos Human Rights Practices, 1993, U.S. Department of State, 31 January 1994.
7. Pierre-Bernard Lafont, *Bibliographie du Laos*, (2 vols.), Publications de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol.50, Paris, 1964 & 1978.
8. Charles F. Keyes, *Southeast Asian research tools: Laos*, University of Hawaii, Asian Program, Southeast Asian Studies, Honolulu, 1979.
9. William W. Sage and Judith A.N Henchy, *Laos: A Bibliography*, Library Bulletin, No.16, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1986.
10. Helen Cordell (compiler), *Laos, World Bibliographical Series*, Vol.133, Clio Press, Oxford, 1991. See author's review in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 23, 2, 1992, pp.469

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11. P-B. Lafont, *Les Recherches en Sciences Humaines sur le Laos*, Publications du centre d'Histoire et civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise: Actes de la Conference Internationale organisee a Vientiane 7-10 Decembre 1993, Paris, 1994.
12. Kampheng Ketavong, "Bilan des activites de l'INTRAL, de l'INRAL, de l'IRALL et de l'IRC", *ibid.*, pp.21-8.
13. Grant Evans, *Lao Peasants under Socialism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990. See the author's review article of this book, "Socialist Anthropology in Laos: An Anthropology of Socialist Laos-A Review Article", *Peasant Studies*, No.17, No.4, (Summer 1990) , pp.295-301.
14. A.R. Khan and E. Lee, *Employment and Development in Laos*, ILO, Bangkok, 1980. To this might be added the village-level study by J. Dennis, "Xieng Khouang Agricultural Development Project Mission report", IFAD, Vientiane, 1989, Annex I and the slightly more accessible UNICEF-sponsored report, by two academic researchers, Kevin Hewison and Nongluk Tunyavanich, "Socio-cultural aspects of water supply and environmental sanitation in nine villages in the Lao PDR", *Thai Yunnan Project Newsletter*, Department of Anthropology, Australian National University, No.23, December 1993, pp.13-21, which they term "the first village-level survey of water user and sanitation behaviour, practices and beliefs conducted in Laos since the late 1960s".
15. Grant Evans, "Reform or Revolution in Heaven? Funerals among Upland Tai" *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 2:1, 1991, pp.1-18.
16. Joseph J. Zasloff, "Le Laos et les etudes americaines de politologie, 1954-1993" , in *Les Recherches*, op.cit., pp.141-66.
17. M. Brown and J. J. Zasloff, *Apprentice Revolutionaries: The Communist Movement in Laos, 1930-1985*, Hoover Institute Press, Stanford University, 1986.
18. J.J. Zasloff and Leonard Unger (eds), *Laos: Beyond the Revolution*, St.Martin's Press, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1991. In fact the authorship of this book is international. Notable are the contributions by M. Stuart-Fox on LPDR foreign policy and Grant Evans on planning probles under socialism.

19. Grant Evans, *The Yellow Rainmakers: Are Chemical Weapons being used in Southeast Asia?*, Verso, London, 1983.
20. Yang Dao, *Hmong at the Turning Point*, Worldbridge, Minneapolis, 1993 and Jane Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic Mountains; The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942-1992*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1993, and Sucheng Chan (ed), *Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1994. See author's review of Yang Dao in *Journal of Asian Studies*, February 1994, pp. 297-8
21. Arthur J. Dommen, "Survey of Laos Research", *Cormsea Bulletin*, Vol.22, No.2, December 1993, pp.2-5.
22. Christopher Robbins, *The Ravens: The Men who Flew in America's Secret War in Laos*. Pocket Books, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1987.
23. Timothy N. Castle, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: U.S. Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government 1955-1975*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993.
24. Bernard Gay, "Les recherches francaises sur l'histoire du Laos", *Les Recherches*, op.cit., pp.85-93.
25. *Peninsule: Etudes interdisciplinaires sur l'Asie du Sud-Est peninsulaire Revue Semestrielle*, Cercle de Culture et de Recherches Laotiennes (Paris/Metz).
26. Amphay Dore, *Le Partage du Mekong*, Encre, Paris, 1980. See author's review in *Journal of Siam Society*, January-July, 1981, Vol.69, pp.204-5.
27. Bernard Gay, *Histoire des frontieres de la peninsule indochinoise. La nouvelle frontiere lao-vietnamienne. Les accords de 1977-1993*, Travaux du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisations de la Peninsule Indochinoise L'Harmattan, Paris, 1994.
28. Christian Taillard, *Le Laos: strategies d'un Etat-tampon*, Reclus, Montpellier, 1989.
29. Martin Stuart-Fox, "Les etudes sur le Laos en Australie", in *Les Recherches*, pp.105-22.
30. Martin Stuart-Fox, *Laos: Politics, Economics and Society*, Frances Pinter, London, 1986.
31. eg., William Worner, "Economic Reform and Structural Change in Laos", in *Southeast Asian Affairs 1989*, ISEAS, Singapore, 1982, pp.229-42.
32. Gary Y. Lee, "Minority Policies and the Hmong", in M. Stuart-Fox (ed), *Contem-*

- porary Laos*, University of Queensland Press, St.Lucia, 1982, pp.199-219.
33. Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, *Kith and Kin Politics: The Relationship between Laos and Thailand*, Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers, Manila, 1994.
34. Yoshiaki Ishizawa, "Le Japon et les etudes sur le laos", in *Les Recherches*, op.cit., pp. 191-5. The only book-length treatments of Laos published in Japan in the post-1975 period appear to be Kamihigashi Teruo, *Raousu no Rekishi* (in Japanese), Dobunkan Shuppan, Tokyo, 1990 and, by the same author, a former Japanese diplomat in Thailand and Laos, *Survey of Laos* (in Japanese), Dobunkan Shuppan, 1992 [unseen]. Yet, the first mentioned of these books does not appear to be based on original research and, at best, might be considered a synthesis of the main published French and English language literature directed at a general readership. To these might be added the accounts of two Japanese soldiers: Okudo Koichiro, *Postwar History of a Japanese Soldier: A Japanese Village in the Reign of the Source in Mekong* (in Japanese), Business-sha, Tokyo, 1991 [unseen] and Yamane, Yoshito, *Raousu no sasageta waga seishun*, Chuokoron, Tokyo, 1984, reviewed by the author and Chieko Gunn in *Journal of Siam Society*, January-July 1984, pp.253-4. Also exceptional in this sense is the translation from Lao to Japanese by Tatsuo Hoshino of Souvanthone Bouphanouvong, *Song Euay Nong*, Daido Life Foundation, Osaka, 1993, a work of "patriotic" Lao literature endorsed by the Lao Ambassador to Japan.
35. Mana Malapetch, "La Thaïlande et les recherches sur le Laos", in *Les Recherches*, pp. 195-200. This author finds that, despite proximity, Thai research on Laos has been relatively "unimportant", although he predicts that as Thai academic cooperation with Laos grows, so should understanding and scholarship. The most significant or at least comprehensive Thai study on Laos to appear in recent years might be that of Teum Wiphakphatchakit, *History of Laos* (in Thai), The Social Science Association of Thailand, Bangkok, 1987. This picture, however, neglects Thai publishing on Laos. One good example is Tatsuo Hoshino, *Pour Une Historie Medievale du Moyen Mekong*, Editions Duang Kamol, Bangkok, 1986.
36. Alexis Filiminov, "Les Recherches sur le Laos en URSS et en Russie", *Les Recherches*, op.cit., pp.185-190.

37. Frank Joseph Shulman (compiler and editor), *Doctoral Dissertations on Asia: an annotated bibliographical journal of current international research*, Vol. 15, No.1&2, Winter/Summer 1992, Association for Asian Studies, Inc, 1993. eg. E.N. Afanas'eva, "The Formation of the New Laotian Literature, 1950–1980" (in Russian). Not only was Laos and Vietnam the object of study by Soviet and Eastern European researchers in this period, by a number of Lao (and Vietnamese) students wrote dissertations on Laos in Soviet universities. For example, Keobualapkha Khampken, "Improving the Work of Local Committees of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party under Cadre Leadership at the Current Stage: With Reference to the Experience of the Communist Party of the USSR" (in Russian), 1990 and Pkhilakhampon Pkhengta, "The Characteristics and Prospects for the Developing Economy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in Collaboration with the Socialist Countries" (in Russian), 1988.
38. Grant Evans, "Vietnamese Communist Anthropology", *Canberra Anthropology*, Vol.8, 1 &2, 1985, p.116–47. 39. In this context read Philip Taylor, "An Anthropologist's Guide to the Literature on the Vietnamese revolution" *Thai–Yunnan Project Newsletter*, Department of Anthropology, Australian National University, No.18, September 1992, pp.18–25, essentially a review of Hy Van Luong's *Revolution in the Village, Tradition and Transformation in North Vietnam, 1925–1988*, (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1992) , "one of the few works that provide a village-level perspective of the Vietnamese revolution". As such Taylor's review article is more revealing of Western anthropological approaches to the study of revolution in Vietnam than the kind of anthropological paradigms in which Vietnamese communist anthropology is sited. From a Chinese perspective, see Gregory Eliyu Guldin, *The Saga of Anthropology in China: From Malinowski to Moscow to Mao*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, 1994. As Arif Dirlik has written in a review of this book (*Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 27, No.4, 1995, pp.85–87) , "How anthropology might be made to serve other causes than that of the state, which is a major problem in anthropology these days, does not seem to be a question that concerns Chinese anthropologists even as they once again welcome contemporary Euro–American anthropological techniques–this time to serve "socialism with Chinese characteristics".