



## สังคmlลาวในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์

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### สังคmlลาวใต้เงาอำนาจคอมมิวนิสต์

นับแต่ก้าวแรกของพรรคคอมมิวนิสต์บนพื้นแผ่นดินลาว เมื่อกว่า 24 ปีก่อน สังคmlลาวได้สูญเสียความเป็นตัวของตัวเองและประสบกับความปั่นป่วนทั้งทางสังคmlและจิตใจอย่างมากมาย คนลาวจำนวนหนึ่งได้อพยพลี้ภัยเข้ามาในประเทศไทยและจำนวนหนึ่งลี้ภัยไปที่ประเทศอื่น ในขณะที่คนส่วนใหญ่ยังคงอยู่ในประเทศลาวด้วยความหวาดหวั่นต่ออำนาจที่คุกคามจากเบื้องบน

พรรคคอมมิวนิสต์ของลาวใช้อำนาจควบคุมประชาชนอย่างเข้มงวดรวมทั้งล้างสมองคนลาวเพื่อเปลี่ยนจิตสำนึกเดิมและปลูกฝังจิตสำนึกในเชิงปฏิวัติ และในขณะเดียวกันก็กักขังประชาชนไว้ในสภาวะฉุกเฉิน ด้วยการสร้างแรงกดดันแก่คนลาวอย่างต่อเนื่องส่วนผู้ที่เคยเป็นข้าราชการและจงรักภักดีในระบอบพระมหากษัตริย์ ซึ่งถูกควบคุมตัวใน “แคมป์สัมมนา” ก็ได้รับการทารุณเยี่ยงสัตว์ แรงกดดันเหล่านี้เองที่ทำให้สังคmlลาวสูญเสียบุคคลิกและวิญญานไป

คงเหลือ แต่ค่านิยมที่เรียกว่า “ลัทธิวีระชน” หรือลัทธิบูชาวีรชนนั่นเอง

## สังคมที่แตกสลายและหลงทาง

ด้วยการสลายจากถิ่นฐาน และการกักขังจองจำในประเทศลาว สถาบันครอบครัวมีสภาพเหมือนถูกทำลาย ค่านิยม ที่มีมาแต่เดิมจางหายไปกับกาลเวลาและการปลูกฝังค่านิยมใหม่ๆ ของระบอบคอมมิวนิสต์ แต่อย่างไรก็ตามอำนาจของฝ่ายปกครองและค่านิยมแบบมาร์กซิสต์/เลนินหาได้เปลี่ยนวิถีชีวิตของชาวลาวในชนบทไปโดยสิ้นเชิงไม่ คนลาวในพื้นที่ห่างไกลยังคงรักษาประเพณีดั้งเดิม และประกอบพิธีทางศาสนาพุทธ อยู่เช่นเดิมและหลังจากการล่มสลายของอำนาจพรรคคอมมิวนิสต์ สังคมในสาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว (LPDR) ก็สามารถลุกขึ้นพบกับเสรีภาพได้ในระดับหนึ่ง ชาวลาวสามารถหาความบันเทิง พบปะสังสรรค์ ศาสนสถานต่างๆ ก็ได้รับการบูรณะด้วยแรงศรัทธาจากประชาชนถึงแม้ว่าจะไม่ได้รับความช่วยเหลือจากฝ่ายปกครองเลยก็ตาม

ในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ หรือช่วงเวลาแห่งการฟื้นฟูสำหรับประเทศลาวนี้ กระทั่งพิธีศพของผู้นำภายในพรรคคอมมิวนิสต์หรือผู้นำของรัฐ เช่น เจ้าสุภานุวงศ์และไกรสรพรหมวิหารยังประกอบด้วยพิธีการทางศาสนาพุทธเป็นหลัก เราอาจสรุปได้ว่าสังคมลาวใน LPDR ช่วงปลายศตวรรษนี้ กำลังมีการฟื้นฟูความคิดทางศาสนา ซึ่งล้วนสืบเนื่องมาจากการทำร้ายทางจิตใจที่เกิดจากความรุนแรงในช่วงที่ผ่านมา ทำให้เกิดความสับสนที่จะสามารถเยียวยาได้เฉพาะทางจิตใจ ชาวลาวจึงแสวงหาที่พึ่งทางใจในทิศทางซึ่งปรัชญาหรืออุดมคติไม่สามารถให้ได้

## สังคมลาวในต่างประเทศ

คนเชื้อสายลาวกว่าล้านคนที่กระจัดกระจายอยู่ทั้งในสหรัฐอเมริกา ฝรั่งเศส และประเทศอื่นๆ ในยุโรป มีลักษณะที่น่าศึกษาด้วยว่ามีกรรวมและรับเอาค่านิยมทางสังคมและ

จิตใจของประเทศที่พำนัก รวมทั้งการปรับตัวเข้ากับทัศนคติและพฤติกรรมของชาติเหล่านั้นไว้อย่างน่าสนใจ

เมื่อพิจารณาโดยรวมแล้ว คนลาวเหล่านี้รับเอาแนวความคิดทางด้านวัฒนธรรมของสังคมนิยมคอมมิวนิสต์ได้อย่างสมบูรณ์ ความมั่งมีคือคุณค่าทางสังคมเพียงหนึ่งเดียว ความสัมพันธ์ในครอบครัวกลับห่างเหินยิ่งขึ้น คนเหล่านี้เปรียบเสมือนสัตว์ป่าที่ถูกกักขังมานานและถูกปลดปล่อยให้ประพฤติตัวไปตามสัญชาตญาณ โดยปราศจากการรับรู้ถึงคุณค่าทางสังคมที่มีมาแต่เดิม

ในขณะที่ความนิยมบริโภคนิยมเปลี่ยนไปเป็นอาหารแบบตะวันตก เช่น แฮมเบอร์เกอร์หรือโคล่า ชาวลาวรุ่นใหม่เปลี่ยนมานับถือศาสนาคริสต์ ซึ่งได้รับการปลูกฝังเมื่ออยู่ในค่ายอพยพที่ประเทศไทย วิถีชีวิตที่ต่างจากเดิมทำให้ชาวลาวมีการถกเถียงด้วยเหตุผลเช่นเดียวกับชาวตะวันตกนิยมศึกษาในสาขาบริหารธุรกิจ หรือวิศวกรรมมากกว่าที่จะเลือกศึกษาวิชาที่ไม่ใช่วิทยาศาสตร์

กระทั่งพระสงฆ์ในศาสนาพุทธที่อยู่ในต่างประเทศก็ได้รับผลกระทบจากสังคมนิยมเช่นกัน ถึงแม้จะไม่ได้รับความสนใจ เช่น พระยันตระของไทย แต่พระสงฆ์ชาวลาวในสหรัฐอเมริกาและฝรั่งเศสที่ประพฤติตนเช่นนั้นก็ยังมีอยู่เช่นกัน

ดังนั้น คงไม่เป็นการคาดเคลื่อนจากความเป็นจริงมากนัก หากจะกล่าวว่าสังคมลาวในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ได้เปลี่ยนแปลงไปในทางวัฒนธรรมเช่นเดียวกับสังคมตะวันตกมากขึ้น ทิ้งให้คุณค่าสำคัญที่มีมาแต่โบราณ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นการช่วยเหลือเกื้อกูลกัน ความซื่อสัตย์และมิตรภาพกลายเป็นเพียงอดีตที่จางไปกับกาลเวลา

# **THE PRESENT LAOTIAN SOCIETY IN THE GLOBALIZATION AGE**

**By Chou NORINDR\***

*“Those who are slaves to passions follow the stream (of craving) as a spider the web which he has made himself. Wise people, when they have cut this (craving) leave the world free from cares leaving all sorrow behind”*  
(Indian philosophy)

## **LAOTIAN SOCIETY UNDER THE COMMUNIST REGIME**

Since the setting up of the communist regime on 2 December 1975, sociologically and psychologically speaking, Laotian society has been

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deeply troubled and traumatised by political violence carried out by Laotian communists grouped in the Laotian People's Revolutionary Party or Laotian Communist Party.



The Laotian society faces disrupted changes with the new political system that replaced the former monarchical system. In term of political changes there were radical changes. One tenth of Laotian people fled and exiled in Thailand then in abroad. The majority of Laotian people, at least those who for different reasons stayed in the country, must face the new life under the communist regime with its harsh and harmful regulations and practices. While thousands of former militarymen, policemen, civil servants and common peoples considered as partisans of the monarchical regime were sent to concentration camps located near the Vietnamese and Chinese borders where they were imprisoned without trial for infinite duration and endured ill-treatments and hardship. Unfortunately, a number of them were executed by their guardians.

Politically, most of the Laotian people were traumatised. They feared to be denounced and arrested at any time. They were frightened by physical and psychological violences such as insults, humiliations, hittings, arrestations, tortures, killings,

starvings, carried out by communists cadres and soldiers. They feared to be expelled from their houses, expropriated and despoiled, enrolled in cooperatives or in militia with tasks of insuring security by night or hunting the opponents or resistants called "*White Laotians*". In this respect arreations under denunciations of civil servants, militarymen and policemen and their imprisonment in goulage (concentration camps) without fair trials and forced labour imposed to them, starving and denied medical care for ill prisoners contributed to maintain Laotian people in the fright.

The Laotian people were closely watched over. Laotian communist regime imposed a total control on them. Villages and towns are divided into sections headed by local communist party organizations which are assigned with tasks of "*brain washing*" the Laotian people in order to provide behavior and cultural changes of Laotian people. (Marshall H. Segall & alia : Human behavior in global perspective, 295)

As regards the brian-washing, firstly, it is aimed at transforming the consciousness of Laotian people from the traditional consciousness to the revolutionary consciousness. Secondly, it is aimed at maintaining the Laotian people in a emergency state by permanent pressure exerted by the omnipresent Laotian communist members. It is a sort of psychological acculturation (Ibid, 293).

As for people numbered at least 100,000 who have the misfortune to be arrested by Laotian communist regime, imprisoned and deported in aforesaid goulage (concentration camps) called "*seminars camps*". They were deprived of all human rights. As prisoners they were no more considered as human beings. They had a status similar to that

of beasts. Otherwise they could face any treatment : starved, beaten, even killed. They were put into custody in camps-prisons, called "seminar camps" located in remoted places. They were chained in underground cells, deprived of medical care. They were abandoned to a slow death. They were deprived of every relations with their family. They didn't have the right to receive visits of their wives parents, children, friends, ect...



The control of individuals by psychological means (pressure) contributed to neutralize them, and to make them lose their personality and their soul. Furthermore, this method aimed at neutralizing all shape of resistance to Laotian communist regime, to transforming the Laotian people into slaves or animals. Otherwise the

psychological pressure aimed at depersonalize the individuals who therefore have no human feeling.

It is noteworthy that Laotian communist cadres enjoy the right of life and death vis-a-vis every Laotian prisoners in goulags. Therefore, Laotian communist regime strived to model new values system conforming with the Marxist-Leninist canon that is the rejection of the self or the individualism and the dedication to the communist party and state which represent the collectivity. According to them, the collectivity has the preeminence over the family or the individual. This absolutist conception of the new values system prevailing in the "new society", otherwise the "communist society", must be traced until Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and obviously Wilhem G. Hegel, Karl Marx.

The new values, according to Laotian communist leaders are trust, loyalty, personal efforts, dedication, sacrifices, for the communist party and state. In sum they are "revolutionary virtues". To this point it is noteworthy to compare the revolutionary virtues with Buddhist commands-or Buddhist Sila : Pancha Sila (Fifth command), Artha Sila (Eigth command), 224 Sila (applicable for Buddhist monks). By rigorously implementing these Sila or revolutionary virtues communist party and state members as well as Laotian people would acquire their merits that are somewhat positive achievements of their duties or tasks assigned by communist party and state. And these merits deserve to be awarded politically or materially according to the communist party and state norms. That is why communist norms or standards can be divided into 3 categories : low, average, upper standards. The upper standard leads to stakhanovism.

participation of buddhist monks chanting their traditional “*anicca*” (pray dedicated to the deceased) for the soul of these communist leaders. These events seem to be unimaginable a decade earlier while communist bloc was still solid and strong. Otherwise Buddhist worship as secular value of Laotian people regains its former place in Laotian society. And Buddhist monks are venerated again without regaining their state status as one of the three pillars of Laotian society prior 1975. Otherwise rites and customs continued to be operative like before. Festivities continue to be organized in pagodas and offerings are as abundant as before for maintaining in good state pagodas, for rehabilitating them and for the daily life of Buddhist monks.

In summary Laotian society in LPDR is witnessing the renewal of religious senses like in other modern countries at the globalization age at the end of this millennium. That phenomenon is due to the psychological and ideological disorientation of Laotian people. Post 1975 Laotian society is like an ill society because traumatised by violence. Therefore it should be relieved from that trauma by therapeutical and psychological means. However there is no such means like in former communist countries. Therefore peoples prefer to come back to secular values as a return to the source or as an easy therapy given the fact that there is neither philosophy nor ideology able to provide such a way out of the tunnel.

## LAOTIAN OVERSEAS SOCIETY

The overseas Lao are numbered at least one

million scattered in several parts of the world : USA, Canada, France, Germany, Belgium, UK, Japan, Australia. Most of them are concentrated in California, Texas, Louisiana, Minnesota of the United States. Then, is classified in the second position of importance the Laotian community of France.

In sociological or philosophical field the overseas Laotian communities deserve to be studied because they represent a species of expatriated Laotians who acquired and integrated new social and psychological values and characteristics of uprooted peoples. Otherwise, they represent a psychological acculturation model involving changes in identity, values, attitudes and behaviors (Marshall H. Segall & alia : Human behavior in global perspective, 291-294)



That is to say the expatriated Laotians once established in host countries began to assimilate the values including the culture, customs and traditions of the latters. As we are in the all-round globalization of the mass consumption society of this stage, obviously the values of the present mass consumption society are influencing them at the



great extent, mainly the Laotian young generation. For Laotian youths are fond of the “*American or European dream*” (American dream and dreams of many others to acquire the material comforts in an environment that richly rewards hard work can provide, Ibid. 299) and the American and European ways of life and rejected the ancient values of Laotian society that of their parents or grand parents. Because there is no more control like in “*traditional societies where behavior is governed by custom not law. The social structure is hierarchical and the individual’s position in the society is normally inherited rather achieved*” (Ibid. 301).

For them the sole valuable value of the present mass consumption society is the materialistic value consisting of money, material goods. Their new behavior is conform to Godwin theory (1974) which stressed that “*the attitudes and behaviors are seen as consequences of structural and cultural changes*” (Ibid.

301).

Therefore, for them wealth is the sole social value. And none of them don’t care with culture or ethics because they said the latters are unuseful and don’t help to satisfy their immediate needs and to help them to get rich. For them, wealth is synonymous of happiness because money helps to build happiness. Otherwise, in the present time to change spiritualism seems to represent a lesser value compared with the materialism and seems to decline considerably because of its assault. That is the conception of life of the expatriated Laotian youths who aim to get rich and happiness through money and material goods which seem to meet their immediate needs. Therefore, for them religious precepts are already archaic and obsolete. That is the reason why most of expatriated Laotian youths have their daily life like the life of people victimized by the mass consumption society who have their mind occupied by the material needs and means to satisfy themselves with material goods. Otherwise, they have a reasoning in term of money according with the old belief that is “*money is king*”. All this witness the enslaving of the modern peoples by the materialism.

Even on the familial field the relationship



between parents and children has radically changed because this relationship has been loosed. There is loss of virtues which must, according to Emmanuel Kant, “lead men towards ends which must be invested with character of duty, the self-perfection and the happiness of the others” (Emmanuel Kant, in Leo Strauss & Joseph Cropsey : Histoire de la philosophie politique, 656).

On the one hand young expatriated Laotians must go working or making their business and must carry out their daily life like the other Americans or Europeans according to the popular French trilogy as follows : *Metro, boulot, dodo* (that means the three daily tasks of a modern Parisian are : to move by the underground to his workplace for working, then to take the same underground after work for going back home, and to sleep). Therefore, they don't have enough time to acquire more knowledge and culture through readings and to have leisure.

As regards the younger ones, those who are in school age, they are the most influenced by their new environment in cultural and social fields because their spirit is very permeable. Otherwise, they are rapidly westernized and don't want speaking Laotian no more. Even most of them are illiterate in Laotian language.

While their children are working and are absent the whole day parents or grandparents must stay lonely at home and take care themselves. Sometimes they are occupied to play the role of baby sitters or kindergardens wards. When they are sick or die in the absence of their children if informed it is the Social Welfare Service of the Mayor's Office who takes care of them.

On the other hand, as they are living in democratic host countries, they are not subject to

pressure of the traditional environment as they were in Laos before 1975. Otherwise, like wild beasts encaged for a long time, once freed they behave unconsciously and irresponsibly by disdaining their ancient social values because they think and act like the other western youngs.



“The social values are, according to Mario Laserna, the characteristics of behavior which are specific to each community, which define the identity of that social group and which are specific to the historical period of tribal life within which a particular individual acts” (Mario Laserna : Quantitative and qualitative growth in industrial global society, 152).

According to Doob, “the complex of values known as modernity includes a heightened concern with being on time and with advance planing” (Human behavior in global perspective, 230). Thus, their daily behavior is completely westernized.

In the food field, they rapidly adopted the American and European foods. They long for fastfood such as McDonald or Burger King hamburgers and drink Cola Cola and other soft drinks. As they want to be identified with western peoples Laotian expatriated boys and girls long to wear the James Dean fashion. That means they prefer western fashion instead of Laotian fashion.



Therefore, it becomes very rare to see Laotian expatriated girls wearing traditional Laotian dresses (Sin).

Intellectually they have changed their traditional mind. They argue and reason like the western peoples. A minority of Laotian expatriates began to be converted into Christians when they were in Thai refugees camps because they were helped and relieved from their sufferings by Catholic and Protestantist missionaries or sponsored by Catholic or Protestantist families in United States, Canada, France, Germany and so on... For example, young Laotian refugees sponsored by a French humanitarian organization "*Enfants du Mekhong*" (the Mekhong children) once hosted in France by Catholic or Protestantist families, are converted into Catholic or Protestant. These young Laotian expatriates can be considered as uprooted peoples



losing all connections with Laotian milieu. In United States an important number of young Laotian expatriates are involved in delictual and criminal gangs. They become drug addicts, thieves, burglars or rapers because they imitate their American friends. That is the bad side of their social mimetism. Needless to say that they have been severely sentenced to imprisonment by American courts.

They are "the children of science and technology" whose life-style become "*a second nature*" (Mario Laserna : Quantitative and qualitative growth in industrial global society, 167)

Obviously they believe they have reached modernism that can be defined by "*independence from traditional authority figures, belief in the efficacy of science, activism, abandonment of passivity and fatalism, ambition for oneself and one's children, interest in civic affairs, mass-media participation, low integration with extended relatives, individualism, emphasis in the future, trust in one's fellow human, low valuation of traditional beliefs and practices, egalitarianism, attitude toward family role structure*" (Human behavior in global perspective, 308).

Otherwise, they think in terms of university degree rather MBA and Engineering degrees than non scientific degrees that enable them to earn high wages and much money. In addition most of them refer to science and high technology, to beautiful mensions and cars and act like robots. Therefore, the ancient Laotian values are not important for them because they do not make Laos modern, civilized and prosperous. That is the reason why only a minority of them continue to maintain relationship with religious milieu : Buddhist monks, Catholic priests, pastors, given the fact that for them religion is profitlessness, like what Lenin said in

former days of the Bolshevik revolution, “a people’s poison”.



It is noteworthy that even part of expatriated Buddhist monks are victimized by the mass consumption society because they are assaulted daily by the materialistic society and loosed their Buddhist behavior that ought to be very austere and pure. Unfortunately, part of them is attracted by the mass consumption society vices : money, luxury things, luxury and expensive foods, illicit needs. A minority of them behaves like laymen and infringes the Buddhist Discipline (Vinaya) or behaves criminally by robbing the Buddhist community’s (Sangkha) property : money, offering items. Certain possess even considerable amount of money in their bank accounts and particular luxury cars they drive themselves. Certain maintain illicit relationship with laywomen but not at the extent of the famous Thai Buddhist monk Yantra. However, little Yantras exist among Laotian expatriated Buddhist monks in United States and in Franc. Some of these culprit monks have been publicly denounced and prosecuted before judicial courts. This concerns the cases of monks Boriphath, head of the Laotian Pagoda Dharmabhirom (located in Choisy-le-Roi

town, southern outskirts of Paris), of Laotian monk Bounlap of the Laotian Pagoda located in Mons (Belgium) who defrocked due to his lovely relationship with a laywomen, of Laotian monk Chanda, of the Laotian Pagoda Buddhavong in Washington, who has been publicly denounced by most of Laotian Buddhists in United States for the same reason as monk Bounlap (The author of this paper was eyewitness of these scandals broken out in the United States in 1994 and in Belgium and France in 1996 while he made two journeys in Washington and Los Angeles in 1994 and 1996 and he was still in France in 1996).

These bad and sordid scandals are well-known among the Laotian expatriated communities because Laotian expatriates’ media had largely mentioned them. They contribute to discredit the Buddhism and to downgrade the belief an worship of Buddhists.

Therefore, in the globalization era, the Lao society loses its ancient values such as altruism, mutual help, friendship, loyalty, which are superseded by decadent values. Doubtless, man become a “*homo hominem lupus*”. Is there a moral power to reconvert mankind to the just and human way? The moral rearmament will it become a means for this end?