

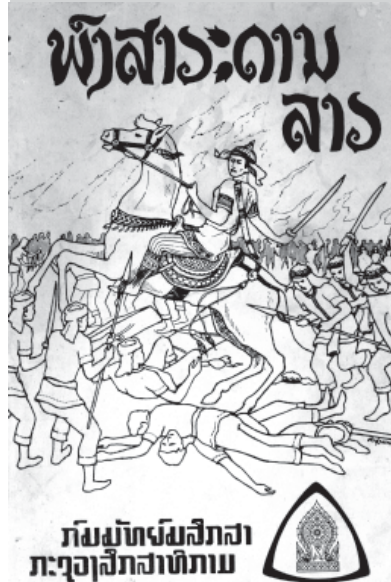
Historical Presentations in the Lao Textbooks: From the Independent to the Early Socialism Period (1949-1986)¹

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This paper presents the presentations of Lao history in the Lao textbooks from the Independent period, starting in 1949 to the Early Socialism period, starting in 1975. We designate the year 1949 as the starting point of our study as it was this year that the Royal Lao Government (RLG) proclaimed independence from France on 19 July. It was also this year that Lao gained international recognition as an independent state, although it was still within the French Union. At the other end, we take the year 1986, as it was the year that the Lao Government declared the new policy “Jintanakarn Mai,” which involved a number of changes in Lao

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social structures. Our purpose is to show that history was manipulated by the Lao governments of both periods as a mechanism to transfer the national social values to the younger generations through textbooks used in school education. Our analysis is based on the Lao textbooks used during the Independent and the Socialism periods (1949–1986). Presentations of this paper are in two parts: 1) the Lao history in the Lao textbooks of the Independent period (1949–1975), and 2) the Lao history in the Lao textbooks of the Early Socialism period (1975–1986).

1. Lao History Before 1975

Based on Lao historical documents, the Lan Xang kingdom used to be a well united state during King Fa Ngum's regime. Later the kingdom was divided into three states: Champasak, Vientiane, and Luang Prabang. The three states were under control of Siam for 114 years during 1779–1893, before French colonial control. During the second World War, Lao was briefly controlled by Japan. After Japan's surrender on August 14, 1945, France returned and tried to seize Laos again. The external conflict with France was a cause of internal conflicts in the country. At that time, Chao Petsarath was the viceroy (*ouparat*) and Prime Minister of the Luang Prabang Royal Lao Government. He proclaimed the national rights, independence of the country, and dissolved all earlier treaties and political agreements between Laos and France. This action was not approved by the Lao king, *Chao Maha Xeevit*, who insisted that Luang Prabang should remain dependent on France. In spite of the King's objection, Chao Petsarath proceeded on the movements for Lao independence. He made another announcement on 15 September of the same year, stating that all Lao provinces (*Muang*s) had to be united into one

single kingdom. Due to this action, Chao Petsarath was accused of being against the Lao population's will, and the King's consent. He, then, was deposed from the positions of viceroy and prime minister.

Despite this, Petsarath made a formal announcement of independence. He formed a government and made public announcement on 12 October 1945² (Chananikorn, 1977). This date was then taken as the Lao Independent day. Consequently, Lao was divided into two factions: the King Chao Mahaxeevit supported by France, and the independent Chao Petsarath. At that time, France did not want the Indochina to be independent, and still wanted to keep it as a colony. France, then, sent troops into Indochina to fight with the Independent movements in Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos. In Laos, France took over Luang Prabang on 24 May, 1946, and claimed control over the whole kingdom. The Japanese troops were driven away. The *Lao Issara*, being unable to resist the French power, had to escape, and set up a government in exile in Thailand. (Luangpasi, 1995: 73)

On August 27, 1946 France gave formal approval to Lao independence. Together with this approval, France facilitated drafting of the constitution, and forming of the parliament. Then, on May 11, 1947, a Lao constitution was established. The date was then taken and celebrated as the national Constitution Day. On July 19, 1949, a Laos-France confrontation ended in an agreement in Paris. According to this agreement, Laos was an independent country, but was still under the French Union. The RLG proclaimed this date as the National Day. It is noticed that two years later, in

² Lao People's Democratic Republic has taken October 12th as the independent day. On the other hand, December 2nd has been taken as the National Day, as the country was transformed into socialism on December 2nd, 1975.

1951, Laos published its own national stamps for the first time. This reflected Laos effort to construct her national symbols and identity.

The Lao Issara Government deposed itself in October, 1949, resulting in three factions. Souvannaphouma held onto ties with France, while Soubhanuvong clinged to North Vietnam. Petsarath maintained his independent position and remained in Thailand. Both Soubhanuvong and Petsarath perceived that the independence from France was not a real one. Therefore, Soubhanuvong, who disintegrated himself from the Lao Issara Movement formed his own group, tried to gain support and guidance from the Vietnamese leader, Ho Chi Minh, to gain real independence from France. In 1950, just before gaining the real independence, Soubhanuvong was successful in receiving support from the North Vietnam. He could form his cabinet, naming Patet Lao Movement or Lao Issara. The formation was publicly announced on 13 August, 1950 (Munghaisong, 1996)

It can be said that the eight year movement in Indochina was successful, resulting in the treaty in Genewa in 1954. This treaty is significant as it designated the complete independence of Laos, although the country was divided into two parts. One part covering Sam Nue and Pongsalee provinces was under the control of Patet Laos, while the other in Vientiane was under the Lao Royal Government, headed by the King under democracy. With these type of administration, it can be said that Laos during 1954–1975 was a single kingdom with dual political systems. This period covered the years of political struggles among Lao elite groups, each supported by different powerful countries.

Based on the historical background as described, it can be concluded that Laos was still fragmentary, even during the regime of complete independence after 1954.

2. Lao History in the Lao Textbooks of the Independent Period 1949-1975

A textbook that was used as a basis for analysis of this study was *Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom* (Lao Chronology for Primary Level). The textbook is composed of 7 sections, starting from ancient Lao history to the last section, describing Laos during 1945–1950³. In the first section, the foundation of Laos was described. The ancient Lao people had been driven from their own homeland. The last section described the struggles for freedom and independence from the French colonial power. Another textbook that was used was *Pongsawadarn Lao: Longlean Mathayom BabPrasom Phangum*⁴ (Lao Chronology: Pha Nhum Integrated Secondary School) by Maha Sila Veerawongse, which was first published in 1952 by the Lao Ministry of Education. Later, Maha Sila added a part for the Secondary Education Department, and reprinted in 1973. This version was composed of 8

³ As this textbook covered the history up to 1950, we can assume that the book should have been printed by 1950, although no printing date was cited. Also, as the Royal Lao Government became independent under control of the French Army in this year, it is not surprising to see lots of compliments of the French in this book. The authors also assume that this book was used until the French withdrawal in 1954, based on the fact that Laos did not have an educational reform until 1962. Another interesting point is that the Ministry of Education published the textbook *Pongsawadarn Lao: Longlean Mathayom BabPrasom Phangum* (Lao Chronology: Pha Nhum Integrated Secondary School) by Maha Sila Veravongse, for the first time in 1952, after the country's independence under the French control. The second edition of the text came in 1973 with additional contents by the author, Maha Sila Veravongse.

⁴ The Lao-USAID secondary schooling system established in 1966. The first school under this system was built in Vientiane. Classes were conducted in Lao language. This was different from the previous educational system in which French had been used as medium for teaching. (Pornkaew, n.d. pp. 94–95)

chapters. The last chapter (entitled “1893”) was about Laos under the French colonial period of 1893–1949. In this last chapter, there was a conclusion that the long lost independence which was taken for 170 years (1779–1949) had returned.

Another source textbook used for this study was **Babrean Sankomsuksa Chan Mathayomsuksa Peetee 1** (The Social Study Textbook for Grade 7) printed by the Ministry of Education, Department of Secondary Education, in 1969. The most interesting point in this textbook concerns the declaration of the Independent Day. It is interesting that 19 July has been taken as the National Independent Day. The 1954 Geneva Treaty was not so much emphasized here. There were only few statements related to the agreement to end the struggles in the Lao Kingdom. It was observed that the Lao history purposively focused on the events related to the government, politics, and the 1957 constitution. It can be concluded that the Lao history textbooks of the Independent period emphasized the independence under the French Union granted on 19 July, 1949. This date was highlighted in the textbooks as the Independent and National Day.

Origins of Laos and the Lao People

The textbook **Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom** started with the origins of the nation and people. Emphasis was on the fact that the current location of the country had been long settled in, as evidenced in the existing monuments related to burial, and the existence of stone jars. The ethnic group that had resided here before the Lao ethnic was the Kha, who was referred to as uncivilized people. This may be an implication that the civilized people were Lao. Later, Kha was driven away by Cham, who were defeated by Khmere.

The Lao or Tai-Lao were among the Tai who migrated from the North and settled in Thailand, Lan Xang, and parts of Burma. It can be seen that Lao civilization was influenced by the Indian and Khmère.

The topic of origins of Laos and the Lao people was also found in the textbook **“Pongsawadarn Lao: Longlean Mathayom BabPrasom Pha Ngum”** (Ministry of Education, Department of Secondary Education, 1973). In this textbook, the topic of Lao origins spread over four chapters to ensure an understanding of Lan Xang history. The subject that was expanded from the primary level was about the original geographical location of Laos. The book stated that originally, Laos had been settled in between the Huang Ho and Yang Zeegiang Rivers, currently in the Xechuan province. It was then called Lung and Pa provinces. Due to the Chinese invasion, the group migrated to the south of Xechuan, and settled in Yunnan, originally called Nong Sae or Nan, or as called by the Chinese, Taleephu. (This settlement theory was confirmed by Luang Wichitwatakarn’s study)

The settlement at Nong Sae is a point that this textbook used to reflect that Laos had been powerful enough to found six large provinces. It also reflected the long period of Lao independency. The text elaborated on the long succession of monarchy from the first monarch to Khun Boromrasathirat, who built up a city on ‘Thi na noi oi noo’. This new city was named Than or Kalong. Later, Khun Borom sent his seven sons to reign other cities. Khun Law, the eldest son, reigned Lan Xang. Chapter 5 of the textbook covered the story of Lan Xang. It stated that Khun Borom was the first king of Lan Xang dynasty. He was the leader that drove away the Khmère, and reigned Chawa (or Luang Prabang), which was later renamed as Chiang Thong. The Lao nationality settled in this area under the reign of successive kings. Among

these, Fa Ngum was the most powerful. During his reign, Laos became a large united nation.

Another textbook, **Babrean Sankomsuksa Chan Mathayomsuksa Peetee 1** provided only short descriptions of Lao origins. The emphasis of the textbook was given to details of the Fa Ngum and the later kings.

Lao Religion and Monarchy

“Admire the King, trust our religion and the traditional practices of our country. These are the only ways to sustain our freedom.”

From: *Nangsue Bab Sonaan Paasaa Lao Chan Ko Ka*
(Lao Language Reading Textbook)

It can be said that the most important part of Lao history is that related to the kings, who were respected for their patriotism. This perception is reflected from the introduction written by Maha Sila Veravongse in **Pongsawadam Lao: Longlean Mathayom BabPrasom Phangum** (Ministry of Education, Department of Secondary Education, 1973:11) as follows:

“May I devote the merit that I should gain from writing this Lao chronology to all the past kings that reigned the nation, and to all the Lao patriots, both in the past and present. May Laos be the land for Lao people forever. May Laos be filled with happiness and peace.”

Building awareness of the importance of the monarchy is reflected in the declaration of the days in the life cycle of the past kings be national days. For example, October 19, was memorized as the death day of King Sisavangvong, and November 13 was recognized as the birthday of King Sisavangvadhana. In addition, loyalty to the monarchy institution was evident

in the publication of the book **“Significant Kings of Lao”** by the Ministry of Information, and Tourism in 1970. The number of printed copies were up to 100,000. Adoration to the kings was clearly stated in the introduction of the book written by Souvannaphouma, the prime minister then, as quoted below.

“We have to be aware of the bravery, courage, and sacrifice of the King. Without him, no land would be inherited to us. All of us have duties to protect this land and water, and save every single piece of our land, so that the land remains in the global map. The nation remains nation, Laos remains Laos only when all are hard-working, and sacrifice, the same way our ancestors did. The later generations will record and will not forget your sacrifice and good deeds.”

It is not surprising to see the term ‘chronology’ in the Lao history textbooks, as the authors of most textbooks applied the chronological approach in their writings. This approach emphasizes activities of each king. The king who receives the highest admiration were those who had been able to make Lao powerful, strong, peaceful, and prosperous. The kings also had to be courageous, brave, and contributing to the restoration of the country. Such kings are elaborated below.

Chao Fa Ngum (1316-1373)

The important role of this king, as presented in **Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom** (the Lao Chronology for the Primary Level), was his ability to integrate and unite the Lao lands into one. He also designated Buddhism as the national religion. The common content is emphasized in **Babrean Sankomsuksa Chan Mathayomsuksa Peetee 1**. Five pages of the material is dedicated to the story of Fa Ngum. (see: Ministry of Education, Department of Secondary Education, 1969: 40-45).

Phraya Bhodhisararaj (1520-1547)

High praise for Phraya Bhodhisararaj is found in *Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom*. Here, the king was presented as “a very clever and generous king, who highly respected and trusted Buddhism.” The king had Wat Wichul built, renounced the homage for spirits. He was also praised for being able to reign Lanna.

Chao Xaisethathirat (1534-1572)

In the textbook *Babrean Sankomsuksa Chan Mathayomsuksa Peetee 1*, King Xaisethathirat was admired as a hero. He marched a troop to Chiangmai, which was at that time a colony state of Myanmar. During his reign, Laos had a number of wars with Burma, while established a good relationship with Ayudhya, and set Vientiane as the capital of Lan Xang state in 1560. Xaisethathirat was presented not only as a military hero, but also as a great supporter of Buddhism. He built the royal pagoda (Pha That Luang), Phra That Phanom, and Phra That Sisonghak. In addition, he built Wat Pha Kaew in Vientiane, and Wat Ong Tue in Tha Boh, Nong Kai province of Thailand.

Chao Suriyavongsa (1637-1694)

In the text, *Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom*, Chao Suriyavongsa was presented as “the king who was politically wise” He ended the existing internal conflicts. During his reign, Lan Xang was prosperous for 57 years. Vientiane was the glamorous capital of monasteries and shrines. The country was rich in arts, and scholars. During this reign, a number of traders and missionaries came to Laos. Among these visitors was Gerrit Van Wustof.

Chao Anou (1805-1828)

In the same textbook (*Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom*), Chao Anu was admired as a wise, strong, and courageous king. He had been trusted by the Thai monarch and positioned as the Lao commander in the Thai army. Being trusted by the Bangkok king, Chao Anou was announced the King of Laos, replacing Chao In. The most important historical event related to this king is his bravery in striving for independence from Thailand.

Chao Anou's bravery was also presented in the textbook of Lao Chronology for the secondary schools. (see Department of Education, Department of Secondary Education, 1973, for details)

It should be mentioned that in the book, printed by the Ministry of Communication and Tourism, *Significant Kings of Laos*, only six kings were presented. These kings were presented in different guises: Chao Fa Ngum as Father of the Lao-Nation. King Samsaenthai as the founder of Laos, King Suwannabanlang as the winner of the Vietnamese troops, King Bhodhisarnraj as the compromiser under the motto "unity is strength", King Xaisethathirat as the supporter of Buddhist monasteries and relics, and suppresser of Burmese, King Suriyavongsa as the last king of the ancient Laos, and Chao Anu as the hero who brought independence and unity to the state.

In 1972, a national student conference was organized during 10-18 April. The resolution drawn from this conference was to construct monuments of the three kings: Fa Ngum Monument to represent the unity of Laos, King Suriyavongsa Monument to represent Lao civilization, and Chao Anou Monument to represent the courageous Laos.

(see: Report of the Second National Student Conference, 1972)

While some kings were admired, some were blamed in the Lao history. Most of these were reprimanded for causing internal conflicts and disunity. The topic of Disunited Lan Xang was found in the text Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom (Ministry of Education, n.d. pp. 31 –34) The textbook stated that there were fights for the throne after the reign of Phya Suriyavongsa. The fights resulted in a split of Lan Xang into two states. Chao Chai Ong Wei claimed the throne of Vientiane, while his nephews, Gingisraj and Intasom took Luang Prabang. This event was presented in the text as quoted below.

“The division of the state was a sign of decay of Lan Xang. The state lost civilization, destroyed by hatred and striving among kin. One party requested assistance from Burma, the other pleaded for Siam. Thus Siam and Burma made interventions for their own benefits, leaving Laos with destruction”

As for Chai Ong Wei of Vientiane state, he was presented in a more negative ways than Chao Gingisraj of Luang Prabang. Reference to Chai Ong Wei was as follows.

“The coronation of Chai Ong Wei caused unhappiness among the people. The Cham Pasak monarch turned to Thailand. Muang Phuan refused to offer the state gifts to Vientiane as it had used to..”

There were some other kings who lost the state to foreign power such as Burma, Siam, and France. For example, during the reign of **King Sansurintra**, just following Xaisethathirat’s, Lao was invaded by the Burmese troops. Lan Xang was colonized to Burma. In addition, **Chao Mantaturaj**, the king of Luang Prabang, was presented as narrow-minded and vindictive, resulting in the destruction of Lan Xang, and the lost of the independence of the country. During the time that Chao Anou sent his diplomat to Luang Prabang,

requesting for help to fight with Siam, Chao Mantaturaj was determined to take side of the winner. Worse than that, he sent a troop to support Siam. Chao Anou lost in that war and the kingdom of Lan Xang was taken as Thai colony (see : Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom, n.d. pp. 48-50)

Another king who was blamed in the Lao history was Chao Noi of Muang Phuan, who arrested Chao Anou and sent him to Bangkok, where he was tortured to death. Besides, after dominating Lao, Siam caused a lot of destruction to the cities and people. Many Lao families were taken to Siam for labors. The textbook wrote that *“Siam took away our properties, one of which was the Emerald Buddha. The prosperous capital, built by Xaisethathirat was left with decays of buildings and monasteries.”*

Emphasis on the national unity and conflicts resulting in the lost of independence was found not just in the history textbooks, but also in the contents of the Lao Language Reading Text for the Primary Level. In this basic reading textbook, love and unity of the country fellow was emphasized.

*“Born Lao, love Lao, assist Lao
Born Lao, we have to work hard
Fight for things we love
We are Lao, the Lao fellows need to love one another
Knitted hearts, unity, these are the best”*

Interestingly, the textbook **Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom** did not present the kingdom of Cham Pasak. Only Luang Prabang and Vientiane were emphasized.

Regarding the religion, belief, and rites, in the Lao textbooks, religion and the monarchy are closely related. It is true that all the popular kings in the Lao history applied Buddhist teachings in their reigning. An example is

Fa Ngum, who brought Lanka Buddhism from Cambodia to Lan Xang. The king was a Buddhist practitioner, and the religious leader. King Samsaenthai was famous as both the nation builder and supporter of Buddhism . Some of the monasteries built by this king were Wat Manorum, Wat Ubosot, and Wat Chiang Khan. Another king, Chao Bothisarnraj, built Wat Wichunraj, and the stupa of Wat Wichun (Ministry of Education, Department of Secondary Education, 1969 : 40-52) The significance of religion was presented not only in the history textbooks, but also in the textbooks of other subjects. For example, in the Elementary Lao Language Reading, Chapter 1 : Merit is at the Temple, there are statements as quoted here.

*“At my home, there are temples and halls
On holy days, they go for sermons
On Bun Pawet, they joined the procession
I am so amazed by the Kuru’s teachings
Telling us to avoid bad deeds
I attended the rites
Enjoy talking to the elders and friends.”*

In addition, Chapter 55 of Teaching Reading Lao for the First Grade emphasized the significance of Buddhist temples and tradition. This textbook elaborated two festivals in five chapters. These included the topics of Lao New Year in Chapter 52-54, and the Ho Kao Salak Duan Sib Ceremony in Chapter 56-57 (Ministry of Education, n.d. pp.123-136). Moreover, the textbooks on Buddhism for the second grade present chapters of the life history of Lord Buddha, the Buddhist Lent, and the other monthly ceremonies such as *Boon Ho Khao Pradabdin*, *Boon Ho Khao Sak*, *Boon Ogpansa*, *Boon*

Prathat Luang, Boon Peemai, Boon Makhabucha, Boon Wisakhabucha (Maha Kikaew and Maha Boonpeng, 1964) These events are presented in the social science textbooks for the primary level (Ministry of Education, 1961: 49–50). The important rites include Sawannakhet province's Boon That Ing Hang which is on the full moon of the first lunar month, Makaha Bucha, on the full moon of the third lunar month, Boon That Sikotrabun of Tha Khaek province, and many others.

The Lao Constitution

In the textbooks for the secondary level, the Lao history covers not only the state, religion, and monarchy, but also the new institution: the 1954 Lao Constitution, which was the revised version of the 1947 constitution. Important points presented in the textbooks included the civil rights and authorities as identified in the constitution. These authorities include the administration, the legislation, and judiciary. A chapter on the constitution was also added to the primary social science textbooks (Ministry of Education, 1969: 71 – 92). The importance of the constitution is evident as shown by the fact that it is added in the contents of the textbook and by the proclamation of the Constitution Day on 11 May. This date was taken as it was the date that King Sisavangvong signed in the Constitution in 1947.

The Nation's Allies, Rebels and Enemies

Based on our in-dept study of the historical contents in *Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom*, we found a point that made this book more interesting than other textbooks. This is the presentation of rebels, which has never been presented in other textbooks. In this textbook, the rebels were

described in the chapter “Internal Security”. In this chapter, The French colonial power was praised.

*“After capturing Laos, France put in effort to bring peace and security to the country. The Lao people complied to the French happily, as they perceived that only France that could take Laos away from difficulties. However, there are still **some savages and bad guys**(our emphasis) who protested to the French administration. It was for our security and happiness that the French power had to fight against those people, with both hearts and weapons.”*

In this textbook, three events were briefly described to prove that the riots were “the internal annoyance.” These three events are as follows.

Kabot Phu Meebun

This disturbance occurred during 1901–1902 was undertaken by a group of Kha and Phu ethnic groups, who were convinced by some revolutionary group. The riot ended after the ethnic leader, Nai Mee, was arrested.

Kabot Hmong

Occurring during 1919–1920 in the Lao Nua province, the Hmong ethnic group in Chiang Kwang and Luang Prabang provinces revolted with the support of Nai Khao Chue Badjai⁵.

⁵ The Hmong’s leader was Badjai, sometimes mentioned in the Lao PDR official documents as Chao Fa (Prince) Pajai.

Kabot Haw in Lao Nua

This textbook mentioned that the Kabot Haw was most serious among all disturbances. The protest was so serious that the government had to send a military force to subdue the insurrection. In addition, the government had to set up a border control in 1916 in Pongsalee province in order to keep the rebels under control.

As a result, it is clear that the image of France in Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom is of a friend rather than an enemy. This is evident on page 55 of the textbook, under the 36 topic “The Arrival of France in Lao”, sub-heading Pavie. There are statements that praised Pavie as quoted,

“Mr. Pavie was a diplomat that had important roles in saving King Ounkham from Haw that robbed Luang Phrabang. In this textbook it was stated that *“this courage of Pavie in saving King Ounkham’s life won the hearts of the Lao citizen, who had been robbed and abused. These Lao people loved and appreciated what he did. The domination of France over Laos, therefore, was due to the approval of the people themselves. Therefore, the French government granted great honor to Mr. Pavie.* (Ministry of Education, n.d. p. 55)

Accordingly, French colonial control in Laos was at the consent of the Lao people. This is contrary to the Burmese and Siamese domination, which were presented as hostile. Accordingly, the images of Thailand and Burma in Lao history as presented in the Lao textbook are as the nation’s enemies rather than allies. With such images, it is not surprising to see a question at the end of the chapter related to the war against Burma in 1568, during the regime of King Xaisethathirat stating *“how did King Xaisethathirat do to fight against our enemy.”*

With such admiration for France, *Pongsawadarn Lao Samrab Chan Pratom* added two chapters on the French administration. One of these chapter was entitled **“The Great Achievement of France”**. The chapter was divided into parts covering exploration in Laos, internal security, health and education, the country’s development, and the king succeeding from King Ounkham.

It can be stated that the history of Laos as presented in the textbooks is the history that emphasizes the virtues of three core institutions: Nation, Religion (Buddhism and ancient Lao tradition), and Monarchy. These three institutions are inseparable in the Lao history. Another point of emphasis is National solidarity and unity. These are symbolized in the national flag with the three-headed elephant, and the Laos national anthem in the Independent period. The song is quoted as follows:

*Laos has been well known among Asian countries
The Laos are closely tied, well united
We love our country, we love our lords
We all have faith in our religion, we have been protecting our land
We won't let any power devastate our country
We will fight to the death, with whoever invades our country
We will respect all minorities, and save one another.*

3. The Lao History in the Lao Textbooks During the Socialism Period (1975-1986)

After the complete independence in 1954, Laos was broken into two factions. The Right got support from the United States of America and Thailand, while the Left was supported by North Vietnam and the Socialist

alliances. However, during 1972–1973 both set up a political agreement resulting in the ending of confrontations, and the formation of the coalition government. The Left, ruling over Vientiane and Luang Prabang, was strengthened politically and administratively, Formed under the name of Pathet Lao Movement, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, led by Kaysorn Phommviharn, succeeded in a political revolution, and took over the power. King Chao Mahaxeevit abdicated his throne, and the Prime Minister Chao Souvanaphuma renounced his position. These were taken as the ending of the Lao internal political conflicts which had been more than 30 years. (Songprasert, 1992).

The Lao Government put effort into reconstructing the country. Among these efforts were the change of the national flag and anthem, based on the resolution of the Grand Meeting of the People Representatives on 2 December, 1975 in Vientiane. (The date has been taken as the National Day since then.) The nation flag was changed from one with a three-headed elephant in the center to the flag that had been used during the revolution. The old national anthem was replaced by a new one that retained the old music, but with newly composed content. The composer was Sixana Sisan. The new content of the national anthem is quoted below.

*The Lao Nation has been wholeheartedly respected by all Lao,
The Laos are well united, hearts integrated
Determined to proceed for the dignity of Lao
Supporting, recognizing equity among minorities,
We will not let the colonial power dominate Lao
All Lao all will protect our freedom and independence
Independence and freedom will yield security and prosperity for
the Nation.*

it can be observed that Laos after the Revolution emphasized “Lao-ness” and social equity. It recognized the plurality of the ethnic minorities, and tried to promote nationalism. These characteristics were reflected in the textbooks of this period. The main textbooks that were used as bases for this analysis include *Babrian Prawatsart Chan Matayom Suksa 1*, and *Prawatsart Chan Matayom Suksa 3*. Both textbooks were products of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party and the Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. In other words, the history was determined by these two elite groups.

History: a Replacement of “Chronology”

It is interesting to see that in this Socialism Period, the word “prawatsart (history)” was used to replace the term “chronology”. It was also the first time that the history subject was defined and its significance pronounced. *“History is a sector of the social science, which provides knowledge about the past and process of social and cultural struggles of mankind”*. (Ministry of Education, n.d. p.1). Accordingly, history as defined in these textbooks refers to the history of struggles from the past to present time. According to this new definition, mankind is not perceived as just struggling against Nature, but also against social domination, for example, against the exploitation of the lords who owned slavery, the feudal, the capitalists, and the colonialists. It was stated in the **Babrian Prawatsart Chan Matayom Suksa 1** that the mankind has passed through the process of social transformation: the primitive, slavery, feudal, capitalism, and socialism (Ministry of Education and Sport, n.d. : 2)

As such, it is clear that the conceptual framework applied in writing history in the Lao textbooks has been very much influenced by the Marxist

approach, emphasizing dialectical materialism. Based on this approach, both natural and human products are taken as basic capital. Historical changes are mainly caused by the conflicts between the natural and human products, the production and ownership systems, and between the ownership system and politico-cultural systems. Basically, the history of mankind is the history of struggles in an economy. As such, most Marxist historians agree that the real history needs to involve people. Recordings of people's behavior must reflect the needs and movements of the mass. This rationale can be seen in many parts of the textbooks used in the secondary level, as a large part is devoted to the history of people's movements, or the history of common people who fought with the dominating power.

A Start of Lao History: the Construction of a Lao Identity

In **Babrian Prawatsart Chan Matayom Suksa 1**, there was a sign of an effort to construct a common national identity. The strategy is exactly similar to the one used in the Independent Period, that is the presentation of history of each ethnicity. The difference in the histories of ethnic minorities from the one presented in the Independent Period concerns the beginning of Laos.

In this period, the history of Laos was claimed to start from the construction of Muang Than by Khun Borom. This event was perceived as the beginning of the cultural integration among Lao ethnics, using the Lan Xang ancient chronology as a driving force. In this textbook, the history of Laos was presented in many periods, starting from the social structures of ancient Laos. Effort has been made to show that there were residents in Laos since the ancient time, as proved by the archeological evidence. Then, the Ai Lao or ancient Laos were mentioned as residing here until Khun Borom moved into this land to build Muang Than. Then, he sent his son, Khun Law, to control

Muang Chawa or Luang Phrabang. This king was recorded as the first lord of Luang Phrabang. This reflects the intention of this textbook to make a historical link between the formation of Muang Than and the establishment of Lan Xang or Luang Prabang kingdom. At the same time, the textbook shows the joint of the history of Muang Phuan and Muang Luang Phrabang. The foundation of Muang Phuan (Chiang Kwang) during the reign of Khun Jueng, and the foundation of Luang Prabang by Khun Law were both resulting from Khun Borom's initiative. Thus, it can be concluded that this textbook attempted to demonstrate that Laos has a longer history than that used to be shown. The history showed that there existed the Lao provinces long before King Fa Ngum integrated them into the one kingdom. This presentation of past history is, however, similar to the one of the Independent period, in a way that history was used as a mean to build up nationalism among the population.

Laos as a Nation

The “nation” is an important concept in the Lao history textbooks. It is not surprising to see that parts of Lao history have been written to serve the nation. The image of Laos as presented by the State and the **Babrian Prawatsart Chan Matayom Suksa 1** is of a nation that has long history, and that has passed through many courageous struggles over many periods of time. Those struggles were between the dominating power and the dominated Laos, ranging from the Lao's feudal lords and monarchy to the French colonial power, and the domination of Japan and the United States of America. It was found that even during the period of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the history still involved the heroes from all social strata who had sacrificed themselves for the freedom of the country. Some characteristics found in the historical presentations of this period are described below.

1. Presentations of the Hero Kings in the Independent Period.

It was found in the **Babrian Prawatsart Chan Matayom Suksa 1** that the story of the kings in the Independent periods was still retained as a major part of Lao history. However, the history described only the kings who contributed to the formation of the nation. In this textbook, the kings who covered many pages in the Lao history were still the same persons who were most powerful in the textbooks of the Independent period. These are as follows.

Chao Fa Ngum The textbook provides detailed description about this king, covering his childhood in the period of disintegrated Lao to the integration of the provinces into one kingdom. Before the integration, Muang Chawa was divided into many townships under different conflicting monarchs. The textbook emphasizes this historical event as one of the greatest turning points in Lao history. It states that the integration and formation of Lan Xang led to the organization of political, economic, cultural, and traditional structures of Laos. In other words, it paved the basis for the present Laos. In this period, Lan Xang was presented as equally prosperous as the neighboring countries, namely Sukhothai, Ayudhya, Daiviet, Cambodia, and Burma.

It should be noted that a number of Lao revolutionary troops during the revolutionary period were named after Fa Ngum. Similarly, the Fa Ngum period was mentioned in the document that the Lao People's Revolutionary Party distributed in its seminars in 2004. In this document Fa Ngum was praised for his achievement in organizing the nation, and founding Lan Xang kingdom. It was the first time that Laos became one large united kingdom. The foundation of Lan Xang symbolized the unity, stability, power, and prosperity of Laos in the past (Kana Kotesana Obrom Soonklang Pak, 2004 : 8-9)

Chao Suriyavongsa Another king that receives attention in the Lao textbooks is Chao Suriyavongsa. The textbook emphasized his efforts in revising the political administration and decentralization of power for the strength of the nation. During this period, the kingdom was decentralized to balance the power of the royal elites. Legislative systems were improved. There were also improvements in the economic, cultural, religious, and artistic spheres, and in foreign affairs.

Chao Anouvongse or Chao Anou In this textbook, Chao Anouvongse was presented as the leader of the struggle for freedom. The history covers his preparation by mobilizing collective support, the construction of the cities, temples, palaces, and other infrastructures, and the ending of the liberation process. It was stated that failure to liberate the country was due to many factors. Among these were the inferiority of the Lao forces and the less efficiency of technology. However, the most important factor was due to the lack of unity within the Lao monarchy themselves, as they separated themselves into three factions: Vientiane coalition, Luang Prabang, and Champasak. There was inadequate cooperation among these three coalitions, each of which valued individual rather than collective benefits. Consequently, this textbook admired Chao Anouvongse as a patriot king, who had fought bravely, and never yielded to the enemies of the country and the Lao people.

2. Presentations of People's Movement in the History

Besides the recording of the king's bravery, the textbooks of this period also recorded the history of common people. The textbooks emphasized the people's movements and struggles for liberation. Some of the people's

movements that received attention in the Lao textbooks of the Socialism period are as follows.

The Uttapue People's Movement in 1579

This movement was led by Khru Pha Khao in the South of Lao to protest against the Burmese power. The movement was, however, not successful.

Phra Sa Khiad Ngong's Movement in 1819.

The textbook admired Phra Sa, who mobilized people to fight with the royal elite in Champasak, He is portrayed as one of the patriots who longed for freedom. Not being able to tolerate the Siamese exploitation, he advocated fighting. He was successful in saving Champasak and liberated it from the governor of Nakorn Ratchasima and the Siamese power.

We regret that the textbooks for Mathayom Suksa 2, which were written before 1986 could not be found. However, reading through the textbook **Babrian Witayasartsankom Chan Matayom Suksa 2**, which was printed in 1997, we found that the history presented therein is from the period of the 16th century to the proclamation of independence in 1945. One out of the three historical contents presented in this textbook were devoted to the people's movements during 1901-1937. Four major movements were presented.

1) The Movement Led by Po Kaduad

Po Kaduad was a resident of Muang Phon, Sawanakheth province, who was so touched by the people's poverty, that he mobilized poor people to protest against the taxation system controlled by the French power in 1901. This movement ended with the surrender of the protesters. The leaders were executed in 1903.

2) The Movement Led by Ong Kaew

This event was recorded as a movement led by meritorious persons during 1901–1910. The movements spread over the South, covering Uttarapue, Salawan and Champasak provinces.

3) The Movement Led by Ong Kommadam

The movement was during 1910–1937 and affected Salawan, Uttarapue and Pakse provinces.

4) The Movement Led by Krue Kham in 1920

This movement took place in Vientiane in 1920. As a memorial to Krue Kham, the Ministry of Education pronounced that 7 October, which was the date that Krue Kham led the people to fight, was the national Teacher Day.

Another interesting point in the Lao textbooks of this period is the presentations of the history of ethnic minorities in Lao, who contributed to the nation's liberation. One event of these is the Movement of the Hmong during 1918–1922 led by Chao Fa (Prince) Pajai. The movement was to protest against France. These presentations of the unrests of the ethnic minorities is different from those in the Independent Period. During that time these protestors were presented as rebels, not as heroes.

3. Emphasis on the People's Revolution Led by Naew Lao Issara, the Protesting State, and the Lao Issara Forces, The Lao People's Party, Pathed Lao Army, Naew Lao Haksart, Naew Huam Khmere Issara, and the Vietnamese Volunteers

This type of emphasis is clearly reflected in **Babrean Prawatsart Chan Mathayom Suksa Peethee 3** or the History Textbook for the Ninth Grade

(Ministry of Education and Sport, 1979. The contents of this textbook covered the period starting from 1945 to the foundation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975. Each part and chapter of the book demonstrated the people's involvement under the lead of Naew Lao Issara and the Protesting Government. They also showed the contribution of the Indochinese alliances and the Vietnamese volunteer army in expanding their boundary and their successes. The second part on **the "War at the Link of Winter and the New Season 1953-1954"**, for example, elaborated the expansion of the liberated area, and the isolation of the enemies' army in Dien Bien Phu. Due to a number of victories over the French troops, including the Dien Bien Phu, Laos was successful in setting up a treaty with France. This treaty was countersigned in Geneva in 1954. This victory was described in this book as *"the great victory of the Indochinese people"*. The victory also legitimized the right of Laos over two areas: Sam Nue and Pongsalee. (Ministry of Education and Sport, 1979: 28)

Reference to the past revolutions and struggles are added not only in the history textbooks, but also in the literature textbooks. For example, **Babrean Khunasombat Chan Prathom Peethee 5**, teaches the young generation to pay love to their homeland country, families, friends, and teachers. The book also teaches them to respect the leaders, and hate the enemies. This information is put in Chapter 4 **Love the Young Volunteer**, Chapter 8 **Love and being Grateful to the Labors, and the People who Contributed to the Revolution**, Chapter 10 **Adore and Respect the Leaders**, Chapter 12 **Hate the Enemies**. Similarly, the textbook, **Babrean Wanakam Mathayom 1** (Ministry of Education and Sport, 1978) covering 34 topics, also implies the love for the nation's literature, respect to the leaders, appreciate the revolutionary ideology, enthusiasm for revolution, and nationalism. This common message

was transferred to the school pupils through Suphanuvongse's address at the occasion of the beginning of the academic year 1964–1965. The address conveyed message about the construction of the country, the revolutions resulting on happiness, the Lao–Vietnam unity, the last minute fight, and the complimentary between people and army.

The Nation and the Nation's Enemies in the Lao Textbooks

Nation and the enemies of the nation are the two important concepts in the Lao textbooks of this period. As mentioned earlier, the history of the nation is the history of struggles between the exploiters and exploited. Together with the presentations of heroes, there was one of the enemies of the Lao. In **Babrian Prawatsart Chan Matayom Suksa 1**, the enemies of the nation were stated as the Burmese, Siamese, and the most powerful, the French colonial.

As for the higher level textbook, **Babrian Prawatsart Chan Matayom Suksa 3**, it presented the movements and struggles between the dominators and dominated people, those who obey and those who break the law, between the Lao people and the French colonizers, and intervening powerful countries such as the United States of America and its follower. The third part of the textbook covers the historical period of the protests against the United States of America and its follower in order to bring peace, neutrality, and solidarity to the country. This period falls during 1954–1959. In addition to this, Chapter 9 of the book, entitled “**the Lawful Fight In the Period of National Solidarity**”, elaborated the integration of the two provinces. This chapter reveals the tricks used by the colonial United States of America and its follower to break the Geneva treaty, signed in 1954. The United States did this by performing an “*uncommon war*” with the intention to destroy the Lao

forces that were rebelling against the United States in Laos. This Chapter (Ch.9) attempts to show that the rebel (Naew Lao Hak Sart) was not against the law. Instead, it was the United States that destroyed the coalition government, as they broke the contract made in November 1957. This event was elaborated in Chapter 10 of the textbook. (Ministry of Education and Sport, 1979: 34-49)

The fourth part of the book describes the liberation of Lao from the United States from mid -1959-1975. Most of the contents of this part concern the domination of the United States over Laos. Chapter 11 presents the expansion of the Lao People's movements. It also emphasizes the increase in the American interventions in Laos. Chapter 14 elaborates the American invasion into the area that used to be under the control of Naew Lao Hak Sart, covering the period of 1963-1972.

The questions posted at the end of the textbook, thus, concern the enemies of the nation. (Ministry of Education and Sport, 1979: 51) Two sample questions are drawn from the end of Chapter 13.

1. *How and when did the United States and its follower destroy the Lao coalition?*
2. *How did the United States and its follower cause the second war?*

It can be observed that the United States was presented similarly in all Lao textbooks, as a hostile and cunning country. The **Babrian Wanagam Mathayom 1** (the Literature Textbook for Mathayom 1), printed by the Ministry of Education in 1978, presented the colonial United States, and the punishment of the colonial United States and its follower. Even in the textbook for the first grade printed in 1987, statements related to the United States as the nation's enemy were found. The presentation of the United States was intended to inform the younger Lao children about the past history.

Mak Kieb (custard apples) are sweet and cool

Mak Kiang (oranges) are so sweet

How come the savage Americans

Enjoy using explosive fruits to kill people

From Chapter 79 (Ministry of Education, 1987)

The Lao soldiers were brave

They fought with the devils

Drove the savage Americans away

Across the Mekong River

From Chapter 52 (Ministry of Education, 1987)

It is clear that the Lao history textbooks attempt to distinguish between “friends” and “enemies” of the nation, so that the younger generation can make distinctions between them. In addition to this, names of the supporters and followers of the United States are identified in the book, for example, General Phumi Nohsawan, was mentioned in chapter 12 as a person who cooperate with the American forces to destroy Naew Lao Hak Sart. The followers of the Americans are mentioned as Ku Prasit and Siho, and the Thai soldiers. Chapter 14 also reveals that a Thai forces joined the United States in bombing Route 9 and 12 of the country (Ministry of Education and Sport, 1979: 53)

4. Conclusion

The history as presented in the Lao textbooks is intentionally constructed to transfer the nationalism to the Lao younger generation. It is the history of struggles and liberation, between the dominating powerful countries

and the Lao people. The history of struggles in both periods, the Independent and the Socialism periods, share some commonalities. They emphasized the roles of the kings in the Independent period, religion, and the nation. The history presented in the Socialism period, however, added more emphasis on the people's movements and the ethnic minorities. It also shows recognition for the support from the alliances, such as the Indochinese coalition and Vietnam. In addition, the Lao history implies the distinction between the “we” and “they” or the enemies of the nation. This distinction is transferred to the younger generation since their primary education onwards. It is anticipated that the new policy announced in 1986, referred to as “the New Imagination Period”, will have further implications and impacts on the presentation of the history of Laos.

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ประวัติศาสตร์ลาวในหนังสือแบบเรียนลาว นับตั้งแต่สมัยเอกราชถึงสปป.ลาว “สังคมนิยม” (1949-1986)

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บทความนี้ต้องการศึกษาการเขียนประวัติศาสตร์ลาวในหนังสือแบบเรียนของลาวตั้งแต่สมัยเอกราช “พระราชอาณาจักรลาว” จาก ค.ศ.1949 จนถึงสมัยสาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว ค.ศ.1986 ผลการศึกษา พบว่า ช่วงหลัง ค.ศ.1949 ถือได้ว่าเป็นช่วงสำคัญช่วงหนึ่งคือ เป็นการสร้างชาติภายหลังได้รับเอกราชจากฝรั่งเศส งานเขียนทางประวัติศาสตร์ในหนังสือแบบเรียนได้รับการประดิษฐ์ขึ้นโดยได้รับอิทธิพลจากแนวทางเขียนแบบพงศาวดาร ส่วนเนื้อหาได้เน้นความสำคัญไปที่สถาบันหลัก คือ ชาติ ศาสนา และสถาบันกษัตริย์ ส่วนในช่วงที่สองคือ ช่วงหลังการเปลี่ยนแปลงการปกครองเข้าสู่ระบอบสังคมนิยม และเปลี่ยนชื่อประเทศจากราชอาณาจักรลาวเป็นสาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยประชาชนลาว ค.ศ.1975 การเขียนประวัติศาสตร์ในหนังสือแบบเรียนของลาวได้เปลี่ยนไปภายใต้อิทธิพลของกรอบแนวคิดประวัติศาสตร์สำนักมาร์กซิสม์ขณะเดียวกันสำนักชาตินิยมก็ได้รับการปลูกฝังในหนังสือแบบเรียนนี้ด้วย ประวัติศาสตร์ในหนังสือแบบเรียนของลาวที่รัฐสร้างขึ้นเพื่อให้เยาวชนลาวได้รับรู้จึงเป็น ประวัติศาสตร์ของการต่อสู้และการปลดปล่อยระหว่างชาติที่เข้ามาครอบครองดินแดนลาวกับประชาชนลาว และในบรรดาประวัติศาสตร์แห่งการต่อสู้ในแต่ละช่วงเวลานั้น พื้นที่ในหนังสือแบบเรียนลาวก็ได้เปิดโอกาสให้กับสถาบันกษัตริย์สมัยศักดินา ขบวนการสามัญชน และชนกลุ่มน้อยรวมทั้งชาติที่มีส่วนร่วมในการต่อสู้ในลาวหลังสงครามโลกครั้งที่สอง

เช่น เวียดนามได้มีพื้นที่ในหนังสือแบบเรียนทางประวัติศาสตร์ลาวด้วย นอกจากนี้ในเนื้อหาแบบเรียนลาวนี้ยังแบ่งแยก “เขา” และ “เรา” หรือศัตรูของชาติไว้อย่างชัดเจนเพื่อถ่ายทอดให้เยาวชนได้รับรู้นับตั้งแต่เริ่มแรกเข้าเรียนชั้นประถมเป็นต้นไปอีกด้วย