

Configurations of Globalization in Laos and Cambodia

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Globalization has been one of the key terms in the social sciences during the past few years.¹ A certain consensus about the term seems to have been established: There is not *one* globalization, but there are several tendencies, most of which have been effective for centuries (Nederveen Pieterse 2004). Globalization is a complex interaction of the global and the local, with the different regions of the world growing together in many respects. This does not necessarily entail uniformity but rather a double process of unification and differentiation that Robertson (1990) termed ‘glocalization’. When we use the word globalization today, we usually refer only to the latest intensification of this process – of which economic liberalization is just one aspect. The role and importance of the different aspects of current globalization is less clear. To clarify these, we now have to link the general consensus to social theory and empirical methods. I will concentrate on the question: What actually happens to local cultures and social structures?

In this paper, I want to pick up the question by taking a closer look at the current effects of globalization in Laos and Cambodia.² The first section proposes a model to integrate global and local levels and tendencies, which I call a socioculture. The second section deals with the history of Laos and Cambodia, with apparent similarities and differences between both countries and with the forces of globalization. Then, the current configurations in politics, economics and the public sphere in both countries are analyzed in more detail. A summary provides an overview of the Lao and Cambodian

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² Fieldwork was carried out in Laos between 1994 and 2003, in Cambodia in 2003 (see Rehbein 2004). Figures refer to these years and do not extend beyond 2004.

sociocultures and their relation to the tendencies of globalization. The central argument of the paper is that statistics do not tell us very much about the effects of globalization unless they are linked to social and cultural conditions. These can be conceived as a configuration of sociocultures.

Configuration of Fields

We are all familiar with the concept of social structure. It refers to models like the distribution of income or the class struggle. These models suggest a clear distribution of individuals within a one- or two-dimensional structure. It makes one think of rice in a bowl with each grain having one (and only one) position within a closed container. Referring to social structure, this entity is the nation state. Ulrich Beck (1997) called the conception the "container model of society". It loses its value with globalization (Robertson 1990). But it does not really fit societies of pre-modern times either. In fact, it is rather doubtful if it ever made much sense of social reality.

I want to introduce a different model, derived from Pierre Bourdieu and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Bourdieu broke down the social world into social fields, which are spheres of social action with their own logic and goals (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 97). There are different fields in modern societies, such as politics, economics, arts, media and so on. The metaphor of a game, which Wittgenstein used and Bourdieu borrowed from him, illustrates this. There are different games and different types of games, for example baseball, football, board games and card games. Each game has its own rules and goals. And whoever is good at one game, is not necessarily good at another, although one is usually good at various games that require similar skills. This is true for social fields as well. To act in society, one needs certain skills, and often more than that: one may need a title, money, authority and so on. Bourdieu subsumed all of these preconditions for social action under the concept of capital. I prefer to speak of resources and confine the term capital to economics only. Every field (and game) requires different resources that have less value in other fields. In the academic field for example, one needs a title to be fully eligible for all types of action. This title has some – although less – value in other fields. It increases one's chances for example in economics, politics, and the media but has practically no value in the field of sports, however. This means we do not have one position in one homogeneous social structure, but different positions in different social fields. According to Bourdieu, there is competition for better social positions and for favorable standards of evaluation of one's own resources in every social field. Fields are shaped by struggles for specific

positions, definitions and resources. To determine the structure of a given society would require to determine the different fields, their relative importance and the distribution of resources required in these fields.

There are societies and realms of social action that are not determined or dominated by struggles. They are not differentiated into fields, i.e. they are not characterized by competition for better social positions. In societies that consist of village communities, it makes little sense to distinguish between different fields – although one can distinguish between different games with different sets of rules. I wish to call an undifferentiated society like that of a village a “unitary society”. All social relations between two persons are more or less present in every interaction between them. This is mainly due to the fact that all persons in the village know each other and have to deal with each other in every social game.

Fields emerge historically in a process of division of labour and social struggles. And they are interwoven with human relations that are not competitive and/or not functional. These are cultural phenomena. Fields are in part cultural phenomena, and they are based (at least in part) on cultural phenomena. They include various types of rules, which are not necessarily subject to struggles (see Wittgenstein 1984: 237 *passim*). Bourdieu’s conception is still valuable for undifferentiated societies, however, because it acknowledges the important role of culture in determining the structure of a society. Fields as realms of action are as much cultural phenomena (they comprise rules, goals, and values) as they are social phenomena (they comprise struggles, resources, and power). And this is true for any realm of action. Bourdieu’s concept is not necessarily inseparably linked to that of a nation state, either – which most models of social structure are. Therefore, it can be applied to smaller and bigger entities than the nation state. To distinguish the concept from the “container model of society” and to emphasize the link between social structure and culture, I want to speak of sociocultures. As fields develop in history, with earlier structures, cultures and fields continuing to exist in some way or another, we have to look at the historical evolution of current sociocultures.

Background

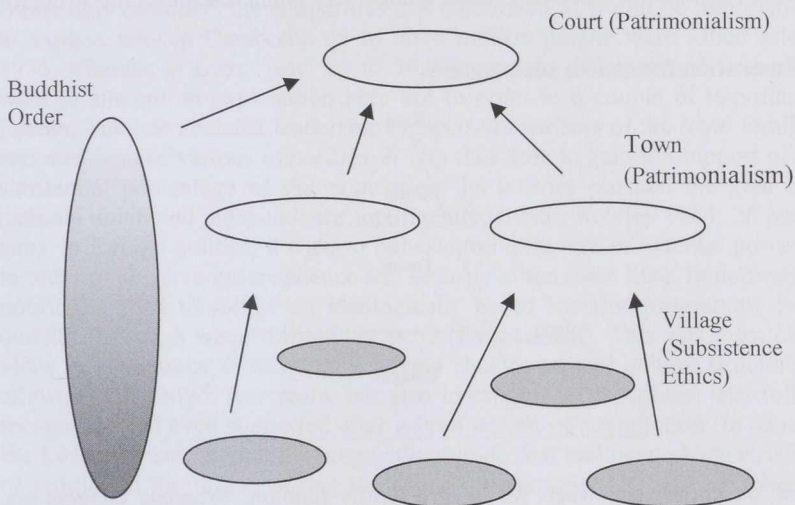
From the perspective of universal theories, there is hardly any difference between Laos and Cambodia. They even share many features with most other developing countries around the globe. There are pronounced inequalities between urban and rural regions, between ethnic majority and

minorities, mountain and valley peoples, national capital and periphery, rich and poor and between different regions.

As far as history is concerned, Laos and Cambodia bear an even closer resemblance. In both countries important political entities rose and fell several centuries ago. The best known are Angkor, which covered present-day Cambodia as well as some of Laos and Thailand, and Lan Sang, which included Laos and Northeastern Thailand. They have been described by Oliver Wolters (1982) as *mandala*, i.e. as circles of power forming part of more encompassing circles of power. The Tai have their own term for this type of structure, *muang*, which means anything from district or town to country. Raendchen and Raendchen (1998) have called the Tai political structure *baan-muang*, village-town. The villages form the basis of the *mandala* structure (see Illustration 1). They are dominated by a town, which in the past was usually fortified and had a market. The town rulers paid tribute to a more powerful ruler in a bigger town or city. He in turn sometimes paid tribute to the Chinese emperor. The *mandala* structures were not oriental despotisms or bureaucratic states but loyalties of minor princes to a major prince. They were not unitary societies because minor entities like villages were not perfectly integrated by the ruling court – but villages were often unitary. The Buddhist order was to some degree integrated into the *mandala* structure with lesser monasteries in the village and more important monasteries in the cities. But to some degree it was an autonomous institution, i.e. something like a field.

The court did, however, attempt to integrate much portions of the surrounding population in various instances. Then more of a unitary society evolved, in which everybody had a specific rank. In Tai *muang* this type of society was called *sakdina*. In Laos, it is documented for example in the Lao epic Nithan Khun Borom (for Thailand, see Terwiel 1983: 11 *passim*).

The *mandala* of Angkor and the *muang* of Lan Sang came to be dominated by the larger political entities of Siam and Vietnam. When the French subdued the region in the nineteenth century, they created two new states with the names of Laos and Cambodia. As in other colonial territories, hitherto non-existent borders were drawn and officially fixed, regardless of historical, cultural and ethnic ties. The French did not have much interest in Laos and Cambodia and did little to develop their economy, administration and education (Gay 1995). Nonetheless, the French presence changed the societies significantly. A western-type urban culture developed, a small but important group of intellectuals came into existence, a modern nation-state was founded, the minorities and all types of periphery were integrated into a larger political structure that introduced hitherto unknown taxes, and slavery

Illustration 1: *mandala* socioculture

(Note: The elliptic shapes indicate social entities better as circles contained in the circles of the higher level)

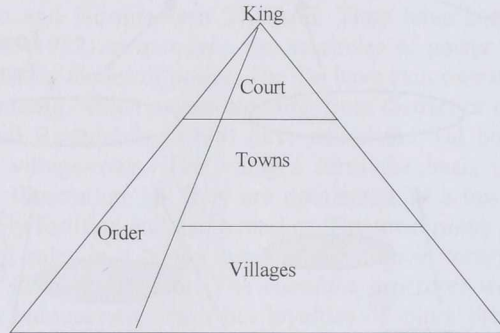
was abolished (Gay 1995; Halpern 1964: 2). Resistance to the French return after the Second World War and the intervention of the United States finally resulted in the foundation of the socialist states of Laos and Cambodia in 1975. After the socialist takeover, part of the elite and the majority of the urban middle class left Laos and Cambodia.³

The historical resemblance of both countries is paralleled by similar sociocultures (see Illustration 1). The *mandala* continues to be the basis of political life. It rests on ties between persons of superior and inferior rank for Thailand. Ernst Boesch (1970) and Norman Jacobs (1971) have described this relationship as patrimonial – adapting Max Weber's concept to the Asian scene. A patrimonial relationship is not simple domination but something like an exchange of protection against loyalty. This often includes the exchange of labour against remuneration as well. The patrimonial socio-

³ The revolution and its consequences are a complex process, which would require a separate investigation.

culture characterizes the town, kinship characterizes the village (Rehbein 2004: 40 *passim*). In villages, inhabitants are usually related to each other. The structure of a Southeast Asian village very much resembles the structure

Illustration 2: *sakdina* socioculture



that we experience when we have a family reunion. Whereas villagers are related, people in a patrimonial structure mostly are not. They act as if they were, but they can leave the structure any time they want. And they expect the respective duties to be fulfilled, which is not necessarily the case in a family. Political culture and much of economic culture in Laos can be characterized as patrimonial, while peasant culture is that of kinship (see Rehbein 2005). In Cambodia, these sociocultures appear to be similar. Apart from the sociocultural similarities, there are also striking parallels between many fundamental data for both countries.

Table 1: Cambodia and Laos: Similarities in socio-economic data

| | Cambodia | Laos |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Area | 181 040 sq km | 236 000 sq km |
| Population aged 0–14 | 39 % | 44 % |
| Employment in agriculture, 2001 | 80 % | 85 % |
| GNP per capita, 1999 | \$ 260 | \$ 280 |
| Trade deficit, 2002 | \$ 351 million | \$ 331 million |
| External debt, 2000 | \$ 2.0 billion | \$ 2.4 billion |

Sources: National Statistical Centre of Laos 2000, CIA World Fact Book Cambodia 2004 (<http://sportsforum.ws/sd/factbook/geos/cb.html>), CIA World Fact Book Laos 2004 (<http://sportsforum.ws/sd/factbook/geos/la.html>)

Differences

If one only considers the similarities just mentioned, it would be impossible to explain why in Cambodia up to three million people were killed after 1975, whereas in Laos “just” up to 30,000 persons disappeared.⁴ I do not want to attempt an explanation here but to point to a couple of important factors. The Lao socialist leadership comprised members of the royal family and members of various minorities. It was thus able to gain the support of a substantial percentage of the population. Its politics pursued the goal of national union and independence intelligently (Evans, Rowley 1984: 26 *passim*). In foreign politics, it tried to balance the influence of external powers in order to preserve independence and security at the same time. In domestic politics, it tried to follow an ideologically based socialist programme but quickly revised it when difficulties arose (Evans 1990). This was most obvious in economics as cooperatives were shut down and market structures allowed after only a few years, but also in religion as Buddhism was fully recognised and even supported after a brief period of suppression. In short, the Lao leadership adopted a pragmatic attitude that had been characteristic of politics in the region during the preceding centuries. In many respects, Laos returned to pre-French structures. Most Laotians were subsistence farmers living in kinship structures (Evans 1990). The elite dominated politics and the marginal money economy, which were patrimonially structured. However, most of the educated elite had left, up to a third of the population was displaced and party control extended to every village. That is, Laos was now an integrated nation state based on traditional structures without economic and intellectual resources.

It looks as if the pre-colonial structure of an elite, a small group of city dwellers and the peasantry along with the Buddhist order was reproduced. But the socialist party formed an all-encompassing structure that did not comply with the *muang* model. It also contained bureaucratic elements. In a way, politics was the only social field under socialist rule. There was no independent economic field nor a civil society. But the spheres of village life and of the Buddhist order retained some autonomy. These were the only entities working against a unitary society under party rule.

Cambodia also returned to an entirely agrarian economy under the rule of a socialist leadership. This leadership, however, was neither internally nor externally pragmatic (see Kiernan 1996). Most intellectuals and city dwellers were killed, a considerable number of the families were torn apart,

⁴ For the entire section cf. Evans, Rowley 1984.

much of the material heritage was destroyed (Ledgerwood et al. 1994: 2 *passim*). Unlike in Laos, Buddhism was prohibited and brutally oppressed. And whereas in Laos, the typical socialist programme of education for all was inaugurated, in Cambodia the slogan read “education for none” (Evans 1998: 153). The leadership sought no balance with its neighbours but provoked a war with Vietnam and tried to destroy all traditional as well as modern structures. One of the reasons for this was its lack of ties with the old royal elite and the majority of the population (Evans, Rowley 1984: 22). It succeeded gaining the support of China and the United States against Vietnam, however. On this basis, it was able to retain power until January 1979 when the Vietnamese overran Cambodia and installed a fraction of the Cambodian elite that was friendly to Hanoi. Even though the Vietnamese withdrew and the international community took charge of Cambodia in the early 1990’s, this elite has remained in power up to this day. Moreover, a completely fresh start has been attempted with the intervention of the international community (see next section).

As far as development is concerned, data for Cambodia look better than those for Laos. Cambodia has a much bigger population on approximately the same surface. This means a higher population density – which is often considered to be a precondition for development. Cambodia produces more rice and has a lower external debt. The country is less mountainous, has access to the ocean, more suitable waterways and two railway lines, whereas Laos has no railways (see Table 2). This means that Cambodia is more integrated.⁵ If we combine this integration with the intervention of the international community, we might be tempted to conclude that developmental prospects for Cambodia should be better than those for Laos.

Table 2: Cambodia and Laos: Differences in socio-economic data (2002)

| | Cambodia | Laos |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Population | 13 million | 5.3 million |
| Rice production | 4.3 million tons | 2.4 million tons |
| Debt ratio | 131 % | 629 % |
| Inflation rate | 3.2 % | 10.6 % |

Sources: See Table 1

⁵ “Compared to neighboring Thailand and Vietnam, it was geographically compact, demographically dispersed, linguistically unified, ethnically homogeneous, socially undifferentiated, culturally uniform, administratively unitary, politically undeveloped, economically undiversified, and educationally deprived.” (Kiernan 1996: 4, on Cambodia in the mid-twentieth century)

We now have to link these data to the global configuration. Laos has opened up for the international community much later and much more hesitantly than Cambodia. It still adheres to the socialist one-party system, which is usually considered to contradict the requirements of a market economy. A closer look at the tendencies of globalization in Laos and Cambodia will cast a different light on the outlook for both countries.

Globalization

In 1979, when the Vietnamese backed government took over in Cambodia, economy and society had been utterly destroyed. Little reconstruction was done during the following ten years because the government received no support from the West, only from the impoverished Eastern Bloc countries. Fighting continued as China and some Western countries still supported the Khmer Rouge (Roberts 2001: 11). In 1986, the Soviet Union started to pull out of Southeast Asia and advised Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to adopt a more market-oriented economy. China and the US opposed the emerging regional solution of the Cambodian situation and called for an international conference, which was held in Paris in 1989. One of its outcomes was the installation of an interim government that included the Khmer Rouge. Its function was to prepare a democratic election, which took place in 1993. During the years of preparation Cambodia was controlled by international forces known under the acronym UNTAC. With the UNTAC, globalization – meaning the current phase of the world growing together (Robertson 1990) – reached Cambodia. This implied the arrival of several thousands of Westerners, who brought an incredible amount of money, technology and modern lifestyles with them. After the election in 1993, they left Cambodia. Their money had been distributed. Because of the quasi-patrimonial structures it had found its way into the pockets of the Vietnamese-influenced ruling elite under the leadership of Hun Sen. Prices had risen (especially in real estate), a large sector of prostitution had emerged, and modern lifestyles had become familiar and desirable to almost every Cambodian.

Globalization entered Laos much more slowly and more under the control of the socialist leadership (Rehbein 2004). As in Vietnam and Cambodia, the first economic reforms were made in 1979, followed by the more comprehensive reforms in 1986. The country did not really open up for foreign tourists and capital until 1994. During the whole period, foreign aid grew more or less constantly. Today per capita foreign aid is higher in Laos than in Cambodia. A few years ago, many Lao peasants had never seen aid workers, tourists or businessmen – not even soldiers during the Second

Indochinese War (Rehbein 2004). Television is just beginning to reach the most remote areas. When asked in 2003 about their material wishes, Lao villagers near the Vietnamese border never mentioned a car or a TV set. They wanted practical things for their peasant life, for example a fish pond or a small tractor. Cambodians replied in interviews that they wished to have cars and houses. These wishes are widespread in the urban population of Laos as well. They come with globalization. Some indicators for modernization under the conditions of globalization are the importance of the service sector, the arrival of foreign tourists and the number of TV stations in the national language (see Table 3).⁶ It is safe to conclude that globalization affected Cambodia earlier, deeper and more markedly.

Table 3: Cambodia and Laos: Indicators of globalization

| | Cambodia | Laos |
|--|----------|---------|
| Share of services in GNP, 2001 | 40 % | 28 % |
| Employment by sectors, 2001 | | |
| Agriculture | 80 % | 85 % |
| Industry | 8 % | 6 % |
| Services | 12 % | 9 % |
| Western tourists, 2000 | 351,000 | 140,000 |
| TV channels in national language, 2003 | 7 | 1 |

Sources: See Table 1

Political Field

I now want to take a closer look at three important fields in both countries, the political field, the economic field and the public field (now called civil society). Cambodia is not only more exposed to the tendencies of globalization, it also follows the Western model in these three fields. It has a liberalized market economy, a democracy, and – at least to some extent – free and

⁶ Another indicator for modernization is language (for Laos cf. Rehbein, Sayaseng 2004). In Laos, personal pronouns have not yet become the dominating form of address as in Thailand or Cambodia. Lao use kinship terms to address each other. Personal pronouns are confined to urban environments – or more generally, to anonymous contact. Kinship terms express a hierarchy, more precisely, a family or patrimonial relationship. They are the standard and often only form of address in the village. In Lao cities and in Thailand they have become rare. They seem to have become much rarer in Cambodia as well although I have not empirically validated this claim.

independent media. Laos has a market economy that is still under control of the government (which means the socialist leadership).

In both countries, the socialist leadership tried to level social differences as far as possible. The leveling stopped short of the leadership itself. The leadership – before and after the revolution – has always consisted of a patrimonially structured group. Most members of this group are linked through family ties. In Laos, the same families run the country today that ran the country before the revolution (cf. Halpern 1964, Rehbein 2004). Only the most exposed individuals and a couple of family names have disappeared (e.g. the Sananikone and the royal family of Champassak). Beneath the elite, social structure has not changed very much either. Peasant society is structured through kinship, urban society through patrimonialism. One of the important changes in post-revolutionary society was of course the party. The party offered the opportunity of upward mobility, and the leading revolutionary families even gained access to the elite. This means, the majority of the population lives in traditional kinship structures, the rest in patrimonial or bureaucratic structures, which allow upward mobility. At the same time, the position of the elite itself remains unthreatened. This structure has been fairly stable. It will increasingly come under pressure, however. First, the elite is growing too big; factional struggles between families and political groups as well as economic competition are the result. Second, globalized city dwellers do not want to improve their social position through the party alone. Third, the party structure has always interfered with traditional structures, which will become a more serious problem as peasants find a better infrastructure enabling them to break out of village and party structures.

The structure of the Cambodian elite does not seem to differ much from that of the Lao elite. It has a quasi-patrimonial structure and rests on the shoulders of a socialist party. David Roberts has rendered a perfect description of this structure: “Power in Cambodia, both traditionally since pre-Angkorean days and contemporarily since the 1970s, has been of an absolutist nature, with little tolerance of opposition. Underpinning this is a system of patronage and clientelism that seeks to ensure the preservation of elites by lower ranks, and to ensure so far as possible positions of economic and sometimes social privilege by elites. Loyalty passes upwards ... Gifts ... passed downwards” (Roberts 2001: 32). There are important differences, however. The leadership around Pol Pot ousted almost the entire pre-revolutionary elite. Some of its members returned with the Vietnamese-backed socialists around Hun Sen and Heng Samrin after 1979. Thus, the present Cambodian elite has not organically evolved. Furthermore, the socialist party and the elite face competition ever since the Paris conference in 1989. The Paris conference “attempted to implant equality and individual

choice in a society governed, and financed, through hierarchical inequality and group loyalties” (Roberts 2001: 34). Democracy, which was introduced by the international community, i.e. as part of current globalization, contradicts both patrimonialism and socialism. Violence often ensues to solve problems that are foreign to patrimonial – and in this case, quasi-patrimonial – structures. In patrimonial and socialist structures every individual has his or her fixed and secure position with some possibility of upward mobility. Democracy is a threat to security, especially of the elite. Hun Sen and his clientele reacted to democracy by closing the elite and manipulating the elections. In 1993, the royalist opposition won the elections. The entire administration was still in the hands of Hun Sen and his clientele, which was structured according to the patrimonial model without having evolved organically. The administration refused to cooperate with the winner of the election, who was forced to let Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party rule and to leave the country in 1996/97 (Roberts 2001: 105 *passim*). Hun Sen learned from this and ensured the victory of his party in the next elections in 1998 through massive propaganda, division of the opposition and by creating public insecurity. The same strategy led to success in the last elections (Weiss 2004). It had to be more drastic, however, as Cambodia’s regional and global integration was more advanced. On January 29, 2003, the Thai embassy in Phnom Penh was raided and devastated by an incited crowd. The event was staged by the ruling elite in order to arrest several members of the opposition, to prohibit public gatherings until the elections in July, and to monopolize the public field.⁷ Cambodia had to pay a high price for the assault: it transferred a large indemnity to the Thai government, the vital border remained closed for several months, fewer tourists arrived and thousands of Cambodian guest workers were sent home from Thailand. From Hun Sen’s point of view, the assault was nonetheless successful. The Cambodian People’s Party received 47 percent of the votes and remains the ruling party.⁸ In spite of formally being a democracy, Cambodia has been ruled by the same group around Hun Sen for a total of 28 years, 14 of which were under democracy.

⁷ 31 members of the opposition even lost their lives under unknown circumstances (Weggel 2004: 257).

⁸ For Hun Sen a pleasant side effect of the assault was the destruction of the offices of the Shinawatra mobile phone company, which is owned by the then Thai premier – its greatest competitor is Hun Sen’s mobile phone company.

Economic Field

The failure of democracy in Cambodia has another side effect. While Laos enjoys considerable domestic stability, the frequent outbreaks of violence in Cambodia have contributed to the country's negative image in the world. Foreign direct investments have continuously risen in Laos, while they have declined dramatically in Cambodia. In 1995, Cambodia received 2.4 billion dollars of FDI, in 2001 only 200 million, which rose in 2002 to 235 million (Weggel 2003a: 250). Foreign aid basically had its peak with the UNTAC mission, whereas it has been rising steadily in Laos. Both countries have little to offer to the rest of the world, but Cambodia may be in a worse position than Laos. Both have become members of the World Trade Organization, which will be a major drawback for the textile industry. In Cambodia, textiles account for 80 percent of the exports (Weggel 2003a), while in Laos electricity, mining products and lumber are equally important export items. Both countries suffer from ecological destruction, especially deforestation, lack of qualified manpower, poor infrastructure, little transparency and lack of capital. Both economies depend entirely on help from abroad, which has been increasing in Laos and decreasing in Cambodia. Immediate economic prospects are not very good for either country.

The most important criterion for the future of the economy of both countries is the emergence of an autonomous economic field with agents who can and may follow the rules of a market economy. In Laos and Cambodia, the economy is dominated by the political elite, but there are several important differences. The Lao leadership does not face any competition in the political field. Its dominating position remains unchallenged. Therefore, a certain amount of economic competition poses no threat (Rehbein 2005). This is not true for Cambodia, where economic power can be used for political propaganda and competition.⁹ Furthermore, Cambodian leaders engage in economic activities themselves, which means that the quasi-patrimonial structures are evident. In Laos, the leading politicians officially own nothing. It is their family members who run businesses and own real estate. Even though everybody knows about the family ties, patrimonialism is a little more covert – and socialism more overt. Finally, a certain middle class is emerging in Laos at a much faster pace than in Cambodia. This is mainly an urban phenomenon: in 2003, average income in Vientiane was ten

⁹ It is interesting to note, for example, that Cambodian university professors are in a better position economically than their Lao counterparts. Both owe their professional position to their political position, i.e. their function within the party. In Cambodia, this entails economic capital, in Laos not necessarily.

times higher than in remote villages (Rehbein 2004: 248). Most of this income was generated by employees and entrepreneurs – who hardly exist in the countryside.¹⁰ Chinese, Vietnamese, returnees from abroad and persons with higher education in English and economics are acting as dynamic entrepreneurs. The most successful are admitted to the elite – mostly through marriage. As this social stratum is a threat to the ruling elite in Cambodia, its emergence is less pronounced. Economic inequality is more extreme in Cambodia (Gini coefficient is 0.1 higher than that of Laos). One could almost say that Cambodians are either rich or poor. The slums of Phnom Penh are vast, begging is common, and there are at least 20,000 children (many of them orphans) living in the streets (Brown 2000: 38 *passim*). In this situation, the higher population density in Cambodia, which is usually considered a prerequisite for development, reveals itself as detrimental. Until quite recently, Laotian peasants did not really have any push factors to leave for the city. The first beggars in Vientiane, who were not seen before 1999, have come because they had neither field nor family in their village any more. This tendency has since greatly increased, but it is much more pronounced in Cambodia.

Public Field

Symbolic globalization has reached Laos and Cambodia. People do not define their social position exclusively in relation to their village or their *mandala* but increasingly in relation to the world population. Global integration entails national integration, which means that people are not primarily members of a village, a group or a *mandala* but of a nation. Global and national integration is more advanced in Cambodia than in Laos. Laotians retain strong family and group ties, which were severed in Cambodia under Pol Pot. Furthermore, the dominating ethnic group in Laos does not feel like the lowest class of global society, because there are always the ethnic minorities below. This is more difficult for the Khmer in Cambodia because the minorities are much smaller and more confined to the periphery. In Laos, the dominant ethnic group, the Lao, comprises only about 50 percent of the population, in Cambodia, up to 90 percent are Khmer.

All Lao can consider themselves middle class in relation to the minorities. They have always felt superior, especially as the minorities have no influence on the symbolic universe. Very few minorities have a writing system,

¹⁰ At the same time, 86 % of households in Vientiane owned a TV set, 55 % a motorcycle, whereas the respective percentages in remote areas were 2 and 1 %.

none have national symbols or overarching institutions. In Cambodia, almost everybody beneath the elite has to consider him- or herself a member of the lowest class. The lifestyles of the UNTAC staff and the elite as well as soap operas on television demonstrate their poverty – and they have no experience of people who are even poorer than themselves. My surveys in Laos clearly showed that people in urban and suburban areas were overwhelmingly optimistic as far as the economic situation is concerned. In these areas, 68 percent expressed fear of poverty, whereas in rural areas of Laos and Cambodia all respondents had that fear. In Phnom Penh, 46 % of the respondents thought life had been better 100 years ago, while in the municipality of Vientiane only 29 % shared this opinion. Here, 84 % said they felt happy, but in Phnom Penh just 41 % of the respondents. People in Cambodia uttered resignation, dissatisfaction and readiness to become violent. But Laotians indicated dissatisfaction with the political situation, even though they tend to speak less openly than Cambodians.¹¹

There is a public field in Cambodia, although Hun Sen and his clientele try to control it. The more they come under pressure, the more they try to monopolize it. However, the international community does not react favorably to these totalitarian tendencies. Foreign donors usually ask for two conditions to be fulfilled: further liberalization of the market and an increase in democracy. Therefore, there are independent media in Cambodia, which do not exist in Laos. Their lack is increasingly detrimental to Laos' development as it hampers learning, differentiation, and the emergence of "intermediate institutions" (Fukuyama). People have to rely on the wisdom of the party for information and organization. As society grows more complex, the party's wisdom frequently fails. But even in the public field, political oppression has a positive side effect. While Cambodia has more TV sets per capita, Laos has more internet users. The internet offers a certain freedom of speech, which the Lao television does not. Therefore, electronic alphabetization proceeds faster in Laos. Cambodia has the fewest internet users in Southeast Asia (Weggel 2004: 355).

Configurations

In modern societies, politics and economics are the dominating fields, with the public field playing an important role. A major aspect of social de-

¹¹ My data show a positive evaluation of economic prospects especially in the middle classes of Laos. The same group shows indirect discontent with the leadership, which is more clearly voiced in private conversation. In Cambodia, dissatisfaction is also directed against the elite, but as the elite controls the economic field as well, economic prospects are seen less optimistically than in Laos. (For Laos see Rehbein 2004.)

velopment is the differentiation and autonomization of fields. Bourdieu regarded autonomization as a descriptive and universal term. But it is just as normative and particular. It refers only to some periods of history and to non-totalitarian states. Lieberman's (2003) interpretation of history seems to underline this point. In pre-French Laos and Cambodia, there was only a differentiation of village, town and court in the sense of *mandala* as well as the Buddhist order. I do not think these different social entities should be called "fields", as all of them were subject to a patrimonial and kinship structure. Present-day Cambodia is a quasi-patrimonial state in which kinship ties have been seriously damaged and distrust may be more important than loyalty. If an autonomous public field and a class of non-political entrepreneurs are permitted to develop in Cambodia, the country may be better equipped to meet the challenges of globalization than Laos. In Laos, however, the economic field has achieved considerable autonomy, which places the country in a better global position than Cambodia. So far, political oppression may have contributed positively to development in Laos, as it has weakened the destabilizing effects of globalization. But as the economic middle class needs more freedom to develop into a group with capitalist cultures and possibilities of action, political oppression becomes increasingly detrimental. Three sources of potential conflict in Laos were mentioned above: the possible closing of the political elite for the new economic elite, lack of freedom for the urban middle class and the organization of peasants. All three problems would be resolved by separation of the political field from the economic field.

Globalization is gradually making its impact in Laos, foreign aid has been continuously growing and a considerable percentage of the population is full of hope for economic improvement (see Illustration 3). The leadership does not feel threatened by economic success of other segments of society because its dominating position in the political field remains unthreatened, which entails a strong position in the economic and the public field. In the population, traditional social ties and nets have by and large remained intact. And ethnic Lao can consider themselves as part of a middle stratum. However, urban and rural poverty will rise with increasing globalization as Laos has little to export and is dependent on imports. Only the political field could do something about poverty – which the Lao government recognizes perfectly well. This is a catch-22 situation because the socialist government is dominated by a patrimonial elite that is acting on its own account. Other sources of conflict are the political control of the public field and the oppression of minorities. Both will become more serious with increasing globalization because people will have better access to outside information and to networking.

Illustration 3: Aspects of the configuration in Laos

| Globalization: | Impact on Fields: | Localization: |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Slow Globalization | Middle Class | Unthreatened Party Rule |
| Rising Foreign Aid | Party Control | Social Nets |
| International Support | Political Discontent | Nepotism |
| | | Oppression of Minorities |

Cambodia was socially and physically disrupted when the UNTAC entered the country in the early 1990's (see Illustration 4). The intervention of the international community made the Cambodian economy entirely dependent on foreign countries. It changed the political field formally to a democracy. And it brought Western lifestyles and money into Cambodia. This money was absorbed by a small stratum of society, mainly the political elite. The position of the elite is threatened by democratic and economic competitors. Therefore, the elite tends to close itself and to monopolize all economic and symbolic resources. Society becomes polarized into a small totalitarian elite and a poor population that knows Western lifestyles and wealth from the UNTAC experience and television (cf. Kraas 2002: 365). The population considers itself part of a global lower class and has little hope.

Illustration 4: Aspects of the configuration in Cambodia

| Globalization: | Impact on Fields: | Localization: |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| UNTAC | Violence | Destruction of social nets |
| Democracy | Leadership in defensive | Nepotism |
| Brief influx of money | position | Civil War |
| Quick liberalization | Polarization | |
| | Economic discontent | |

This sketch of configurations seems complex, but in fact it is very rough and even oversimplifies. I have to admit that the model of sociocultural configurations is highly complex and rather problematic. It does not even allow for clear and simple predictions. But I think it allows for a more adequate picture of social reality, which in itself becomes ever more complex with increasing globalization. We have seen that the tendencies of globalization are ambivalent. And we have seen that a faster and more intense opening to globalization is not necessarily helpful for development, though it can facilitate the emergence of a public field, of networking and communication. It has had detrimental effects on the economic and political fields of Cam-

bodia, but more liberty in the public field and the faster integration into the international community may put so much pressure on the elite that it has to withdraw from its monopolization of power. Cambodia would then be in a better global position than Laos. In Laos, this pressure is more likely to come from within. If urban middle strata topple one-party rule, a differentiated society will be the result (cf. Evers' concept of strategic groups; Evers 1973). But efforts in both countries may be undermined by further pressure from economic globalization, as rising poverty may result in more unitary structures.

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