

# CONTESTING VISIONS OF THE LAO PAST



Lao  
at the Crossroads  
History

*Edited by*  
Christopher E. Goscha  
and Søren Ivarsson

# Contesting Visions Of The Lao Past

**Simon Creak**



## **Contesting Visions Of The Lao Past:**

*Contesting Visions of the Lao Past* Christopher E. Goscha, Søren Ivarsson, 2003 Laos's emergence as a modern nation state in the 20th century owed much to a complex interplay of internal and external forces. Arguing that the historiography of Laos needs to be understood in this wider context, this study considers how the Lao have written their own nationalist and revolutionary history on the inside while others, the French, Vietnamese, and Thais, have attempted to write the history of Laos from the outside for their own political ends. As nationalist historiography like the formation of the nation state does not emerge within a nationalist vacuum but rather is created and contested from inside and out, this incisive volume's approach has applications and implications far beyond Laos.

**Creating Laos** Søren Ivarsson, 2008 This book examines the process through which Laos came into existence under French colonial rule through to the end of World War II. Here Laos's position at the intersection of two conflicting spatial layouts of Thailand and Indochina made its national form a particularly contested process. Rather than analyze this process in terms of administrative and political structures, the book discusses how a specific idea about a separate Lao space and its culture was formed.

**The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism: Volume 2, Nationalism's Fields of Interaction** Cathie Carmichael, Matthew D'Auria, Aviel Roshwald, 2023-11-09 This major new reference work with contributions from an international team of scholars provides a comprehensive account of ideas and practices of nationhood and nationalism from antiquity to the present. It considers both continuities and discontinuities, engaging critically and analytically with the scholarly literature in the field. In volume II, leading scholars in their fields explore the dynamics of nationhood and nationalism's interactions with a wide variety of cultural practices and social institutions in addition to the phenomenon's crucial political dimensions. The relationships between imperialism and nationhood, nationalism and between major world religions and ethno-national identities are among the key themes explained and explored. The wide range of case studies from around the world brings a truly global comparative perspective to a field whose study was long constrained by Eurocentric assumptions.

Buddhism and Violence Vladimir Tikhonov, Torkel Brekke, 2012 It is generally accepted in the West that Buddhism is a peaceful religion. The Western public tends to assume that the doctrinal rejection of violence in Buddhism would make Buddhist pacifists, and often expects Buddhist societies or individual Asian Buddhists to conform to the modern Western standards of peaceful behavior. This stereotype, which may well be termed positive Orientalism since it is based on the assumption that an Oriental religion would be more faithful to its original non-violent teachings than Western Christianity, has been periodically challenged by enthusiastic acquiescence by monastic Buddhism to the most brutal sorts of warfare. This volume demolishes this stereotype and produces instead a coherent nuanced account of the modern Buddhist attitudes towards violence and warfare, which take into consideration both doctrinal logic of Buddhism and the socio-political situation in Asian Buddhist societies. The chapters in this book offer a deeper analysis of Buddhist militarism and Buddhist attitudes towards violence than previous volumes grounded in an

awareness of Buddhist doctrines and the recent history of nationalism as well as the role Buddhism plays in constructions of national identity The international team of contributors includes scholars from Thailand Japan and Korea     The Transformation of Southeast Asia Ronald W. Pruessen, Marc Frey, Tan-Tai Yong, 2015-05-22 Providing the basis for a reconceptualization of key features in Southeast Asia's history this book examines evolutionary patterns of Europe's and Japan's Southeast Asian empires from the late 19th century through to the 1960s     **States of Imitation** Patrice Ladwig, Ricardo Roque, 2020-06-16 Late Western colonialism often relied on the practice of imitating indigenous forms of rule in order to maintain power conversely indigenous polities could imitate Western sociopolitical forms to their own benefit Drawing on historical ethnographic studies of colonialism in Asia and Africa *States of Imitation* examines how the colonial state attempted to administer control and integrate its indigenous subjects through mimetic governmentality as well the ways indigenous states adopted these imitative practices to establish reciprocal ties with or to resist the presence of the colonial state     *Spirits of the Place* John Clifford Holt, 2009-07-29 *Spirits of the Place* is a rare and timely contribution to our understanding of religious culture in Laos and Southeast Asia Most often studied as a part of Thai Vietnamese or Khmer history Laos remains a terra incognita to most Westerners and to many of the people living throughout Asia as well John Holt's new book brings this fascinating nation into focus With its overview of Lao Buddhism and analysis of how shifting political power from royalty to democracy to communism has impacted Lao religious culture the book offers an integrated account of the entwined political and religious history of Laos from the fourteenth century to the contemporary era Holt advances the provocative argument that common Lao knowledge of important aspects of Theravada Buddhist thought and practice has been heavily conditioned by an indigenous religious culture dominated by the veneration of phi spirits whose powers are thought to prevail over and within specific social and geographical domains The enduring influence of traditional spirit cults in Lao culture and society has brought about major changes in how the figure of the Buddha and the powers associated with Buddhist temples and reliquaries indeed how all ritual spaces and times have been understood by the Lao Despite vigorous attempts by Buddhist royalty French rationalists and most recently by communist ideologues to eliminate the worship of phi spirit cults have not been displaced they continue to persist and show no signs of abating Not only have the spirits resisted eradication but they have withstood synthesis subordination and transformation by Buddhist political and ecclesiastical powers Rather than reduce Buddhist religious culture to a set of simple commonalities Holt takes a comparative approach using his nearly thirty years experience with Sri Lanka to elucidate what is unique about Lao Buddhism This stimulating book invites students in the fields of the history of religion and Buddhist and Southeast Asian studies to take a fresh look at prevailing assumptions and perhaps reconsider the place of Buddhism in Laos and Southeast Asia     Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity Joshua Barker, Erik Harms, Johan A. Lindquist, 2013-07-31 We live in a world populated not just by individuals but by figures those larger than life people who in some way express and challenge our conventional

understandings of social types This innovative and collaborative work takes up the wide range of figures that populate the social and cultural imaginaries of contemporary Southeast Asia some familiar only in specific places others recognizable across the region and even globally It puts forward a series of ethnographic portraits of figures that represent and give voice to something larger than themselves offering a view into social life that is at once highly particular and general They include the Muslim Television Preacher in Indonesia Miss Beer Lao the Rural DJ in Thailand the Korean Soap Opera Junkie in Burma the Filipino Seaman and the Photo Retoucher in Vietnam Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity brings together the fieldwork of over eighty scholars and covers the nine major countries of the region Burma Myanmar Cambodia Indonesia Laos Malaysia the Philippines Singapore Thailand and Vietnam An introduction outlines important social transformations in Southeast Asia and key theoretical and methodological innovations that result from ethnographic attention to the study of key figures Each section begins with an introduction by a country editor followed by short essays offering vivid and intimate portraits set against the background of contemporary Southeast Asia The result is a volume that combines scholarly rigor with a meaningful up to date portrayal of a region of the world undergoing rapid change A reference bibliography offers suggestions for further reading Figures of Southeast Asia Modernity is an ideal teaching tool for introductory classes to Southeast Asia studies anthropology and geography

**Contestations of Memory in Southeast Asia** Kwok Kian-Woon, Roxana Waterson, 2012-01-01 Contestations of Memory in Southeast Asia applies a new theoretical literature on social memory to remembered events in Burma Laos Vietnam Malaysia Singapore the Philippines and Indonesia Highlighting connections between theorizing based on European examples and unresolved memory issues in East and Southeast Asia the authors show how comparative study of the interpenetration of politics and lived bodily experience of communal and personal memories and of dominant and suppressed narratives can yield insights into the human potential to become either perpetrators victims or bystanders The memories found within different groups in any society are open to negotiation suppression contestation or revision in the ever evolving politics of the present The searching and close grained analyses of contemporary issues found in the volume vividly illustrate the essentially plural and multivocal nature of social memories and demonstrate the intricate connection between transnational national and sub national politics Readers seeking a more nuanced and complex understanding of the past and of its continued relevance to the present and future will find here much food for thought

*Vientiane* Marc Askew, Colin Long, William Logan, 2006-12-07 Providing insights into this neglected Southeast Asian city this interesting book interprets Vientiane's landscape physical as well as imagined as a reflection of key aspects of Lao geo political history the nature of Lao urbanism and its critical relation to constructions of Lao identity in the contemporary period It is argued that the patterns of change seen through Vientiane's past embody the key political and economic processes and transformations impacting on the people of Laos The Lao urban past has rarely been an object of attention by scholars Laos in fact is continually portrayed as a rural backwater marginal to the dynamic trends affecting most of the

Southeast Asian mainland In contrast to these persistent and static portrayals of Laos as a tiny landlocked backwater with no significant urban present or past the authors aim to document explain and evaluate the significance of the Lao urban landscape Focusing on the theme of Vientiane's marginality in its various forms the book interprets this apparent marginality as an historically produced phenomenon resulting from geo politics dating from the pre colonial period and extending into the post colonial period Drawing on a wide range of research materials Vientiane is the first work of its kind on this ignored city

*Champassak Royalty and Sovereignty* Ian G. Baird, 2024 The Kingdom of Champassak was founded in 1713 in what is now southern Laos and its royal lineage the House of Champassak continues to the present In this historical study of Champassak Ian G Baird explores the ways it has asserted its sovereignty across time and through monumental historical shifts including the delineation of national boundaries for Laos Thailand and Cambodia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries In re creating this story Baird draws not only on a dazzling variety of primary sources in English French Lao and Thai but also on many years spent in conversation with members of the Na Champassak family who are now spread across a wide geographical area from Laos and Thailand to France and the United States Each chapter treats one historical period identifying the Champassak approach to sovereignty during that time Through this deep history Baird shows how sovereign power even within one case takes a wide range of forms always contingent contested and uneven across space and time

**Regional Community Building in East Asia** Lee Lai To, Zarina Othman, 2016-09-01 This volume is a collection of papers written by nationals or former nationals of the respective country in ASEAN and Northeast Asia Unlike other works written by scholars outside ASEAN or East Asia it offers an insider's point of view of the 10 ASEAN states China Japan and South Korea on regional community building While a nationalist perspective may permeate throughout the study it is also clear that pursuing regional cooperation is considered to be important by the respective author denoting the non exclusivity between nationalism and regionalism and the mutual reinforcement of the two Each author of this volume has made a deliberate effort to introduce and survey the developmental challenges and experiences of his or her country from a historical perspective All authors without exception have emphasized the importance and advantages in staying with ASEAN or linking up with ASEAN by China Japan and South Korea in political security economic and socio cultural terms Their papers also reveal that the self help and self strengthening mechanism emphasized by the ASEAN Plus Three process will take time to bear fruits In the meantime it seems that bilateral interactions and cooperation between ASEAN and Northeast Asian states remain to be more dominant as shown in this study One can argue that bilateral interactions are the building block of multilateralism interactions To be sure there is a deliberate effort in this study to highlight unity in diversity in East Asia in general and ASEAN in particular

*Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words* Justin Thomas McDaniel, 2010-12-01 Winner of the Henry J Benda Prize sponsored by the Association for Asian Studies *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words* examines modern and premodern Buddhist monastic education traditions in Laos and Thailand Through five centuries of adaptation

and reinterpretation of sacred texts and commentaries Justin McDaniel traces curricular variations in Buddhist oral and written education that reflect a wide array of community goals and values He depicts Buddhism as a series of overlapping processes bringing fresh attention to the continuities of Theravada monastic communities that have endured despite regional and linguistic variations Incorporating both primary and secondary sources from Thailand and Laos he examines premodern inscriptional codicological anthropological art historical ecclesiastical royal and French colonial records By looking at modern sermons and even television programs and websites he traces how pedagogical techniques found in premodern palm leaf manuscripts are pervasive in modern education As the first comprehensive study of monastic education in Thailand and Laos *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words* will appeal to a wide audience of scholars and students interested in religious studies anthropology social and intellectual history and pedagogy

**Embodied Nation** Simon Creak, 2017-08-31 This strikingly original book examines how sport and ideas of physicality have shaped the politics and culture of modern Laos Viewing the country's extraordinary transitions from French colonialism to royalist nationalism to revolutionary socialism to the modern development state through the lens of physical culture Simon Creak's lively and incisive narrative illuminates a nation that has no reputation in sport and is typically viewed even from within as a country of cheerful but lazy people Creak argues that sport and related physical practices including physical education gymnastics and military training have shaped a national consciousness by locating it in everyday experience These practices are popular participatory performative and above all physical in character and embody ideas and ideologies in a symbolic and experiential way *Embodied Nation* takes readers on a brisk ride through more than a century of Lao history from a nineteenth century game of *tikhi* an indigenous game resembling field hockey to the country's unprecedented outpouring of nationalist sentiment when hosting the 2009 Southeast Asian Games En route we witness a Lao Vietnamese soccer brawl in 1936 the fascist inspired body ethic of the early 1940s the novel modes of military masculinity that blossomed with national independence the spectacular state theatrics of power represented by Olympic inspired sports festivals and the high hopes and frequent failures of socialist sport in the 1970s and 1980s Of central concern in Creak's narrative are the twin motifs of gender and civilization Despite increasing female participation since the early twentieth century he demonstrates the major role that sport and physical culture have played in forming hegemonic masculinities in Laos Even with limited national sporting success Laos has never won an Olympic medal the healthy toned and muscular form has come to symbolize material development and prosperity *Embodied Nation* outlines the complex ways in which these motifs through sport and physical culture articulate with state power Combining cultural and intellectual history with historical thick description Creak draws on a creative array of Lao and French sources from previously unexplored archives newspapers and magazines and from ethnographic writing war photography and cartoons More than an imagined community or geobody he shows that Laos was also a body at work making substantive theoretical contributions not only to Southeast Asian studies and history but to the study of the physical culture

nationalism masculinity and modernity in all modern societies      **Handbook of Autobiography / Autofiction** Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, 2019-01-29 Autobiographical writings have been a major cultural genre from antiquity to the present time General questions of the literary as e g the relation between literature and reality truth and fiction the dependency of author narrator and figure or issues of individual and cultural styles etc can be studied preeminently in the autobiographical genre Yet the tradition of life writing has in the course of literary history developed manifold types and forms Especially in the globalized age where the media and other technological cultural factors contribute to a rapid transformation of lifestyles autobiographical writing has maintained even enhanced its popularity and importance By conceiving autobiography in a wide sense that includes memoirs diaries self portraits and autofiction as well as media transformations of the genre this three volume handbook offers a comprehensive survey of theoretical approaches systematic aspects and historical developments in an international and interdisciplinary perspective While autobiography is usually considered to be a European tradition special emphasis is placed on the modes of self representation in non Western cultures and on inter and transcultural perspectives of the genre The individual contributions are closely interconnected by a system of cross references The handbook addresses scholars of cultural and literary studies students as well as non academic readers      *Buddhism, Power and Political Order* Ian Harris, 2007-06-11 Weber's claim that Buddhism is an otherworldly religion is only partially true Early sources indicate that the Buddha was sometimes diverted from supramundane interests to dwell on a variety of politically related matters The significance of Asoka Maurya as a paradigm for later traditions of Buddhist kingship is also well attested However there has been little scholarly effort to integrate findings on the extent to which Buddhism interacted with the political order in the classical and modern states of Theravada Asia into a wider comparative study This volume brings together the brightest minds in the study of Buddhism in Southeast Asia Their contributions create a more coherent account of the relations between Buddhism and political order in the late pre modern and modern period by questioning the contested relationship between monastic and secular power In doing so they expand the very nature of what is known as the Theravada Buddhism *Power and Political Order* offers new insights for scholars of Buddhism and it will stimulate new debates      **Culture and Customs of Laos** Arne Kislenko, 2009-03-05 This all encompassing volume offers a comprehensive look at the contemporary culture that defines this Southeast Asian country of Laos examining everything from Buddhist traditions to Laotian cuisine Coverage includes a brief history of the nation followed by in depth narrative chapters on religion literature visual and performing arts fashion gender roles everyday social customs and more Through illustrative descriptions of daily life students will learn how traditional customs have shaped contemporary life in Laos today Few other resources provide the same extensive coverage on current culture in Laos Ideal for high school students as well as general readers *Culture and Customs of Laos* is a must have for all library shelves The Southeast Asian country of Laos one of the world's last standing communist nations has often been overshadowed in the international newsroom by its more dominant



neighbors Thailand Vietnam and Cambodia Among one of the most bombed countries in the world one that suffered much during and after the Vietnam War Laos has been struggling economically and politically for decades In spite of these challenges a rich beautiful culture has survived in Laos This exhaustive volume offers a comprehensive look at the contemporary culture that defines this seemingly quiet country from Buddhism to Laotian cuisine Coverage includes a brief history of the nation followed by in depth narrative chapters on religion literature visual and performing arts fashion gender roles everyday social customs and more Through illustrative descriptions of daily life students will learn how traditional customs have shaped contemporary life in Laos today Few other resources provide the same extensive coverage on current culture in Laos Ideal for high school students as well as general readers Culture and Customs of Laos is a must have for all library shelves

*Parts and Wholes* Laila Prager, Michael Prager, Guido Sprenger, 2016 This festschrift for Josephus D M Platenkamp brings some central concerns of anthropology into focus social morphology exchange cosmology history and practical applications Ranging across several disciplines and continents but with a preference for Southeast Asia the contributions look at a common approach that unites these diverse themes In this view the most constitutive relationships of society are based on exchange Exchange and ritual articulate central values of a society thus appearing as parts in relationship to a whole These relationships encompass both human and non human beings the social and the cosmological domain Thus the study of these subject issues merges into a single project Series Anthropology Research and Science Ethnologie Forschung und Wissenschaft Vol 27 Subject Anthropology

**The Mekong: A Socio-legal Approach to River Basin Development** Ben Boer, Philip Hirsch, Fleur Johns, Ben Saul, Natalia Scurrah, 2015-12-22 An international river basin is an ecological system an economic thoroughfare a geographical area a font of life and livelihoods a geopolitical network and often a cultural icon It is also a socio legal phenomenon This book is the first detailed study of an international river basin from a socio legal perspective The Mekong River Basin which sustains approximately 70 million people across Cambodia China Laos Myanmar Thailand and Vietnam provides a prime example of the socio legal complexities of governing a transboundary river and its tributaries The book applies its socio legal analysis to bring a fresh approach to understanding conflicts surrounding water governance in the Mekong River Basin The authors describe the wide range of uses being made of legal doctrine and legal argument in ongoing disputes surrounding hydropower development in the Basin putting to rest lingering caricatures of a single ASEAN way of navigating conflict They call into question some of the common assumptions concerning the relationship between law and development The book also sheds light on important questions concerning the global hybridization or crossover of public and private power and its ramifications for water governance With current debates and looming conflicts over water governance globally and over shared rivers in particular these issues could not be more pressing

**Buddhist Dynamics in Premodern and Early Modern Southeast Asia** D. Christian Lammerts, 2016-04-29 The study of historical Buddhism in premodern and early modern Southeast Asia stands at an exciting

and transformative juncture Interdisciplinary scholarship is marked by a commitment to the careful examination of local and vernacular expressions of Buddhist culture as well as to reconsiderations of long standing questions concerning the diffusion of and relationships among varied texts forms of representation and religious identities ideas and practices The twelve essays in this collection written by leading scholars in Buddhist Studies and Southeast Asian history epigraphy and archaeology comprise the latest research in the field to deal with the dynamics of mainland and pen insular Buddhism between the sixth and nineteenth centuries C E Drawing on new manuscript sources inscriptions and archaeological data they investigate the intellectual ritual institutional sociopolitical aesthetic and literary diversity of local Buddhisms and explore their connected histories and contributions to the production of intraregional and transregional Buddhist geographies

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