

Fig. 1.1. Map of Northern Laos, showing Boun Tay District in Phongsaly Province
Courtesy G. Schlemmer

CHAPTER 1

New Paths of Work at the Lao-Chinese Border: From Self-Sufficient Agriculture to Wage Labor

Vanina Bouté

A few decades after other countries in Southeast Asia, and under the impulse of various changes—entry into ASEAN, opening of borders, influx of foreign investors—Laos is now encountering the first great waves of rural-urban migration, which has subsequently led to the development of villages and small towns, a new phenomenon in a country that until the early 2000s was largely rural. The migration of peasants is not primarily driven by economic considerations, but by the need to reconstitute family networks after the disappearance of their original villages, a phenomenon that was often orchestrated by the state (Bouté 2013). Most of the migrants imagine resuming agricultural work oriented towards sufficiency, as was the case in their home village. But faced with difficulties of access to land in host communities, most of them instead have ended up in wage labor. In these growing towns, employment opportunities are currently not very diverse. The peasants tend to find employment as laborers either for Chinese companies or for other local farmers.

I propose here to document the transition from self-sufficient agriculture to daily jobs and will focus on the peasants' changing perception of what is considered to be "labor" or "employment." First, I will describe the very rapid changes that have occurred in Laos over the last twenty years, which explain the modalities of the transition from self-sufficient agriculture to market-oriented agriculture. This will allow us to better understand why and how the emergence and spread of salaried work became possible and then widespread among peasants. Then, I will examine more specifically, from the

example of a small district of northern Laos, the ways in which farmers and their employers used to and now consider wage labor.

The article will be based on data collected among populations from about thirty villages in the mountain area where I worked from 1999 to 2005, prior to their displacement and dispersion to lowland villages in areas bordering China. I have also been following some of them after their resettlement in the lowlands in three provinces of northern Laos, namely, Oudomxay, Luang Namtha, and Phongsaly, from 2008 to 2014.[1]

From Self-Sufficient Agriculture to Capitalist Agriculture: A Twenty-Year Process

Long described as largely rural, Laos is also considered to be one of the last countries in Southeast Asia where the majority of its inhabitants depended on so-called subsistence agriculture. This form of agriculture had disappeared in the plain of Vientiane, the capital of the Lao PDR, in the mid-1960s with the emergence of a market-oriented peasant economy, land development pressure, and social differentiation, as well as salaried labor. But these changes at the time affected only Vientiane and its environs.

I propose here to show the major economic transformations undergone in the provinces of Laos by the development policies of the past two decades (1990–2010), in order to explain the effects on the farming systems adopted by the inhabitants. In tracing the shift from a non-capitalist economic system (as defined by Chayanov 1990) to a market-oriented economy, we will ultimately try to identify how this has influenced the peasants' conceptualization labor.

Agrarian changes: From swidden to cash crops

Laos is a very sparsely populated country of 6 million inhabitants, and compared to its neighbors,[2] is mostly mountainous. The population, even in the 2000s, was 80 percent rural. In the few plains of the country, along the Mekong River and in the valleys, the majority of inhabitants were Lao-Tai-speaking peoples, who formed about 60 percent of the population and lived on wet-field paddy systems. In the mountains, 40 percent of the population

spoke languages belonging to other linguistic families, including Tibeto-Burmese, Mon-Khmer, and Hmong-Mien, and lived mainly on swidden rice cultivation and husbandry.

The urban world has long been largely nonexistent in Laos, with the exception of the five major cities of the country, namely, Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Takhek, Savannakhet, and Pakse.[3] Other cities are more recent. In the 1950s, the current provincial capitals, which I will now call "secondary towns," were still only large villages whose population was estimated at from two thousand to three thousand inhabitants (Lebar and Suddard 1960, 238). They only began to grow in the late 1970s, when the new Communist government redivided the country into sixteen more autonomous provinces, mainly to allow for food self-sufficiency. These towns were then composed of one or two villages farming lowland rice, around which new officials of the young party-state and the first state enterprises settled. These enterprises would all close between 1989 and 1990 due to the discontinuation of subsidies from the former USSR.[4]

Until the 1990s, there was no real difference in lifestyle between the surrounding villages and the provincial towns. A large majority of the original inhabitants of these towns were still farmers while government officials—all sons or daughters of peasants—used to return to their home villages on weekends to cultivate land, clear fallows, or develop paddy fields to plant rice (Bouté 2012). These agricultural activities were indeed a basic necessity for these officials, who were paid very little because of limited money circulation in the provinces. Farmers paid taxes in rice and officials, who were not taxable,[5] were paid in foodstuffs (Alary 2013, 473). Farmers' agricultural practices were fully oriented towards self-sufficiency: in addition to rice, other crops such as vegetables, maize (essential for pig feed), and cotton, used for family weaving, were produced. Products collected in the forest (honey, creepers, game) enabled exchanges with hawkers, who supplied villages with metal goods (pots, knives), salt, oil, or soap. Furthermore, in some northern provinces, such as Phongsaly, the main site of my investigation, the cultivation of opium, practiced on old fallows in the dry season, provided additional income, which was quickly reinvested into heads of livestock

(buffalo, cows). Occupation (*asip*) was then mostly identified as that of the peasants (rice farmers or swidden cultivators—*saona, saohai*) and the civil servants (*latakon*). The key value was rice—it was the farmers' main produce and the currency for paying taxes and wages to civil servants—which is also commonly used as an indicator of households' wealth or poverty.[6] While this method of calculation has been criticized as a subjective government deviation, it nevertheless made sense in self-sufficient societies where, for most people, "to eat" is "to eat rice."

A telltale sign of this predominance of peasantry is the statistics used to identify professional occupations in Laos. At the national level, the latest 2015 census[7] estimated that 68 percent of the population was "economically active." This category is subdivided into officials (government employees and state enterprise employees, amounting to 11.1 percent of the workforce), private-sector workers or employers (8.1 percent), and a category called "own account workers" (80.8 percent) that essentially consisted of peasants.[8] No other details are given on the different forms of work, and commerce is curiously absent. A second table attempts to separate the different agricultural classes—farmer, fisherman, and livestock farmer—as opposed to "non-farm activity," which accounts for 21.5 percent of the population at a national level and between 9.7 and 15 percent for the country's northern provinces (Phongsaly, Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, Bokeo, and Huaphan). In provincial censuses, the categories used to identify the occupations of families are even more revealing of the importance attached to the peasant world. In the province of Phongsaly, for example, until 2010, there were only two categories: public servants and "civilians" (*pasason*)—understood here as a substitute for "peasants."

Various pressures from the central government, neighboring countries, and major international sponsors, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank, have been exerted to transform the practices—and the labor—of this peasant population and to move it from subsistence agriculture to market agriculture. I have distinguished here—schematically, for the sake of clarity—three periods marking the transformation of agricultural practices: the 1990s, the 2000s and from 2010. As will be seen, the first two decades have mainly affected populations practicing swidden agriculture, which represented about 30 percent of the total population, while the last and third decade mainly affected lowland rice farmers.

In the 1990s, the economic development model advocated by the government and other international actors as mentioned above was based on a system of supposedly "modern" agriculture practiced by the Lao majority, that is sedentary wet rice cultivation. As Yves Goudineau (2000, 26) recalled, the Lao government frequently claimed swidden agriculture to be ecologically destructive and often criticized it for its low productivity, for creating food insecurity, and causing the dispersion of settlements, despite strong arguments that some systems of swidden agriculture were viable and some were not. Since wet-rice cultivation is practically impossible in mountainous areas, displacements of populations practicing swidden agriculture were organized at the national level, leading to massive village relocations towards the plains or along roads. Each concerned district further organized the resettlement of its own "undeveloped" upland population to the lowlands or along new roads (Goudineau 1997, 11). Some were moved to special "focal sites" with new regulations on forest and land allocation, and market-oriented forms of agriculture were introduced and implemented (Vandergeest 2003; Evrard and Goudineau 2004). In reality, few displaced villages found rice paddies on their arrival. The first attempts at cash crops, such as sugar cane in northern Laos, failed due to the lack of a market. As a consequence, the villagers resumed their swidden activities on their new sites, though often in difficult conditions (Evrard and Goudineau 2004; Bouté 2018).

In the early 2000s Laos experienced increased regional and global integration following its entry into ASEAN in 1997. The transition to plain rice cultivation was superseded by the promotion of cash crop production in the name of a new rural development policy. Poppy cultivation, the easiest product for earning money in remote areas, was forbidden, beginning from approximately 2000 to 2005, while village relocations along roads continued to facilitate the production in the highlands of cash crops such as tea, rubber, coffee, and corn, initiated by foreign investors, mainly from China in the

north, under the pretext of replacing poppies. Other villages were—and continue to be—cleared to allow the development of large infrastructure projects (such as dams, mines, and plantation concessions), often also involving foreign investors.[9] Simultaneously, in 2005, the eradication of shifting cultivation was promulgated and expected to be complete by the year 2010 (but was then postponed to 2020 because of its unrealistic targets). A new set of reforms was also promulgated regarding new land tenure, such as zoning and land allocation, to urge the transition from self-sufficient agriculture to "modern" agriculture.

Since 2010, the development of cash crops in the lowlands has emerged, following these relatively well-described phenomena of massive displacements and the ban on shifting cultivation. However, unlike the first two agrarian changes, this latter one is not the result of a reform or law promoted by the government, and it does not affect upland populations, only the inhabitants of the lowlands. In northern Laos, cash crop cultivation was implemented and mainly taken over by small Chinese companies based in Yunnan Province that settled in the border provinces in northern Laos either for a season or permanently, partnering with a Laotian associate in order to obtain the necessary administrative authorizations. The deal consists in facilitating the provision of seeds, inputs, and fertilizer for farmers, who will provide the land and labor in exchange—a contract known as the "2 + 3"[10]). The cash crops—so far being mostly peppers and green beans, watermelons, and tobacco—are planted in the dry season when the rice fields are unused, which turns any farmer into a producer for this market, provided that he/she owns his/her land.

To sum up, in only two decades, these various changes have led to the transition from a farmer agriculture to a capitalist agriculture or, as Grant Evans (1990, 24) said forty years ago in the case of Vientiane, the transition from an agriculture in which the size and composition of the family determined the amount of land to be worked, to an agriculture determined by a "constant and unchanging amount of capital and land area." These three different types of agrarian transformations have had several effects on northern Lao societies, to which we will now turn.

Mindset changes: From rice in mountains to money in cities

The changes detailed above have not involved merely agrarian transformations in Laos. They have also led to new territorial configurations, that is, the demographic imbalance between lowlands and mountains (driven by migrations from the mountains to the lowlands over the past two decades), to an increase in the size of cities and small towns, and consequently to new social diversity among the inhabitants. We will see further how the economic and demographic dynamism of these localities has resulted in peasants' changing their views of traditional agriculture and mountain life.

Indeed, the waves of forced displacement in the 1990s resulted in a snowball effect of various types on voluntary migration, with highlanders moving mainly towards the few highways of the country or to enclosed valley bottoms where district capitals and towns are located. These departures are often the result of the desire to escape forced resettlements or new agrarian policies being implemented, or simply to join relatives having left earlier and to reconstitute in the host locality the family support that existed in the old mountain village (Bouté 2018, 206–19). The emergence and development of rural-urban migration is a relatively recent phenomenon and yet is remarkable for its growing scale. Initially, population increase did not necessarily mean a growing urbanization of localities. Indeed, Laos's secondary towns were able to preserve their rural appearance because 40 percent of the population was peasant families. This has been less true over the past ten years. Meanwhile, the wave of peasant migration to provincial capitals has become less important, and new migrants from rural areas now tend to settle in district capitals and small towns, where it is still possible to acquire land and to benefit from a market for cash crops. So it is the latter sites that proportionally have the highest influx of people. A major impact of this recentering of populations to the lowlands and the towns over the last twenty years is increased land pressure (Bouté 2013). In the early 1990s, in the north, the fallows were freely cultivated by those who cleared them, or were lent out free of charge, and rice fields could be acquired in exchange for a pig or a few dollars, although not until 2003 could the land officially be sold or purchased (Mahaphone et al. 2007). Subsequently, over the next

twenty years, prices of agricultural land in some places increased by a factor of ten, officials often being the main buyers (Bouté 2013, 415). That ended not only the free land appropriation but also the low social differentiation existing among peasant families (Evans 2008, 518–19).

There has been a significant change in the social composition of the urban areas with a diversification of jobs and increasing social differentiation. Most of the first occupants of these localities, both civil servants and peasants, had the opportunity to make money by selling plots of land to new settlers. They invested the money in new economic activities such as construction companies, shops, freight, buying NTFP (non-timber forest products) or other crops from neighboring villages and selling them in China. Work in cities is no longer divided into two categories—civil servants and peasants—but now includes civil servants, former civil servants, as well as several categories of traders and farmers, from those cultivating their own rice fields to those owning various plots of cash crops to diversify their activities for the market.

Increased migration to the lowlands, urban development, and the low value of mountain land have very quickly led to the debasement of life in the mountains and swidden agriculture. It has also brought changes in values that used to be attached to practices of the peasant world. Subsistence agriculture is now widely devalued because it does not generate significant financial income. The cultivation of cash crops in the mountains is no longer attractive because upland products that have been proposed to peasants—tea, corn, sugar cane, galangal—are of much less value than those that can be produced on the plains (chili, beans). Living and practicing agriculture in the mountains is nowadays perceived as a default for those who cannot acquire land in the lowlands.

The depreciation of certain forms of agriculture also affects practices and representations previously attached to it. The reciprocal exchange of work—once common for some activities like sowing, harvesting, and house repairs—has become rare or limited to the family circle. Similarly, the exchange of goods between unrelated people, which was so common in the villages of Phongsaly during my early visits in the turn of the 2000s,

has become nonexistent. Ten years before, peasant were still able to get rice wine in exchange for a pig, rice for forest products, and wild game for a day's work. Today, some farmers who still resort to this do so reluctantly, equating their efforts to begging. In fact, the conceptions of "poverty" and "wealth" themselves have changed. It is no longer the lack of rice that becomes the essential criterion for farmers to distinguish the poor from the rich within a village. In the village of Hat-ngam, for example, where people were displaced to a valley floor by Boun Tay District authorities in 2008, everyone felt that the rice paddies were more beautiful than in the old village and nobody was lacking rice here, whereas 50 percent of families were short of rice for three to six months a year at the former site. However, their present village is located on a dirt road that was a cul-de-sac, located about twenty kilometers from the nearest village, and residents said they regard themselves as poor. The reason was that although they had rice in abundance, they had no cash crops and therefore felt excluded from a market that was in full swing a few hours away (a discourse that I had never heard in the same district ten years earlier). Similarly, the agronomist Olivier Ducourtieux (2006), comparing the economic situation of two villages in Phongsaly District, one located several hours' walk from the road and the other relocated along the road, reached the conclusion that the first, enjoying a wider variety of agricultural products and livestock, was richer than the second. However, this "richer" village was gradually emptying until it totally disappeared in 2006. Its inhabitants were all eager to join the roadside village even though the economic situation there was considered less favorable—there was less available land due to land pressure, fewer NTFP to collect, and no wild game. A peasant justified his departure this way: "I'll sell all my buffaloes and settle in the village of X along the road. In the village, it is the same thing every day. There we can watch the cars go by" (Bouté 2018).

Such examples urge us not to underestimate the values that the actors themselves give to some concepts, representations that we may tend to subordinate to "economic rationalization," which is sometimes superimposed on local representations. I have shown elsewhere that the reasons for voluntary migration in northern Laos were often non-economic—for example, leaving

a mountain village could be motivated by aging, the desire to find a spouse, or to recreate family networks split up by migration, but also by the fact that the depreciation of mountain life created the necessity of departure to find a life considered to be more decent (Bouté 2018, 2013). At present, therefore, more than rejecting a given social situation, it is the individual's or family's aspirations that push them to leave and transform their lives. These aspirations emerge from a vision focused on the development of towns, among other things, and what is thought to be desirable, like "modernity," and the means to access this modernity. In this context, the representations of work also evolve. Work is now thought of as a necessary way to generate income, and as a possible vector of change.

Transition to and Apprehension regarding Wage Labor

There is no definiteve study on the emergence of wage labor in Laos's rural world. Some scholars have mentioned the fact that companies reward poorly, or not at all, the peasants they employ, or that there is no legal framework for hiring (Baird 2010, 23, 25; Rigg 2005). A recent article by Li and Lyttleton (2017) reveals a new phenomenon, however. It explores how the notion of *guanxi*, "an ideology of reciprocity associated with Chinese interpersonal relationships," is used in this context to cultivate appropriate interpersonal trust and consolidate economic transactions between Chinese-Akha (or Han Chinese) entrepreneurs and Lao-Akha peasants. Although the authors do not mention it, what they call "the emotional dimension of exchanges" is undeniably reminiscent of the concept of "moral economy" developed by James Scott in 1976.

The concept of "moral economy" as defined by Scott has two dimensions: the norm of reciprocity and the right to subsistence security. The first corresponds to a system of exchange of goods and services but also to a system of standards and obligations between peasants and large landowners, which helps to explain how exploitation can coexist with local principles of justice. Here, I will not refer to the "ethics of subsistence" dimension defined by Scott, which leads to a conception of moral economy as a form of resistance or

indifference to a cash economy, and a way to maintain the status quo against the upsurge of the market.[11] I rather consider, as do other scholars (Bernal 1994; Roitman 2000), that it is not because there is integration in a capitalist system that there is a full renunciation of all "non-capitalist" values. I will therefore focus on the notion of reciprocity, as conceived in the relations between employees and employers today. To do so, I will present the labor situation and its evolution in Boun Tay District of northern Laos, which in the past twenty years has undergone similar changes to other lowland districts in northern Laos: population growth, the imbalance between mountains and lowlands, and the appearance of wage labor.

Too much demand and not enough supply for labor: A case in northern Laos

Boun Tay District is located in Phongsaly, Laos's northernmost province bordered to the west by China (Yunnan Province) and to the east by Vietnam (Lai Chau Province).[12] Close to the Chinese border, Boun Tay District is crossed by the province's only paved road connecting Phongsaly to the rest of the country. In a mostly mountainous province with very enclosed valleys, the district is characterized by a few low-lying small valleys where wet-rice cultivation is possible. Tai-speaking groups (such as Tai Lue and Tai Yang) live in the valleys, and the surrounding mountains are inhabited by different Austroasiatic- (Khmu, Bit), Tibeto-Burmese- (Phunoy, Akha), and Hmong-Mien- (Hmong, Yao) speaking populations. Because of its geographical features, Boun Tay is the lowland district that is undergoing the most spectacular development within the province. Its success is often mentioned in the national press and visiting officials from the capital tour it as a showcase for the country.

In 1993, three years after the foundation of the district, its principal town was a village of about forty civil servants and their families who had just settled next to a hundred Tai Lue rice farmers from Boun Tay Village. Very quickly, this town attracted many mountain families from neighboring villages and districts. The provincial authorities launched an appeal to encourage people to come and populate the new district capital, but according

to surveys I have conducted, it was especially the first district officials who informed people from their hometown of the future opportunities that could arise from their relocation near the capital of Boun Tay District. In fact, a dirt road was dug in 1995, and a covered market was built in 2002. Many mountain families came to take possession of land and vacant rice fields, and arable fallow rice fields were available until 1998. During a twenty-year period, population growth in the district has been spectacular: from 10,937 people in 1993, the population rose to about 15,200 in 2003 and 23,100 ten years later.[13] Today, the district capital, located in a basin surrounded by hills, is composed of a village of Tai Lue rice farmers, a village of officials, and a mixed village of officials and peasants totaling 623 families from different ethnic groups. Within a radius of two to three kilometers are several villages of rice farmers, some of which were founded by mountain dwellers in the late 1990s. Most of them have rice fields; only a small number of families who settled from 2005 do not, and they rent fallows to cultivate rice.

The situation is different in the mountain villages in the rest of the district. In some villages that are almost drained of their population, from which many migrants have come, those who remain expect their family relations who have settled in the plains to acquire residential land for them to move to. In other villages, from which very few migrants come and mostly inhabited by members of the Akha ethnic group, the population is stable. As they do not have the opportunity to benefit from relatives living in town or cannot afford a piece of land in lowland villages and lack the networks and opportunities to find paid employment there, inhabitants of these villages cannot migrate.

Conversely, the world of the lowlands—and the villages composing the district capital and its surrounding villages—undergoes different dynamics, not only in demographic terms as we have seen but also in terms of work and job opportunities. Like other urban centers in Laos, Boun Tay Town has experienced the same influx of migration and thus the same social structure among its inhabitants, with a diversification of jobs and increasing social differentiation.

In fact, the need for hired labor has grown exponentially since the development of cash crop agriculture in the district's lowlands. Since 2007, the cultivation of rubber, which is only possible at an altitude of less than 700 meters, has spread across the district's valley floors. In addition to Chinese companies, which have rapidly established land concessions and taken possession of the largest plots, some traders and officials from the district and especially from the capital of the province (located a hundred kilometers away), bought land, invested, and planted rubber trees. Within two years, the movement spread, and all the inhabitants of the district capital who could afford to planted rubber trees on their cleared lands. The largest owners hire families from the mountains or locally employ landless farmers to take care of their plantations. These employees are paid very little and live mainly on the rice and vegetables they grow between the rubber tree plantations. From 2010, rubber prices have collapsed,[14] but the need for labor continues due to the introduction of cash crops planted in rice fields in the dry season. In comparison to other crops, the cultivation of beans by small Chinese companies has been very successful, for two reasons. The beans are grown after the rice harvest during a period of agricultural unemployment, and their cultivation is very lucrative. Boosted by fertilizers provided by the companies, a rice field that barely provides sufficient rice to nourish two people can offer two to three tons of beans in four months—more than 10 million kip (equivalent to USD 1,240), that is, almost the annual salary of an official.

The harvesting of beans mobilizes a large workforce. The selection criteria of the vegetables imposed by Chinese buyers involves rapid collection so that they have the required dimensions and appearance. Beans harvested on the same day are collected by trucks that travel along the tracks of the district; two companies pack them locally before sending them to Yunnan. These various operations also require local labor: translators who can make the connection between farmers and the bosses of Chinese companies, truck drivers, supervisors, and daily labor that comes to pack beans when the trucks return to the company. And these related activities also generate other types of jobs, such as stallholders in and around the market hall and workers in the construction of buildings, hotels, restaurants, and private homes for those

who have become rich by investing in these new economic opportunities. In fact, one in every three houses in the district capital was under construction during my stay in January and February 2015.[15] On a smaller scale, the need for housekeepers, guards, masons, and foremen is also increasing.

The development of rubber trees and dry crops in rice fields—and the demand for services related to the enrichment of producers—has therefore led to a strong demand for wage labor. Yet, at the same time, farmers' migration to Boun Tay declined significantly due to the land pressure mentioned earlier. The annual growth rate of the district population was only 1.18 percent between 2013 and 2014 (compared to 2.1 percent nationally). As a result, there is a shortage of available labor. Farmers work primarily in their own fields while officials and traders are themselves recruiters for this workforce. Therefore, only the peasants with little or no land remain available for hiring, but they are few in the three urban villages that make up the town and also few (about 15 percent of families) in the surrounding villages.

To meet this demand, many residents temporarily accommodate relatives living in neighboring districts. Taonam, a former resident of a mountain village in Phongsaly, who has lived there since 2005, told me: "There are relatives in the districts of Phongsaly and Boun Neua who are free this season. They come to seek work here because in three months they can earn 7 to 8 million kip. In Phongsaly District, they only have tea to cultivate." Another added: "The relatives from Phongsaly District we call to tell them to come if they don't have work. They come for weeks, some for months, depending on the work. They sleep with us, we help each other, and we eat together." Yet, it was common during my stay to hear that the workforce was still insufficient. A hospital official deplored: "There are not many people who look for paid work because they have no time. As soon as the rice is harvested, the Chinese ask them to plant beans." A young Tai Lue peasant was complaining he could find no one to help him harvest: "With my in-laws, we have harvested almost five tons. We could harvest even more, but the problem is that everyone is planting beans and suddenly, there is no one to come and work for us." The owner of one of the guest houses in the town also told me: "Employees for the hotel, they come one day and leave the next. I'm tired of searching."

This leads to a paradoxical situation in terms of employment opportunities at the district level. On one hand, many villages inhabit the district's mountainous areas. Their inhabitants, who live mainly on swidden rice cultivation (which is in danger of being banned) and on alternative commercial crops (but which earn little and for which demand varies greatly) have few economic opportunities. All they can do is wait for an opportunity to leave permanently for the lowlands, because, in the absence of networks in the lowlands, they can neither settle nor work temporarily. On the other hand, in the lowland areas there is a high demand for seasonal labor, but the number of employers seems to be, at certain times of the year, higher than the number of potential laborers.

Changing conception of labor

The remarks such as those made by the hotel owner deploring a volatile labor force suggests that, as daily workers are fewer than the number of vacancies, they easily find work and can therefore change often. However, the situation is more complex, for what the people of Boun Tay mean by "work" or rather "a good job" rules out a number of jobs. What I will show here through a few examples is that it is not the nature of work or wages that is challenged by peasants but the nature of interactions between employers and employees. As Grant Evans (1990, 218) rightly noted: "No form of cooperation can exist on the basis of purely rational, economic exchange relationships. All must have elements of social and symbolic exchange in order to persist. In other words, it is impossible to entirely expel substantive calculations from economic action." More than the economic dimensions of the work, I will focus here on the representations associated with it.

The fact of working for others and the terms to describe this work have changed dramatically between 2005 and 2015. During my first visits in the early 2000s, the term *asip* was used indiscriminately by farmers and officials to refer to their main occupation (growing rice, raising animals, working for the government). Ten years later, they use the word *asip* only to refer to a gainful occupation. This led most of the local officials to say that the mountain dwellers had no occupation (*asip*) because they only did

swidden cultivation. Daily work is referred to as *chang kin* (literally "hire-eat," translated as "bread-and-butter work"). Non-laborers do not see it as a sustainable occupation because this type of work is related to the workforce, and as people age they can no longer do it. Others feel it is not sustainable and what is gained in a day is "eaten" in the next. Taonam, a rice farmer, spoke of his cousin, saying: "Look at Khamtan, he can do nothing as work (*asip*), he just goes to see the people who have money, works (*chang kin*) for them and earns 60 or 70,000 kip per day [about USD 9]."

The representations associated with working for others have also changed over the past decade. During my first stay fifteen years ago, the peasants went to work in each other's fields, especially in times of sowing. These were daily work exchanges, which were characterized as "mutual assistance" (*suaikan*). They were forms of cooperation based on reciprocity and practiced among equals (without hierarchies or bosses), and considered to be the natural way of doing things, being a moral necessity. Conversely, the first experiences of paid work for strangers involving a superior-subordinate relationship and lacking reciprocity thus aroused painful reactions. For example, Suk's sister, who has been living in Boun Tay for twenty years, now works as a cleaner in a recently built Chinese hotel. She remembers that a few years ago she refused to go and work for others: "I was ashamed (*na ai*) and I was afraid (*yan*)," she said. Singvan hails from a mountain village in Phongsaly District. She arrived in Boun Tay with her husband in 2005, following the disappearance of her village, when all its population migrated to the lowlands. When she was asked to take on a small paid job, her husband firmly opposed the proposition, despite the fact that they lived in precarious conditions; he was ashamed (*na hai*), she recounts, that his wife worked for strangers. Un, from the same village, moved to the outskirts of the city of Phongsaly at the same time. The field of tea plants she and her husband had purchased was not enough for their needs and her husband started working as a blacksmith. Un, aged fifty, found work as a cook for a Vietnamese company that was tarring the road. "Every day, I cried and cried, I was so ashamed to work for other people," she recounts. In 2015, these discourses and attitudes have changed: Suk's sister says that she is now used to her job at the hotel. Singvan and her husband do not have land but find work every day—she picks beans, he lays bricks. All now believe that the disgrace attached to paid work is a sign of failure to adapt because now livelihood is closely associated with salaried labor. Typical examples of comments I have collected include: "When we have elders and children to feed, if we are ashamed, then we are poor." "To work, the most important thing is not to be ashamed." "Before, people were ashamed because they were not yet used to working this way, and also because it was not pleasant. But now they are making money and they no longer care about shame."

The sense of shame seems, with time and habit, to have disappeared. Yet, the fact remains that all paid jobs are not the same. Even if the work to be performed is often the same, the profile of employers varies among the managers of Chinese companies, foremen of concessions, local officials, merchants, and other peasants. Interviewees who regularly sought paid employment often said, in essence, "I will work, but not for anyone." Take the example of inhabitants of the recently relocated village of Hat-ngam. They complain of not having opportunities, namely selling cash crops or access to paid work. Yet they were originally displaced to work in a Chinese concession that had decided to plant rubber trees. I will not dwell on their various experiences with contracts, but to make a long story short, farmers felt they had been cheated by the Chinese company. It had promised them metal sheets for roofs, tools, seeds, and other things, in return for their move, and had kept none of these promises. Seven years later, when the trees planted by farmers had reached maturity and the harvesting of rubber became possible, the farmers refused to bleed the company's trees for a salary, even though some of them were looking for equivalent jobs a few kilometers away. To explain their refusal, they blamed not drudgery or low wages (which were identical to those offered elsewhere in the district), but the failure of the company's commitment to them. "If they had taken care of us, we would go, but they did nothing for us. They have not kept their promises, so we will not go." So the salary, the opportunity to be paid in money, does not seem to be a sufficient condition to make farmers accept a job. As Grant Evans points out, "all economic exploitation is not necessarily conceived as illegitimate.

Exchanges between peasants and elites are judged by the rules of reciprocity" (1990, 30). It is the form of reciprocity between employers and employees, which is the key to understanding the peasants' refusal of certain job offers, that we will now look at more closely.

An employer must take the time to "present his face and his eyes first"

A recurring element in all the discussions I had with Chinese entrepreneurs in the district during my investigations in January–February 2015 was that they were very quickly cut short because they "had no time" to prolong our exchanges. Often leaving for somewhere else by the time we managed to meet, or returning from elsewhere but already on their way to another activity, they ended up apologizing, acknowledging that they "had no time." Consequently, the conversations were sometimes continued with their foremen—but only if they were Laotians—and rarely with the workers employed, the latter being also restricted by time. "We would like to pause, but we are paid per task. It takes much more time than expected to pack these beans," one admitted. "I'm telling you this [the conditions of employment] but I cannot keep on talking any longer. Here, we cannot take our time, and I see the Chinese foreman looking at us," said another. "How can one rest a bit, while everyone is running here?" lamented a third.

This attitude contrasts sharply with that of Laotian employers, be they small business owners, traders, or district officials. When we arrived on the doorstep of their homes, they were all busy—or pretended to be. "Ah, you're lucky to find me in. Normally I'm never home." The discussion began, but every few minutes they mentioned how busy they were. "Me, I never stop." "I never sit down for more than five minutes." "Every day, I get up at six and I only stop at nightfall." Yet the interviews often lasted more than an hour. Despite my sincere protests that I did not want to bother someone who was so overworked, my host added to my confusion by making it clear that he was giving me—in addition to answers to my questions—what was most precious: his time. He then gave me vivid demonstrations of this: the time taken to heat water, serve tea, all during long, polite, and conventional exchanges about

the family, children, education, improvements to the house, and the cost of the work, going himself to buy some alcohol from a shop even though it was down the other end of the long street that goes through the village, or searching at length for an unimportant object, often a photo mentioned during the conversation, which took about ten minutes, despite my protests. In a word, on every occasion, my hosts not only took time to talk to me, they also clearly demonstrated how generous they were being by describing their time as a precious rarity that they did not, however, mind bestowing on me throughout the whole course of our meeting.

Taking time and giving one's time appears to be one of the main forms of mutual obligation (equal or unequal, depending on how it is staged) in relations between employees and contractors. Phong, who is employed as a guard of the brand new hotel of a former senior official of the province, is paid less than a laborer on a plantation (based on a "rational" economic calculation or by comparing the hours, or days he is at his workplace—that is, time that he cannot devote to his own activities—and the salary paid to him at the end of month). But this is not the way Phong saw his working conditions. For him, as for many employees interviewed who had experienced different types of employers, the salary was not highlighted to distinguish "good" bosses from "bad" ones. The good boss, even if he pays less, is the one who allows them to take a break (by distributing cigarettes and alcohol), the one who in appearance spends time on his employees and who—as I have often been told by many farmers—"takes care of" (*liang*[16]) them. Today, the term *liang* is partly related to power: in the state institutions, an important man, a "great man" (*phu gnai*), must "feed" or "take care of" his family network and the people who have been loyal to him (Evans 2002), that is to say, to give them help and assistance in case of need (weddings, funerals, health, education, travel) in return for their support and their help with different activities. Here, in the context of contractual relations between employers and daily workers, the fact of nourishing workers (*liang*) is in addition associated with an extra allowance of time.

A good boss—and so a good job—is the one that lets employees enjoy one or more breaks. On two different occasions, accompanying and going to work

with the same group of peasants to collect beans, we each time had a meal at midday. In the first case, the peasants considered they were not fed well by the boss—in this case Chinese. In fact, it was not the quantity or even the quality of the food that was contested, but the fact that the meal, brought by the foreman ready to eat, had needed no preparation by the employees. Therefore we immediately started to eat (an activity that is usually extremely short in Laos, conversations being occasional when eating) and then, even after the usual after-lunch cigarettes, we went back to work. The second meal was said to be better. Yet during this second meal, only the rice, served cooked and packed in plastic bags, was distributed to everyone by the employer. It had therefore been necessary to prepare the meal and at the time of the break, we had to do exactly as is done in mountain villages; in other words, one person left to get some water, another the vegetables. While it was cooking, everyone sat around a quickly improvised fireplace and chatted about the morning's work or other things. This time, the meal was much longer than the previous one, and the meal itself was described as "much better." In both cases, we received our salary at the end of the day, at dusk. In the first case, 50,000 kip each; in the second, 40,000 kip. Yet the group was unanimous in declaring not to like (*bo mak*) the first type of work, and enjoying (*mak*) the second, or again, qualifying the second as "good," "enjoyable" (*muan*) in contrast to the first (*bo muan*).

This importance of giving time is well understood by many Lao entrepreneurs. Some explained to me how they were able to recruit, in a situation where work is not lacking and when labor is scarce. They told me they were underlining, not only the access to better working conditions than those of their competitors, or better wages, but qualities related to ethical behavior, that is, the employer must be generous but also show some concern for his employees. As we have seen, this attention is expressed through the gift of food: "To find laborers, is easy. It is not only the salary that counts—you also have to buy water, cigarettes. This is how we attract people, because people have a mouth and a belly that go with them (*mi sop mi thong thi pai nam*)." It can also be through other types of attention. An intermediary told me that the inhabitants of a village did not want to plant beans for his

company, and how he had changed their minds by providing their village with a new collective house.

But generosity is not only about material things. Listening and especially speaking are also widely valued. A trader explained: "To do business, we must be generous. If you have no money to be so, you have to use your mouth to talk well to people (*vau muan*)." He concluded: "In doing so, we show them that before talking about work, we spend time together." Khamlek, a local entrepreneur, told me about his career, insisting: "To be successful, a trader must receive people well, smile, give them food and drinks. Those who do not do this cannot start a business. When the Akha come down to town, some do not give them anything, but I buy them a water pipe and tobacco. I feed them. My wife and I know a few words in Akha and we communicate with them. I always do that. When others could not sell anything, I always could." Farmers also highlight the importance of words when in search of daily work. "Finding work does not depend on the network. It depends on the way we speak." "One should not be taciturn or intimidated. You have to talk." "Finding work depends on the way you speak. It depends on your face; you must smile. The mouth should always talk and smile."

Demonstrating "good will" in business relationships also means using kinship appellatives to name employees. Khamlek, a Phunoy, speaks of the peasants of the Akha ethnic group as his "relatives" (*pinong*); the hotel owner takes in her "grandchildren" (*luk lan*) although they are not related to her in any way. The converse is true: Seng is extremely proud that all his employees call him "Big Brother Seng," because he believes he has won their trust (*sua man*). Though these appellatives can mark a closeness between employers and employees, it does not reflect equality in the relationships. Akha employees from Khamlek continue to show him respect and recognition, and some admit they can actually only trust their true relatives. However, these words expressing closeness allow entrepreneurs to facilitate their business. A trader who buys forest products from farmers for resale in China, told me: "If you cannot speak well, if you're stingy, farmers do not come to you. For, ultimately, our money is with the peasants. If we can talk to them, their money will come to us."

These forms of generosity, proximity, attention, and trust are generally expressed in terms of "face" (*na*) and "heart" (*chai*). Seng says: "When I started my commercial activity, I had no money to provide food when the peasants came to my shop. But when they arrived, I bought water and offered drinks. For we must "present first our face and eyes" (*au na au ta kon*)," that is to say, to make him (Seng) appear as a considerate and generous person. Others stress the frank, honest, transparent behavior needed. "I want them to see my heart." "We must have a big heart [be generous]." Conversely, not being welcoming would be considered, to some extent, a loss of face for job seekers. Taoviang, an entrepreneur and head of the newest village of the city, explained: "*Ya su lang kiat,*" a formula that he would put as follows: "One shouldn't be dismissive, differentiate between people, and only speak to those who are rich."

The employers' display of attention may involve demonstrating a significant time commitment for his employees' private sphere. An employer may inquire about the education of his employee's children, occasionally sending them small gifts (fruits from his garden, old clothes from his own children). He is regularly invited to attend and to honor with his presence the ceremonies held by his employees such as weddings or funerals. On such occasions, the employer is expected to manifest his generosity by spending some significant time sitting in a prominent place, allowing all guests to pay attention to his presence. He may also give a speech for his employee's guests. And so the prestige of an entrepreneur or leader is measured by his staged sociability and generosity. "Some people are bosses (*chao*), others are leaders (*nai*), but no one comes to see them. Others are not leaders, but people from all around come to visit them. This means they are someone important."

Moreover, establishing paternalistic relationships is also the way employers prove their generosity and create a network of relationships in their debt. It is not unusual in Boun Tay to meet with employees going to their boss's house at night or during weekends to do additional salary-free work. They come on special occasions, mainly for ceremonies such as weddings, building of a new house, the New Year celebrations, when guests are numerous and there is a great need for cooks and servers, for example. They also may participate

in other small activities for their boss (repairing the roof of the house, babysitting the children, going to the forest to look after the buffaloes). "This way, we help each other" (*suaikan*), as most of the employees explained to me. "Phan is like a father for me. After all he has done for me, it's normal for me to help him as much as I can," another told me. When an employer does not respect the implicit terms of the contract anymore, employees do not feel that they owe anything to their boss. In most such cases, they leave their job all of a sudden without telling their boss and without asking for their wages. Employers try to save face by denying when they fall short of the principles of reciprocity. That is, at least, the way I interpret the fact that they complain publicly, "After all I have done for him . . ." "I treated her as my own child. I don't understand." Lastly, the rules of reciprocity are not implemented by all Laotian employers ("everyone is different—it's like the fingers of one hand"). It is for this reason that, in the end, the number of employers judged "good" by peasants is relatively limited and why those who do not adopt this ethical behavior are still struggling to find employees.

Conclusion

My research has investigated the transition to paid work in the farming world among the Lao population, agriculture still being the main occupation. It is clear that what was previously considered to be a job (*asip*) has been reconceptualized. Up until only ten years ago, the arena of work in Laos was still thought of as being divided into two categories: the farming world and the world of state officials. The importance attached by the Lao PDR to the peasant world was especially emphasized through the imagery used in propaganda billboards, banknotes, stamps, and statues. Some expressed the unity of a multiethnic nation through the representation of three women from different ethnic groups wearing different ethnic clothes but portrayed primarily as farm workers, holding a sickle in one hand, a sheaf of rice in the other, and carrying a large basket on their backs. Other images depict the unity of workers in the figures of a civil servant (usually healthcare or education personnel), a peasant, and a soldier. In 2015, after the very wide

generalization of wage labor in cities and towns, the work of peasants is now largely undervalued. Agricultural sufficiency is no longer considered to be a job because it does not bring in a salaried income. This is the opinion expressed by local officials and farmers cultivating cash crops in Boun Tay. But the latter would find it hard to learn that at the national level, they are no longer considered to have a job, at least according to the preamble to the latest report on employment in Laos produced by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (2009, 23), which states: "More than 75% of workers continue to be engaged in agrarian livelihoods, a clear indication that economic growth has not created jobs." Agriculture is apparently no longer a job, an idea that is reinforced in the UNDP coedited report by claims that the (low) labor productivity in agriculture is four to ten times less than that in non-agricultural activities, and that "any shift of workers away from agriculture is encouraging" (24).

The other central focus of this research is the way in which peasants accept daily farm work, and more broadly, wage labor. One of the conditions in the peasants' transition to paid employment, to "work for others," is mutual cooperation between employers and employees, similar to the exchange of working days practiced among farmers in rural villages ten years ago. Contrary to the exchange in these villages, where the forms of cooperation were strictly reciprocal in nature—wood cutting for wood cutting, help with crop sowing for the same—the exchange here is not equal. Employees who put their services at the disposal of an employer believe implicitly that they offer something more than strictly their labor, and thus expect more in return than just a salary.

An employer who wishes to attract employees—and more generally a sort of "clientele" (farmers who agree to sell or deliver their products exclusively to him, for example)—must not only be able to offer a salary in exchange for labor, but more importantly, some of his time in exchange for the time his employees spend working for him, and demonstrations of generosity to compensate in some way for the shame and loss of face that working for others engenders. It is under these conditions that work can appear "good" or "worthwhile" to a peasant, and that an employer may establish and maintain

his network of daily employees. It is based on these conditions that the Lao employers can claim, when pointing at their Chinese competitors, "We do not 'eat' the work force of others." This type of cooperation involving different forms of exchange between partners is inherently unequal. Ultimately, ostentatious demonstrations of generosity deployed by employers, which are most often non-material, end up placing the employer in the position of donor, implicitly making their employees beholden to them. In this way, new entrepreneurs in northern Laos are echoing behavior and gestures that were those of pre-1975 elites and have now become those of the Communist Party's executives and high-ranking government officials (Evans 2002, 105–6).

Acccording to some scholars, culture is neither a source nor an obstacle to economic transformation.[17] Rather, the integration of local communities into the global capitalist economy should lead to the reinvention of cultural practices. In this sense, would the new entrepreneurs in Laos be "mediators of modernity," in the words of Janet Roitman (2000, 52), that is, people updating historical ethics in the context of a modern economy? But one can also wonder if these are transient forms of authority in a world of work that will prove increasingly dominated by the logic of the new market opportunities. In December 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community came into force; one of its components is the free movement of workers across all of Southeast Asia. Laotians still know little about how such free movement will function and are worried about it, imagining a competitive flow of Chinese and Vietnamese workers who will ignore the criteria that constitute a "good" job and accept any job under any conditions.



Fig. 1.2. Women packing beans for a Chinese company, Boun Tay District, 2015

Notes

1. Since 2008, I conducted surveys as part of a personal research project examining the issue of local power in Laos through the study of two interconnected phenomena: the emergence of new local elites and the rapid growth of border localities. These surveys, ranging from one to three months each year, were conducted by combining both qualitative in-depth interviews and sociological and economic data collected from district-level and provincial-level authorities. Since 2013, I have enjoyed the support of the European Research Programme SEATIDE to conduct fieldwork, including those carried out in January–February 2015 as part of the present publication. I would like to thank Yves Goudineau, Vatthana Pholsena, and Grégoire Schlemmer for their stimulating comments on this paper.

2. Population pressure in Laos is 27.4 inhabitants per square kilometer, compared to 122 in Thailand, 253.5 in Vietnam, and 117 in the border province of Yunnan (China).

3. These are all located along the Mekong River and developed from the late nineteenth century onwards due to the installation of the French colonial administration and, simultaneously, to the arrival of Vietnamese (recruited as colonial officials) and Chinese merchants.

4. As noted by Pierre Alary (2006, 178), these companies were more like artisanal structures than companies, more political than economic, and their activities were limited.

5. Agrarian taxes actually account for most of the tax collected during 1975–85: 90% in 1975, 98% in 1980, and 74% in 1985 (Alary 2006, 180).

6. Both provincial authorities and farmers measured the degree of poverty of a village on the basis of the number of families lacking rice / number of months. Conversely, wealth was prorated on the basis of families who had a surplus of rice (Evans 2008, 518).

7. Steering Committee for Census of Population and Housing, 2016. The national census is conducted every ten years.

8. To this category is added that of "unpaid family worker," but the two are to be read together. That is to say, "own account worker" corresponds to the household head, and "unpaid family worker" to his spouse and children

(interview with Ms. Manivanh, Head of Office for National Statistics, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Vientiane, December 10, 2007).

9. On the introduction of cash crops in the highlands, see Dwyer (2007) and Lagerqvist (2014).

10. This type of "2 + 3" agreement between peasants and small Chinese companies extends to other cultures that have spread massively throughout northern Laos such as the rubber tree (which is not planted on the rice fields, but generally in old fallows). On rubber cultivation in Laos, see, among others Cohen (2009) and Shi (2008).

11. Scott (1985, 184), in his other book, *Weapons of the Weak*, will moreover redefine more carefully his concept of moral economy (broadening his statement to the resistance rather than to the riots and to the values more than to the standards), qualifying it as of "moral context," consisting "of a set of expectations and preferences on relations between the rich and the poor."

12. This is where I conducted my inquiries for this present research in January–February 2015, but I had conducted fieldwork here on several occasions since 2005, particularly on migrants from Phongsaly District who had settled there.

13. This was an increase of 39 percent between 1993 and 2003, and of 52 percent between 2003 and 2013, much higher figures than the national average of 22 percent and 19 percent respectively for these two periods, and well above those of Phongsaly Province—8 percent and 4 percent in both periods (2005 National Census, Lao Statistics Bureau, 2014; Steering Committee for Census of Population and Housing, 2006 and 2016; and according to the information I collected from the Provincial Department of Statistics, Phongsaly, 2014).

14. In Laos, the prices negotiated with farmers increased from approximately USD 1.3 (11,000 kip)/kg in 2012 to USD 0.5 (3,000–4,000 kip) in 2014. In Boun Tay, rubber trees were about to reach maturity and nearly ready to be tapped when the price of rubber fell.

15. This phenomenon illustrates what the people of Boun Tay, including farmers, now define as one of their three basic needs: to build a house (judged worthy of the name, made of cement and tiles), to provide education for their children, and to pay for their future wedding costs. These needs thus stated obviously vary depending on the different categories of people in the district.

For officials and traders, the purchase of a smartphone and a car (4x4 or small truck) has now been added to these needs. Ditto for wedding ceremony costs that vary greatly according to the wealth and social status of families; but in ten years, I have observed hyper-inflation of the costs of these ceremonies. It is now recognized that even the bride price paid by the son of a minor official must be at least 10 million kip and 10 million kip in gold (excluding ceremony costs).

16. The first meaning of *liang* is effectively "to feed" (nurture).

17. See, among others, Ong (1997) and the many chapters on that topic in Bayart (1994).

References

Alary, Pierre. 2006. "Dynamique monétaire et développement des échanges marchands." PhD diss, EHESS, Paris.

———. 2013. "La théorie économique confrontée aux transformations économiques d'une société rurale: Le cas de la province de Phongsaly au Laos." *European Journal of Development Research* 25: 466–87.

Baird, Ian G. 2010. "Land, Rubber and People: Rapid Agrarian Change and Responses in Southern Laos." *Journal of Lao Studies* 1 (1): 1–47.

Bayart, Jean-François, ed. 1994. *La réinvention du capitalisme*. Paris: Karthala.

Bernal, Victoria. 1994. "Peasants, Capitalism, and (Ir)Rationality." *American Ethnologist* 21 (4): 792–810.

Bouté, Vanina. 2013. "Mobilities and the Restructuring of the Population within the Trans-border Areas in Northern Laos." In *Transnational Dynamics and Territorial Redefinitions in Southeast Asia: The Greater Mekong Subregion and Malacca Strait Economic Corridors*, edited by Christian Taillard and Nathalie Fau, 397–418. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

———. 2012. "Migrations paysannes et villes émergentes au Nord Laos." In *Laos: Sociétés et pouvoirs*, edited by Vanina Bouté and Vatthana Pholsena, 117–38. Paris: IRASEC-Les Indes Savantes.

———. 2018. *Mirroring Power: Ethnogenesis and Integration among the Phunoy of Northern Laos*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books and EFEO.

Chayanov, Alexandre V. 1990. *L'organisation de l'économie paysanne*. Paris: Librairie du Regard/Éd. de la Maison des sciences de l'homme.

Cohen, Paul. T. 2009. "The Post-Opium Scenario and Rubber in Northern Laos: Alternative Western and Chinese Models of Development." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 20 (5): 424–30.

Ministry of Planning and Investment, and UNDP. 2009. *National Human Development Report: Employment and Livelihoods, Lao PDR 2009*. Vientiane: Department of Statistics/UNDP.

Ducourtieux, Olivier. 2006. "Is the Diversity of Shifting Cultivation Held in High Enough Esteem in Lao PDR?" *Moussons* 9–10: 61–86.

Dwyer, Mike. 2007. *Turning Land into Capital: A Review of Recent Research on Land Concessions for Investment in Lao PDR*. Consultancy report in two parts for the Land Issues Working Group. 2 vols. Vientiane.

Evans, Grant. 1990. *Lao Peasants under Socialism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 2002. *A Short History of Laos*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

———. 2008. "Lao Peasant Studies Today." In *New Research on Laos*, edited by Yves Goudineau and Michel Lorrillard, 507–31. Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient.

Evrard, Olivier, and Yves Goudineau. 2004. "Planned Resettlements, Unexpected Migrations and Cultural Trauma." *Development and Change* 35 (5): 937–62.

Goudineau, Yves, ed. 1997. *Resettlement and Social Characteristics of New Villages: Basic Needs for Resettled Communities in the Lao PDR*. 2 vols. Vientiane: UNESCO/United Nations Development Programme/Orstom.

Goudineau, Yves. 2000. "Ethnicité et déterritorialisation dans la péninsule indochinoise: considerations à partir du Laos." *Autrepart* 14, 17–31.

Lao Statistics Bureau. 2014. *Statistical Yearbook 2013*. Vientiane: Ministry of Planning and Investment.

Lagerqvist Fujita, Yayoi. 2014. "From Swidden to Rubber: Transforming Landscape and Livelihoods in Mountainous Northern Laos." In *The Social Lives of Forests: Past, Present, and Future of Woodland Resurgence*, edited by Susanna B. Hecht, Kathleen D. Morrison, and Christine Padoch, 260–73. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lebar, Frank, and Adrienne Suddard. 1960. *Laos: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture*. New Haven: Hraf Press.

Li Yunxia and Chris Lyttleton. 2017. "Rubber's Affective Economies: Seeding a Social Landscape in Northwest Laos." In *Changing Lives in Laos: Society, Politics and Culture in a Post-Socialist State*, edited by Vanina Bouté and Vatthana Pholsena, 301–24. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

Mahaphone, N., P. Ngaosrivathana, M. Phimphachanh, S. Chittasupha, S. Pasay, and Paul Jones. 2007. *Study on Land Conflicts and Conflicts Resolution in Lao PDR*. Land Policy Study No. 9 under LLTP II. Vientiane: Lao-German Land Policy Development Project/GTZ.

Ong, Aihwa. 1997. "Chinese Modernities: Narratives of Nation and of Capitalism." In *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*, edited by Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini, 171–202. New York: Routledge.

Rigg, Jonathan. 2005. *Living with Transition in Laos: Market Integration in Southeast Asia*. London: Routledge.

Roitman, Janet. 2000. "Economie morale, subjectivité et politique." *Critique internationale* 6: 48–56.

Scott, James C. 1976. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in South-East Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shi Weiyi. 2008. *Rubber Boom in Luang Namtha: A Transnational Perspective*. Vientiane: GTZ.

Steering Committee for Census of Population and Housing. 2006. *Results from the Population and Housing Census 2005*. Vientiane: Ministry of Planning and Investment.

———. 2016. *Results from the Population and Housing Census 2015*. Vientiane: Ministry of Planning and Investment.

Vandergeest, Peter. 2003. "Land to Some Tillers: Development Induced Displacement in Laos." *International Social Science Journal* 55 (1): 47–56.