CHANGING LIVES IN LAOS

Society, Politics, and Culture in a Post-Socialist State

Edited by

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oral history project "Voices of Viengxay" (LNTA 2010), which provided material for the audio tour of the Viengxay Caves Visitor Center.

18. LNTA, 2013 Statistical Report on Tourism in Laos. Available at http://www.tourismlaos.org/files/files/2013%20Statistical%20Report%20on%20Tourism%20in%20English.pdf
19. For a comparative case study, see Pierre Petit's (2013) excellent analysis of the *bun greh* festival of the Khmu (see also Jonsson 2001).
20. And even longer via Youtube, while Facebook appears to be the main platform for voices critical of the regime—both sources enabling a methodologically questionable perspective for (cyber-)armchair-anthropology.
21. Besides, one has to consider the demography of the country, since at least half of the population was born after 1975. Thanks to Vatthana Pholsena for this elucidation.

CHAPTER 4

'Special Operation Pagoda': Buddhism, Covert Operations, and the Politics of Religious Subversion in Cold-War Laos (1957–60)

Patrice Ladwig

Introduction

Imagine a Buddha statue painted in Andy Warhol style pop-art colors. Both hands of the Buddha are in the lap with palms upward, resembling the *dhyāna mudrā*, a gesture of meditation and alluding to the triple gem—the Buddha, his teachings (dhamma), and the monastic order (Sangha). In the arms of the statue, a man is leveling a gun. Aiming for a point somewhere above, he uses the folded arms of the Buddha as a support for his gun. This socialist propaganda image was painted by the Cuban artist Rafael Zarsa in 1969 for the "Day of Solidarity with the People of Laos." I can only guess how this hybrid-imaginary of communist revolutionary insurrection and the Buddha would be perceived by Lao Buddhists today, but it undoubtedly represents a powerful metaphor for one of the possible positions of religion in the Cold War. The image is an artistic testimony to the fact that the Cold War—with its revolutionary projects for independence or a new social order—produced constellations between politics and religion that were at times unusual, radical, or even bizarre to some observers. From a general perspective, research on Buddhism's roles during the Cold War is still underresearched. Some exceptions are the works on the so-called Buddhist crisis in Vietnam

in 1963 and its roles in the demise of the Diem regime. This period has probably attracted more research due to its intense imagery, namely, burning monks on Saigon's roads, and its high visibility in the media during the Second Indochina War (Thanh 2006; Moyar 2004). The most promising work on Southeast Asia's Theravāda Buddhism's entanglements into the Cold War is the voluminous PhD thesis by Eugene Ford entitled "Cold War Monks: An International History of Buddhism, Politics and Regionalism in Thailand and Southeast Asia, 1941–1976" (Ford 2012). Ford's thesis presents a very detailed and refined picture of the regional and transnational relationships between Southeast Asia and the USA influenced by Cold-War politics of religion.

When researching the history of the Lao Buddhist Sangha's position in the pre-revolutionary political landscape from the mid-1950s onward, it quickly comes to the fore that the Cold War had a decisive influence on its trajectories, and that Buddhism's ideological and practical capacities were considered important by a variety of political stakeholders including the Neo Lao Hak Sat (Lao Patriotic Front, NLHS), the Pathet Lao's political organization (PL),[1] the various manifestations of the Royal Lao Government (RLG), and neutralist-leftist forces such as the Santiphab Party. When I did my PhD fieldwork in Laos between 2003 and 2005, some of the monks who had been involved in Sangha affairs during the Cold War were still alive. At the time, most were already in their seventies and eighties, and almost all of them have by now passed away. Their retrospective narrative accounts revealed that Lao Buddhism and its institutions were deeply affected by the Cold War, and fields of official and administrative actions, but more often subject to clandestine political interventions in the fight for and against communism, neutrality, and independence. As the religion of the ethnic Lao, Buddhist culture, the Sangha's traditional high standing and its institutional networks were seen as potentially ideologically supportive. Retrospectively, one could say that the Sangha's political orientations played a role that was perhaps not decisive, but added a distinctive shade to the complex, fragile, and very temporary power constellations of the Lao revolutionary foreplay. The research that deals with the situation of Buddhism before the revolution (Stuart-Fox 1996; Holt 2009), and the interviews that I conducted concerning the situation in the late 1950s, revealed a quite dynamic and fragmented image of Lao Buddhism,



especially in Vientiane: changing alliances in a politicized and polarized Sangha; efforts to discipline monastic institutions through new regulations; and monks demonstrating and rallying around town show that the Sangha was deeply immersed into the political situation of the time. Although the Cold War should always be understood as a localized conflict in the context of decolonization that cannot be reduced to proxy theaters of conflict embedded into simple superpower dichotomies (Goscha and Ostermann 2009; Day 2010), one must at the same time take into account its transnational dimensions: the involvement of the CIA, the Asia Foundation, Thai monks, and Vietnamese advisors in Lao Buddhist affairs clearly show this relevance.

This chapter sets out to discuss the position of the Lao Buddhist Sangha in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the context of Cold-War politics of religion. Intending to widen the scope of the few works already dealing with the politization of Lao Buddhism in the context of the Lao revolution (Stuart-Fox and Bucknell 1982), my main focus is on a short time window between 1957 and 1960. I will mainly discuss the situation in Vientiane, with some short references to other areas of Laos such as Luang Phrabang and Sam Neua in the so-called "liberated zones." I hope to show that in this short time-span the incidents in Vientiane were of crucial importance for forming the trajectories of the events leading to the revolution in 1975. I begin with an analysis of the position Buddhism had in the complex Lao political landscape of the late 1950s and its entanglements between various political stakeholders, followed by a discussion of the 1958 elections, the subsequent coalition government, and their significance for the politics of religion. Both sections will introduce some of the monastic and political key players in Sangha affairs. The third section of this chapter will explore the efforts of the Lao secret service and other international agencies involved in covert operations to contain the influence of neutralist and communist forces in the Sangha. Finally, I will show that the new Sangha laws and other disciplinary measures introduced in 1959 provoked massive resistance among radicalized monks, and eventually led to a schism inside the Vientiane monastic order that lasted until 1975. With this chapter having a more descriptive nature, I will here only briefly allude to a theoretical point by Max Weber (1947) on forms of legitimacy and bureaucracy, and claim that in the case of the Lao Sangha this legitimacy was undermined.

1. Cold-War Religion: Buddhism and the Lao Political Landscape of the Late 1950s

After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the Cold War conflict in Indochina entered a new phase. With the retreat of the French, American military aid, presence of staff and clandestine operations increased massively (Castle 1993). Simultaneously, North Vietnam's engagement in Laos became more apparent (Vietnamese advisors had been active in Laos since the aftermath of the Second World War (Goscha 2004), and the Vietnamese started to build the Ho Chi Minh Trail in 1959 (Pholsena 2008a).

While the foreign aid of the US government in support of the RLG was just beginning to pour into the country, its effects were immediately apparent: Vientiane and other urban areas, with their small upper-class, profited in grand style from the influx of US financial aid. In the course of a few years, new villas, imported consumer goods, cars and western-style entertainment venues started to spread in Vientiane. As Grant Evans has put it aptly: "In a few short years millions of dollars had rained down like manna from heaven on the cities of Laos" (2002a: 102). Inequalities in wealth and the desire to tap the America-sustained phantasmagoric urban economy led to more and more internal division among Lao politicians, and was also seen as a threat for Lao culture; and the radical social changes associated with influx of capital "sent shivers of cultural anxiety down the spines of its leaders and cultural institutions such as the Buddhist Sangha" (Evans 2002a: 100). As Buddhist monastic institutions are largely dependent on donations and an economic surplus that can be invested into the ritual economy (Wijayaratna 1990; Ladwig 2013), some sections of the Sangha surely profited from this foreign aid. Joel Halpern observed that this cashflow offered opportunities for monks, most of whom were eager to adopt Western lifestyles and to learn English. Yet, "at the same time [they] maintain strongly anti-American attitudes and also oppose the policies of the Royal Lao Government in general" (1964a: 60). Internal reports of the RLG, the Lao secret service, and various external observers (to be discussed later) indeed suggest that the majority of monks politically opposed American involvement and the RLG's policies (Lafont 1982: 151). Martin Stuart-Fox has correctly pointed out that the social change provoked by this involvement actually played into the hands of the oppositional forces

(1996: 129). The ascetic self-representations of members of the NLHS and the PL, as well as their public perception, profited from a certain overlap with Buddhist ideas, and contributed to win the sympathies of many monks, as it represented a remarkable difference to their opponents' evolving culture of nepotism and wealth fueled by the American presence. Other oppositional forces such as the leftist-neutralist Santiphab Party also pointed to these developments, and therefore appealed to many monks and a Buddhist audience in general.

Buddhism and Its Symbolic and Practical Significance for Political Movements

Before further outlining the political landscape of this period and its relationship to Buddhism and monastic institutions, it might be useful to discuss why certain political factions tried to appeal to Sangha members and Buddhism in general. Why was the support or rejection of certain political projects by the Sangha deemed important? From a very general perspective, Buddhism has been crucial for political legitimacy, and alliances and tensions between state ruling elites and the monastic order form a crucial part of conceptions of statecraft of the region. Ideally, they are in a symbiotic relation representing the "two wheels of the dhamma." This alliance is well documented for Theravāda Buddhism in Southeast Asia, where local leaders from early on saw the usefulness of associating themselves with the monastic order.[2] However, Steven Collins argues that "the relations between kings and leaders of the monkhood can thus be seen as co-operation and/or feud between rival factions of the elite" and thereby also alludes to the potential conflicts that can arise between Sangha and state (1998: 415). Hence, this association can take on a variety of forms including cooption, adaptation, and resistance. But monks were not only part of the strategies of ruling elites, but at times also had active roles in politics, as shown in the case of northern Laos.[3]

According to Max Weber's ideal-types, in modern states, forms of legitimacy undergo a crucial change: they switch from traditional and/or charismatic authority to forms of legal authority (Weber 1947: 324–8). With Laos in the 1950s exposing a mixture of these various types of legitimacy, one can argue that despite the changes brought about by the postcolonial Lao nation state and secularization (Ladwig 2011), this association of political power and Buddhism was still

vital. This connection of the religious and the political field was also engraved in the postcolonial Lao state, as the 1947 Lao constitutions proclaimed: "Buddhism is the state religion, and the King is its supreme defender."

From a more practical perspective, one can also argue that the Sangha was interesting for political stakeholders because it offered institutional and bureaucratic capacities that could be utilized. In the 1950s, Laos largely remained a peasant economy with most villages having very little connection to the central state authorities. Over a decade later, Laos remained decentralized, but the Sangha and its institutions were described as being "the only permanent vertical functional organization which reaches into the Lao rural population" (Boutsavath and Chapelier 1973: 15).[4] Although the latter statement might somewhat overrate the Sangha's capacities, the association with the monastic order undoubtedly had practical implications as the temple took on a variety of social functions beyond purely "religious ones." In the virtual absence of a state school system outside a few urban areas, monks were very often the only teachers available and some monastics arguably represented a type of "traditional intellectual" with a wide-ranging institutional network that had a significant influence on the peasant population (Ladwig 2013). Moreover, modern developments, such as Buddhist Sunday schools for youth, were starting to emerge, and under the leadership of the meditation master Mahapah Ananto (1911–68), *vipassana*-classes and other activities for laypeople were being developed in Vientiane (McDaniel 2008: 53f). Therefore, the networks in which monks' activities took place represented a resource and an apparatus that could be filled with new tasks and take on a variety of roles. As I will elaborate in more detail later, and as Martin Stuart-Fox (1996: 92–3) and John Holt (2009: 123f) have already shown, the NLHS/PL, the RLG, and other political factions actually recognized Buddhism as a symbolic and practical resource. This insertion of Buddhist institutions into aspiring political movements is a rather common phenomenon and has clear parallels to the case of Thailand, where in the late 1950s, and especially in the 1960s, "segments of the Sangha were mobilized for 'integrationist'... and counter-insurgency programs" (Anderson 1998: 166) under the US-friendly military regime led by General Sarit Thanarat. Buddhism's role in these programs constituted a rather bizarre mix of civilizing

mission, Thai nationalism, development programs, border patrolling, and anti-communist counterinsurgency.

The Lao Political Landscape and Buddhism during the Cold War

To provide a comprehensive overview of the Lao political landscape and its relationship with Buddhism, especially between 1958 and 1960, is by no means an easy task. Political parties often changed their names, alliances were short-lived, and leading politicians changed sides, were imprisoned, and even killed. External interventions by Vietnamese and American "advisors" add another layer of complexity to this period of Lao politics. Moreover, the political factions that tried to win the support of the Lao Sangha, or profit from rival factions, were not following a deterministic bipolar order of the Cold War, rather alliances were more often of a personalized and unstable nature. This approach contributes to developing more nuanced and localized accounts of the important events that were happening in the "periphery" of the Cold War (McMahan 1994; Wade and Hack 2009: 443f.), or on a more general level, even to the "provincialization" of dominant European and American perspectives on history (Chakrabarty 2000).

Given the complexity of the interaction between national parties, personal interest groups, and international agendas, I can only give a sketch of the political situation (for further details of the larger political context, I refer to the contributions of Martin Rathie, Oliver Tappe, and Vatthana Pholsena in this volume). I shall in the following sections mainly refer to political factions that were involved in the politics of religion and in programs that were aiming at gaining the support of or subverting Buddhist institutions. First, I shall outline the role of the political factions that opposed cooperation with the RLG and the US, namely the NLHS/PL and the Santiphab-Party, and established a short-lived cooperation before the decisive elections for the coalition government in May 1958. I will then, in the next chapter, present more details of the various RLG governments that were influential in the Lao politics of religion and tried to contain the political radicalization among members of the Lao Sangha.

The political movements and actors active in religious matters during this decisive period of Lao Cold-War politics can be classified

as belonging to the leftist-neutralist camp, though at times they co-operated with the NLHS and the Pathet Lao. The most important and durable neutralist force was constituted by the Santiphab *pen kang* ("Peace is Neutrality") party led by Kinim Pholsena. Founded in 1955, the Santiphab-Party also attracted the support of many monks and therefore became—besides the Pathet Lao—a target of various RLG–CIA covert operations (to which I will return in the latter part of the chapter). Maha Khou Souvannamethi (1911–98) was a prominent member of the Santiphab-Party (representing a wing that to some extent was close to the political line of the Pathet Lao). He studied at the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh and was a Pali teacher for several years. In 1945, he disrobed to start a career in politics, and in 1955 became a member of the National Assembly. Although the Santiphab-Party gradually lost its political significance after the assassination of Kinim Pholsena in 1963, Souvannamethi maintained a good relationship with the Pathet Lao, and played an important role in the Ministry of Religion in the period before and after 1975. Internal American reports stated that "he [was] almost certainly a crypto-communist."[5]

Another political player who belonged to the neutralist camp was Bong Souvannavong (1906–78), who throughout the 1950s and 1960s was a very active Buddhist-inspired member of the pre-revolutionary scene in Laos. Although the name of Souvannavong's political parties often changed, he was elected several times member of the Lao National Assembly, occupied ministerial posts and in 1957–58 was also running for the Santiphab-Party. He had a vivid interest in Buddhism and often critiqued the RLG and the government of Souvanna Phouma. In 1956, he founded the League for Peace and Neutrality and edited a newspaper called *Santiphab*. Despite the title of Souvannavong's major 1961 publication, *Doctrine Lao ou socialisme dhammique (sangkhom dhammadhipatai) pour l'instauration de la paix*, he was not a socialist in the strict sense. Instead, he "was one of the few Buddhist thinkers, aside from U Nu in Burma, who concentrated on the relationship between Buddhism and democracy" (Christie 2001: 152). Nevertheless, strongly opposing the American influence, he and his networks also supported the NLHS and the Pathet Lao at times. Clearly visible was his emphasis on ethics and morality—inspired by Nehru's *panca-sila* ("five general principles") concept, Souvannavong (1961) emphasized Buddhism's contribution to neutrality by drawing on its ethical capacities.

The Pathet Lao and Buddhism

What was to become in the course of the conflict the most powerful political faction, the Pathet Lao, or its official face and legal political wing, the NLHS, was also very active in Buddhist matters and attracted the support of some sections of the Sangha. Building on a reservoir of politicized monks that had emerged during the colonial era,[6] the Lao communist movement from very early on made concerted efforts to recruit monks and get them politically engaged. Earlier experiences of Vietnamese communists cadres in Laos were perhaps also of importance in the recognition of the supportive role Buddhism could play. Christopher Goscha (2004: 155) reports from a Vietnamese revolutionary autobiography:

> A female cadre, Hoang Thi Phuong, was sent to southern Laos in 1949 to mobilize women for the revolutionary cause. She went from house to house, proffering slogans and propaganda, but to no avail. Interestingly, she explains that all this changed when she met and received help from a local village monk. He explained that her revolutionary message was packaged in the wrong form and language; she would never reach the 'people.' Thanks to this monk's linguistic, religious and sociocultural experience and help, Hoang Thi Phuong was able to simplify, modify, and indeed, indigenize her message to tailor it to the interests and needs of her potential converts. She reveals too that this monk helped her make the right connections in order to gain the trust of the local Lao women.

It therefore comes as no surprise that party programs and other material issued by the NLHS and the PL from early on contained points that were dealing with Buddhism as a national heritage, its value for the nation, and the necessity to protect it from "imperialist" influences. It is worth mentioning that the early meetings of the NLHS in the liberated zone already included a proportion of monks, and that the photos taken at the founding meeting of the NLHS in 1956 show monks (clearly visible in the first rows) as participants. Photographs taken in the liberated zone in Huaphan and Sam Neua show a young future revolutionary leader Kaysone Phomvihane talking to Buddhist monks. Moreover, member lists of the NLHS from this period show that several monks (easy identifiable by the prefix "*pha*") or highly educated (ex-) monks (listed as "*maha*," i.e. monks possessing a high educational level and standing) were actively involved in

the NLHS (Zasloff: 1973: 117f). Especially in the period discussed in this chapter, the NLHS was mostly perceived as a nationalist liberation movement, and less as an organization of a communist party operating from the liberated zone (mostly occupied by non-Buddhist minorities) where the movement was already experimenting with many of the policies to be introduced nationwide after the communist victory in 1975.[7] In the late 1950s, among the larger population, little was known about the more Marxist-Leninist line that was being established by some members of the NLHS (Schneider 2001: 67; Rathie, this volume).

In particular, two figures of the Pathet Lao were important in the politics of religion and the Buddhist-inspired self-representations of the movement. Prince Souphanouvong, as one of the most competent and prominent figures of the communist movement, has been described as an extraordinary intelligent and charismatic leader. Some of the miraculous narratives that surround his activities prove that by large parts of the Lao population, he was seen as a "man of merit" (*phu mi bun*) and his popularity could draw on Buddhist concepts of charisma. Although not directly involved in the politics of religion, Souphanouvong made regular allusions to Buddhism. In a radio speech he gave in 1962, for instance, he made explicit references to Buddhism and in that way "Buddhicized" the fight for independence (Brown and Zasloff 1986: 223). More influential on a practical and operational level in the politics of religion was Phoumi Vongvichit (1909–94). He played a crucial role in the politics of religion and culture before and after the revolution. Vongvichit initiated measures that were meant to appeal to monks and to persuade them to participate in the "anti-imperialist struggle." In a propaganda text of the PL entitled "The Victorious Struggle of the Lao People against American Neo-Colonialism," he clearly outlined Buddhism's potentials and described the Sangha as "a systematic organization, parallel to the power apparatus of the state. The monks have a great moral authority on the social life in the country, especially on the peasants. The Buddhist philosophy has as well a profound influence on the mentality and the ideology of the majority of the Lao people" (1968: 24–5). In some of his later writings (1995: 163f; 206–8), one still finds numerous references merging moral discourses of socialism and Buddhism. Both "Souphanouvong and Phoumi Vongvichit stood out



from other Lao revolutionaries due to their intellectual appetite and discipline" (Rathie, this volume), and were very well aware of the potentials Buddhism and the Sangha offered for their political aims. Images taken in the late 1950s and early 1960s (today accessible in the archives of Khaosan Pathet Lao) show them touring through the temples of Vientiane and presenting offerings to monks. In the course of these visits, they informed the monks about their political ideas and discredited the politics of religion of the various RLG governments.

2. The 1958 Elections and the Politics of Religious Subversion

These religious-political configurations underwent another shift when in August 1957 Souvanna Phouma became Prime Minister and, following a crisis in the cabinet, was charged by the King with forming a new government. Supplementary elections to the National Assembly were planned in order to form a coalition government. In preparation for the elections, Vongvichit organized much of the pre-election propaganda on behalf of the NLHS, also targeting monks. Crucial for the preparation and the outcome of the election was the fact that neutralists such Bong Souvannavong and Kinim Pholsena closely cooperated with the NLHS. Hence, in late 1957 and early 1958, the NLHS and the neutralist-oriented parties coordinated their campaigns. Souvannavong, for example, allowed the NLHS to use his printing press (Deuve 1995: 78). Other figures of the neutralist movement who had a Sangha-background were also pleading for collaboration with the NLHS. Maha Boutdy Sourysak, a Pali teacher who before was involved with the Sintham-Party, but from 1955 to 1960 joined the Santiphab Party, became one of Souvannavong's closest advisors. Monks could also vote, and Jean Deuve commented that many more than expected used their voting right and supported the forces that promoted the cooperation between NLHS and neutralists (1995: 91).

The elections for the National Assembly on May 4, 1958 marked a turning point in the relationship between the Sangha and the various political stakeholders. The failure of the Progressive Party and the Independent Party to agree on a list of common candidates, and the coordinated strategy of Santiphab and NLHS, were crucial to the outcome of the elections:

> The stunning success of the LPF [NLHS] and its allies in winning thirteen of the twenty-one seats contested in the May 4, 1958, elections to the National Assembly changed the political atmosphere in Vientiane. This success had less to do with the LPF's adroitness than with the ineptness of the old-line nationalists...The LPF and the Peace (Santiphab) Party carefully worked out a strategy of mutual support, which succeeded in winning nearly two-thirds of the seats with barely one-third of the votes cast.[8]

In the subsequently formed coalition government, Vongvichit became Minister of Culture and Fine Arts, whose responsibilities included the affairs of the Sangha. Although the coalition government was short-lived, Vongvichit cleverly used his power in the ministry and created concerted propaganda programs aimed at the Buddhist Sangha that were to have a lasting effect. He reformed the Sangha laws in order to give the monastic order more independence, as well as encouraged monks to make politics a topic of their temple sermons.[9] Vongvichit also recognized that Buddhism offered a set of metaphors that could translate and simplify socialist propaganda, making it understandable for a peasantry that had no or little exposure to such ideas. Throughout this period until the early days of the revolution, the propaganda units of the NLHS at times also used Buddhist-inspired concepts; for instance, the coming of a classless society of abundance was equated with the coming of the future Buddha Maitreya (Schneider 2001: 69; Thepbuali 1976).

Radicalized Monks

Vongvichit's influence was particularly strong among younger, middle-aged and well-educated monks, though he could also build on contacts with leading senior Vientiane monks. Maha Khamthan Thepbouali (b. 1922), who became after 1975 one of the Lao Sangha's chief-ideologues, told me in a 2004 interview that as a monk in his thirties who had just finished his studies of Buddhist psychology in Bangkok, he attended the meetings with Vongvichit and thereby became increasingly politicized. Like some of his younger monk friends, he became a "revolutionary in robes," as he phrased it. Similar political views were held by Maha Vichit Singhalat (1935–2012), who until his death in 2012, was the Supreme Patriarch of Lao Buddhism. At the time a monk in his twenties, Vichit returned to Laos after his

studies in India and quickly became politically engaged. Some members of the Lao Sangha were already on good terms with Vongvichit and other leaders of the NLHS and the Santiphab Party. Some of Vientiane's highest-ranking monks, like Maha Khoun Manivong (1898–1968) and Maha Bouakham Voraphet (1909–1996), supported the political line advanced by Vongvichit and his associates. Manivong has been described as an open advocate of the NLHS policies,[10] whereas Voraphet had already been politically active during his training at the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh, where he was jailed for four months for his anti-colonial activities.[11] In 1958, Voraphet became head of the largest and most important school for monks in Vientiane and used his position to spread his political views.

Although the situation in Luang Phrabang was probably very different, there were also some well-trained monks who, during their studies in colonial Cambodia, were already involved in political activities and carried on with their engagement later. Maha Khamphan Virachit (1914–95), a native of Luang Phrabang province, studied at the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh and returned to Laos in 1937. He became member of the last coalition government before the revolution in 1974, and according to US intelligence, was counted into the "Lao Patriotic Front contingent."[12] Another monk from Luang Phrabang, Pha Bounchankaeo Phothichitto (1920–96) had a clearer connection to the Pathet Lao. Bounchankaeo, a monk of unusual learning and an expert in monastic linguistic studies, was a distant relative of Vongvichit. During his secular training at Ta Hokaeng Lycée in Hanoi from 1939 onward, he became good friends with a classmate who was to become one of the central figures of the Lao revolutionary movement, and later long-term president of the Lao PDR: Kaysone Phomvihane. Official Lao history books report that revolutionary leaders regularly came to consult with Bounchankaeo on political questions (Grabowsky 2012: 68). The convergences of anti-colonialism, oppositional activities, communism, and Buddhism were by no means happening in isolation, but were also linked to transnational networks and global flows of persons and ideas. Recent research on Southeast Asian cultural productions during this period (Day and Liem 2010), and works on the Indochina wars (Goscha and Ostermann 2009) embed the Cold War into local decolonialization processes, as well as point to the latter's entanglements with international trajectories. Hence, what can be labeled the "revolutionary

potentialities" of Buddhism (Ladwig and Shields 2014) were explored in a number of places in Asia where Lao monks traveled to places like Bangkok, Phnom Penh, Hanoi, and India. At the same time, local Lao histories of earlier, Buddhist-inspired anti-colonial rebellions in southern Laos at the turn of the 20th century were also still present in narratives and collective memory (Gay 2002), and could also be used as an example of the compatibility of Buddhism, insurrection, and independence movements (Ladwig 2014a).

The Increasing Appeal of the Pathet Lao

Although I could here only deliver a sketch of Vientiane's political landscape and the political orientation inside the Sangha, several sources seem to confirm that large parts of the Vientiane monastic order were indeed opposing the RLG, and leaning toward the NLHS/PL and the Santiphab Party. The Asia Foundation (TAF) was surveying the political tendencies in the Lao Sangha and in other Buddhist countries. Active in Laos since 1954, and having established an office there in 1958, its "Buddhist Programming Missions" spied upon and selectively promoted religious organizations all over Asia in consultancy with the CIA.[13] From 1959 onward, TAF writes in its reports: "the Pathet Lao is well organized, trained and energetic in Buddhist matters" and "perhaps seventy to eighty percent of the bonzes are opposed to the government [...] and as much as ten to twenty have strong Pathet Lao inclinations" (1964: 22). The report finishes this section with a rather pessimistic account of Buddhism's potentials for the anti-communist struggle: "In general, the feeling is that Buddhism in Laos is far from being a bulwark against Communism and that the Pathet Lao is making considerable inroads among the Buddhist clergy" (ibid.: 33).[14]

The quick breakdown of the coalition government in 1958, and the events following in 1959 heralded a significant shift to the right in the Lao political scene. With the new government under Phoui Sananikone formed on August 18, 1958, Vongvichit lost his position in the ministry, and the cooperation between NLHS and the Santiphab Party fragmented. While Bong Souvannavong became increasingly hostile to the NLHS, its leader Kinim Pholsena continued to steer a neutral course partially deviating from the NLHS. However, the political line of two important ex-monks and associates of the neutralists

—Maha Khou Souvannamethi and Maha Boutdy Sourysak—became further radicalized. For Jean Deuve, these two politicians formed a wing of the neutralists that was "practically non-distinguishable from the NLHS." Both continued to be responsible for the political propaganda inside the Sangha after exclusion from the coalition government (1995: 95).

Recognizing that the NLHS and its associates were winning more and more support, the RLG under Sananikone was alerted and started to take the political significance of the Sangha more seriously. The government now felt impelled to protect Buddhism, care for its purity and, if possible, use it in the ideological fight against communism. This recognized importance of Buddhism by the RLG, but also the potential threat that was inherent in its radicalization, was emphasized by a high-ranking official of the Ministry of Religion interviewed by Joel Halpern in 1959 after the departure of Vongvichit: "The priesthood is one of the best elements for working against the communists [...] but attention must be paid to the anti-governmental elements within the priesthood" (1964a: 143). Another effect of the political polarizations was a radicalization of language. The sanitizing vocabulary used by RLG officials in the Ministry of Religion after the breakdown of the coalition government is telling. Halpern here quotes the same employee: "If we have formal proof that monks serve the Pathet Lao against the government, we must punish them. We cannot wait until many are contaminated" (1964a: 144). Before this shift, many members and supporters of the RLG seemed to have had a more leftist orientation with a rather limited interest in the political dimensions of Buddhism that for some authors was rooted in the French colonial education they received.

A more important reason for this reluctance is possibly grounded in the fact that the social strata from which the Sangha recruited its members were radically different from the RLG elite's social background. What Benedict Anderson has attested for the Thai political upper-class and Sangha in the 1960s seems to parallel the Lao case: "Boys from aristocratic and upper-bourgeois circles were not very interested in ordaining and the Sangha continued to recruit most of its members from lower-class, rural backgrounds which contributed to a widening of the gaps inside the Sangha and the politization of monks. Monks got increasingly involved in social activism and politics" (1998: 166–7). Seeing that certain temples in Vientiane and a

number of well-educated monks had strong anti-RLG attitudes, and sympathies for, or even an active engagement with the NLHS and the Santiphab Party, the RLG made efforts to show a greater commitment to Buddhism and worked out new strategies and regulations that were designed to contain the influence of neutralist and communist forces.

3. Spying on the Sangha: Counterintelligence and the Lao Secret Service

Reflecting Clausewitz's insight that "psychological forces exert a decisive influence on the elements involved in war" (1976: 127), strategies linked to so-called covert operations and psychological warfare were attributed great efficiency in the ideological struggles of the Second Indochina War. As "over the next four years [1955–59] Laos—and not Vietnam—was the principal theater of American covert action in Indochina" (McClintock 1992: 132), Laos became a testing ground for some of these strategies, which were only later in the 1960s applied to South Vietnam. The Lao Sangha was also one of the institutions that were subject to covert action and counterintelligence operations.

As early as December 1955, American authorities had set up various project offices in Vientiane, and the United States Information Service (USIS) had in June 1957 started to initiate a campaign aiming at the Buddhist Sangha. At the same time, the RLG's secret service was already involved in a clandestine campaign in the same field (Deuve 1995: 72). The Asia Foundation also got involved in Lao monastic education, and CIA reports on TAF's activities mention that "its program to up-date the education of remote village Buddhist monks is a counter-insurgency effort."[15]

Thai Thammayut Monks and Development Projects

Transnational assistance in counterintelligence operations also involved the Thai Sangha. With the RLG and the Thai regime following a similar political line in this period, contacts with sections of the Thai Sangha were established in order to assist in the anti-communist struggle. Most of the monks involved from the Thai side came from the Thammayut-sect,[16] a minority sect from Thailand that nonetheless gained a strong position under the tutelage of General Sarit Thanarat.

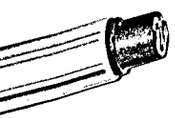
Although there were not many Thammayut monasteries in Laos (most of them were situated in the south of Laos), and the sect had a marginal position in comparison to the Mahanikay-sect, Thammayut-monks became more influential in Isan, the ethnic Lao region of Northeast Thailand. Monks there distributed posters depicting images of communists as demons that destroyed temples and tortured monks. A number of monks involved in this program also crossed over to Laos in order to spread their anti-communist message (Gabaude 2001: 161–2). Also in cooperation with Thai monks and American advisors, a program for rural development that involved Lao Buddhist monks was planned. Monks, because of their influence on the peasant population, were supposed to lend it their moral authority (Boutsavath and Chapelier 1973: 26). Both interventions, those by USIS and Thammayut monks, were met with criticism, and their clandestine agendas were quickly revealed. In reaction, monks in Vientiane organized several larger meetings in order to distance themselves from RLG politics. The "Movement of Young Monks against the Thai Thammayut monks," and the "Movement of Novices to Demand their Rights" (Stuart-Fox 1996: 90) were rather short-lived, as the meetings held in Vientiane's That Fun temple did not lead to concrete steps in forming a new and lasting organization (Thepbuali 1976: 54–5). The influence of Thammayut-monks, and cooperation with their projects continued to be strongly condemned after these incidents by leading PL cadres and monks loyal to them (Vongvichit 1968: 26–7).

Spy vs. Spy: Buddhism and the Secret Service

The disciplining of an increasingly neutralist-left-leaning Sangha was furthermore achieved through even more unconventional methods. With the intensification of the split in the political landscape, and the need to counter the growing influence of neutralists and communist forces, the RLG had set up a secret police.[17] This service appeared under a number of different names and disguises. At first it was called "Special Service of Political Propaganda" (1955–56), then "Interministry Service of Political and Social Action" (SIDASP) (1956–57) and finally, and perhaps somewhat ironically, "National Centre of Documentation" (CND) (1958–60). SIDASP and CND

were involved in a range of activities aimed at the Sangha and Buddhism in general. Throughout 1957, SIDASP organized information sessions and distributed pamphlets with titles such as "Religion and Communism" or "The Defense of Buddhism" that denounced the Pathet Lao as enemies of Buddhism.

With the CND's "Section 50" being responsible for political propaganda, its major task concerning the work inside religious institutions involved the collection of data on the influence of the Pathet Lao and the Santiphab, recruiting agents that could infiltrate the Sangha, and materially sustaining persons and activities that were beneficial for the RLG. In 1958 and 1959, the Section Political Action of the CND carried out a special operation in Vientiane for which it intended to recruit seven agents and five Mahas. The "zones of action" listed in the document focuses on 16 places, six of which were monasteries in Vientiane. The first trimester report for 1959 discusses the results of "an action concerning the pagodas influenced by the propaganda of the Neo Lao Hak Sat or the Santiphab" (Deuve 1995: 258). Under the rubric "Special Action Vientiane Pagodas," the first interim report lists the methods and results of the actions. The document, written in rather bureaucratic, dry language, gives the reader a good sense of the strategies and motivations of the secret service.



The document reveals that the influence of the NLHS and the Santiphab was spread quite unevenly amongst Vientiane temples. Some temples were classified in varying grades as infiltrated or "polluted" by neutralist and communist influences. The report furthermore speaks of some temples being "fortresses" of the NLHS, which included the highest institute of Buddhist education, the Pali School. One of the main methods employed was to show that the NLHS is indeed a communist organization that intends to destroy Buddhism. Given the evolving situation in Tibet at that time with a virtual destruction of Buddhism taking place, this might have impressed some monks that followed the international news. Other directives advised agents to enter a village and to pretend to be a Pathet Lao cadre, then "publicly insult monks and damage the image of religion during festivals" (Deuve 1995: 157).

Outside of Vientiane, activities were also carried out. On March 31, 1959 a report elaborated on the CND's efforts in Sam Neua, Huaphan province, the center of the liberated zone and NLHS

activities. Besides the successful sabotage of a NLHS journal, we find some short passages related to the Sangha: "The measures concerning the Buddhist clergy have continued in Sam Neua. This measure is almost exclusively related to one person, namely the highest monk [of that province] Pha Maha Kongsy. Reports indicate that this person has already started to change his opinions influenced by the fact that the NHLS has introduced communism" (Deuve 1995: 262). A report with the same date also shows activities in Luang Phrabang: "The section has also used the profound religious sentiments of the villagers against the NLHS that wants to use communist methods and destroy religion" (Deuve 1995: 265). The CND also established "secret outposts in the Buddhist settings of Vientiane and Pakse" (Deuve 1995: 254). The accuracy of the conclusion that the abbots of the monasteries had given up their overt political engagement after the campaign is hard to attest, as many of them might have chosen to at least officially renounce any sympathies for the Pathet Lao and their allies in order to prevent further conflicts.

Kinship ties also played an important role. In an interview conducted in 1959, a member of the Ministry of Religion made a clear statement on the political views of Khoun Manivong, the Vientiane Sangha's leading monk, but also admitted the difficulties attached to this situation. Halpern described the physical gesture accompanying this statement concerning how the government should deal with PL-sympathizing monks: "We must honour the good monks, and do this [smashing his fist hard against his hand] with the bad ones. This is very difficult, because some, including the chief monk, have relatives who are members of the Pathet Lao" (Halpern 1964a: 146).

I have until now found little historical data from the NLHS/PL side on the subversive covert action tactics, although there is little doubt that they were involved in similar actions. This is also highly likely because the Vietnamese Communist Party, which advised most of their Lao allies' political strategies, was involved in Buddhist covert action with the Buddhist protest movement in South Vietnam in the 1960s. Mark Moyar emphasized how valuable these actions were: "The Buddhist movement was engaged in covert action, and in a highly effective fashion of that. Rarely has an opposition movement undermined multiple governments so effectively and with so few resources" (2004: 754).

4. Purification, Protest, and the Fragmentation of the Vientiane Sangha

Beyond these clandestine operations, a legal intervention, namely the change of Sangha regulations, was considered by many RLG politicians to be a more efficient measure to drive out the neutralist and communist elements that, in their view, had already undermined the government's authority. In May 1959, a new Lao Sangha regulation took effect as a royal ordinance.[18] The changes introduced were significant: from then on, appointing and dismissing superior ranking monks on each administrative level required authorization at higher levels; and the cabinet had to approve each new position in the clergy's higher echelons. Furthermore, correspondence between all levels of the Sangha had to be copied and go through screenings conducted by the Ministry of Religion. According to paragraph 62 of the new regulation, monks were no longer free to preach where they wanted to, and had to ask for permission to perform public preaching. In addition to these disciplining administrative regulations, Ministry personnel and Buddhist Institute teachers who were under suspicion of cooperating with the PL and the Santiphab were to be "transferred" to other posts. The highest-ranking monk of Vientiane, Khoun Manivong, was without further explanation dismissed from his office.[19] Not all of these provisions were new, but for the anthropologist Joel Halpern, "they appear to have been promulgated in response to mounting unrest among the Sangha" and "they indicate a continued government desire to exercise administrative control over the priesthood" (1964a: 50). In Weberian terms, we witness in my opinion here a gradual shift from a "traditional" bureaucracy based on consent and negotiation (Weber 1947: 324), to a legal system of authority employing coercive measures (ibid. 329f.).

Examples of similar purifications are no exception in the history Theravāda-Buddhism. Despite the regular allusions to the term "purification" in the literature on Theravāda Buddhism, the concept remains somewhat unexplored (Leider 2004).[20] From a general perspective, purifications are meant to re-establish the symbiotic relationship between ruler and Buddhist clergy. They often take as a point of departure the practice of the *vinaya* (code of discipline for monks), and redefine the monk's duties and tasks along reinterpretations of this canonical treatise. They are designed to prevent schisms in the Buddhist order, (re-)establish forms of cooperation between clergy and

ruling elite, and renovate a tradition that is supposedly in the course of decline. Sometimes a certain faction in the Sangha calls for purification, while at other times a ruler—in order to establish his new regime and guarantee a loyal clergy—simply expels some of its members. For the Lao case discussed here, the increasing pressure on the Sangha, and the reforms of the Sangha–state relation introduced in 1959, attest for Tambiah's thesis that these purifications were bound up with the concrete political situation: "The question is why they [purifications] should have happened so frequently. An unmistakable correlation is that the degeneration and restoration of the Sangha kept pace with the political collapse and revivals of kings and their reigns" (1976: 170). Tambiah (ibid.: 84) further remarks that restorative and purifying acts usually signify that the power-holding elites intend to expand the political domain of influence.

Although it is difficult to access the efficiency of these measures, they did not appear to have been very effective. On the contrary, they aggravated an already problematic relationship between the Lao state and the Sangha.[21] Already in January 1960, Bouakham Voraphet, the head-monk of the Pali School in Vientiane, gave his students "pro-communist lessons" and encouraged them to organize and participate in meetings that opposed the new Sangha regulation. He furthermore called for what could be considered a "strike" among laypeople and asked them not to feed "hostile" monks (Deuve 1984: 141–2). The unfolding of other events seems to confirm that the relationship between the government and parts of the Sangha became openly hostile, which led to a remarkable event in modern Lao history:

> Underlying tensions came into the open in February 1960 when a group of monks demonstrated in Vientiane against the government, evidently in protest against the transfer of a teacher 'for administrative reasons'—i.e. antigovernment activity. The pro-government newspaper *L'Indépendant*, representing the traditional elite, expressed chagrin and shock at this development. Hundreds of bonzes carrying placards and streamers for the first time in history of the kingdom vigorously called for the complete autonomy of the clergy in all fields. The article declared that the meeting was a result of communist infiltration among younger bonzes and concluded that the superior Buddhist clergy had been derelict in its duties and should in the future look after the bonzes more carefully. The necessity of firm government intervention was also stressed (Halpern 1964a: 50).

The Pathet Lao-friendly newspapers and commentators celebrated this demonstration as a genuine expression of the "anti-imperialist struggle" and supported the monks' claims. What Joel Halpern does not mention is another possible reason for the demonstration. On July 28, 1959 the PL leaders, including Prince Souphanouvong and Phoumi Vongvichit (just a year after they were officially appointed into the coalition government), were arrested and jailed in Vientiane's infamous Phone Kheng prison. They escaped with the help of sympathetic guards on May 23, 1960. In retrospect, the demonstration and another meeting of monks in Vientiane's Sithon Neua temple is in official Lao history books (Ministry of Information and Culture 2000: 876) and interpreted as a protest against this incarnation.

The Schism of the Lao Sangha

The final break with the RLG regime, and a schism within the Lao Sangha, came only a few months later during the Kong Le coup and the battle of Vientiane in December 1960. A group of monks—comprising mostly the politically active monks already mentioned—finally decided to take sides and joined the neutralist Santiphab and PL forces operating in the liberated zone. The monk Vichit Singhalat described in his memoirs, *Reasons for Joining the Revolution* (Singhalat 1998: 6–8) the end of a hope for neutrality as one of the motivating forces to leave Vientiane. The failure to solve the conflict through the mediation of traditional Sangha–state relations and the non-recognition of the RLG's treatment of the Sangha finally led to defection: with 82 other monks, Vichit Singhalat left the capital in 1960 and joined the neutralist and PL forces operating on the Plain of Jars in the liberated zone (Stuart-Fox 2008: 368). In this sort of sectarian schism in modern disguise, these monks were first stationed at Khang Khay on the Plain of Jars from where the RLG-opposition operated for several years. Here, they intensified their political work under the leadership of Maha Khou Souvannamethi who in the Khang Khay opposition government acted as Minister for Religious Affairs. Besides combining "traditional" tasks with political work, they also acted as very popular radio propaganda preachers.[22] With the intensification of bombing, they moved with the PL to Huaphan, where most of them stayed until the communist seizure of power in 1975.

What in 1959 could not be achieved in Vientiane—the founding of a new Lao association of Buddhist monks—could now be realized. In 1961, leading Pathet Lao cadres (including Vongvichit) and monks such as Thepbuali, Voraphet, and Vichit founded the Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organization in the liberated zone.[23] It seems that the monks, who initially had a political orientation that was more Santiphab-oriented, were gradually assimilated by the PL. The forces in the liberated zone could now plausibly claim to be actively protecting Buddhism as it had integrated well-trained monks from Vientiane into their movement. Here, they acted as preachers for the PL's cause and increasingly integrated with its propaganda apparatus. Although a rather small group of monks (most men were simply drafted as soldiers), their conception of Buddhism itself, and the role of Buddhism in society, were under these circumstances going through major transformations.

With many of the more openly critical monks leaving Vientiane, and with the Ministry of Religion later being relegated to the RLG-conservative Prince Boun Oum, it seems that at least the open confrontations between Sangha and RLG were largely subdued. It was only in 1973, at the dawn of American withdrawal from the conflict, and when the liberated zone covered most of the country, that the political engagement of monks in Vientiane again became more open. The Ministry of Religion was now (in a new coalition government) under the control of Maha Khou Souvannamethi, and Khamthan Thepbuali and other PL-sympathetic monks returned to Vientiane and "prepared" the Sangha for the time to come. Other monks, like the most senior pro-PL monk Bouakham Voraphet, or the younger Vichit Singhalat, had been firmly integrated into the Pathet Lao in the liberated zone, and with the proclamation of the Lao PDR on December 2, 1975, their careers in the "official" post-revolutionary Sangha administration started. They were elevated into high positions that were previously occupied by monks more or less loyal to the RLG. One could say that Buddhist institutions, like the ones on the political level, were almost completely emptied and then refilled. The staff of Buddhist schools and the Ministry of Religion under the RLG were quickly replaced with monks and laypeople who had been firmly immersed in, and indoctrinated with the PL politics of religion.

Conclusion

Due to the uncertain future they were facing, many monks who had not been with the PL disrobed, or joined the masses of refugees crossing the border to Thailand. Some of them, who settled in Isan temples or went abroad, got involved in resistance activities. They assisted resistance forces by providing food, shelter, and moral support, or, in rare cases such as that of Achan Chanh Ly (1941–2004), even supported military operations against the new regime (Baird 2012). The ones who stayed had to adjust, sometimes in rather harsh conditions. For instance, prior to the revolution, Khamphoun Philavong was one of the most prolific monks, Sangha teachers, and author of books on Buddhism in Vientiane. In 1975, he disrobed, "disappeared" for two years, and then resurfaced in Vientiane in 1977 as a married layperson running a bookshop.[24] Other monks were at first euphoric because of the end of a long war, but then increasingly got frustrated with the Lao PDR government's politics of religion. Some became refugees a few years after the change of regime, such as the Sangharaja[25] of Luang Phrabang Pha Thammayano. In 1978, he (then already 87 years of age) and some of his followers escaped to Thailand (Zago 1978). Some Buddhist-minded politicians also met with fates that can be described as less than fortunate. Bong Souvannavong remained in Laos, but, because of his critique of the post-revolutionary religious policies, was sent to one of the infamous re-education camps where he died a few years later (Christie 2001: 156). The regime now started to promote a form of Buddhism that Vatthana Pholsena describes with reference to the contemporary situation as "a secularized image of Buddhism in order to reconcile the official ideology and the religion" (2006: 70).

The roots of this specific image of Lao Buddhism can clearly be linked to the Cold-War politics of religion in Laos between the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Sangha and its institutions were zones of ideological conflict, fields of propaganda, covert action, and counter-intelligence measures. With most political movements seeing the opportunities that opened up through collaboration with the monastic order, an increasing political polarization of monks, most visibly in Vientiane, took place. The various political factions saw the Sangha as a means of expanding their sphere of influence, as in traditional conceptions of Theravāda-Buddhist statecraft the alliance of Sangha

and worldly power is crucial for a leader's legitimation. However, considering the practical implications of having the Buddhist Sangha on its side (its infrastructure, schools and monastic networks), the NLHS/Pathet Lao and the neutralist-leftist forces from early on also recognized Buddhism's potentials for the dissemination of anti-RLG propaganda. With much of the history of the Second Indochina War being focused on military operations and political parties seemingly disconnected from their cultural surroundings, one should keep in mind that this "symbolic alliance" was also of crucial relevance. Anthropologists James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta argue that "states are not simply functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production" (2002: 981). In times of political tension and intense polarizations, the "symbolic" is not a mere supplement to the "real," but can attain a significance that becomes effective through a merging of institutional capacities and symbolic power.

The PL and the Santiphab Party particularly appealed to monks, and could capitalize on their increasing frustration with the RLG's political line. With significant efforts from the American and the Thai side to influence the RLG's politics of religion, the practices that were employed to curtail the influence of the PL and the Santiphab reveal a profound transformation of Sangha–state relations in the context of the Cold War. Although some of these measures were in line with previous purifications, the cases that I have described also show that disciplinary measures and surveillance can suddenly become reservoirs of resistance and non-recognition of state-power. Transferring this to Max Weber's theory of political legitimacy and bureaucratic authority, one could say that two ideal-types can be discerned. First, a bureaucracy (for example, a ministry dealing with religious affairs) can be based upon "consent" in which rules emerge from processes of negotiation and agreement, and power is regarded as more or less legitimate by most participants as there is a "probability that certain commands (or all commands) from a given source will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (Weber 1947: 324). The second form of bureaucracy is, according to Gouldner's (1954: 207f) interpretation of Weber, "punishment centered," aimed at extracting obedience from its subjects. In the eyes of most participants, its authority is not regarded as legitimate, and therefore prone to acts of sabotage and resistance. With the RLG government and its politics of

religion exposing more features of the second type, it was finally confronted with a schism and a partial breakdown of the state–Sangha symbiosis. The methods the RLG regime used, and the contexts in which they became effective as reactions or preventive measures, contributed to a loss of credibility in the eyes of many monks. Therefore, the regime lost legitimacy, and consequences were resistance and non-recognition of the state's authority over the Sangha. Parts of the Buddhist clergy defected, left the capital, and joined the forces operating in the liberated zones. They preferred to join a faction that was said to destroy religion, but in truth had been courting Buddhism for several years already, and finally succeeded in using its legitimizing power.

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Notes

1. For a detailed history and genesis of the Lao communist movement, and the link between NLHS and Pathet Lao, see Martin Rathie's contribution in this volume. See also Grabowsky (2007b), and Brown and Zasloff (1986).
2. See, for example: Tambiah (1976), Ishi (1986), and Jackson (1989) on Thailand; and Reynolds (1969) and Grabowsky (2007a) on Laos. More recent volumes attest to the continuing relevance of the topic in general (Assavavirulhakarn 2010), and its transformations in modern nation-states (Harris 2007).
3. High-ranking monks often acted as advisors of kings and, as described by Grabowsky (2007a), for pre-modern Laos, and sometimes also held political offices. This is also attested for southern Laos' Champasack kingdom in the 18th century (Archaimbault 1961).

4. On the organization of the Lao Sangha in this period, see Pathoumxad (1956). In 1958, the Lao Sangha had approximately 17,000 members (1.5 percent of the whole population). See Asia Foundation (1964: 8) and Halpern (1964a: 50).
5. Quoted from: Electronic Telegrams. Action EA—Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Biographic sketches of members of new coalition government; April 9, 1974, 05:19. Available at http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974VIENTI02851_b.html. See also Rathie (this volume) on Souvannamethi.
6. Rathie also refers to links between Indochinese anti-colonial movements and some members of the Lao Sangha, especially their politization during their studies in Phnom Penh: "[Lao] Monks who were present in the Cambodian capital during WWII found common cause with the protests of Son Ngoc Thanh and other progressive radicals who had served at the Buddhist Institute" (Rathie 2014; this volume).
7. See Pholsena's piece in this book for a more detailed account of the liberated zone and the production of new socialist men and women in this area.
8. Quoted from Savada, ed, *Laos: A Country Study* (1994). Available at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field%28DOCID+la0036%29
9. See Vongvichit (1987: 137f) for an example of a high-ranking monk preaching against the imprisonment of PL leaders in 1959.
10. For Manivong's biography, see the book printed for his cremation (Anonymous 1969).
11. On Voraphet and the political engagement of Lao monks from these circles, see Vilaychakre (2001: 22–37).
12. See the classification of members of the coalition government by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs for the US government in April 1974. Available at http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974VIENTI02851_b.html
13. TAF was active in Buddhist countries all over Asia (at times also in cooperation with the World Fellowship of Buddhist based in Bangkok) until the disclosure of its association with the CIA in 1967. Serving as a counterinsurgency unit, TAF provided school textbooks to monks, sponsored "development programs," and wrote reports about the political orientation inside the Sangha. Disclosed CIA-archival material gives a revealing task description of the foundation. See, for example, Memorandum. Revised Administrative Plan for IC Division Proprietary Project DTPillar, September 3, 1957. Available at http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1705143/DTPILLAR%20%20%20VOL.%202_0012.pdf

14. The qualities of these reports on Laos were explicitly lauded by the CIA. See Renewal of Project DTPillar approved, Covert Action Staff, 30th September 1964. Available at http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1705143/DTPILLAR%20%20%20VOL.%203_0018.pdf
15. Quoted from: Secret Project Approval. Renewal of Project DTPillar, November 10, 1965. Available at http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/1705143/DTPILLAR%20%20%20VOL.%203_0014.pdf
16. "Sect" is somewhat misleading for Buddhism and the Pali term *nikāya* ("assemblage" or "group") might better denote these various schools of Buddhism.
17. The following information is taken from Deuve's (1995) excellent descriptive account of the secret war against Lao communism. Here one also finds the full text of the report.
18. For the exact text, see Royal Ordinance No. 160, May 25, 1959.
19. For an estimate of Manivong's political orientation, see Asia Foundation (1964: 21f).
20. I thank Andrew Huxley for our discussions on this topic and his generous advice on the historical and legal dimensions of Sangha purifications.
21. Several observers claim that this intensification of control had an adverse effect. See Halpern (1964a: 50) and Asia Foundation (1964: 144). For the perspective of a PL supporting monk on these events, see Thepbuali (1976: 51).
22. With the radio being a major propaganda instrument, the strong reactions in the Information Bulletin of the Ministry of Religion (1961: 22) of the Vientiane government seem to confirm that the skills some monks had as preachers were also of advantage in radio propaganda. See also Dommen (1971: 91f) on this.
23. Concerning details of this new organizational form of Buddhism, see Rasdavong (2005: 43-45).
24. Philavong died in 2005. Interview with his wife, January 2008.
25. Literally translating as "the king of monks," it designates the highest position in the *sangha*. Interestingly, this term (used throughout the world of Theravāda Buddhism) was abolished in 1975 and replaced with a secular terminology that does without king.

CHAPTER 5

War Generation: Youth Mobilization and Socialization in Revolutionary Laos

Vatthana Pholsena

Introduction

For about two decades from the second half of the 1950s, thousands of young boys and girls living in areas controlled by the Pathet Lao (hereafter PL) were enrolled in the ranks of the Lao revolutionary movement. Some were sent to Viengxay district, Huaphan province, in northeastern Laos where the PL had established its government and administration, and others to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (hereafter DRV), the PL's main political and military ally, to undertake their schooling.[1] Many of these young people left for several years, some returning home only in their early-to-mid twenties. These students followed different paths at the end of their studies in the mid-to-late 1970s: some went back to their villages or districts of origin to resume a farming life; others were recruited into the state administration (or left a few years later to work in the private sector or became self-employed). Some did extremely well and today belong to the ruling political class and sit on the Party's Central Committee or even in the Politburo, the Lao Communist Party's most powerful political organ.[2] We therefore must take into account the diversity of these individuals. These alumni cannot be defined as a homogenous group along class, ethnic, or geographical lines. Only their childhood and adolescence in these revolutionary schools define them as a group