

Configurations of Globalization in Laos and Cambodia: Does Faster Globalization Mean Better Development?

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Abstract

There are many similarities between Laos and Cambodia. Because of these similarities it seems likely that both countries will share the most important traits of their development within the frame of globalization. The paper is to show that this is not the case. If one looks at both countries from the perspective of universal history, the differences in their current development are of course insignificant. From this perspective it is impossible, however, to say anything significant about both countries. And if one focuses on a single factor – like the economy or the political system – one overlooks the importance of most other global, regional and local factors. The theoretical thesis of the paper is that one has to look at the whole configuration of factors, which is singular for any historical moment and locality. Under the conditions of globalization, the configuration has to include global and regional factors. Following Pierre Bourdieu, the factors can be analyzed into social fields, forces, and positions. Similarities and differences between Laos and Cambodia are discussed in this framework.

Introduction

Globalization has been one of the key terms in the social sciences during the past few years. We have now established a certain consensus about the term. There is not only one globalization, but there are several tendencies, most of which have been effective for centuries. Globalization is a complex interaction of the global and the local with the different parts of the world growing together in many respects. This not necessarily entails unification but rather a differentiation that Robertson termed glocalization. After the general discussions that already reached a certain conclusion several years ago, we now need to take a closer empirical look at the processes of globalization. We now have to link the abstract discussion on globalization with social theory and empirical methods. What actually happens with local cultures and social structures?

In this paper, I want to do this by taking a closer look at the current effects of globalization in Laos and Cambodia. First, I wish to propose a model to integrate global and local levels and tendencies, which I want to call a socioculture. I wish to analyze the different levels and tendencies as a configuration of sociocultures. After the introduction of concepts, I shall say something about the history of Laos and Cambodia, about apparent similarities and differences and about the forces of globalization. Then I'll take a closer look at the current configuration in politics, economics and the public sphere in both countries. To summarize, I will give an overview over the Lao and Cambodian sociocultures and their relation to the tendencies of globalization.

Configuration of Fields

We are all familiar with the concept of social structure. When we hear the word, we usually think of models like the distribution of income or the class struggle.

Diagram

I want to introduce a different model, which I derive from Pierre Bourdieu and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Bourdieu broke down the social world into something he called social

fields, which are spheres of social action with their own logic and goals. He was mainly interested in the distribution of power on these fields. Bourdieu saw the close relationship of the concept of field with Wittgenstein's concept of a language game. Wittgenstein suggested that there is not one fixed meaning of a word but that the meaning varies according to the social circumstances in which it is used. He said that these circumstances are not arbitrary but follow certain models that are similar to games. When one enters into linguistic interaction, one is expected to follow the rules of the game. Wittgenstein was not very interested in power, he looked at the way those games were played. I think in the analysis of social interaction, both aspects have to be looked at – the ways of playing the game, or the culture, and the possibilities of playing the game, or the social structure. That is why I want to speak of a socioculture.

There are different fields in modern societies, such as politics, economics, arts, media and so on. The metaphor of a game illustrates that. There are different games and different types of games, for example baseball, football, board games and card games. Each game has its own rules and goals. And whoever is good at one game, is not necessarily good at another, although one is usually good in various games that require similar skills. This is true for social fields as well. To act in society, one needs certain skills, and often more than that: one may need a title, money, authority and so on. Bourdieu subsumed all of these preconditions for social action under the concept of capital. I would rather speak of resources to confine the term capital to economics only. Every field and game requires different resources that have less value on other fields. On the academic field for example, you need a title to be fully eligible for all types of action on the field. This title has some – although less – value on other fields as well. It increases your chances and possibilities for example in economics, politics, and the media. It has practically no value on the field of sports, however. The value of your knowledge is even more confined to the academic field. And your manner of speaking, which is a prerequisite for any success on the academic field, will even be a detriment on most other fields.

Every field has its own rules, goals and requirements. This means, we don't have one position in one homogeneous social structure, but we have different positions on different social fields. To determine the structure of a given society would require to determine the different fields, their relative importance and the distribution of resources required on these fields. Let us return to our metaphoric example – which I will turn into an illustration now. In the US, baseball and football are the most important games. Whoever is well equipped to play one of these games, has good chances to be a star. We can now say, he has good chances to get a good or leading position on the field of sports. In order to get a similar position as a swimmer or even a female soccer player, you have to achieve a great deal more – that means you have to acquire more capital and possibly to acquire additional capital on other fields. From this example it is evident that physical qualities and sex function as social resources as well. No woman can become a football or baseball star.

In societies that consist of village communities, it makes little sense to distinguish between different fields – although one can distinguish between different games with different sets of rules. That is why Emile Durkheim called life in the traditional village a total social fact. All social relations between two persons are more or less present in every interaction between them. This is mainly due to the fact that all persons in the village know each other and have to deal with each other in every social game. In bigger societies, there is a differentiation of fields and a rise in anonymous contact. In fact, differentiation is one or even the main characteristic of development. In this paper, I want to refer to development as a change in socioculture to meet more

difficult and complex tasks, whereas the term modernization is to signify the rise in economic and administrative efficiency. This distinction may appear somewhat blurry and arbitrary at this point, but it will make more sense later on. It is based on the argument in Norman Jacobs' book on "Modernization without Development".

It is necessary to look at the evolution of fields to understand their relationship and their structures.

Background

From the perspective of universal theories, there is hardly any difference between Laos and Cambodia. They even share a lot of features with most other developing countries around the globe. There are pronounced inequalities between urban and rural regions, between ethnic majority and minorities, mountain and valley peoples, national capital and periphery, rich and poor and between different regions.

Data: These differences already form a configuration that evolved historically. It is rather complex in itself. Its analysis would lead to far here.

As far as history, socio-economic data and political structures are concerned, Laos and Cambodia bear an even closer resemblance. In both countries important political entities rose and fell several centuries ago. The best known are Angkor, which covered present-day Cambodia as well as some of Laos and Thailand, and Lan Sang, which included Laos and Northeastern Thailand. These entities were not oriental despotisms or bureaucratic states but loyalties of minor princes to one major prince. They have been adequately described by Oliver Wolters as mandala, that is as circles of power forming part more encompassing circles of power. The Tai have their own term for this type of structure, müang.

Diagram: The villages form the basis of the mandala-structure. They are dominated by a large village or a city, which in the past was usually fortified and had a market. The city rulers paid tribute to a more powerful ruler in a bigger city. He in turn sometimes paid tribute to the Chinese emperor.

The mandala of Angkor and the müang of Lan Sang came to be dominated by the larger political entities of Siam and Vietnam. When the French subdued the region in the 19th century, they created two new states with the names of Laos and Cambodia. As in other colonial territories, hitherto non-existent borders were drawn and officially fixed, regardless of historical, cultural and ethnic ties. The French did not have much interest in Laos and Cambodia and did little to develop their economy, administration and education. But the French presence changed the societies significantly. A western-type urban culture developed, a small but important group of intellectuals came into existence, a modern nation-state was founded, the minorities and all types of periphery were integrated into a larger political structure that included hitherto unknown taxes, and slavery was abolished. Except for persons who were more or less directly paid by the French, most of the population was not content with French rule. After the defeat of the French in the Second World War and their replacement by the Japanese, hardly anybody in Laos and Cambodia wanted them to return. When they did return in 1946, a struggle for independence and a civil war ensued. The final result was the foundation of the socialist states of Laos and Cambodia in 1975. The socialist revolution was carried out in both countries by peasants from the periphery under the leadership of a part of the educated elite. After the revolution, the rest of the elite and the majority of the urban middle class left Laos and Cambodia. So far, the history of both countries can be told in the same terms. As we all know, it differed greatly after 1975. To explain this, a closer look at history is necessary – for which time is too short here. But I will mention a couple of important points later on.

The historical resemblance of both countries is paralleled by similar socio-economic and political sociocultures. The mandala continues to be the basis of political life until today. It rests on ties between persons of a superior and an inferior rank. Ernst Boesch and Norman Jacobs have described this relationship for Thailand as patrimonial. A patrimonial relationship is not simple domination but something like an exchange of protection against loyalty. This often includes the exchange of labor for remuneration as well. The patrimonial socioculture evolved from the family. In traditional villages, more or less all inhabitants are related to each other. The structure of a Southeast Asian village very much resembles the structure that we experience when we have a family reunion. Whereas villagers are related, people in a patrimonial structure mostly are not. They act as if they were, but they can leave the structure any time they want. And they expect the respective duties to be fulfilled, which is not necessarily the case in a family.

Political culture in Laos and Cambodia can be characterized as patrimonial, while peasant culture is that of kinship. This is true for urban social relations and many economic relations as well. The economy of both countries is essentially rural however. Most inhabitants of Laos and Cambodia are peasants. Under the French, the Americans and the socialists, the small effort of industrialization and urbanization has been financed through external aid. This still is true today. Money for the national budget and capital investment almost entirely comes from abroad.

Data: It is easy to see that many important socio-economic data are identical for Laos and Cambodia.

Differences in the Background

Looking exclusively at the preceding paragraphs it would be impossible to explain why in Cambodia up to three million people were killed after 1975, but in Laos just up to 30,000. I don't want to attempt an explanation here but I do want to point to a couple of important factors. The Lao socialist leadership comprised members of the royal family and members of various minorities. Therefore, it was capable of gaining the support of a substantial percentage of the population. Its politics pursued the goal of national union and independence intelligently (Evans, Rowley 1984: 26f). In foreign politics, it tried to balance the influence of external powers in order to preserve independence and security at the same time. In the interior, it tried to follow an ideologically based socialist program but quickly revised it when difficulties appeared. This was most obvious in economics as cooperatives were shut down and market structures allowed after only a few years, but also in religion as the Buddhism was fully allowed and even supported after a very short period of suppression. In short, the Lao leadership adopted a pragmatic attitude that had been characteristic of politics in the region during the preceding centuries. In many regards, Laos returned to pre-French structures. Most Laotians were subsistence farmers living in extended family structures. The elite dominated politics and the tiny money economy, which were patrimonially structured. However, most of the educated elite was gone, up to a third of the population was displaced and party control extended to every village. That is, Laos now was an integrated nation state based on traditional structures without economic and intellectual resources.

Diagram: Seemingly, the precolonial structure of an elite, a small group of city dwellers and the peasantry along with the Buddhist order was reproduced. But the socialist party formed an all-encompassing structure that did not comply with the muang-model. It also contained bureaucratic elements. In a way, politics was the only social field under socialist rule. There was no independent economic field or civil society. But there were the spheres of village life and of the Buddhist order.

Cambodia also returned to an entirely agrarian economy under the rule of a socialist leadership. This leadership, however, was neither internally nor externally pragmatic. Most intellectuals and city dwellers were killed, a considerable amount of the families torn apart or destroyed, a lot of the material heritage dismantled (Ledgerwood 2ff). Unlike in Laos, Buddhism was prohibited and brutally oppressed. And whereas in Laos, the typical socialist program of education for all was inaugurated, in Cambodia the slogan read, education for none (Evans 1998: 153). The leadership sought no balance with its neighbors but provoked a war with Vietnam and tried to destroy all traditional as well as modern structures. One of the reasons for this was its lack of ties with the old royal elite and the majority of the population (Evans, Rowley 1984: 22). It succeeded at making the old king, Sihanouk, the formal head of state, however, and at gaining the support of China and the United States against Vietnam. (Without Lon Nol deposing Sihanouk in 1970, the revolution would have had no basis in the population, as Sihanouk – contrary to the Lao and Vietnamese royalists – was the legitimate king *and* an enemy of colonialism, that is a nationalist.) On this basis, it was capable to retain power until January 1979 when the Vietnamese overran Cambodia and installed a fraction of the Cambodian elite that was friendly to Hanoi. Even though the Vietnamese withdrew and the international community took charge of Cambodia in the early 1990's, this elite remains in power up to this day. Apart from this, a completely fresh start has been attempted with the intervention of the international community. If we now combine this intervention with some of the general differences between Laos and Cambodia, we might be tempted to conclude that the developmental outlook for Cambodia should be much better than that for Laos.

Data: Cambodia has a much bigger population on approximately the same surface. This means a higher population density – which usually is a precondition for development. Cambodia produces more rice and has a lower external debt. The country is less mountainous, has access to the ocean, more suitable waterways and two train lines, whereas Laos has none.

We now have to link these data to the global configuration. Laos has opened up for the international community much later and much more hesitatingly than Cambodia. It not only shows worse socio-economic data but still adheres to the socialist one-party system, which is supposed to contradict the requirements of a market economy. A closer look at the tendencies of globalization in Laos and Cambodia will cast a different light on the outlook for both countries.

Globalization

In 1979, when the Vietnamese backed government took over in Cambodia, economy and society were utterly destroyed. Little reconstruction was done during the following ten years because the government received no support from the West, only from the impoverished Eastern Block countries. Fighting continued as China and some Western countries still supported the Khmer Rouge and their formal ally, Sihanouk (Roberts 2001: 11). In 1986, the Soviet Union pulled out of Southeast Asia and advised Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to adopt a more market-oriented economy. China and the US opposed the emerging regional solution of the Cambodian situation and called for an international conference, which was held in Paris in 1989 (Roberts 2001: 22). An interim government was installed that included the Khmer Rouge. A democratic election was prepared, which took place in 1993. The years of preparation was controlled by international forces known under the acronym UNTAC. With the UNTAC, globalization reached Cambodia. This meant the arrival of several thousands of Westerners, who brought an incredible amount of

money, technology and modern lifestyles with them. They are also believed to have brought AIDS and other diseases. After the election in 1993, the UNTAC left Cambodia. Their money had been distributed. Because of the patrimonial structures it had found its way into the pockets of the Vietnamese influenced ruling elite under the leadership of Hun Sen and Chea Sim. Prices had gone up (especially in real estate), a large sector of prostitution had emerged, and modern lifestyles had become familiar and desirable to every Cambodian.

Globalization entered Laos much slower and under considerable control of the socialist leadership. Along with Vietnam and Cambodia, the first economic reforms were made in 1979, followed by the more comprehensive reforms in 1986. The country did not really open up for foreign tourists and capital until 1994. During the whole period, foreign aid grew more or less constantly. Today per-capita foreign aid is higher in Laos than in Cambodia. A few years ago, a considerable amount of Lao peasants had never seen aid workers, tourists or businessmen – not even soldiers during the Second Indochinese War. Television is just starting to reach the most remote areas. When I asked Lao near the Vietnamese border for their material wishes, none of them mentioned a car or a TV set. They wanted practical things for their peasant life, for example a fish pond or a small tractor. Cambodians that I asked, wanted cars and houses – just like ourselves. It is safe to conclude that globalization affected Cambodia earlier, deeper and more pointedly.

Table: Some indicators for modernization under the conditions of globalization are the importance of the service sector, the arrival of foreign tourists and the number of TV stations in the national language.

Diagram: Another indicator for modernization is language. In Laos, personal pronouns have not yet become the dominating form of address as in Thailand or Cambodia. Lao use kinship terms to address each other. Personal pronouns are confined to urban environments – or more generally, to anonymous contact. In intercourse, they are reciprocal, whereas kinship terms are fixed to one person. They express a hierarchy, more precisely, a family or patrimonial relationship. They are the standard and often only form of address in the village. In Lao cities and in Thailand they have become rare. My hypothesis (which is not empirically validated) is that they have become much rarer in Cambodia as well.

Political Field

I now want to take a closer look at three important fields in both countries, the political field, the economic field and the public field (that we lately come to call civil society). Cambodia is not only more exposed to the tendencies of globalization, it also follows the Western model on these three fields. It has a liberalized market economy, it is a democracy, and it has – at least somewhat – free and independent media. Laos only has a market economy that still is under control of the government which means the socialist leadership.

In both countries, the socialist leadership tried to level social differences as far as possible. The leveling stopped short of the leadership itself. The leadership – before and after the revolution – has always consisted of a patrimonially structured group. Most members of this group are linked through family ties. In Laos, the same families run the country today that have run the country before the revolution. Only the most exposed individuals and a couple of family names have disappeared (e.g. the Sananikone and the royal family of Champassak). Below the elite, social structure has not changed very much either. The peasant society is structured through kinship, the urban society through patrimonialism. One of the important changes in postrevolutionary society was of course the party. The party offered the possibility of

upward mobility, the leading revolutionary families even gained access to the elite. This means, the majority of the population lives in traditional kinship structures, the rest in patrimonial or bureaucratic structures which allow upward mobility. At the same time, the position of the elite itself remains unthreatened. This structure has been fairly stable. It will increasingly come under pressure, however. First, the elite is growing too big; factional struggles between families and political groups as well as economic competition result from that. Second, globalized city dwellers do not want to raise their social position through the party alone. Third, the party structure has always interfered with traditional structures, which will become a more serious problem as peasants find a better infrastructure to organize themselves. I will return to all three points later.

The structure of the Cambodian elite doesn't seem to differ much from that of the Lao elite. It has a patrimonial structure and rests on the shoulders of a socialist party. Roberts rendered a perfect description of this patrimonial structure, even if he doesn't use the term: "Power in Cambodia, both traditionally since pre-Angkorean days and contemporarily since the 1970s, has been of an absolutist nature, with little tolerance of opposition. Underpinning this is a system of patronage and clientelism that seeks to ensure the preservation of elites by lower ranks, and to ensure so far as possible positions of economic and sometimes social privilege by elites. Loyalty passes upwards ... Gifts ... passed downwards" (2001: 32). There are important differences, however. The leadership around Pol Pot ousted almost the entire prerevolutionary elite. Some of it returned with the Vietnamese backed socialists around Hun Sen and Heng Samrin after 1979. That is, the present Cambodian elite has not organically evolved. Apart from that, the socialist party and the elite face competition ever since the Paris conference in 1989. Let me cite Roberts again: The Paris conference "attempted to implant equality and individual choice in a society governed, and financed, through hierarchical inequality and group loyalties" (2001: 34). Democracy contradicts patrimonialism. Violence often ensues to solve problems that are foreign to patrimonial structures. The intervention of the international community – which is one characteristic of contemporary globalization – brought about a democracy with free elections, which contradicts both patrimonialism and socialism. In patrimonial and socialist structures every individual has his or her fixed and secure position with the possibility of upward mobility. Democracy is a threat to security, especially of the elite. Hun Sen and his clientele reacted to democracy by closing the elite and manipulating the elections. In 1993, the royalist opposition won the elections. The entire administration still was in the hands of the patrimonially structured clientele. The administration refused to cooperate with the winner of the election, who was forced to let Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party rule and to leave the country in 1996 (Roberts 105-136). Hun Sen learned from the inconvenience and ensured the victory of his party in the next elections in 1998 through massive propaganda, division of the opposition and creating public insecurity (Roberts 189). The same strategy led to success in the last elections. It had to be somewhat more drastic, however, as Cambodia's regional and global integration. Some of you may remember the assault on the Thai embassy in Phnom Penh on January 29, 2003. The event was staged by the ruling elite to arrest several members of the opposition, prohibit public gatherings until the elections in July and to monopolize the public field. (31 members of the opposition even lost their lives under unknown circumstances; Weggel 2004: 257.) Cambodia had to pay a high price for the assault, as it paid an indemnity of 6 million dollars to Thailand, the vital border remained closed for several months, less tourists arrived and thousands of Cambodian guest workers were sent home from Thailand. From Hun Sen's point of view, the assault was still successful,

however. The Cambodian People's Party received 47 percent of the votes and remains the ruling party. (A pleasant_side effect of the assault was the destruction of the offices of the Shinawatra mobile phone company, which is owned by the Thai premier – as its greatest competitor is Hun Sen's mobile phone company.) In spite of formally being a democracy, Cambodia has been run by the same group around Hun Sen and Chea Sim for 12 years and a total of 26 years now. The democratic façade has only resulted in a waste of money, energy and lives.

Economy

The failure of democracy in Cambodia has another side effect. While Laos has a considerable interior stability, the frequent outbreaks of violence in Cambodia have contributed to the country's negative image in the world. Foreign direct investments have continuously risen in Laos, while they have dramatically fallen in Cambodia. In 1995, Cambodia received 2,4 billion dollars of FDI, in 2001 only 200 million, which rose in 2002 to 235 million. Foreign aid basically had its peak with the UNTAC mission, whereas it has been rising steadily in Laos. Both countries have little to offer to the rest of the world, but Cambodia may be in a worse position than Laos. Both have entered the WTO, which will be a big drawback for the textile industry. In Cambodia, however, textiles account for 90 percent of the exports, while in Laos electricity is the major export item. Both countries suffer from ecological destruction, especially deforestation, lack of qualified manpower, poor infrastructure, little transparency and lacking capital. Both economies depend entirely on help from abroad, and as I said, this has been increasing in Laos and decreasing in Cambodia. The most important criterion concerning the future of the economy of both countries is the emergence of an autonomous economic field with actors who can and may follow the rules of a market economy. In Laos and Cambodia, the economy is dominated by the political elite, but there are several important differences. The Lao leadership doesn't face any competition on the political field. Its dominating position remains unchallenged. Therefore, a certain amount of economic competition poses no threat. This is not true for Cambodia, where economic power can be used for political propaganda and competition. Furthermore, Cambodian leaders engage into economic activities themselves. That means, the patrimonial structures are evident. In Laos, however, the leading politicians officially own nothing. Their family members run businesses and own real estate. Even though everybody knows about the family ties, patrimonialism is a little more covert – and socialism more overt. Finally, a certain middle class emerges in Laos at a much faster pace than in Cambodia. Chinese, Vietnamese, returnees from abroad and persons with higher education in English and economics are acting as dynamic entrepreneurs. The very successful ones are admitted to the elite – mostly through marriage. As this social stratum is a threat to the ruling elite in Cambodia, its emergence is less pronounced there. Economic inequality is more extreme in Cambodia. One could almost say that Cambodians are either rich or poor. The slums of Phnom Penh are vast, begging is common, and there are at least 20,000 kids (many of them orphans) living in the streets (Brown 2000: 38-42). In this situation, the higher population density in Cambodia, which is usually considered a prerequisite for development, reveals itself to be detrimental. Until quite recently, Laotian peasants did not really know any push factors to leave for the city. The first beggars in Vientiane, who I first saw in 1999, have come because they had neither field nor family in their village any more. This tendency has greatly increased ever since, but it is much more pronounced in Cambodia.

Public Field

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

Table

All Lao can consider themselves a middle class in relation to the minorities. They have always felt superior, especially as the minorities have no influence on the symbolic universe. Very few have a writing system, none have national symbols or overarching institutions. In Cambodia, almost everybody below the elite has to consider him- or herself as member of the lowest class. The life-styles of the UNTAC staff and the elite as well as soap operas on television demonstrate their poverty – and they have no experience of people who are even poorer than they themselves. My surveys in Laos clearly showed that people in urban and suburban areas were overwhelmingly optimistic as far as the economic situation is concerned. People in Cambodia uttered resignation, dissatisfaction and readiness to become violent. But Laotians indicated dissatisfaction with the political situation, even though they tend to speak less openly than Cambodians.

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

Configuration of and on Fields

In modern societies, politics and economics are the dominating fields with the public field playing an important role. An important part of social development is the differentiation and autonomization of fields. Bourdieu thought autonomization to be a descriptive and universal term. But it is just as normative and particular. It only refers to periods of history and to non-totalitarian states. In pre-French Laos and Cambodia, there had only been a differentiation of village, town and court in the sense of mandala as well as the Buddhist order. But I am not sure if these different social entities should be called "fields", as all of them were subject to a patrimonial and kinship structure. Present-day Cambodia still is a patrimonial state in which kinship ties have been seriously damaged and distrust may be more important than loyalty. If an autonomous public field and a class of non-political entrepreneurs are permitted to

develop in Cambodia, the country may be better equipped to meet the challenges of globalization than Laos. In Laos, however, the economic field has reached a considerable amount of autonomy, which places the country in a better global position than Cambodia. So far, political oppression may have contributed positively to development in Laos, as it has weakened the destabilizing effects of globalization. But as the economic middle stratum needs more freedom to develop, political oppression becomes increasingly detrimental. Earlier on, I mentioned three sources of potential conflict in Laos: the possible closing of the political elite for the new economic elite, lacking freedom of the urban middle class and the organization of peasants. All three problems would be resolved by a further separation of the political field from the economic field. We can see this by comparing the structure of both fields.

Picture: Especially important is the relationship of economic and political elite. The middle strata on the economic field have little chance to move upward on the political field except in the party, therefore they want a decrease in the influence of the political field. The peasants hold the party to be responsible for their fate. The more they recognize themselves as relatively and absolutely poor, the more they tend to be dissatisfied with the government. This is less so in a democracy, where economic fate is attributed to the market.

Configurations of Globalization

We now have to link the configurations of and on the fields with the tendencies of globalization, which we discussed earlier.

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

Tendencies of globalization are slowly picking up in Laos, foreign aid has been continuously growing and a considerable percentage of the population is full of hope for economic improvement. The leadership does not feel threatened by economic success of other segments of society, because its dominating position on the political field remains unthreatened, which entails a strong position on the economic and the public field. In the population, traditional social ties and nets have by and large remained intact. And ethnic Lao can consider themselves as part of a middle stratum anyway. However, urban and rural poverty will rise with increasing globalization as Laos has little to export and needs a lot to import. Only the political field could do something about poverty. In fact, the Lao government recognizes this perfectly well. One main reason for the socialist party holding on to power is the fear of increasing inequality and social unrest. This is a catch 22 situation because the socialist party is dominated by a patrimonial elite that is acting on its own account. Other sources of conflict are the political control of the public field and the oppression of minorities. Both will become more serious with increasing globalization because people will have better access to outside information and to networking.

Conclusion

The sketch of configurations seems complex, but actually has remained very rough and even somewhat oversimplifying. I have to admit that the model of sociocultural configurations is highly complex and rather inconvenient. It does not even allow for clear and simple predictions. But I think it allows for a more adequate picture of social reality, which in itself becomes ever more complex with increasing globalization. We have seen that the tendencies of globalization are equivocal. And we have seen that a faster and more intense onset of globalization is not necessarily helpful for development, but globalization can also further the emergence of a public field, of networking and communication.

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