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## **Transnational Dynamics in Southeast Asia**

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# Transnational Dynamics in Southeast Asia

The Greater Mekong Subregion  
and Malacca Straits Economic Corridors

EDITED BY

Nathalie Fau • Sirivanh Khonthapane • Christian Taillard



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*Singapore*

First published in Singapore in 2014 by  
ISEAS Publishing  
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies  
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang  
Singapore 119614

*E-mail:* [publish@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:publish@iseas.edu.sg) • *Website:* [bookshop.iseas.edu.sg](http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg)

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#### **ISEAS Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

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Transnational dynamics in Southeast Asia : the Greater Mekong subregion and  
Malacca Straits economic corridors / edited by Nathalie Fau, Sirivanh Khonthapane and  
Christian Taillard.

1. Southeast Asia—Economic integration.
2. Greater Mekong River Subregion—Economic integration.
3. Malacca, Strait of—Economic integration.
4. Southeast Asia—Economic conditions.
5. Greater Mekong River Subregion—Economic conditions.
6. Growth triangles—Southeast Asia.
  - I. Fau, Nathalie.
  - II. Sirivanh Khonthapane.
  - III. Taillard, Christian, 1942-  
HC441 T775                      2014

ISBN 978-981-4517-89-8 (soft cover)

ISBN 978-981-4519-70-4 (E-book PDF)

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*Credit of maps:* All the maps in this book have been created by the authors themselves. “Source” of maps refers only to the origin of the data.

Typeset by International Typesetters Pte Ltd  
Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

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# PREFACE

## **TRANSITER SOUTHEAST ASIA, A FRANCO-ASIAN SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION PROGRAMME**

The main goal of the Transiter Programme “Transnational Dynamics and Territorial Redefinitions in Southeast Asia: The Greater Mekong Subregion and Malacca Straits economic corridors”, is to better understand the role played by the economic corridors in the ongoing transition between the development of cross-border trade, towards a broader transnational integration process. This objective will be reached basing the research work on concrete examples, studied according to a multi-disciplinary approach of monitoring evaluation during a three-year period, in order to value and estimate the potentialities of these new dynamics, as well as anticipate on their potential negative impacts on the local populations and natural environments to be transected by the corridors. Although the primary focus of research is on Southeast Asia, the programme also analyses the conditions when possible to compare the transnational dynamics taking place along the Straits of Malacca’s maritime corridors with the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) continental corridors. It also details and reviews the multi-disciplinary research available on this region and, in particular, on Lao PDR, which is a “key country” within the subregion and the main counterpart within this scientific cooperation programme.

## **VIEWS OF LAO COUNTERPART**

Following the policy of the government in transforming Lao PDR from land-locked to land-linked status, there have been substantial investments in transport infrastructure. Such initiative is driven by development partners, mainly the Asian Development Bank (ADB), through the Greater Mekong

Subregion (GMS) framework and bilateral cooperation between Laos and its neighbours. This gives birth to the economic corridor development concept, focusing on developing the transport infrastructure to connect Lao PDR with her giant neighbours, including the construction of the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) and the North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC), and the promotion of economic opportunities along the corridors. Along with the improvement in the hardware, the government of Laos has gradually improved the trade and investment climate in the country with the objective of making it easier for the private sector to maximize the benefits from this increased connectivity and integration. Despite the massive investment in hardware, together with gradual reforms in trade and investment regulations, the expansion of trade and investment in the subregion and in Lao PDR in particular remains below expectations and the transport cost has not reflected this development.

In light of the importance of the ongoing integration of the Lao economy at the subregional, regional and global level, the National Economic Research Institute (NERI) within the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Centre Asie du Sud-Est (CASE) — from the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) — have developed a Lao-French Scientific Cooperation Project to research on the impacts of the regional economic corridors in the GMS with specific focus on the transition from cross-border trade to transnational integration. The project aims to build upon strong complementarities between the two institutes, in disciplinary terms, thematic areas and geographies of interest, allowing a further impulse in multi-disciplinary approach to research on transnational integration. These exchanges have resulted in the outline of a bilateral cooperation project, based on the existing synergies between the NERI and the CASE, with the milestones of jointly organizing the mid-term workshop in July 2009 under the title “Researching the Impacts in Laos of the Economic Corridors in the Greater Mekong Subregion: From Cross-Border Trade to Transnational Integration” supported by French National Research Agency (ANR), French Agency for Development (AFD) and the Lao Government, and a final international research symposium in Vientiane in December 2010.

The project has had multiple dimensions of long-lasting benefits to Lao PDR as well as the counterpart agencies. At the researcher level, this has been achieved through the participation in the fieldwork with the French counterparts. By doing so, the skills and competence of our researchers have been strengthened. At the institutional level, NERI had the opportunity to cooperate and share experiences with the reputable French counterpart raising

the status of external cooperation to a more advanced level. The successful organization of the final international symposium helped NERI to network with researchers, not only from GMS and Malacca Straits in Southeast Asia but also from Central America, creating the new frontier for NERI to further expand its cooperation.

Finally, at the country level, the findings from the researchers have created a wealth of knowledge on the roles of economic corridors in the ongoing transition between the developments of cross-border trade towards a broader transnational integration process of Lao PDR with understandings on the comparable cases of the Straits of Malacca. Young researchers from NERI have had the opportunity to learn from Malacca's maritime corridors. Several experiences can be drawn such as the development of dry ports in Malaysia (ie. Nazery Khalid's contribution) which could be initiated and developed in Lao PDR at the head of the international bridges crossing the Mekong, or the establishment of pair cities which command areas linking interior productive areas and external nodes, or the corridor leading importance to combine national integration and territorial planning (*aménagement du territoire*) which could also be promoted. The different types of classification of stages of corridor development, starting from transport corridors, multimodal, logistic corridors, economic corridors (ie. Ruth Banomyong's contribution) provides us with the basis for the assessment of the level of development of the corridors crossing Lao PDR. In addition, the results of the studies will be used by planners and researchers to review related policies on subregional, regional and global integration including to developing national integration strategy as well as to feed into the ongoing preparation of national development strategy up to the 2020s.

## **VIEWS OF FRENCH COUNTERPART**

The Southeast Asia component of the ANR Transiter programme has been developed as scientific cooperation composed of three phases, each concluded with a scientific seminar. The first phase of the research programme led to the Franco-Lao workshop "Researching the Impacts in Laos of the Economic Corridors in the Greater Mekong Subregion: From Cross-Border Trade to Transnational Integration", held in Vientiane in July 2009. This seminar gave the opportunity to present and discuss the first results of Lao and French scholars' fieldwork research from NERI and CASE on the transition process from border trading practices to transnational integration. This first stage has allowed us to compare issues, data sources and fieldwork performed by

researchers from both institutes, mainly economists from the NERI and pluridisciplinary researchers from the CASE.

The second phase of this research programme was concluded by a Southeast Asian symposium held in Vientiane in December 2010, “Transnational Dynamics and Territorial Redefinitions in Southeast Asia: The Greater Mekong Subregion and Malacca Straits economic corridors”, prepared by the same institutions, NERI and CASE, and supported by the French National Research Agency (ANR), the Agency of the Research Institute for Development (AIRD) and the Lao Government. This conference followed a year after the Central American Regional symposium on transnational dynamics and territories, held in San José, Costa Rica in December 2009. These regional symposiums hence encompass the two cultural areas included in the Transiter Programme.

These regional seminars have been the subject of separate publishing projects centred on the comparison of the transnational integration processes at work in each of the two case studies chosen in Southeast Asia: the Greater Mekong Subregion and the Malacca Straits. These seminars have also made it possible to initiate a comparison between these two transnational integration dynamics and those of the Central American isthmus, the second study area of the Transiter programme. At this second level, the first basic element in the comparison of these two emerging integrations concerns their location at the crossroads between major north-south and east-west international and subregional trade routes. They also share spatial profiles with a North-South structure resulting from the respective positions of sea coasts, rivers and highlands. These two north-south profiles, combined with the above mentioned connections between world and subregional traffic, lead to a dynamic of spatial recompositions where emerging transnational North-South corridors play an essential role.

The third and last phase of this programme was concluded by an international conference, held in Paris in February 2012, “Transnational Dynamics and Territorial redefinitions: Cross Perspectives from Southeast Asia and Central America”, has compared the transnational dynamics generated in the Central American isthmus and in Southeast Asia. This conference has, first of all, enabled a thorough comparison to be made of the transnational dynamics studied in both parts of the Transiter programme: Southeast Asia and the Central American isthmus. The comparative approach was then broadened to include the research results of other French programmes dealing with similar issues for other subregions on all continents. A final synthesis will deal with the impact of the different transnational integrations taken into account on ongoing regionalization in the globalization process.

The last two phases of the programme have closely associated French researchers and their partners from the subregions studied who have studied similar scientific issues. The field of scientific cooperation founded on different cultural approaches and interpretations, initiated in the first place with Lao researchers, has been extended to all the Asian partners. There were two objectives to this dialogue which took into account the different outlooks of the participants involved: firstly, to submit the results of the French research teams to the scrutiny of their Asian partners, and secondly, to ask them to present their own results in such a way as to lead to a constructive debate, the fruit of balanced scientific cooperation, which is taken into account in this work, in both the diversity of the contributions and the two comparative conclusions.

Sirivanh Khonthapane (NERI) and Christian Taillard (CASE)



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Three mixed laboratories of the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) — the SEDET (Paris 7 University), the Southeast Asia Centre (CASE, CNRS/EHESS) and the CEMCA (CNRS/MAE, Mexico) issued a call for projects concerning southern countries, initiated in France by the National Research Agency (ANR) in 2007. The project, entitled “Transnational Dynamics and Territorial Redefinitions: A Comparative Approach to Central America and Southeast Asia” (Transiter), was approved in 2008 and funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR) and the French Development Agency (AFD)

This project, steered by Laurent Faret, a professor at Paris 7 University and a researcher at the SEDET, has made it possible not only to finance many research areas for experienced researchers, but also for young doctoral students. Thanks to frequent meetings, organized and supported by both the SEDET and the CASE, it has been possible to set up comparative grids enabling us to study the regional integration processes at work along the continental and maritime corridors of Southeast Asia. This book is the result of a collective multi-disciplinary effort over a period of four years, punctuated by numerous seminars, roundtables and symposia. We would like to thank all those taking part in these sessions analysing different types of regional cooperation in Asia and the rest of the world, and the discussants in our seminars and symposia whose constructive criticisms and suggestions have enabled our research to progress.

Special thanks are due to our Asian partners, too numerous to mention by name, who greatly contributed to the progress of our research. We are also grateful to the National Economic Research Institute (NERI) of the Ministry for Planning and Investment of the Lao PDR, which co-steered this research programme and brought together all the contributors from Vientiane to discuss the results. We also benefited from a fruitful cooperation

with researchers from the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA) in Kuala Lumpur and their knowledge of the Malacca Straits.

This book could not have existed without all the help we received to publish it. We thank Caroline Charras-Wheeler who quickly and efficiently revised the English in the book as a whole, and also translated several of the papers. Our sincere thanks also go to Muriel Charras who patiently and competently managed the Asian part of this programme for the CASE, and was in charge of formatting the manuscript. Thanks also to Vatthana Pholsena who provided a precious link between our programme and ISEAS. Finally, we thank Mrs Triena Ong, the Managing Editor of ISEAS, who took interest in the comparative approach we developed, and Sheryl Sin for her excellent editorial skills.

Nathalie Fau, Sirivanh Khonthapane and Christian Taillard



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Social Sciences sector, translated several Chinese novels into French (*Bleu de Chine*) and participated in the musical alternative scene in China. Her researches have focused on social marginalities in China and Southeast Asia. She has recently achieved her Ph.D. in social anthropology under the joint supervision of Lisa Wynn (Macquarie University of Sydney, Australia, 2012) and Pál Nyíri (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2013) on the topic of cross-border marriages in the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands. In 2010, she also published a book on this topic entitled *Volées, Envoyées, Convolées... Vendues, en fuite ou re-socialisées: les fiancées vietnamiennes en Chine* (Connaissances et Savoirs). Her current research interest focuses on the issue of non-existence of immigrants in China, cross-border traders of the Sino-Vietnamese border, and the notion of chaos in China.

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Elsa Lainé graduated from Development Studies at Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris and Urban Environmental Management at Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Geography at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris. Her field of research deals with the transformations of border towns under regionalization in Lao PDR and Thailand, more specifically under the Greater Mekong Subregion framework. She participated in international workshops in Vientiane with contributions focusing on twin cities along the Mekong border.

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Muszafarshah Mohd Mustafa is a Senior Lecturer in Economics at the School of Economics, Finance & Banking, College of Business (COB), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) in Malaysia. He worked previously in the private sector and was attached to the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) in Penang, Malaysia for a year in 2012 as an economic analyst. His publications and consultancy works include “Regional Disparities, Income Inequality & Poverty: A Cumulative Causation from Malaysia’s Experience”, in *Poverty and Global Recession in Southeast Asia*, edited by Aris Ananta and Richard Barichello (2012) and a *Feasibility Study on the Establishment of Malaysia-Thailand Special Border Economic Zone for the Economic Planning Unit* (2009). His areas of interest are public economics and development economics.

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Nazery Khalid joined MIMA in April 2004 as a Research Fellow at the then Center for Economic Studies and Ocean Industries. His research focus is on Maritime Economics, specifically shipping, ports, logistics, maritime support services, seaborne trade issues and offshore oil and gas industry. Nazery Khalid has published extensively in refereed journals, magazines and newspapers and has contributed chapters in books on a broad range of topics on maritime economics. His research works on ship financing and multimodal transport development in Malaysia has been published by MIMA. He has also edited two conference proceedings on the Straits of Malacca. Nazery Khalid was a Visiting Scholar at the prestigious Logistics and Operations Management Section at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University in October 2010 and at University Paris Diderot in October–November 2011. He also taught Maritime Economics to MBA in Shipping Management students at a Malaysian university.

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Vatthana Pholsena is a Research Fellow at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). Currently based in Singapore, she is also the representative for the Institute of Research on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC). Her current research interests include state formation and social change in frontier regions (Laos-Vietnam), social history of revolution and the Vietnam Wars, and dynamics of ethnicity in Laos. She is the author of

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Ruth Banomyong is an Associate Professor in the Department of International Business, Logistics and Transport Management at the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Thammasat University in Thailand. He received his Ph.D. in 2001 in the field of International Logistics within the Logistics and Operations Management Section (LOMS) at Cardiff Business School (UK). His papers have appeared in refereed journals such as *International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management*, *International Journal of Logistics: Research and Applications*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, *Maritime Policy and Management*. He has co-authored four books in the areas of logistics and supply chain management and international trade.

**Sirivanh Khonthapane**, Assistant Minister of Planning and Investment, Lao PDR.

Sirivanh Khonthapane is Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Lao PDR. She received her Master degree in economics in the former Soviet Union in 1981 at University of Practice Lumumba and a Master degree in Public Management in 2007 at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. She was the Director General of National Economic Research Institute of Lao PDR for ten years. Her main publications focus on labour migration and gender, labour market in Lao PDR, economic intergation in the region, SMEs, and community production knowledge (One District One Product). She contributed to the First–Seventh Five-Year Socio-economic Development Plans of Lao PDR, and worked as National Advisor for National Indicative Plan Development for Lao National Mekong Secretariat in 2012–13.

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Christian Taillard is a geographer, specialized in mainland Southeast Asia, and CNRS Emeritus Senior Researcher at the Southeast Asia Centre (CASE) in Paris.

His publications in English on Laos cover a range of themes including village irrigation systems (“Village-based economic systems, the development

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A second set of publications deals with processes of urbanization and metropolization in Southeast Asia: *Territoires de l'urbain en Asie du Sud-Est: une métropolisation en mode mineur*, edited by M. Frank, Ch. Goldblum et Ch. Taillard (2012); *Vientiane, architectures d'une capitale: traces, formes, structures et projets*, edited by P. Clément, S. Clément-Charpentier, Ch. Goldblum, Bounleuam Sisoulath et Ch. Taillard (2011); and “Danang, a New Metropolis in Central Vietnam”, in *Trends of Urbanization and Suburbanization in Southeast Asia*, edited by Tôn Nut Quynh Trân, Fanny Quertamp-Nguyễn, and Claude de Miras (2012).

A third set relates to transnational integration between Northeast and Southeast Asia (*Intégrations régionale en Asie orientale*, edited by Ch. Taillard (2004)), which also involves land economic corridors in the Greater Mékong Subregion (“Un exemple réussi de régionalisation transnationale en Asie orientale: les corridors de la Région du Grand Mékong”, in *L'Espace Géographique* (2009/1)).

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Ella Vignat is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris. She was a garment engineer and spent half her life in Asia with diverse working experiences in clothing industry, language teaching and humanitarian relief.