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From Tribalism to Nationalism: The Anthropological Turn in Laos—A Tribute to Grant Evans. Edited by Yves Goudineau and Vanina Bouté. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2022. xiii+396 pp.

This collection of essays provides a sample of the research done in Laos by Western scholars in anthropology and related fields over the last twenty years. Many of the chapters first appeared in French in 2008, while some others were published in journals since that time. But for the wider readership beyond the small group of scholars who focus on Laos, the essays present new insights.

Yves Goudineau's introduction provides an overview of research on society and culture in Laos. N.J. Enfield describes problems and prospects regarding studies of the languages of Laos and points to the importance of nurturing local research skills. Official reluctance to allow or enable field research has repeatedly been an obstacle and has stalled or precluded the emergence of a Laotian research community. Boike Rehbein strikes a very different tone in his proposal to examine sociolects, the social equivalent of dialects. He posits the village, the royal court and the Buddhist monastery as the main sociolects of premodern society. The chapter does not offer descriptive materials with which a reader might assess the case. The analytical framework resembles Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "habitus" in the attempt to offer a Marxist perspective that avoids the term "class". Traditionalism and a subsistence ethic, we learn, characterize "peasant socioculture" (p. 34).

The chapter by Grant Evans assesses studies of the Lao countryside since 1990. He finds a lamentable situation: modern researchers have ignored the insights of peasant studies from the 1920s (Chayanov 1986) and 1960s (Wolf 1966), and, more generally, they show no interest in "questions of peasant social structure" (p. 79). Claims regarding the peasant focus on "use value" and not "exchange value" and references to the "natural economy" of premodern Laos (pp. 63–64) appear strikingly ahistorical. A similar imbalance towards (Western) theory marks Patrice Ladwig's chapter on "the genesis and

demarcation of the religious field”. I had hoped for some extended descriptions to ground the discussion since the study was based on several years of field research and included a stint of teaching at a Buddhist college in Vientiane, but that was not the case. The finding that Buddhism was of decreasing social importance as education was moved to state schools prior to 1960 is unsurprising. The case about “the religious field” and “the state” reads dated.

Vatthana Pholsena’s re-examination of the early years of the Lao revolution in the south challenges the heroic history that centres on the leaders of the post-1975 government as the founders of the modern nation. The remaining chapters all focus on the ethnically diverse highlands, reinforcing an academic division of labour that directs anthropologists to rural areas and ethnic difference. Guido Sprenger’s examination of modernity and secularism among the Rmeet in the northern highlands explores how ritual practice can come to an end. Vanina Bouté charts religious dynamics among the Phunoy of Phongsaly over time. The Phunoy people, Tibeto-Burman speaking highlanders, have a long history of Buddhism in combination with various animist elements. The ethnographic formalism in the studies of the Rmeet and Phunoy also characterizes Ian Baird’s case regarding spatial organization among the Brao.

Olivier Evrard and Chanthaphilith Chiemsisouraj consider the history of Vieng Phu Kha, whose ancient ruins in Luang Nam Tha are of uncertain origin. Some of the stories connect the past to the crossing of ethnic lines: either outsiders built the area and it then passed into local hands, or it started when a lowland Tai royal woman married a highland man. The inconclusive case presents a welcome alternative to the ethnographic formalism of some of the other studies. Goudineau charts colonial-era ethnographic accounts of the southern region related to Kantu people. In a separate chapter, he describes efforts to fashion a multi-ethnic modern nation. His case assumes a clear distinction between local traditions and the state-imposed new national heritage. Oliver Tappe’s study of Huaphanh is the book’s only previously unpublished chapter. It depicts an ethnically diverse and complex local landscape where there are competing narratives

of heroic patriots versus stories of hardship and suffering, and a total silence regarding the violent death of the last king of Laos in a re-education camp. Tappe's attention to the historicity, diversity, complexity and contradictions of everyday social life and livelihood stands out in the collection.

If the book inspires a follow-up volume, I hope for a focus on cities and towns and on the contemporary diversity of the Lao people that questions the easy binary of lowland Lao and highland ethnic others. One analytical angle that the collection does not bring up is the areal and comparative (Southeast Asian) dimension.

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Consumption and Vietnam's New Middle Classes: Societal Transformations and Everyday Life. By Arve Hansen. London: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2022. xv+203 pp.

Ethnographies of economic transition and accompanying social transformations can have short shelf lives for contemporary societal analysis in a country like Vietnam, where GDP growth has been one of the highest in Asia for over a generation. Situated field research is essential to document the rapid developments that have long been under way in the country and region. Nonetheless, given the inevitable temporal lag of long-term fieldwork and subsequent academic publishing, book-length studies of economic transitions