

## **The kinship relations of Thai-Lao communities along Mekong River banks: a case of Mukdahan-Savannakhet community and recommendations for improving Thai-Lao Relations\***

Watunyu Jaiborisudhi<sup>1\*</sup>, Wichian Intasi<sup>1</sup> and Ampa Kaewkumkong<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute of East Asian Studies, Thammasat University, Pathum Thani, 12121, Thailand.

---

### **Abstract**

**Background:** *The bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos were initially based on a good perception for a long time. It can be said that Thai policy towards relations with Laos was adhered to the old discourse, which believed that Thailand and Laos are Sister Countries, and thus presumed the close tie between them. While Thai myth believed that they were strong bilateral relations, Lao people, on the contrary, believed that the aforementioned discourse implied an insult of Thai people towards Laotian.*

**Objective:** *1. To study the cause of the problems concerning the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos. 2. To study the relative advantage of the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos.*

**Results:** *The study of the comparison of the advantage and disadvantage between Thailand and Vietnam on the relationship with Lao showed that Thailand was relatively disadvantaged in comparison to Vietnam in all aspects. However, the Researcher has proposed the advantage that Thailand possesses over the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos, namely, the kinship relations of the communities along both Mekong River banks included Mukdahan-Savannakhet community which was closely sustained.*

**Discussion:** *This research is to study the causes of the bilateral relations problem, and to present the advantages over the improving of the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos under the historical research and the concept of National interest.*

**Keyword:** The kinship relations, Thai-Lao communities, Mukdahan-Savannakhet community, Thai-Lao Relations

---

\* Corresponding author: watunyu1979@hotmail.com

## **Introduction**

The bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos were initially based on a good perception for a long time. It can be said that Thai policy towards relations with Laos was adhered to the old discourse, which believed that Thailand and Laos are Sister Countries, and thus presumed the close tie between them. While Thai myth believed that they were strong bilateral relations, Lao people, on the contrary, believed that the aforementioned discourse implied an insult of Thai people towards Laos.

This view was achieved through various sources including the Mukdahan-Savannakhet perception survey, the in-depth interview and focus group, as well as the research document on the topic of "The Thai-Lao relations from Lao's point of view" by the Institute of Asia Studies Chulalongkorn University. (Khien Tee-rawit, 2001) The relating information included the attitude and the relations of both countries which were uneven. It reflected in the historical conflicts between Thailand and Laos which gradually accumulated to the Lao perception for years.

Moreover, the influence of Vietnam and their strong bilateral relations with Laos, made Vietnam the leader country in the Indochina regional. Vietnam has continually pushed forward proactive policy to other Indochina member countries. For example: the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation signed with Laos in 1977, and with Cambodia in 1979. Furthermore, Vietnam had strengthened and provided assistance to other Indochina countries in the security, economic, social and technology matters.

Those problems were questioned by researcher in the study of: What are the causes of relations problems between Thailand and Laos and what are the advantages of Thailand in improving these bilateral relations?

This research was conducted through using the concept of national interest as the guideline. Though it was the national interest basis, the analysis will focus on the loss of the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos. The researcher did not target at resources, trade or the investment in Laos, but the researcher aimed to focus on the benefit from their good mutual relations under the entire good understanding, to lessen the fears, including the bilateral friendship between Thailand and Laos. The major interest would lead to the kinship relations which would establish the cooperation of both nations. For Thai, we have to accept the mistakes in the past especially during cold war period and accelerate the adjustment and improvement of the bilateral relations.

## **The causes of the bilateral relations problem between Thailand and Laos**

The causes of the problem were classified into two issues; the historical conflicts and the influence of Vietnam in Indochina region.

## **Problem of the Historical Conflicts between Thailand and Laos**

The problem of the past conflict between Thailand and Laos stemmed from nationalism, it could be said that nationalism is a result of colonialism. Many colonial states wanted to liberate their countries in economic, politic,

social and cultural aspects from their colonizers. Hence, to restore the identity together with establish the national unity, the colonial states had to construct and re-produce their nationalism history responding to their needs at the time. However, this procedure was inevitably done through binary opposition. They primarily focused on building good images for their own country, while created contradictory images for others; making other countries their permanent enemies; calling other countries threats or making them inferior to their own countries, etc. For example, the perception of Thai state was told by nationalism history that Myanmar was our permanent enemy, Vietnam was our threats, Cambodia could not be trusted, and Laos was inferior. This resulted in the bilateral conflicts between Thailand and Laos. It came from the negligence of Thai media, that implicitly incorporate scornful perception to Lao people such as in the Nicole case, the movie "Mak Tae" and in the musical drama "Love Song of the Mekong Banks". In this case, Lao believed that Thai people looked down on and insulted them which resulted in the protest of the Lao government against the Thai government.

Meanwhile, Laos had also unified their nation through nationalism history and textbooks. There were several cases and historical evidences which showed how abusive and oppressive Thailand was to Laos, making Thailand their permanent enemy.

For example, in the Emerald Buddha case, Lao people think that they lost their sacred possession by Thai robbery. It was in 778 A.D., when King Tak-Sin commanded the General Phaya Chakri and Phaya Surasri to

attack Vientiane as Chao Siri Boonsarn denied to ally with Thailand in the fighting with Burma. At that time Laos had divided into three kingdoms: Vientiane, Champasak and Luang Phrabang. It was easy for Siam to overcome Vientiane. This resulted in the loss of territories of all three kingdoms in 1778. Siam captured thousands of Lao people and brought them back to Saraburi province, while all members of the Lao Royal family were held hostage in Bangkok. Furthermore, Siam robbed Lao properties, including the Emerald Buddha that was later brought from Vientiane to Bangkok. (Sila Viravong, 1997) It can be said that the loss of Emerald Buddha caused deep-cut wound to the Lao people.

Phaya Chakri and Phaya Surasri case showed that the same history was perceived entirely different by the two countries. It was in the reign of Thailand's King Rama III, after three kingdom of Laos had defeated, King Anuvong tried to get independence from Siam. He led the army to relocate Lao people from Saraburi province and migrated them to Vientiane. However, King Anuvong failed and it showed his defiant to the Kingdom of Siam. Thus, King Rama III commanded the army to capture King Anuvong, as well as those Lao people and bring them back to Siam. Moreover, the Siam army burnt the whole Vientiane for fear that Lao would fight back and rebel again. King Anuvong was captured and imprisoned until his death in 1828. (Sila Viravong, 1997) King Anuvong case presented conflicting story as a result of nationalism. For Lao people's point of view, they suffered a great loss and defeated, while on the Thai side, this story showed them how powerful their country was.

This case created suffering and bad memory for Lao people, which was similar to the Thailand's huge loss during Ayutthaya period.

Another conflict between Thailand and Laos was the different between their political ideologies during cold war. In that bipolar world, Thailand was supported by the US, while Laos was supported by the communist. In that situation, Thailand and the US had the common perception against communist threat under the domino theory, which resulted in the implementation of the communist containment policy by Thailand and the US. With the fear of the communism, Thailand mistaken the main goal of Pathet Lao (liberation from imperialism), and at the time understood that left-wing movement in Laos was a threat to Thailand's security.

Therefore, the cooperation between Thailand and the US to defend the Lao communist were established in all forms, whether the interference in the Laos' internal affairs, the support provided to the armed Hmong under the command of General Vang Pao, and the sending of over 30,000 Thai soldiers to fight a secret war with the Pathet Lao regime. Furthermore, with the support of the US, Thailand became the location of the *Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier*, that Thailand permitted the US army to assemble 8 air force bases in the country. In 1970, the US air force struck Laos for 106,872 times, and in 1971, the US air force struck Laos for 95,495 times. 47 percent of the air strikes over Laos originated from Thailand bases. (Puangthong Pawakapan, 2006) This damaged and made a huge loss for Laos. However, Thai-Lao kinship relations along Mekong River remained in good terms and continued to sustain.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that during the cold war, the bilateral relations of Thailand and Laos was paradoxical. The main interest of Thailand and the US was to defeat the communist. It was obvious that the air force bases was assembled and originated from Thailand, and the air strikes made the big damage to Laotian. It was also clear that Thailand was the alliance who damaged the Laos. Also, Thai supported the (armed) Hmong and hired soldiers to fight the war with Laos. It reflected that Thailand had supported the "Kon bor dee" especially the Hmong group to cause war in Laos. The containment communist policy of Thailand and the US made Laotian people angry with Thailand. Laos was not impressed by Thai action and it took a long time to improve their perception with Thailand. And it was very hard to uplift the relations to a good level.

However, after Laos opened their country, they administered with the omni directional policy which based on the new thinking in foreign policy. They particularly joined hands with newly-independent world. For Thailand, after the ending of cold war in 1990, the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos were developed into good terms. It could be said that the new thinking in foreign policy was consistent with Thailand's new policy, that was to transform the battle field to a market place during the Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan government. It was an important basis in promoting the better bilateral relations of the two countries. Also, the people relations of the communities of Thailand and Laos along Mekong River showed a positive picture of Thailand-Laos relations.

Unfortunately, during the Asian economic crisis in 1997, Thailand had no policy to provide assistance to Laos. Furthermore, Thailand had postponed the purchase of the electric power from Laos due to the slowdown of the Thai economy, which led to the worsening in Laos' economic situation. (Surachai Sirikrai, 2009) Consequently, Laos turned to Vietnam, the former communist alliance, for help. From 1997 until now, Laos has strengthened their relations with Vietnam.

### **The Influence of Vietnam over Indochina**

Vietnam's foreign policy may not play a prominent role in comparison to Thailand's policy in ASEAN, however, its policy plays a major role over Laos and Cambodia in Indochina. At this stage, it could be accepted that Vietnam was the real leader in Indochina, as a result of their long term relations with Laos and Cambodia during the colonial period. France had built Vietnam as the centre of the Indo-China administration and trading. Later in 1930, Komintern tried to make Indochina a socialist Bloc, leading by Ho Chi Minh, who established unity in Indochina. (Sriprapa Petchmeesri, 1998) These historical and international political contexts influenced Vietnamese leader's perception in building up Vietnam as the hub while Cambodia and Laos were their spokes in the Indochina region. Furthermore, they tried to eliminate the French influence in Indochina so that the three countries fused into the brotherhood against imperialism.

After the severity of cold war, Vietnam was divided into two parts, North Vietnam and South Vietnam. Prathet Lao had an obvious

perception that Thailand and the US were their threats, who acted against their national interest. It was Laos' aim to sustain its sovereignty and to dismantle imperialism. The aforementioned threats and national interest of Laos were coincided with the national interest of Vietnam. Therefore, the communist Laos and Vietnam joined hands in a war against Thailand and the US. Vietnam sent the troops and weapons to support Prathet Lao movement, while Laos allowed the Vietnamese troops to transfer their army force and provisions through the Ho Chi Minh route to beleaguer South Vietnam base. Cambodia under Sihanou's leadership, tried to balance out Vietnamese influence with a close relation with China, as well as a participation in Non Aligned Movement (NAM) to reduce Vietnam's role and influence over Cambodia. However, Sihanou was unable to resist Vietnam, and eventually allowed North Vietnam to transfer the troops and the provisions through Sihanou Ville port. (Theera Nuchpiam, 2003)

In 1970s, the Indochina Special Relations encouraged by Vietnam became tangible. The Treaty of Peace Friendship and Cooperation was signed by Vietnam and Laos in 1977, and the treaty between Vietnam and Cambodia was signed in 1979, accordingly. The aforementioned Treaties were the agreements signed by Vietnam to assist and establish the cooperation in Indochina region in the omni direction including economic, political, social, and particularly the army force cooperation. Both Laos and Cambodia also allowed Vietnam to maintain its military forces in their territories. It showed the clear influence of Vietnam in Indochina. It could be said that the Treaty of

Peace Friendship and Cooperation was the starting point of the Indochina and Vietnamese cooperation. For example: the Minister of Foreign Affairs Forum, the Indo-China Economic Minister Forum which regularly organized in rotation, among the Indochina to jointly plan economic, cultural and public health policy. Moreover, the relations in the Indochina community, was pushed forward by Vietnam to "Twin Cities" to promote the good relations of the three countries in the micro level. (Surachai Sirikrai, 2009)

Vietnam assisted Laos and Cambodia in all aspects, such as economic, political, social, military, technology, and technical assistance. They continually granted the assistance to both countries. For example, in 1983, Vietnam provided economic and the military assistance to Laos and Cambodia at the amount of 65,000 Dong or about 20 percent of Vietnam's total budget. (Khien Theeravit, 1985) It showed that Vietnam sincerely devoted to Laos and Cambodia in order to establish the strong cooperation under the Indochina Special Relations before they became ASEAN members in 1990s.

However, later Cambodia was no longer governed by the Communist, Vietnam relations with Cambodia was thus reduced. (Thanyathip Sripana, 2007) Laos which remains under the supervision of the communist, shows sustainably close relations with Vietnam. For those three countries, they exchanged views and established the relations in the local government and central government level. But the bilateral relations between Vietnam and Laos were better than the bilateral relations between Vietnam and Cambodia. The exchange of the

special cooperation by communist parties in Vietnam and Laos stressed their special relations.

In 1987, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), had the resolution to celebrate the 10th anniversary under the Treaty of Peace Friendship and Cooperation with Vietnam. They believed that Vietnam was their main factor helping them achieved the revolution victory. Moreover, the Lao government disclosed that there were thousands of Vietnamese volunteers that had devoted themselves for the Lao revolution. Also, Vietnam had continually assisted over 500 development projects in Laos. (Surachai Sirikrai, 1989) This reflects strong bilateral relations between Vietnam and Laos, and strong cooperation against the common threats.

Furthermore, the 1997 Asian economic crisis, which Thailand provided very little assistance to Laos, was very different from Vietnam's action. Vietnam provided a huge assistance to Laos until Laos had recovered from the Asian economic crisis. Laos was sincerely impressed by Vietnam's action. During the 1997 Economic crisis, Thailand decreased the purchase of the electricity from Laos, and provided very little assistance. Vietnam, on the other hand, assisted Laos by providing Vietnamese economic specialist to help solving Lao economic problems, as well as using product exchange system instead of normal trading system. Thus, whenever Vietnam requires any assistance, the Lao government does not hesitate to help. This is very different from the Thailand scenario. (Prasit Viriyaboonma, 2011)

In the early 1999, Lao students and lecturers gathered to call for democracy. As a

result, Lao leaders visited Vietnam to ask for help against the Lao democratic movement. Vietnam agreed by signing the special agreement that strengthened the bilateral relations with Laos in terms of bilateral assistance, as well as foreign policy. They also mutually established the economic, political and social plan. Laos also cut import duties on products from Vietnam, as well as implemented income tax and benefits exemption for the Vietnamese investor. Moreover, Laos authorized the Vietnamese construction companies to build all roads in the country. The close relationship between Laos and Vietnam made Laos very much dependent on Vietnam. (Surachai Sirikrai, 2009) Furthermore, both Laos and Vietnam confronted the same threat, not only, the internal threat from Laos People's Democratic Republic in Laos, but also the Global Democratization threat and the Human Rights ideology. It could be said that both Laos and Vietnam faced the same threat of the Global Democratization which made their bilateral relations even closer. It reflected in their mutual policies in all aspects. It was considered that Thailand was the agent of the Democratic and liberalism which continually affected the Indochina communist. Moreover, Lao situation was more dependent on Vietnam, in contrast with Thailand, which Laos became less dependent on.

### **The Relations of the communities along the Mekong River banks and the advantages of the Thai-Laos relations**

From the above, it showed that the problem of the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos was resulted from two

major factors: First, the historical conflicts between Thai and Laos. Second, Vietnamese influence in Indochina. In order to solve the problem of conflict between Thailand and Laos, Thai side had to start accepting their wrongdoing in the past especially during the cold war period. Moreover, Thailand should review its roles and the attitudes toward Laos by starting to revise its history and nationalist textbooks which always perceive Lao being inferior to Thai people. They should write history without adding nationalist sentiment, and tell Thai people to understand that the Lanchang Kingdom was in fact as great as Ayutthaya Kingdom. Also, make Thai people realize their terrible action in the history, that Thailand once attacked Laos, robbed, and burnt Vientiane. The most important thing was that Thailand used to cooperate with the US to engage in the war with Laos during the Cold War. Both history and the textbooks had to be revised and written to emphasize the kinship relations between Thailand and Laos.

The revision of history and textbook would create better understanding and the positive perception to Laos for Thai people. It should provoke our wrongdoing, and build a sense of kinship between Thailand and Laos. Then established and improve the new relative perception, without dishonor, nor taking a part from Thai and Laos. Furthermore, the revision of the history and textbooks will be a good foundation to build a correct history and textbooks which will be using together in the future which will develop knowledge and good understanding, as well as the fraternity for ASEAN member countries in the ASEAN community in 2015.

Indochina leadership of Vietnam was the benefits of the good bilateral relations between Vietnam and Laos. Whenever Laos was more dependent on Vietnam, the dependency on Thailand would decrease. According to the threats analysis, the closer relations of Vietnam and Laos, means the more adjusted relations between Thailand and Laos. Considering the Vietnamese capability and intention, it could be seen that there was huge Vietnamese military support to Laos during the cold war. Moreover, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam helped preventing Laos against the threat of democratization. Vietnam has no less capability than Thailand in terms of economic power or technology. However, they manage to use their economic and technological capacity as soft power to effectively win over Laotian.

With Vietnam's capability and intention, they could use their special relations as their advantage, as opposed to Thailand. The analyses were as follows:

*Historical conflicts:* In the past, both Thailand and Vietnam had spread their influences over the Lao territory before the Nation State was formed. Regarding the modern history, such as Vietnam War, and the war in Laos which Thailand collaborated with the US, Laos and Vietnam has created a strong alliance against the threat of the liberal world.

*Political regime:* The relationship between Laos and Vietnam under the communist ideology was very strong. Both nations had the cooperation in all aspects at all levels of the communist party. Thailand's democratic made it impossible for us to establish the same relationship, and the democratic made Laos

felt that Thailand was the threat to the communist regime.

*Economy:* Though the overall trade investment of Thailand in Laos was higher than that of Vietnam, Vietnam continued to expand their investment in Laos. In 2007, the Vietnam's investment value was higher than Thailand's, and it was the second highest after China. (Surachai Sirikrai, 2009) Vietnam intended to increase their investment, making Laos becoming more dependent on them, while becoming less dependent on Thailand.

*Cooperation:* there were various levels of cooperation between Thailand and Laos both multilateral and bilateral ones. But the bilateral cooperation between Thailand and Laos was not as strong as Vietnam and Laos'. It could be seen from the Indo-China Special Relations under the Treaty of Peace Friendship and Cooperation, as well as the mutual fears of the threat by the liberal world. In 2000, Vietnam and Laos had signed the Special Agreement, which both countries will establish the economic, political and social plan, as well as foreign policy unity in the future. (Surachai Sirikrai, 2009)

The comparison of the advantages and the disadvantages of the multilateral relations of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, according to those 4 aforementioned factors, shows that Vietnam had the advantage over Thailand in all aspects. However, it could be seen that the advantage that Thailand has over Vietnam was the kinship relations. The kinship relations between Thailand and Laos reflected ethnic relations of both nations. It could be seen that the languages we used to communicate were similar, and we have very close ties between

The kinship relations of Thai-Lao communities along Mekong River banks: a case of Mukdahan-Savannakhet community and recommendations for improving Thai-Lao Relations

---

Watunyu Jaiborisudhi, Wician Intasi and Ampa Kaewkumkong

the communities along both sides of Mekong river banks. Along 1,500 kilometers of Thailand and Lao border, there were relative communities along both sides of Mekong river banks. Even during the cold war period, they traveled back and forth, and they also had common traditions, cultures, religions, as well as continually trading relations (Adisorn Semyam, 2011). This case study is a good example of good relationship of between Thailand and Laos using the Mukdahan-Savannakhet community as the representative of the communities along Mekong river banks, not to mention Thatphnom-Thakhaek, Nongkhai-Thabor, Chong mek-Pakse communities.

*The historical characteristics of Mukdahan-Savannakhet community:* they shared the long history and legend. The people migrated from Vientiane leading by Lord Chandrasuriyawongse, settled down and built their homeland at Baan Luang Phonsim, the Ing-Hang Stupa, currently situated in the Savanakhet District. Lord Chanthakinnaree later ruled the community, and expanded the territory along the Mekong River. At Huay BangMuk, he built Sri Mongkhon temple (Sri Mongkhon is now in Mukdahan Province). There was a story that at mid night, there was a transparent and glittering object emerge from the top of the seven sugar palm trees and floated over the Mekong River banks, Lord Chanthakinnaree then named such object "Keo Mukdahan or the Pearl Crystal" and thus called the city "Mukdahan". (Pises Jearchanphong, 1994) This story implies the shared history of both communities along the river banks. Other communities also shared similar history as Mukdahan-Savannakhet one.

Besides the shared historical characteristics of communities, they also shared the same religious legend, especially the Legend of Urang-kat (the breast bone of Buddha) during the Buddha era. It was told that the Lord Buddha visited Mekong River basin and showed the miracle of torturing the Naga who lived along the Mekong basin. It was the sign of their social and Cultural Revolution in the communities where people previously believed in animism and superstition. Laotian changed their belief and began to worship Buddhism, the same religion as Thailand. The Mukdahan-Savannakhet community as well as other communities along the Mekong respected Pra Borommatat pagoda, as they believed it was the sacred place and the center for the people from all walks of life (Sutin Sanongphan, 2000). It could be said that the Thai-Lao community along the Mekong River were related by Prathat ideology. For example, Prathat Phanom was the worship place of both Laotian and Thai, who felt that they were both Prathat sons (stupa sons).

For Mukdahan-Savannakhet communities, they had Pratad "Ing-Hang", which contained the Lord Buddha's spine (backbone). It was the most sacred place for those people, and it was the twin of Buddha's relic, Prathat Phanom. Prathat Phanom was believed to be a part of Prathat Ing-Hang history. The local people also believed that the Lord Buddha had visited this very place after he visited Pookam-pra mountain, which is currently in Prathat Phanom. (Supachai Singyabuth, 2000) From the history and legend, it can be seen that the Buddhist belief was shared by Mukdahan-Savannakhet community, and it showed that

the two nations were related and shared the Buddhist tie. This could be seen as an advantage that could help improving the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos.

*Tradition and cultural characteristics of the Mukdahan-Savannakhet community:* the kinship relations of the Mukdahan-Savannakhet community were non-blood and were not marital ones, which was anthropologically called “Artificial Kinship”, or “Pook Suay” tradition. Furthermore, there were sharing traditions of the communities along both river banks, including rice donating at the funeral where the people along the river banks would cross over to attend the ceremony, regardless of the distance from their hometown. The Boun Song Rua or Boat Racing Festival between the people of Mukdahan and Savannakhet was a tradition that had been held for years. On the festival, the immigration point would be closed after midnight. This clearly showed the close bilateral relations between Mukdahan and Savannakhet community. All travelers from both sides of the river did not need to present any document before entering the country. They only needed to fill in the names and the numbers of people in the book, which was controlled by the local officer. (Adisorn Semyam, 2011) It illustrated the bilateral relations that exceed beyond any border or modern Nation State’s regulation.

Another shared tradition between Mukdahan and Savannakhet that showed strong bilateral relations along Mekong River was Heat Sib Song. This was a customary tradition that incorporates agriculture with religion. People would practice it every month of the lunar calendar year. For example,

people of Mukdahan and Savannakhet would jointly harvest rice fields, which was called “Long Khaek”. After that, they would have a celebratory party together. It was a tradition that usually occurred along both sides of Mekong River banks. (Piyachat Sindhusa-ad, 1997) It could be said that these shared traditions and culture continually helped maintaining good kinship relations and promoting better understanding and unity among Thailand and Laos.

The history, tradition and the culture of Mukdahan and Savannakhet community showed the common ethnic and the traditions and cultures influenced by Buddhism enhance the special relations between the two communities. It was different from the special relations between Laos and Vietnam which was particular linked with political state-to-state issues. The special relations of Mukdahan and Savannakhet, and the communities along Mekong river banks were kinship relation, and such special relations were stronger and more stable than the state-to-state relations. The political relations could change according to the changes in the National interest, global, political, and economic climates. The Mukdahan and Savannakhet community, on the other hand, continued to maintain their strong relationship across the river

## Conclusion

The comparison of the advantage and disadvantage between Thailand and Vietnam on the relationship with Lao showed that Thailand was relatively disadvantaged in comparison to Vietnam in all aspects. However, the Researcher has proposed the

advantage that Thailand possesses over the bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos, namely, the kinship relations of the communities along both Mekong River banks included Mukdahan-Savannakhet community, which was closely sustained. It was beyond concepts of borders, rules and the Nation State. Moreover, it was beyond any political ideology, conflicts and benefits. The kinship relations along Mekong River presented good bilateral relations between Thailand and Laos. In order to develop strong relations with Laos, strategic policy, with a strong support to sustain the kinship community along the Mekong River, is needed.

Moreover, to maintain the good relations, we have to make Thai people understand and adjust their attitude towards Lao. Thailand also needs to accept our wrongdoing to Laos in the past especially during cold war period. Furthermore, both countries should agree to revise

the history and textbooks without adding their nationalist sentiments.

The revision of the history and textbooks will be a good foundation to build a correct history and textbooks which will be using together in the future which will develop knowledge and good understanding, as well as the fraternity for ASEAN member countries in the ASEAN community in 2015.

Lastly, Thailand has to continually provide the sincere cooperation and assistance to Laos, either in terms of economic, social or technological assistance. This is to achieve the goal of uplifting the current bilateral relations with Laos.

### **Acknowledgement**

This work was supported by the National Research University Project of Thailand office of Higher Education Commission.

### **Reference**

Adisorn Semyam. (2011, July 6). Interview. Researcher. Institute of Asia Studies, Chulalongkorn University.

Gearoid O Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge. (2006). *The Geopolitics Reader*. Oxon: Routledge.

Harvey, David. (2005). *A Brief History of Neo-liberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Khanlasy Keobounphanh. (2011, July 22). Interview. Counselor of Economic and Commercial. Embassy of the Lao PDR. In Thailand.

Khien Teerawit. (1985). "Cambodia" Annual Asia 1985. Institute of Asia Studies, Chulalongkorn University.

Khien Teerawit. (2001). *Thai-Lao relations in Laotian perception*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Printing house.

Lerche, Charles O. and Said, Abdul A. (1963). *Concept of International Politics*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Nieokham Khammenathy. (2011, July 30). Interview. Agriculture and Forestry Service office of Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR.

Nye, J.S. Jr. (2007). *Understanding International Conflicts*. 6 th ed. Longman.

Pises Jearchanphong. (1994). *Urang-katat (That-phanom Legend)*. Bangkok: Reunkeaw Printing.

Piyachat Sindhusa-ad. (1997). *Lanchang Social: 21-23 B.E.* Master's thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University.

Prasit Viriyaboonma. (2011, April 26). Interview. Director. Savan ceramic co.ltd.

Puangthong Pawakapan. (2006). *Vietnam War and the truth of Thai State*. Bangkok: Copefire.

Rosnau, James N. (1968). *International Encyclopedia of the Social Science*. New York: Macmillan Company & The Free Press.

Sila Viravong. (1997). *History of Laos*. Bangkok: Matichon.

Sriprapa Petchmeesri. (1998). *Vietnam: economic and political development*. Bangkok: Copefire.

Supachai Singyabuth. (2002). *Southern Laos*. Bangkok: Krongkran-anaboriwansuksa-ha bhumipark.

Surachai Sirikrai. (1989). "Laos" *Annual Asia 1989*. Institute of Asia Studies, Chulalongkorn University.

Surachai Sirikrai. (2009). "Laos: Politics, Economy and International Relation After the Economic Crisis (1997-2007)" in Sida Sornri (Ed). *Southeast Asia: Politics, Economy and International relation after the Economic crisis (1997-2007)*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Printing house.

Sutin Sanongphan. (2000). *The Socio-Historical of Mekong River Banks 1349-1827*. Muhan Chombueng Rajabhat University.

Thanyathip Sripana. (2007). *Vietnam's foreign policy since 1986: a case of Vietnam's policy towards Thailand*. Bangkok: Thailand Research Fund.

Theera Nuchpiam. (2003). "Cambodia Politics" *Southeast Asia: The Politics after the end of Cold War*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Printing house.

Thongsay Sychanh. (2011, July 30). Interview. Lecturer. Champasak University, Chapasak province, Lao PDR.