

1 Everyone is aware there are major differences between Asian and Western culture. Despite this fact, Westerners are often frustrated and culturally shocked by the extent of the differences. But the more you learn and become aware of **them**, the better you will be able to cope as you go about your life and work in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR).

2 Despite global modernisation, much of Lao culture is still profoundly influenced by Buddhist thinking, attitudes and behaviour. It is impossible to understand Lao culture without having at least a basic understanding of the Hinayana Buddhist tradition which came to the country from Cambodia over 450 years ago.

3 Much behaviour can be traced back to the five Buddhist precepts

Buddhist Precept	Purpose of the Precept
i. Do not kill humans or animals	to foster kindness of heart
ii. Do not steal or commit corrupt acts	to foster love of work and honest effort
iii. Do not commit adultery	to deepen love of one's spouse
iv. Do not tell lies	to foster honesty in word and deed
v. Do not take alcohol or drugs	to avoid carelessness

4 Acceptance is the Lao worldview. Things are as they are and should be. Why would you wish to try and change this inevitability? I am responsible for myself and you are for yourself. There is no need for discussion or confrontation. Much of this perspective comes from the Buddhist belief in re-incarnation. Events, for better or for worse, are often related to one's previous **incarnation** and are therefore accepted without challenge or emotion. One must behave in accordance with proper Buddhist conduct with a view to one's next incarnation.

5 In spite of this general posture of acceptance, the Lao believe their world is in constant flux with one incarnation flowing into the next. This is why there is so much patience. If things are not okay at this time, maybe they will be better later, or in the next incarnation.

6 Sometimes expressions capture the essence of a culture. Two frequently used Lao expressions are the responses "bo penh nyang" and "thammadha". **Like all frequently used expressions they have a variety of meanings depending on the context.** But all meanings derive from a Buddhist perspective of acceptance of the prevailing situation. "Bo penh

nyang” is sometimes used in its literal meaning, "No problem" but it also has other meanings like "never mind" or "are you all right?" or "I forgive and forget your action." This expression sometimes frustrates Westerners with the world view that problems are there to be solved, not to be accepted.

7 The response “thammadha” is also steeped in Buddhist philosophy. Fundamentally, it means acceptance of one's fate - that one is born, grows old and will die. But it is also used in more day-to-day situations to mean "average," "the norm" or "proceeding as usual." For example, if a man is fired from his job he may not be sad; he may be thammada meaning he accepts his fate and does not harbour resentment.

1. Which of the following would be the best title for the passage?

- A. Lao perspective of acceptance
- B. How Lao language captures its culture
- C. Differences between Lao and Western culture
- D. Understanding Lao culture

2. What does the word “**them**” in paragraph 1 refer to?

- A. Asian and Western culture
- B. Westerners
- C. differences
- D. your life and work

3. When did Hinayana Buddhist tradition appear in the country?

- A. over 4 centuries and a half ago.
- B. less than 450 years ago.
- C. exactly 450 years ago.
- D. over 50 decades ago.

4. What is most crucial in understanding Lao culture?

- A. Buddhist thinking, attitudes and behaviour
- B. the Hinayana Buddhist tradition
- C. five Buddhist precepts

D. a perspective of acceptance

5. Which of the following words does the word **“incarnation”** in paragraph 4 have closest meaning to?

A. life

B. appearance

C. symbol

D. structure

6. What can be inferred from paragraph 5 about Lao people?

A. They often have indifferent attitudes toward life

B. They often have optimistic attitudes toward life

C. They always care too much about patience

D. They always wait for the next incarnation which is better than this.

7. In paragraph 6, what best paraphrases the highlighted sentence?

A. Common expressions often possess a wide range of meanings which are distinctive in different contexts.

B. Different contexts often possess a wide range of meanings which are distinctive in common expressions.

C. A wide range of meanings often possess different contexts which are distinctive in common expressions.

D. Common expressions often possess different contexts which are distinctive in a wide range of meanings.

8. In which paragraph does the writer mention one conflict in worldview between Western and Lao people?

A. 4

B. 5

C. 6

D. 7

9. What is implied about a Westerner if he loses his job?

A. He may argue with the manager about this to defend his right.

B. He may do nothing to get the job back.

C. He may accept the situation of unemployment.

D. He may have an extremely pessimistic attitude toward his career.

10. What is the writer's purpose?

A. to claim that Lao culture is better than Western culture

B. to support Lao people's worldview

C. to raise awareness of Lao's cultural features

D. to guide people of Westerners how to cope with culture shock when coming to Lao PDR