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The Grammar and Function of Colophons in Lao Manuscripts: The Case of the Vat Maha That Collection, Luang Prabang

Abstract: This article discusses the structure, grammar, and function of colophons in Lao palm-leaf manuscripts containing Buddhist texts. The manuscripts which form the corpus of this study have been selected from the monastic repository of Vat Maha That, one of the largest monasteries in the old royal capital of Luang Prabang. The colophons are almost exclusively written in the Lao vernacular with rather short, standardized Pali phrases at the end. The main emphasis is on the role of scribes and of sponsors in the making of manuscripts. The vast majority of Lao manuscripts are elaborately dated according to the Lao lunar calendar. In the case of manuscripts from Luang Prabang the relatively high number of female sponsors and the presence of royalty among principal lay initiators is a most striking feature.

1 Introduction

Luang Prabang has maintained its fame and status as a centre of Lao Buddhism to the present day. The ancient and quite exceptional manuscript culture of Laos has survived colonial rule, war, and modernization in a globalized world. Unlike many parts of the world, manuscript production did not cease during the twentieth century in Laos, where traditional methods of writing have been preserved by monks and lay scribes up to the present. The first documentary evidence of the Dhamma (*Tham*) script in the Lao Kingdom of Lan Sang is a monolingual Pali palm-leaf manuscript, dated 1520/1521, kept at the Provincial Museum in Luang Prabang (formerly the Royal Palace). This sacred script is an extraordinary example of Lao written culture. Originating in the late fourteenth century, in the neighbouring northern Thai kingdom of Lan Na – probably as a derivative of the ancient Mon alphabet of Hariphunchai – it made its way south through the Mekong River basin. As the name indicates, the script was used for the writing of the Buddhist scriptures and other religious texts.

Vat Maha That Rasabòvòravihan or Vat Maha That, the ‘Monastery of the Great Stupa’ is well known for its ‘Great Stupa’ or ‘Pha Maha That’, i.e. the Great Stupa built at the same time as the temple hall (*sim*) in 1548. However, many

locals call the monastery simply Vat That ('Monastery of the Stupa') or, even more notably, Vat That Nòi ('Monastery of the Small Stupa'), as later on larger stupas were erected at other monasteries in Luang Prabang, e.g. Vat Siang Thòng. Vat Maha That is located on a lower slope on Fa Ngum Road in the centre of the former royal capital and the centre of Lao Buddhism. The district of the town attached to the monastery is known as Ban Vat That. In the past, Vat Maha That was the main monastery of a group of monasteries situated in the lower (southern) part of Luang Prabang, the so-called *khana tai* ('southern group'). Its location is also called *than müang* (the base of the city). In 2017, when research was first carried out, the monastery of Vat Maha That counted a total of three monks and twelve novices under the supervision of the abbot, Venerable Pha Vandi Vannatharo. The monastery is the focal point of the most important and impressive Lao New Year festival, which is held every year in mid-April.¹

The monastery was founded by King Say Setthathirat in 1548 and has been renovated and restored many times since then. During the twentieth century, Vat Maha That was regarded as the temple of the viceroy, the lord of the front palace (*Vang Na*), and his family. Thus, it was a monastery under royal patronage. At present, many buildings in this monastery have been registered by UNESCO as part of the architectural heritage of Luang Prabang. Such constructions include, aside from the great stupa itself, the temple hall (*sim*) and the three monks' abodes (*kuti*) in the lower part of the temple compound. As a result, the structures and building materials have been well preserved. As with every monastery in Buddhist Luang Prabang, Vat Maha That is an important intersection between the monastic community of monks and novices (the Sangha) and the community of lay people in the surrounding town who support the Sangha with the necessities of life. The monastery is the centre of numerous community activities, such as religious rituals and festivals, social events, and lessons.

In early 2018, the Buddhist Archives² requested permission from the monastery to bring the whole corpus of manuscripts to our Buddhist Archives at Sala

¹ For more information on the Lao New Year festival, see Nginn 1959; Berger 2000 (no page number); and Kislenko 2009, 147–150.

² The Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang was formed in 2015 out of the Buddhist Archives of Photography. See <<https://www.wmf.org/project/buddhist-archive-photography>>. The core of the Buddhist Archives is a collection of more than 35,000 historical photographs (prints and negatives), which have been discovered in Luang Prabang monasteries, dating from c. 1880 up to our own days. Coming from nineteen distinct monastery collections (with Pha Khamchan's collection comprising half of the whole corpus) this unique photographic 'view from inside' documents various aspects of monastic life, pilgrimage, rituals, and social life in Luang Prabang

Thammavihan in Vat Suvannakhili, where with modest financial support from the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC), University of Hamburg, the preservation and digitisation of the manuscripts was begun, continuing till the end of August 2018. The constraints of time resulted in concluding the inventory and digitisation of just one-third of the whole corpus by 31 August 2018. The preservation and digitisation project was continued with financial support from the Digital Repository of the Endangered and Affected Manuscripts in Southeast Asia (DREAMSEA) from September 2018 to June 2019. During the entire duration of the project, a total of 3,467 documents either written by hand or typed in various scripts were registered, mainly in Tham Lao, Old Lao, modern Lao, and Thai. The 1,541 manuscripts written in Tham Lao and Old Lao scripts were selected for digitisation. At present, all original manuscripts are kept at the monastic library in Vat Maha That, whereas the digital images of the digitised manuscripts are present in different institutes and displayed on the DREAMSEA website.³

2 The manuscript collection of Vat Maha That

Lao village communities as well as town districts usually have a *vat* (ວັດ) as its cultural and spiritual centre. The *vat* is a Buddhist temple-monastery which is not only where the Sangha (the community of monks and novices) live and meditate, but is also a place for laypeople to come together for festival celebrations, take part in religious rituals, seek spiritual experiences and the advice of highly respected monks in more worldly matters. The *vat* is a place where the Sangha and the laity come together to participate in mutually rewarding and meritorious activities. Aside from that, the *vat* is an educational centre, offering the teaching of the Dhamma, fundamental truths revealed by the Buddha, as well as secular sciences.⁴ In other words, it is a repository of traditional knowledge. It is at the very core of every Lao village community. While a *vat* determines the identity of a community, the members of that community have the obligation to maintain the *vat*.

and beyond. An overview of the photographs and their listing is available at <<https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP326/search>>. All websites mentioned in this article were accessed on 2 May 2022.

3 <<https://www.hmmcloud.org/dreamsea/manuscripts.php?country=&tags=&city=&author=&library=&language=&projnum=0011&writingSupport=&title=&script=&searchType=1>>. For a list of the archival material used in this article see the Appendix below.

4 The Lao temple-monastery (*vat*) as a social space and the interaction between Sangha and laity in the Lao context are discussed in Hayashi 2003, 101–111. See also Holt 2009 and Bounleuth 2016.

The idea of a *vat* is still present in the mindset of the lay community, even when a village has no *vat*. This is evident from the requirement of the monks' presence in the performance of ritual ceremonies. In this case, it is necessary to invite monks from the *vat* of a neighbouring village. A religious ritual without the presence of monks and novices is barely imaginable. The mere presence of the Sangha members adds a sacred meaning to non-religious ceremonies, such as a housewarming party, the inauguration of a hospital, or a wedding.⁵

Lao manuscripts were mostly inscribed with a stylus on cut and cured, rectangular palm-leaf sheets of varying length. Each sheet had two holes; a cotton string strung through the left hole, enabling the binding together of several palm-leaf sheets as one fascicle (*phuk*). Recent research estimates that more than ninety percent of Lao manuscripts are 'palm-leaf books' (*nangsü bai lan*). According to traditional Buddhist beliefs manuscripts were never to be treated disrespectfully, or kept in a demeaning place, whether written carefully or not. The manuscripts' texts, especially ritual texts, were not to have any insertions or other writing added to them. Any person breaking this rule would lose the respect of devout Buddhists.

The length of the text determined the number of leaves in a given palm-leaf fascicle. However, a literary text can also occupy several fascicles, which are then fastened together. Such a bundle is called a *sum* (ຊຸມ). A quite widespread method for protecting manuscript fascicles bound together by cord was the insertion of at least one, at times two or three, blank folios at the beginning and the end. Sometimes one of these blank folios, usually the front cover folio, bore the text title and the fascicle's number (when texts ran over more than one fascicle). Two wooden boards were often added to the bundle for protection. The bundle would then usually be wrapped in a piece of cloth and bound with cotton string. A wrapped bundle of manuscripts is called a *mat* (ມັດ). A *mat* consisted of either a single bundle comprising a single text or multiple bundles featuring several fascicles and texts.

2.1 Variety of genres and themes

The manuscripts discovered and documented at the monastery of Vat Maha That are all written on palm-leaf, with the exception of less than a dozen paper manu-

⁵ This 'Buddhization' of formerly non-Buddhist rites and rituals is best reflected in *Anisong* texts. For a detailed analysis of *Anisong* manuscripts in a Lao cultural environment, based on the Pha Khamchan Virachitto's personal collection, see Bounleuth 2015a.

scripts. The vast majority of these palm-leaf manuscripts contain one single text running over one palm-leaf fascicle, although others contain more than one, and some even up to ten fascicles. However, many of the multi-fascicle manuscripts are not complete, with one or more missing fascicles. Several manuscripts comprising a single fascicle may have originally been part of a larger multi-fascicle manuscript, the other fascicles being lost. Some manuscripts are complete and in good physical condition while others are lightly or severely damaged with parts of the text missing.

In the 1990s, the Preservation of Lao Manuscripts Programme (PLMP) divided 86,000 texts written on 368,000 fascicles – approximately 12,337 texts are currently available for online research – into twenty categories.⁶ The last two categories ('miscellaneous' *lai muat* and 'undetermined' *bò dai cat muat*) are noteworthy as they illustrate a feature peculiar to Lao (and other Southeast Asian) manuscript cultures, i.e. some manuscripts, palm-leaf and paper manuscripts, contain various texts. Whereas Pha Khamchan Virachitto's personal collection of manuscripts kept in his living quarters contained a high percentage of such multiple-text manuscripts, among the mulberry paper folding books, they are rare in the Vat Xiang Thông collection. Several secular or non-religious texts do not appear in any of the manuscripts from this collection, e.g. customary law texts, philological and astrological treatises, and the wide field of secular literature, aside from a few folk tales (*nithan* นิทาน นิทาน). Texts related to white magic (*sainyasat* ไสยสะสาต ไสยศาสตร์) and rites and rituals (*phithikam* พิธีกรรม พิธีกรรม) are as rare as medical treatises (*tamla ya* ตำลายา ตำรายา). The collection contains several dozen chronicles; almost all of which can be classified as 'Buddhist chronicles' (*tamnan phutthasatsana* ตำนานพุทธศาสนา ตำนานพุทธศาสนา).

A significant number of manuscript-fascicles (414) contain texts from the Pali canon and may be classified as categories of Vinaya, Suttanta or Abhidhamma. Of almost equal importance are the popular Jātaka stories, dealing with Buddha's previous lives, comprising one-fourth of the Vat Maha That corpus' manuscripts. Aside from the Jātaka tales (398 manuscript-fascicles), *Anisong* (Pali: *ānisaṃsa*) texts (300 manuscript-fascicles) are featured most prominently in the Vat Siang Thông collection of manuscripts.⁷ *Anisong* texts are generally known under the

⁶ See <<http://www.laomanuscripts.net>>.

⁷ As Arthid Sheravanichkul (2009 and 2010) has shown in his seminal study of gift-giving in the Thai and Lao world, the kind of gifts recommended in *Anisong* texts pertain to (a) giving alms to the Sangha (food and medicine, robes and cloth, ritual offerings such as flowers and lamps, sponsoring the construction of temple buildings, copying of religious texts); (b) producing objects of worship (images, stupas); (c) constructing public works (bridges, roads, hospitals, schools) and (d) giving gifts in ceremonies or festivals (celebrating a new house, funerals, the

terms *Salòng* or *Sòng* in Lao. These popular texts, inscribed on palm-leaf, mulberry paper and other kinds of paper, are used for performing sermons or preaching. These short homiletic texts, which rarely contain more than twenty folios, concern the rewards of merit or literally the ‘advantage’ which a believer may expect to receive from performing a particular religious deed.

Table 1: Distribution of texts of the Vat Maha That collection according to genres

Genre	ພວດ	หมวด	No. of fasc.	% of total
General Buddhism	ທຳມະຫິວໄປ	ธรรมะทั่วไป	---	---
Vinaya rules	ພະວິໄນ	พระวินัย	97	6.3
Suttanta doctrine	ພະສູດ	พระสูตร	289	18.8
Abhidhamma doctrine	ພະອະພິທຳ	พระอภิธรรม	28	1.8
Buddhist tales	ນິຍາຍທຳມະ	นิยายธรรมะ	52	3.4
Jātaka tales	ຊາດົກ	ชาดก	398	25.8
Prayers	ປິດສູດມົນ	บทสวดมนต์	80	5.2
Anisong (blessings)	ອານິສົງ	อาณิสงส์	300	19.5
Rites and rituals	ພິທີກຳ	พิธีกรรม	3	0.2
Monolingual Pali	ຄຳພິບາລີ	คัมภีร์บาลี	47	3.0
Buddhist chronicles	ຕຳນານພຸດທະສາສະໜາ	ตำนานพุทธศาสนา	99	6.4
Secular chronicles	ຕຳນານເມືອງ	ตำนานเมือง	25	1.6
Customary law	ກົດໝາຍ	กฎหมาย	---	---
Didactics	ຄຳສອນ	คำสอน	61	4.0
Medical treatises	ຕຳລາຢາ	ตำรายา	3	0.2
White Magic	ໄສຍະສາດ	ไสยศาสตร์	7	0.5
Folktales	ນິທານ	นิทาน	---	---
(Secular) Literature	ວັນນະຄະດີ	วรรณคดี	43	2.8
Proverbs	ຄຳສູ່ພາສິດ	คำสุภาษิต	1	0.1
Astrology	ໃຫ້ລາສາດ	โหราศาสตร์	5	0.3
Miscellaneous	ຫຼາຍພວດ	หลายหมวด	---	---
Unclassified	ບໍ່ຈັດພວດໃຫ້	ไม่จัดหมวดให้	---	---
Total	ລວມທັງໝົດ	รวมทั้งหมด	1541	100

Buddhist New Year, etc.). The manuscripts of Pha Khamchan Virachitto’s collections containing *Anisong* are analysed in Bounleuth 2015b and Bounleuth 2016, 130–136.

An unsurprisingly large number of Jātaka texts are written on palm-leaf manuscripts. This suggests that the Jātaka stories, on Buddha's previous lives, are not only well known to the Lao people of Luang Prabang, but are also very popular. Among the many Jātaka stories, the Vessantara Jātaka is the most popular. It tells the story of one of Buddha's lives immediately before he was born as Siddhattha Gotama. The story is about the compassionate Prince Vessantara, who gives away everything he owns, including his children, thereby displaying the virtue of perfect generosity or *dāna*. It is also known as the *Thet Mahasat* (Great Birth Sermon), familiar to Lao Buddhists by the name *Phavet* or *Phavetsandòn*. *Phavet* is also the name of a traditional festival, Bun Phavet, which is held sometime around the fourth lunar month of every year. The festival lasts two or three days, with the story of Prince Vessantara recited all day on the final day of the festivities. The story, composed in verse form and comprising thirteen chapters or *kan* (*kaṇḍa*), is chanted aloud by monks and novices with years of experience preaching all the chapters. The text combines Pali words and phrases with the respective Lao translation.⁸ According to tradition, three of them – Himmaphan, Thanakhan, Kumman – are usually divided into two volumes. Due to this sub-division, the story of Prince Vessantara is composed and written on sixteen fascicles of palm leaves. However, many of the Jātaka manuscripts from the Vat Si Bun Hüang collection comprise only one of the thirteen *kan* and not the complete text.

2.2 The colophons

Colophons reveal extremely interesting information on the background of the manuscripts, its production, purpose, and usage. Colophons usually appear at the end of the manuscript, either directly following the main text from which it is separated by a blank line or by smaller-sized letters (as in the last example), or appearing on the recto side of an additional folio. In some cases, notably in more recent manuscripts, a colophon can also appear on a title folio, and its appearance within a fascicle (for example in multiple-text manuscripts) is not totally unusual. Hundius (1990) indicates in his definition, that the Tai-Lao manuscript tradition lacks a clear distinction between the writer or author of a manuscript and its copyist. Lao manuscripts usually use the terms *phu taem*, *phu khian*, or *phu litchana*⁹ for denoting the scribe who would call himself *kha* ('servant [of the Buddha]'). Aside from which, a number of colophons also mention a *phu sang*,

⁸ See Bounleuth 2016, 110.

⁹ From Pali: *racanā*, 'composition, arrangement' (verb root *rac*, 'to arrange, prepare, compose').

literally the ‘maker’ of a manuscript. This term refers to the person who sponsors the making of the manuscript by employing a scribe before the manuscript is donated (*thawai* or *than*) to a monastery or to monks.

Some colophons of the corpus here are scribal colophons (119 manuscripts). The vast majority of manuscripts with colophons (815), however, express the wishes of their sponsors and donors; 555 manuscripts or 45 percent of the total, do not have colophons at all and are almost all undated. While rather few manuscripts have colophons that are exclusively scribal, many more record the names of both the scribe and the persons who sponsored the making of the manuscript and donated it to the Sangha. In general, the intentions for making the donation and the wishes expressed in the colophons pertain to the principal monastic or lay supporters and the religious faithful (*mūlasaddhā*)¹⁰ who took the initiative in enabling the manuscript’s production.¹¹

The three wishes that seem evenly distributed over all periods are that the writing of the manuscript will eventually lead to *nibbāna* – ‘the splendid city, the peak of *nibbāna*’ (*wiang kaeo an nying nilaphan*) – that it will lead to obtaining merit (*puñña*) or rewards of merit (*phala-ānisaṃsa*) either for the writer, the sponsor and donor, his family or other people, and that the copying of the manuscript and/or its sponsoring and donation to the Sangha will support (Lao: *kham**su*) the Teachings of Buddha (*sāsana*) to last for 5,000 years, counted from Buddha’s entering of the *parinibbāna*.¹² This basic purpose is grounded in the widespread belief among the Tai and Lao that the complete degeneration of the Buddha’s Teachings will be reached at the latest after 5,000 years. Whereas the intention of the sponsor and donor to extend the lifespan of Buddhism is expressed as a standard phrase in almost all the longer colophons, and even in most of the rather short ones, the wish to be reborn in the age of Buddha Metteyya (Ariya Metteyya) is reflected in a rather large number of colophons (altogether 17). This wish is expressed in different phrases. They are mostly written in the Lao vernacular (13 colophons), while four are in Pali. Some colophons just express the donor’s wish to be reborn in the age of Buddha Metteyya and to meet him in person and be ordained as a monk to become his disciple, as expressed in the following example:

¹⁰ In Lao and Thai the term *mūlasaddhā* can indeed designate both the faith a person has in the Teaching of the Buddha, and the faithful believer as well. The meaning depends on the context in which *mūlasaddhā* is used.

¹¹ Cf. von Hinüber 2013, XLVI–XLVIII.

¹² See Veidlinger 2006, 164–165.

May I reach the crystal city which is Nibbāna and may I be ordained at the residence (*samnak*) of Pha Ariya Metteyya (Maitreya), who will emerge in the world in the future. May this not be ignored.

ขอให้ผู้เข้าได้ถึงเวียงแก้วนิรพาน และได้บวชในสำนักพระแก้วองค์ชื่อว่าอริยมตไต๋ อันจักมาพายหน้า ยา (อย่า) คลาด ยา (อย่า) คลา.¹³

Others add the wish that the donor will also get the chance to enter the path (*magga*) towards enlightenment as an *arahant* through the teachings of Buddha Metteyya. For instance:

May the power of this merit support the sponsor of this manuscript to meet Pha Metteyya (Maitreya) who will emerge in the world in the future. May the power of this merit destine me to attain enlightenment in the institution of Pha Ariya Metteyya. After having finished reading, may I, the sponsor, attain Nibbāna definitely.

ขออำนาจกุศลสรวงนี้จงนำเอาตัวผู้สร้างธำสรนี้ ให้ได้พบพระเมตเตย(ย)องค์จักลงมาอุบัติในโลกพายหน้า ขอเดชะกุศลจงดลบันดาลให้ผู้เข้าได้บรรลุ (บรรลุ) อมตธำ (ธรรม) ในสำนักพระสีอาน [อริยมตไตรย] แล้ว.¹⁴

Ariya metteyya santike anāgate arahanta magga. Nibbānapaccayo hotu me niccam dhuvaṃ

[May I be] in the presence of Ariya Metteyya and achieve Arahantship in the future. May this be a condition for me to reach Nibbāna constantly and forever.

อริยมตเตยยสนฺติเก อนาคเต อรหตุตมคฺคญฺญา นิพฺพาน ปจฺจโย โหตุ เม นิจฺจํ ฐวฺ.¹⁵

Anāgate metteyyo santike bhava pabbājetu daramānopi sattayo desetum anukampāya

In the future (let me) exist in the presence of Metteyya who [comes] out of compassion to teach the suffering beings to ordain.

อนาคเต เมตเตยฺโย สนฺติเก ภเว ปพฺพาเซตฺ ทรมาโนปิ สตุตโย เทเสตฺถ อนุกมฺปาย.¹⁶

Iminā kussala sadānena yatha yatha bhava jāto tikkhapañño visārado mādarido surūpo pāda saniyaṃ madhuseroyakiyalo kuttasabbasaṃpattinaṃ arahantā arahanti maggañāṇaṃ ariyameṭṭiya santike anāggate kāle niccam dhuvaṃ.

13 BAD-22-1-0578, fol. 7^r, a *kot set* year but no year of an era given. The original text here and passim written in Tham Lao (i.e. the Lao variant of the Dhamma script) has been transcribed into modern Thai script by largely preserving the orthography of the original. Thus readers familiar with modern Thai might better comprehend the English translations. This approach, though not without shortcomings, is considered more appropriate than transcribing the text into modern Lao (due to the script's limited number of consonant letters) or using a Tham Lao font.

14 BAD-23-1-0629, fol. 11^v, dated 23 April 1963.

15 BAD-22-1-1154, dated 29 March 1826.

16 BAD-22-1-0282, dated 16 July 1766.

By means of this gift of merit, in whatever world I was born, [may I] possess sharp intelligence, be confident, not be poor, be beautiful, be lovely, possess a sweet voice, be an arahant, that is one who is worthy of possessing all mundane and supramundane attainments [and achieve] the knowledge of the paths [of liberation] in the presence of Ariya Metteyya [Buddha] in the future. [May my aspirations be realized] constantly and certainly.

อิมีนา กุสุสล สทาเนน ยถ ยถ ภเว ชาโต ติกุขปญโญ วิสาร์โท มาทริโท สรุโปปาทสนีย มธุเส
โรยิกยโลกุตต สัพพสมุปตฺติโน อรหันตา อรหันติ มคฺคญาณโน อริยมเตถยุย สนฺติเก อนาคฺคเต
กาลเณ นิจฺจ จฺว.¹⁷

As mentioned above, colophons generally appear at the end of the main text, following either directly or separated by a blank line. In many cases, colophons, especially the lengthier ones, are written on a separate folio, sometimes in smaller letters, covering only the central parts of a folio. Colophons in manuscripts of religious content commissioned by sponsors to be donated to a monastery are highly formulaic as they follow a similar pattern characteristic of Buddhist colophons from Laos and other areas of the Dhamma script cultural domain, including Northern Thailand (Lan Na), the Tai Khün area of Chiang Tung and the Tai Lü speaking regions in southern Yunnan. Colophons usually provide information on the date when the manuscript was finished, the date when the scribe started writing, however, is rarely recorded. Thereafter, the scribe's name might follow, especially when the scribe is also the sponsor of the manuscript. However, in general the names of the leading monastic or lay supporters (*mūlasaddhā*) feature prominently in the second section of the colophon, sometimes mentioning the copied text. Thereafter the *mūlasaddhā*, often a lay couple representing their extended family, express the main objective of the manuscript donation, i.e., to ensure the Teachings of the Buddha (*phuttha-satsana*) last till the end of 5,000 years. In some instances, this objective is connected with the expectation that the manuscript's writing support, i.e. the palm leaves, might endure for that period too.¹⁸

Other colophons are relatively long and may even span more than one side of a palm leaf. Apart from the dating, the recording of the names of the scribe and principal sponsor, the mention of the motives and intentions for making the manuscript, the aspirations a scribe or sponsor/donor had for the good results of

¹⁷ BAD-22-1-1082, dated 26 November 1838.

¹⁸ See, for example, the colophon of manuscript BAD-22-1-0465 stating: 'Hua Lung Na Nüa and his wife together with all children had the most ardent religious faith to sponsor the making [of this manuscript entitled] *Nithan Chanthaphanit* to support the Teachings of Gotama Buddha to last until the end of 5000 years and the end of these palm leaves.' (หัวlungนาเหนือ ผัวเมียลูกเต้า ชูคน ได้มีใจใส่สัทธิฐานงานนันทะพานิดผูกนี้ ไว้กับสาธุสนาพระโคตมะเจ้า ตาบต่อเท่า ๕ พัน วสุสา หมดเช่น(สิ้น)ใบลาน).

the acquired merit, some of the longer colophons also contain some personal expression, including biographical details. The concluding Pali phrase is optional and, in most cases, rather short. The structure of such colophons is analysed in the following chart, discussing two examples which are from different periods and whose sponsors/donors came from different social backgrounds.

Table 2: Contents and structure of colophons

	BAD-22-1-0616	BAD-22-1-0839
Era	2491 BE	1220 CE
Lunar calendar		
Year	<i>poek chai</i> (Year of the Rat)	<i>poek sanga</i> (Year of the Horse)
Month	first lunar month	first lunar month
Fortnight	eighth waning day	fourth waning day
Day of the week	sixth day of the week (Friday)	sixth day of the week (Friday)
Zodiac day	<i>poek si</i>	<i>huang mao</i>
Corresponding to	Friday 24 December 1948 CE	Friday 24 December 1858 CE
Time	<i>nyam kham</i> (time of the late afternoon, 4.30–6.00 p.m.)	<i>nyam kông doek</i> (time of the late evening drum, 7.30–9.00 p.m.)
Initiator		
Scribe	Saen Kumphon (at Ban Phon Sai)	---
Sponsor/donor	Saen Kumphon (at Ban Phon Sai)	Thit (ex-monk) Kaeo Sao (i.e. Ms) Sopha I (i.e. Ms) Pheng and all their male and female servants had the religious faith to sponsor the making of this manuscript
Title	<i>Thamma Rattana Sut</i> (Sutta text)	<i>Lam Sut</i> (Sutta text)
Objective	May the merit derived from the making of the manuscript support my father, Chan Suk, my mother, Sao Nyathi, my sister, Sao Vandi, my uncles, Thit Thum, Chan Phio, Thit Cha, Sao Nyôt and all my relatives and friends. May all of them acknowledge this merit.	to support the Teachings of the Buddha to last until the end of 5000 years.

Table 2 (continued)

	BAD-22-1-0616	BAD-22-1-0839
Wish	As for myself, may I attain enlightenment and become one of the teachers of the world (i.e., the Buddha) in the future. Before attaining enlightenment and still moving in the saṃsāra (cycle of birth), for any of my rebirths, may I be purified physically, mentally and with regard to my speaking more than other human being. May I be saved from all kinds of diseases and dangers until I will have attained enlightenment as an omniscient person in the future.	May all of us reach the three states of happiness with Nibbāna as the ultimate goal. May our wishes not be ignored. May all our wishes come true.
Concluding phrase (in Pali)	---	<i>Nibbāna paccayo hotu no niccam dhuvam dhuvam</i> (May this be a condition for us to reach Nibbāna, constantly and certainly).

If a manuscript is dated, the place where the date shows up would almost always be the very beginning of the colophon. In general, the year when the scribe finished the inscribing of the text on palm-leaf would be the so-called ‘little era’ (*cunlasakkalat*, *chunlasakkarat* or *cuḷasakarāja*), first introduced in March 638 CE originating in Burma. In addition, dates in Tai-Lao historical records were also given with reference to the corresponding year of a sixty-year cycle. This sexagesimal cycle is known by almost all Tai speaking groups¹⁹ and is composed of two repeating series of terms. The first series consists of ten names referring to the year numbers of the decade; the second series is composed of the twelve names of the animal cycle. The series of ten is repeated six times and the series of twelve five times. Thus, sixty different combinations are generated before the sexagesimal cycle restarts. The first year of the cycle, for example, is called *kat sai* by the Lao and can be rendered in English as ‘the year of the small snake, the first year of the decade.’ A crosschecking comparison of both dates – *cuḷasakarāja* year and the sexagesimal cycle year – allows us to disclose copyist and other errors in the historical records. Each lunar month comprises two fortnights. The first

19 See Terwiel 1980.

fortnight is called *düan khün*, literally meaning ‘the rising moon’ or ‘the waxing moon’. It comprises 15 days. The second fortnight, comprising 14 or 15 days, is named *düang haem*, which means ‘the waning moon’. Days of the week are numbered, beginning with the word *van* and followed by ordered cardinal numbers. The first day of the week is Sunday and the last and seventh day is Saturday. *Van sam* – literally, ‘day three’ – refers to the third day of the week corresponding to Tuesday. This way of reckoning days is usually called the ‘Mon reckoning’ of the weekday. In addition, there is also a ‘Tai reckoning’ which divides the days into cycles of 60 days, following the same sexagesimal pattern similar to the one used for the reckoning of years.

Aside from a dual dating of years and days, colophons of Lao manuscripts very often record the time of the day (*nyam* ຍາມ ຍາມ) when the scribe finished the writing of his manuscript. It is not surprising that a scribe noted the moment when his arduous and often painstaking work of copying a long, sacred text came to an end with pride. Preferred times of the day for marking the end of the writing process were ‘the time of the morning drum’ (*nyam kông ngai* = 7.30–9.00 a.m.), ‘the time of the forenoon horn’ (*nyam thae kai thiang* = 9.00–10.30 a.m.), and ‘the time of the sunset drum’ (*nyam kông laeng* = 1.30–3.00 p.m.).

One of the most interesting colophons concerning the wishes and aspirations of a sponsor/donor is recorded in the relatively long colophon of manuscript BAD-22-1-0375, titled *Paet Mün*.²⁰ The principal initiator and the main sponsor of this manuscript was Pha Phui Thirachitta Maha Thera, the abbot of Vat Maha That, who dedicated it to his deceased parents, siblings, teachers, and old friends who had already passed away. Thus, the benefits derived from the meritorious donation should affect an improvement of their actual state in the otherworld and pave their way to ‘the realm of heaven’ (*sawan*). At the same time, the fruits of the merit should also help the donor, a high-ranking abbot, to achieve his ultimate goal: the successful attainment of Nibbāna. The manuscript is dated both according to the traditional style (see chapter above) and according to the international calendar: 26 April 1983. The manuscript comprises three palm-leaf fascicles, each of which contains colophons with identical wording (fascicle 1, fol. 17^{r-v}; fascicle 2, fol. 16^{r-v}; fascicle 3, fol. 15^{r-v}). Its wording is quoted in full (Figs 1a and 1b).

²⁰ *Paet Mün* means literally ‘Eighty Thousand’ and is a short form of *Paet Mün Si Phan* (‘Eighty-four Thousand’) referring to the 84,000 Dhamma-Khanda (Dhamma Teachings), which is the traditional Theravāda description of the complete Tipitaka canon.

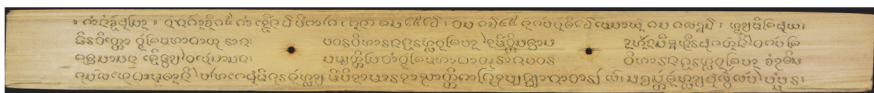


Fig. 1a: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0375, fascicle 1, fol. 17^r. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

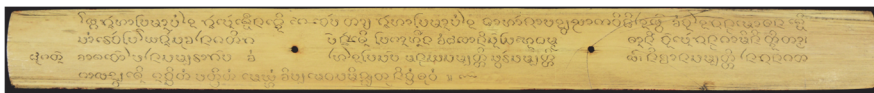


Fig. 1b: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0375, fascicle 1, fol. 17^v. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

คำนำของผู้สร้าง: วันอังคาร ขึ้น ๑๕ ค่ำ เดือน ๖ ปีกาไก่ (กุน) พ.ศ. ๒๕๒๖, จ.ศ. ๑๓๔๕ กองกับ วันที่ ๒๖ เมษายน ค.ศ. ๑๙๘๓ หมายถึงพระผุย ถิรจิตโต วัดพระมหาธาตุราชวรวิหาร นครหลวงพระบาง ได้มีจิตสทธาสร้างหนังสือ ๘ หนักร ผูกตั้นไว้กับพระพุทธรูป เพื่อถวายไว้เป็นศาสนสมมปัตติประจำวัดพระมหาธาตุราชวรวิหาร นครหลวงพระบาง ขออุทิศกุศลแห่งธมมทานนี้ไปให้แก่ผู้มีศรัทธาทั้งหลาย มีบิดามารดา ญาติบิดา ครูอุปัชฌา อาจารย์ และสัพพัตถ์ทั้งหลาย ผู้ล่วงลับไปสู่ปรโลกอันหาประมาณมิได้ อันเป็นเพิ่นเกิดแก่เจ็บตาย อันหาประมาณมิได้ ถ้าหากขาดด้วยญาณวิถิใดแล้ว ขอจงได้อนุโมทนา เพื่อสำเร็จประโยชน์สุขในคติภพนั้น เทอน ประการหนึ่ง ขอผลานิสงส์แห่งธมมทานนี้ จงเป็นอนุคามินิติตตามข้าพเจ้าไปสัสมปรายภพ ขอให้ได้ประสบมณุตสมปัตติ สวรรสมปัตติ และนิพพานสมปัตติ ในอนาคตกาลด้วย เทอญ อิจฺฉิตํ ปตฺติตํ เมยฺหิ ชีปเมว สมิชฺชตฺถ นิจฺฉํ สุว

On Tuesday, the fifteenth waxing day of the sixth lunar month, a *ka khai* (*kun*) year, 2526 BE, 1345 CS,²¹ corresponding to 26 April 1983 CE.²² Pha Phui Thirachitta Maha Thera, the abbot of Vat Pha Maha That Rasabòvòlavihan in Luang Prabang had the religious faith to sponsor the making of the manuscript entitled *8 Mūn*, fascicle 2 to support the Teachings of the Buddha, for the property of Vat Pha Maha That Rasabòvòravihan in Luang Prabang. May I dedicate the benefits of this merit to all benefactors, including my parents, siblings, teachers and all other living creatures that were friends in birth, age, illness and death and have already died and stayed in the other worlds. If they acknowledge my dedication, they may rejoice and achieve blissful benefits in their worlds. Moreover, may the benefit of this merit support me to enter the realm of heaven. May I achieve human prosperity, heavenly prosperity and the successful attainment of Nirvāna in the future. *Ichchitaṃ patthitaṃ mayhaṃ khīpameva samijjatu niccaṃ dhuvam*. (May whatever I wish quickly come to be, may all my aspirations be fulfilled, constantly and certainly).

²¹ As Eade points out according to conventions *cūlasakarāja* starts in March 639 CE. ‘That is the date of its year 1, from which it does not follow that it began then. Like all Southeast Asian eras, it had a year 0, unlike the Christian Era, which has no 0 CE’ (Eade 1995, 17). The Buddhist era (BE), starting with the year 544 BCE as year 1, has been used for the dating of texts in Laos more frequently only in the twentieth century.

²² The date of the Gregorian calendar matches with the traditional Lao date.

The relatively rigid structure of the Lao Buddhist colophon nevertheless leaves space for more personal expressions of the scribe who would add them either in a shorter colophon which is separated from the main (sponsors'/donors') colophon or as a final sentence being part of the main colophon. In the personal statements of scribes, we frequently find humble excuses for bad handwriting and misspellings, even by properly trained and experienced scribes. A striking example is the scribal colophon appearing at the end of the last of twenty fascicles of the manuscript entitled *Matthu Anulom* and dated 29 August 1923 (BAD-22-1-0012, fascicle 20, fol. 10^v). The scribe, ex-monk Man, begs for leniency as follows: 'I am Thit (ex-monk) Man, the scribe. If any mistakes have been made, such as the omission of letters, the illegibility of my handwriting, and misspellings, I apologize to all Bhikkhu (monks), the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.'²³ Occasionally the scribe would stress his lack of experience, being a novice both with regard to his monastic status and his being a beginner in the copying of texts.²⁴ Yet we even find the insufficient quality of the writing support, along with constraints of time as an excuse, such as in manuscript BAD-22-1-0647 (fol. 15^r): 'My handwriting is not beautiful because the palm-leaves are not good, and I had to hurry in my writing. There are some mistakes, please consider.'²⁵ Reflecting a special sense of humour with sexual allusions is the colophon of a monk-scribe complaining about his unfulfilled desire to touch a widowed laywoman whose physical attractiveness might have been on his mind while he was writing (Fig. 2).

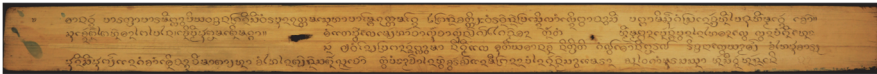


Fig. 2: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0887, fol. 13^r, lines 3–4. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

ริจนาแล้วยามเที่ยง ขอให้ผู้ข้า[มี]รูปผู้ดีผู้เพียงแต่ก็ข้าเห็น ขาดจิมายพายหน้า ขอให้ได้พบ
องสัพพัญญูเจ้า ตัวบงามอย่าได้หัวข้อยแต่ มือกระด้างไม่ได้คั่นนมสาวแม่มร้าง เขียนไว้คำ
มูรสาสุสนา หนังสือวัดหนองเนื้อ อ้ายจันทร์วัดหนอง เขียนเนื้อ จบเท่านั้นแล

The writing of this manuscript was finished at noon (between 10.30 a.m. and 12.00 p.m.).
May I be born as a good and intelligent person in my next lives. May I meet the Enlightened

²³ ข้าพเจ้าทิดมัน เป็นผู้ริจนา เขียนเนื้อ ตกก็ดี เหลือก็ดี บ่พอกก็ดี ตัว(หนังสือ)บ่ดีบงามก็ดี ใส่ตัวอักษรผิดก็ดี ข้าพเจ้าขออนุญาตนำพระภิกษุสงฆ์ ทั้งปวงกับพระพุทธเจ้า พระธรรมเจ้า พระสงฆ์เจ้า แด่ก็ข้าพเจ้า.

²⁴ See, for example, the colophons of manuscripts BAD-22-1-0176 and BAD-22-1-0596.

²⁵ เขียนบงามเนื้อ ลานบ่ดี เขียนฟ้าวเต็มที บ่อนตกก็มี บ่อนเหลือก็ดี ค่อยพิจารณาเอาท่อน.

One. My handwriting is not so beautiful, do not laugh at me. My hand is rough because it has never touched the breast of the widow girl. The making of this manuscript is to support the Teachings of the Buddha. The manuscript belongs to Vat Nồng. Ai Chan from Vat Nồng is the scribe.

2.3 Scribes, sponsors and donors

This section presents in brief the results of a quantitative analysis of the colophons of the manuscripts in the Vat Maha That collection with regards to the information they provide on the persons who contributed to their production. These are, on the one hand, the scribes who inscribed the texts on the palm leaves, and on the other, the sponsors and donors who paid the remuneration or provided the palm leaves and other writing material. A number of more interesting colophons have been selected to illustrate the social and ethnic background of scribes and donors. Special emphasis is given to the role of the religious and secular elites (Supreme Patriarch respectively members of the royal family) as commissioners. The collaboration of scribes and sponsors/donors to ensure the making of the manuscripts and their later circulation as reflected in ownership statements is also illustrated.

As mentioned above, one tenth (119) of the colophons in the 1,220 manuscripts of the Vat Maha That corpus record the names of scribes, while the vast majority only state the writing was accomplished at a certain date, directly followed by the names of the leading and initiating monastic or lay supporters (*mūla-saddhā*) and their intentions for sponsoring the making of the manuscript. With one exception (BAD-22-1-1082) all scribal colophons explicitly mention the scribe's name, and in many cases his affiliation to a certain monastery (51), village or town quarter (11) as well. Three-fifths of the known scribes were members of the Sangha, either abbots or other monks, and in some cases also novices. Two-fifths of the scribes were laymen of whom four are called *achan* ('learned man'), often also called by its short form *chan*, while most of the other lay scribes were former monks (*thit* or *khanan*) or novices (*Siang*).

Though most scribes were monks and novices, with former monks and novices making up the rest, the vast majority of sponsors/donors were laypeople. Analysis here of the names of monasteries and home villages of scribes and sponsors/donors reveals two-thirds (64 of 96) of the 'leading monastic supporters' (i.e., monks and novices) to be based at Vat Maha That itself (which was anticipated), while the remaining 32 principal monastic supporters were from 19 different monasteries. One third (33) of the 99 manuscripts recording the home villages, town quarters or places of residence of the 'leading lay supporters'

were sponsored by people living in the town quarter of Ban Vat That, in the immediate neighbourhood of Vat Maha That. The only other place from which a substantial number of sponsors originated were Ban Hua Siang (10) and, surprisingly, the Royal Palace (9) where the King of Luang Prabang resided and the Front Palace, the residence of the viceroy. The relatively large number of royal sponsors will be discussed in a section below. The most prominent principal monastic supporter was the Supreme Patriarch (Saṅgharājā) of Luang Prabang called *Phutthapanya* (Buddhapaññā) who sponsored the making of a palm-leaf manuscript consisting of twelve fascicles, which survived as a complete set. The manuscript, entitled *Visaiyabanha* (Pali: Vijayapañhā) is the story of King Sivirat and his minister Sonsai making military preparations to fight against King Sivijaya of Pharanasi (modern Benares). A young novice (*chua*) named Mi was hired as a scribe. The karmic benefits derived from the production of this manuscript were asked to be transferred to the Supreme Patriarch's late elder brother, as is stated in the colophon, which is written in far smaller writing than the main text in the central part of the leaf (Fig. 3).

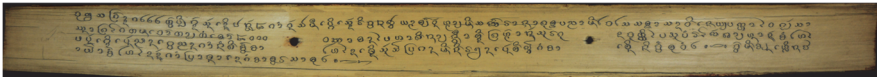


Fig. 3: Manuscript BAD-22-1-1160, fascicle 1, fol. 25^r. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

จุลศักราช ๑๒๒๒ ตัว ปกติเดือน เดือน ๖ ออก ๕ ค่ำ วัน ๓ มื้อเบิกเสียด ริจจนแล้วยามเที่ยงวัน
หมายมีสังฆราชาพุทธปณฺยา มิใจใส่สุทธสาสร้างวิเชยยบณฺหาไว้กับสาสนาพระโคตมเจ้า ตามต่อ
เท่า ๕๐๐๐ วสสา ทานไปหาพี่ชายชื่อว่าทิดพรหมา อันสุรคุด (สวรคุด) จุตติไปสู่ปรโลกพาย
หนานั้นขอให้ไปบังเกิดเป็นญาณแก้วญาณค่าน้ำพิของข้าให้ได้ถึงสุข ๓ ประการ มีนิรพาน
เป็นที่แล้วก็ข้าเทอญ นิจุจ ฐว ฐว จั้วมิเขียนเหลือผาหยา ขอให้ได้ตั้งคำมกค่าปรอลนาแดก
ข้าเทอน สาธุ สาธุ

In Culasakkarat (cs) 1222, a *kot san* year, on the fifth waxing day of the sixth [lunar] month, the third day of the week (Tuesday), a *poek set* day,²⁶ the writing of this manuscript was finished at noon (between 10.30 a.m. and 12.00 p.m.). Saṅgharājā Phutthapanya had the religious faith to sponsor the making of this manuscript entitled *Visaiyabanha* to support the Teachings of Gotama Buddha to last until the end of 5000 years and to dedicate the merit to my elder brother named Thit (ex-monk) Phomma who has already died and has gone to the other world. May the benefit of this merit be a crystal-golden vehicle to transfer my older brother to reach the three states of happiness with Nibbāna as the ultimate goal.

²⁶ 1222 Vaisakha 5 = Tuesday, 24 April 1860 which was indeed a *poek set* day. This and the following dates are calculated with the assistance of Lars Gislén's computer programme 'SEAsian Calendars' based on Eade's manuals (1989, 1995).

Niccaṃ dhuvaṃ dhuvaṃ (continuously and forever). [I.] Chua (Novice) Mi, am the scribe writing beyond [my] wisdom. May my wishes and desires come true. *Sādhū sādhū* (Well done! Well done!).

In some rare cases there is evidence of the ethnic or professional background of sponsors, such as the colophon of manuscript BAD-22-1-0545, mentioning a Mae Thao (grandmother) Khün (แม่เต้าซิ่น) from Ban Pa Phai village (บ้านป่าไฟ) who was most probably a Tai Khün immigrant from the Chiang Tung area in the eastern Shan State of Myanmar. Another manuscript (BAD-22-1-1020) was written by an unnamed Lao scribe at Vat Chòm Si in Luang Prabang in the Lao variant of the Dhamma script. The manuscript, comprising 57 folios, contains a bilingual text – *Sap Patimok* (Skt: Śābda/Pali: Sadda Pāṭimokkha, ‘Words of the Sangha Disciplinary Precepts’) – written in Pali and Lao in accordance with the Nissaya system in which a Pali word or phrases are directly followed by a translation into the vernacular. The contents start from the beginning of the Pāṭimokkha and run until the end of Pārājika, the Buddhist monastic code. In contrast to the general convention of the Lao manuscript culture of four lines written on each side of a palm leaf, this particular manuscript runs over six to eight lines. This is unusual even in Northern Thai and Tai Lü manuscript cultures (five lines per side is the norm). The colophon states (Fig. 4):

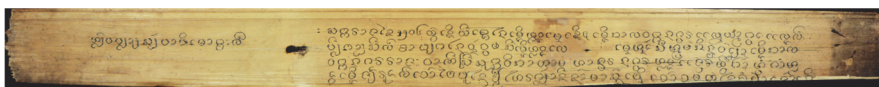


Fig. 4: Manuscript BAD-22-1-1020, fol. 57'. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

สักกราชได้ ๑๒๐๖ ตัว เติดยี่เพ็ง ในเมืองหลวง แม่นดิน ๔ เมืองอาลาวกนคอรแล้วยามกองแลง
แล ปลีกาบสีแล ข้าเฝือกในวัดจอมลีเมืองหลวงแล แม่นหนึ่งสี่หม่อมอินทวงสา เมืองอาลาวก
นคอรราชะธานี สรรสุกพาวีภาดา มหานครหลวงแสนทวีฟ้า หอคำหลวงมิ่งเชียงรุ่งแล เจ้าไท
ผู้ไดยิม ให้รักชาติ เอามาส่งเทอน เจ้าจอมตนใดขออย่า (ข้อมูลขาดหาย)

In Culasakkarat (CS) 1206, on the full moon day of the second [lunar] month (according to the Lao calendar), in the capital city, in the fourth lunar month [according to the] Müang [Lü calendar] in the city of Alavakkanakhòn, the writing of this manuscript was finished at the time of the sunset drum (between 1.30 p.m. and 3.00 p.m.), in a *kap si* year.²⁷ I copied (*phiak*) [this manuscript] at Vat Chòm Si, in the city of Luang [Prabang] from a manuscript belonging to Mò̃m (monk) Inthavongsa from the city of Alavakkanakhòn Lasathani Sisuk

27 1206 Pausha 15 = Wednesday, 22 January 1845. In fact, it should be the third lunar month of the Lao calendar leading to the following correction of the date: 1206 Magha 15 = Friday, 21 February 1845.

Phaviphata Maha Nakhòn, Luang Saenvifa Hò Kham Luang Müang Siang Hung (the full name of Siang Hung or Chiang Rung, the capital of Sipsòng Panna).²⁸ Those who borrow [this manuscript] shall take good care of it and send it back. Any monk may not fail... [missing text].

The Lao scribe claims that he obtained the master-copy used for producing his own manuscript from a monk called Mò Inthavongsa based at Chiang Rung, the capital of Sipsòng Panna, and most likely of Tai Lü ethnicity. It may be assumed the master-copy was almost certainly written in the Tai Lü variant of the Dhamma script, in Pali and the vernacular Tai Lü language. The date recorded in the colophon is clearly the date when the writing of the original Tai Lü manuscript was accomplished by Mò Inthavongsa and does not represent the date when the unknown Lao scribe made his own copy. It seems that the Lao scribe copied the first half of the colophon directly from the colophon of the master-copy but amended the lunar month from the ‘fourth’ (according to the calendar of Chiang Rung and Chiang Tung) to the ‘second’, according to the Lao tradition. Here he made a slight mistake, as the Tai Lü calendar is only one month ahead of the Lao calendar and not two like the Lan Na calendar of Chiang Mai. Therefore, the date in the colophon should represent the third lunar month of the Lao calendar with 21 February 1845 as the day when the writing of the master-copy was accomplished. It is unclear, however, how the Lao scribe obtained the master-copy. It is most likely that a visiting monk from Sipsòng Panna – perhaps even the scribe himself – brought it to Luang Prabang, where he made his own ‘Lao version’ at his home monastery Vat Chòm Si, which is located at the foot of the sacred hill, Phu Si, in the centre of the town of Luang Prabang.

Two manuscripts record the High Commissioner of the Siamese crown as the principal lay supporter, either together with his Lao wife (BAD-22-1-0482, dated 6 January 1871) or alone (BAD-22-1-1205, dated 17 September 1891). The second manuscript is highly interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it was produced less than two years before the Pak Nam incident of July 1893 CE, when French ‘gun-boat diplomacy’ enforced the Siamese cession of all territories situated on the left bank of the Mekong River to French Indochina. The kingdom of Luang Prabang ceased to be a Siamese vassal state under the supervision of a High Commissioner sent by the government in Bangkok and became a French protectorate. Secondly, the colophon reveals that the manuscript entitled *Sipsòng Tamnan* (‘Twelve Chronicles’) was copied from a printed book (*nangsü phim*) published by the Siamese king. Thus, the original text was translated from the Thai language and

²⁸ It appears the manuscript owner was a monk from Chiang Rung in Sipsòng Panna, most probably an ethnic Tai Lü.

script into Lao and written on palm-leaf in the Lao variant of the Dhamma script. Finally, the date when the writing of the manuscript was finished is given both in the traditional Lao style, based on the ‘Minor Era’ (*Chulasakkarat*) and the ‘Bangkok Era’ (*Rattanakosin Sakkarat*), which starts with the founding of Bangkok (1782) as Year 1. The colophon (on fol. 36^{r-v}) reads (Fig. 5):



Fig. 5: Manuscript BAD-22-1-1205, fol. 36^v. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

มหาจักรราช ๑๒๕๓ ตัวปรีรวงเหมา เติ่น ๑๐ ออกใหม่ ๙ คำ วัน ๖ ริงจนาแล้วยามเที่ยง วันที่ ๑๑ เติ่นก็ญายน รัตโกสินธลสะก ๑๑๐ หมายถึงพระราชนิพนธ์ ทานพระภัตตานุหลัก(รักษ) ข้าหลวงใหญ่ มีสัทธาธมมะ คำเลื่อมใสในวรพุทธศาสนาเป็นอันยิ่งจึงได้สั่งสิบสองตำนานไว้กับสาธุสนาพระโคตมเจ้า ตรีบดเท่า ๕๐๐๐ พระวสุสา นิพพาน ปจจโย โหตุ โน นิจจ ฐว ฐว ปรมิ สุข หนังสือข้าพเจ้าเพียะ สีสุดธมม(ศรีสุทธอิธรรม) ได้ชอบทานกับหนังสือพิมพ์ของพระบาทสมเด็จพระพุทธเจ้าอยู่หัว ได้ขงสั่งแต่กรุงเทพพระมหานครสร้างขึ้นมานั้นโดยแล้วพรสงองค์มีสัทธาจะสั่ง จะเขียน จะสุต ขอให้ริงจนาตามพระคณานี้เถิด

In Culasakkarat (CS) 1253, a *huang mao* year, on the ninth waxing day of the tenth [lunar] month, the sixth day of the week (Friday),²⁹ the writing of this manuscript was finished at noon time (between 10.30 a.m. and 12.00 p.m.), on 11 September in [year] 110 of the Rattanakosin Era (1892 CE). Pha Phatsadanulak, the [Siamese] High Commissioner, had the most ardent religious faith to sponsor the making of this manuscript entitled *Sipsòng Tamnan* to support the Teachings of Gotama Buddha to last until the end of 5000 years. *Nibbānapaccayo hotu no niccam dhuvaṃ dhuvaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ.* (May this be a condition for us to reach Nibbāna, which is the greatest bliss, constantly and forever). I am Chao Phia Sisutthamma, who reviewed this manuscript and compared it with the typed manuscript which was published by His Majesty the King in Bangkok. A monk who is devout and wants to sponsor, copy or chant, please make a copy of this manuscript.

The principal lay supporters sponsoring the making of manuscripts were mostly couples and the name of the husband is mentioned first, followed by the wife's name. The couple included their children (*luk* ลูก), grandchildren (*lan* หลาน), great-grandchildren (*len* เหลน), or simply the ‘whole family’ (*phanthuvongsa* พันธุ์วงศ์), as beneficiaries of the merit resulting from the donation. Many colophons (99 manuscripts in total) mention a woman as the principal lay-supporter, either alone or together with her husband, whose name would be listed in second

29 1253 Bhādrapada 9 = Saturday, 12 September 1891.

position. These women are recognizable by their titles *sao* or *nang* for younger or middle-aged women, *pa* ('aunt') for elderly women, or simply *mae-òk*, which means 'laywoman'. One is tempted to speculate that in cases where a woman was the only leading lay supporter, she was either an unmarried woman or a widow; regarding the latter, children and other family members would explicitly be mentioned as beneficiaries. The colophon of manuscript BAD-22-1-0573 (fol. 11^r) specifies the female donor's principal intention of merit transfer to her late husband as follows (Fig. 6):



Fig. 6: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0573, fol. 11^r. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

จุลลักราชาล่วงแล้วได้ ๒๔๘๒ พันสาปสิกัดหม้า เติ่น ๔ ออกใหม่ ๒ คำ วัน ๑ (วัน)ติดลิจนา
แล้วบายโมง ๑ หมายถึงเจ้ามุลลสัทธาสาวิที บ้านนอกวัดหัวเขียงมีใจใส่สัทธาพรหมกันกับทั้ง
บุตรบุตรดา ญาติวงษาพี่น้องได้สร้างยังขับ(ศัพท)ไชยน้อยผูกนี้ไว้กับสาธุสนาพรโคตมเจ้า
ตราบต่อเท่า ๕ พันพรวิสาณี้ แด็กข้าเทิน ขอให้สรวรบุรุษสรวรอนันไรรอดไปเถิงติดคร
ผู้เป็นสามที่จุดติดตายไปสู่ปรโลกภายหน้า คันตกที่ร้ายแล้ว ช้ให้ย้ายใส่ที่ดี คันเถิงที่ดีแล้ว ช้ให้
ดีกว่าเก่า ร้อยเท่าแลพันที คันนุรหากมีเมื่อพายลฺร ช้ให้เอาตนเข้า (สู่เวียง) แก้ว คือว่ากลาว
พ(ระ)อมุตตมทานิรพานันั้นแด็กข้าเทิน สุตฺธิณิ วตเมทานิ ปรม์ สุธ สาธุ อนุโมทามิ (...)

In 2482 BE, a *kat mao* year, on the second waxing day of the fourth [lunar] month, the first day of the week, Sunday. The writing of this manuscript had been finished in the afternoon at 1.00 p.m. Sao (i.e. Ms) Thi from Ban Hua Xiang together with her children and all relatives had the religious faith to sponsor the making of this manuscript entitled *Sap Sai Nòi* to support the Teachings of Gotama Buddha to last until the end of 5,000 years. May this merit support Thit Khun, her husband who has already died to the other world. If he has been stuck in a place of suffering, please have him moved to a good place. If he has already been born in a good place, please let him enjoy happiness numerous times greater than previously. If he still has merit, may he enter the crystal city that is Nibbāna, definitely. *Sudinnam vata me dānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ sādhu anumodāmi.* (This gift of mine has been properly offered. Nibbāna is the highest stage of happiness. Well done! We rejoice.)

Perhaps the most amazing discovery of the Vat Maha That collection is the relatively large number of royalty acting as sponsors and donors of manuscripts. A total of thirty-two manuscripts can securely identify the sponsors as members of the royal family. Three manuscripts alone have a 'royal mother' (*pha lasamada* or *pha lasasonani*) as the principal royal sponsor. The colophon of one of these manuscripts (BAD-22-1-0032, fol. 27^r) records Sathu Thongsī, the 'mother' of King Sisavang Vong, the King of Lan Sang Hòm Khao (Kingdom of the Million Elephants and the White Parasol) as the royal sponsor who dedicated the 'fruits of

merit' (*phala-puñña*) derived from the donation to her own parents (in October 1906 CE). At least three further manuscripts were sponsored by incumbent kings. King Sisavang Vong (r. 1904–1959 CE) sponsored two on the same day in the early period of his reign. The two single-fascicle manuscripts (BAD-22-1-0195 and BAD-22-1-0196) are put together in one manuscript-bundle (*mat*), protected by two not beautifully embellished wooden covers (*mai pakap*). Containing short texts entitled *Palami* (Pārami) and *Unhatsavisai* (Uṇhassa-vijaya) respectively, the two manuscripts have colophons with identical wording indicating that their writing was accomplished on the same day: Friday, 30 June 1911 CE (Fig. 7).

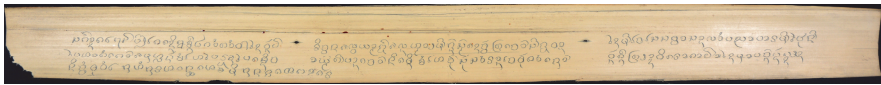


Fig. 7: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0196, fol. 26'. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

สักราต ๑๒๗๓ ปชี่(วาง)ไค้ เติ่น ๘ ขึ้น ๘ ค่ำ พาวว่าไต้หวัน ๖ ริงจนาแล้วยามกองแลง หมายมือง สมเด็จพระเจ้าสิสว่าง(วงศ์) ได้มีใจใส่สัทธาส้างสำปญาบารมีผูกนี้ ไปหาพ่เก่าแม่หลัง ขอใ้ไป รอดไปเถิงจำยมพิบานเจ้านิเ็น ขอใ้อยู่สุกสำรานใจทุกค่ำเช้าวันคิน พรยาตธิโรคาอย่า ได้มาพจนบังเบียด นิจุจ้ ฐว่ ๆ อห่ อรหนโต โหมิ อนาคตเกาะ (กาล)

In Culasakkarat 1273, a [*huang*] *khai* year, on the fourth waxing day of the eighth lunar month, the sixth day of the week (Friday),³⁰ the writing of this manuscript was finished at the time of the sunset drum (between 1.30 a.m. and 3.00 p.m.). His Majesty King Sisavang [Vong] had the religious faith to sponsor the making of this manuscript entitled *Panya Parami* to dedicate to *phò kao mae lang* (his previous parents). May this merit reach the guards of the hells. May I be happy in daytime and night-time. May I be prevented from all diseases constantly and certainly. *Niccaṃ dhuvam̐ dhuvam̐ aham̐ arahanto homi anāgata kāle*. (Constantly and forever, may I become an arahant in the future.)

The most prolific royal sponsor of manuscripts was not a king of Luang Prabang but a viceroy (*uparat*). Viceroy Un Kham (r. 1872–1889 CE) commissioned the making of three manuscripts in the early years of his reign and his son and successor Bunkhong (r. 1890–1921) is listed as the sponsor of at least nine manuscripts between 1895 and 1918 CE, with four manuscripts donated on one day in November 1895 CE alone. Only the colophon of manuscript BAD-22-1-380 mentions his name ‘Bunkhong’ explicitly, while the others call him either *Chao Maha Sivit Wang Na* (‘Lord of the Great Life, [Head of the] Front Palace’) or by even more elaborate titles. Perhaps the most impressive joint sponsorship of Viceroy Bunkhong as

³⁰ 1273 Ashadha 4 = Friday, 30 June 1911.

principal royal initiator and his closest relatives is recorded in the colophon of a manuscript entitled *Munlanipphan* (Mūlanibbāna), ‘Foundations of Nibbāna’ (Fig. 8) :

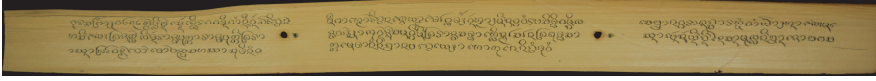


Fig. 8: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0778, fol. 34'. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

จรัสกราช ๑๒๗๒ ตัว ปัสกิดเส็ด เดือน ๑๑ ขึ้นค่ำ ๑ วัน ๓ ริจจนามือกำเหมา ริจจนาแล้วยาม
เตรไถ่เที่ยงวัน หมายมือคควรบทิทธิคมภิลเสฏฐานคคราอิงสารหอคำฝ่ายหน้า และมเหสี
และพระชวลลณี ทั้งราชบุตรดา ราชบุตรดี พระราชขวงสาณวง สมัคคีมีพระราชสัทธาเหลื่อมใส
ในพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นอันยิ่ง จึงได้สั่งมูลนิพพาน โขฏกศาสนาพระโคตมเจ้าเท่าปญ
จสหสสา สุติน วัตตเมทาน นิพพาน ปจจโย โหตุโน นิจจ ฐว

In Culasakkarat (CS) 1272, a *kot set* year, on the first waxing day of the eleventh [lunar] month, the third day of the week (Tuesday), a *ka mao* day,³¹ the writing of this manuscript was finished at the time of the forenoon horn (between 9.00 and 10.30 a.m.). Akkavòrapasitthikhamphila Setthanakkhara Itsara Hò Kham Fai Na (king), together with the queen and his mother, princes, princesses, and all royal family members, had the most ardent religious faith to sponsor the making of this manuscript entitled *Munlanipphan* (Mūlanibbāna) to support the Teachings of Gotama Buddha to last until the end of 5000 years. *Sudinaṃ vata me dānaṃ nibbānapaccayo hotu no niccaṃ dhuvaṃ.* (May this well donated gift be a condition for me to reach Nibbāna constantly and forever.)

Although manuscripts were usually commissioned by members of the same family, the Vat Maha That corpus also contains several cases of joint sponsorship by persons from different families. Manuscript BAD-22-1-0933, with the title *Lam Chüang* (a popular epic about a pre-historical Tai king in the Upper Mekong basin), comprises nine extant fascicles, each of which was commissioned by different main sponsors. Moreover, some colophons provide interesting insights into the shared responsibility of different sponsors. While several colophons stress the sponsor's efforts to procure the palm leaves for the scribe, one manuscript's (BAD-22-1-0904) colophon (fol. 66') stresses that the principal monastic initiators – two senior monks – gave money to the unnamed scribe while a former novice looked for the writing material (Fig. 9).

31 1272 Asvina 1 = Tuesday, 4 October 1910.

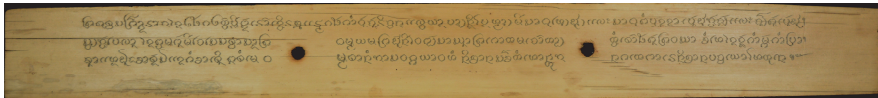


Fig. 9: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0904, fol. 66r. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

พระพุทธสักกราดได้ ๒๕๑๒ ตัว ปลีกัดเร้า เติ่น ๘ แรม ๑๕ ค่ำ วันจันทรจางแล้วยามบ่ายหนึ่งโมง
หมายมีสาธุใหญ่ผุย และสาธุพ่อบุตรดา เป็นผู้ออกขับ (ทรัพย์) และเขียนพันเป็นผู้ชอยออกไป
ลาน พ่อแม่กันมีใจใส่สัทธิสาส์นพระธัมมมก(ยามุก)ผู้กนี้ ไว้กับสาสนาพระโคตมเจ้า
ตราบต่อเท่า ๕ พันพระวัสสา ขอให้ได้ตั้งค้ำมก คำปรารภรณาแห่งฝูงข้าทั้ง ๓ แดกข้าเทิน
อิทธิเม ธมฺมทานิ อาสวคฺคยวาทิ นิพฺพาน สัชฌาตฺ โหนตุ อนาคเต กาเล นิพฺพาน ปจฺจุโย โหตุ โน

In the Buddhist Era (BE) 2512, a *kat hao* year, on the fifteenth waning day of the eighth [lunar] month, a Monday,³² the writing of this manuscript was finished in the afternoon at 1.00 p.m. Sathu Nyai (great monk) Phui and Sathu Phò (elderly monk) Butda were the sponsors who donated money, and Siang (ex-novice) Phan looked for the palm leaves. They had the religious faith to sponsor the making of this manuscript entitled *Nyamuk* to support the Teachings of Gotama to last until the end of 5000 years. May all the wishes and desires of the three of us come true. *Idaṃ me dhammādānaṃ āsavakkhayaṃ nibbāna saṅkhātāṃ hotu anāgate kāle nibbānapaccayo hontu no* (May my donation of the Dhamma bring about the destruction of the cankers (*āsavaka-kilesa*) known as Nibbāna. May it be a condition for me to reach Nibbāna in the future.)

Though manuscripts kept in a monastic repository belonged to that monastery, they were frequently borrowed for various purposes, either to be studied and copied by monks from a neighbouring monastery who lacked a specific text or to be used in Buddhist rituals and ceremonies outside the monastery's compound. This explains why the scribes admonished all borrowers of manuscripts to return them to their original place, as expressed in the following rather short colophons: 'Those who borrow it, please give it back to Vat Sikoet monastery' ([ไผ่]ยืมให้ส่งวัดสิเกตเนอ, BAD-22-1-0007, fol. 26^v) and 'This manuscript belongs to Vat Pha Maha That Rasabòvòravihan. Those who have borrowed it have to return it to its original place.' (หนังสือวัดพระมหาธาตุราชบวรวิหาร ถ้าบุคคลผู้ใดยืมไปแล้วต้องให้เอามาส่งที่เดิม, BAD-22-1-0216, fol. 15^v). An interesting case is manuscript BAD-22-1-0004, which contains two different texts sponsored by two couples. The two main sponsors' colophons (fols 51^r and 52^r) are preceded by a colophon of the manuscript's owner. One of the sponsors probably took it back later and kept it in his home (fol. 50^r), and his colophon is preceded by a brief scribal colophon directly following the end of the second text (fol. 50^r). These two colophons are quoted in full (Figs 10a and 10b).

³² 1331 Pratomashada 30 = Monday, 14 July 1969.



Fig. 10a: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0004, fol. 50^r. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

หมายมีธัมมปญาวัดธาตุ เป็นผู้ริจนา ขอส่วนบุญอานิสงผลบุญนำๆ หลายๆ แต่เห็น มุรเก่าลงหลาย ก่ายได้ห้าใบเต็ม ส่วนของเพี้ยนแล้ว ปดกบเหลือแล้ว

Thammapanya from Vat That is the scribe. May I share a large amount of merit with you. The old manuscript had lost much [text], [thus I] copied an additional five full leaves. Now [the manuscript] is fully completed.

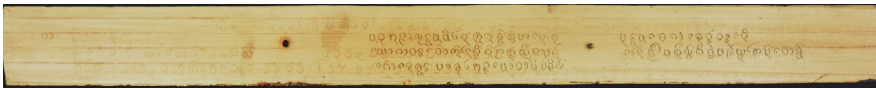


Fig. 10b: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0004, fol. 50^v. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

มธฺอนุลอมรอม มี ๒ ผูกต่อกัน ของหัวป่าแสนใหม่ปู ร่อมแฉ (ขอยมม) กำแพงวัดธาตุเนื้อโยคจรเข้าตนใดก็ดี คนครหัด ยิ่งชายฝูงใดยืมไปฟังแล้ว ก็จงประโยคให้ส่งเจ้าของเก่าแด่ทอน สาธุๆ อนุโมทามิ ๓ ทีแล

Matthu Anulom Hòm, 2 fascicles are bound together. [This manuscript] belongs to Hua Pa Saen [and] Mai Pu, [their house is located] behind the corner of the wall [surrounding] Vat That. If any wandering monks, laymen or laywomen borrow [this manuscript] to recite it, they must return it to its original owner after having used it. Well done! Well done! I rejoice three times.

Occasionally ownership statements are found that help to identify the provenance of a manuscript which does not contain any paratextual information about the scribe and sponsor(s). The palm-leaf manuscript BAD-22-1-0482 (dated 6 January 1871), of which only the first fascicles (*phuk ton*) of the *Nitsai Chatuvik* has survived, is a case in point. A brief ownership statement appears on the verso side of folio 8v. It is written in modern Lao script with a blue ballpoint pen, and reads หนังสือสาธุจันทา วัดหัวเชียง, ‘The manuscript belongs to Monk Chantha from Vat Hua Siang’. This indicates that this fascicle – part of a larger codicological unit comprising several fascicles – originally belonged to Vat Hua Siang in the lower (southern) part of the town of Luang Prabang. Most of the ownership statements, however, confirm the manuscript belonged to Vat Maha That itself. In other cases, the ownership statement is written on a separate side of a leaf with a pink ballpoint pen. The following example is BAD-22-1-0152, a manuscript com-

missioned by abbot Chao Mòm Bunthan on 31 December 1947. It is written both in Tham Lao script and in Roman characters (Fig. 11).

In Roman script:

Vat Phramahathat / Rasehabovoravihall (sic) / Luang-Prabang.

In Tham Lao script:

กิตตบุญญโณภิกขุ พระบุญทันธาธิกุล / วัดพระมหาธาตุราชบวรวิหาร / พระนครหลวงพระบาง

Thittapunya Bhikkhu Phra Bunthan Rathikun / Vat Phra Maha That Rasabòvòravihan / Phra Nakhòn Luang Phrabang

ได้สร้างนิยายกิมพาร้าไว้กับศาสนา / พระโคตมเจ้า เพ้า ๕๐๐๐ / วสุสา นิพพาน ปจฺจโย โหตุ เม

[He] sponsored the making of the *Niyai Phimpha Hamhai* [manuscript] to ensure that the Teachings of Buddha Gotama will last until [the end of] 5000 years. *Nibbānapaccayo hotu me* (May [this] be a condition for me [to reach] Nibbāna).

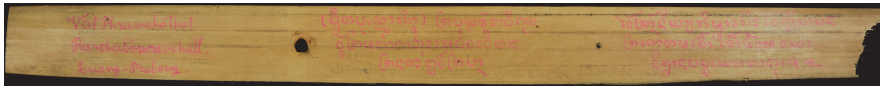


Fig. 11: Manuscript BAD-22-1-0152, fol. 30^v. © Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang.

3 Conclusion

The corpus of digitised manuscripts kept at the monastic repository of Vat Maha That is the largest ever conducted in the city of Luang Prabang, thus far. The impressive collection of palm-leaf manuscripts was the work of senior intellectual monks who appreciated the ancient manuscript culture of Laos. Notably, Sathu Nyai Phui Thirachitta Maha Thela (1925–2005), who served as the abbot of Vat Maha That from 1967 until his death, contributed much to the building-up of the unique manuscript collection at his home monastery. He was a passionate scribe, sponsor, and collector of manuscripts.

The colophons found in these manuscripts reveal quite interesting features, though their structure and content differ little from those that are known from other Lao, Northern Thai (Lan Na) or Tai Lü manuscripts and bear religious texts. The vast majority of these manuscripts are dated, and the dates are recorded according to the Lao lunar calendar in a refined and elaborate way allowing, in most cases, a quite precise dating of the day (and even daytime) when the writing of the text was accomplished. The persons figuring most prominently in the colophons are not the scribes, whose names are only occasionally mentioned, but the

sponsors or donors who hired the scribes and provided the writing support. They are considered the real ‘makers’ of the manuscripts, and their intentions and wishes are expressed in the colophons. Though the main texts might be written in Pali or bilingual Pali-Lao, the colophons are almost exclusively written in the Lao (or in some cases also Tai Lü) vernacular with rather short, standardized Pali phrases at the end.

Scribes are, in almost all cases, either monks and novices or laymen once ordained in a monastery where they have learned to read and write texts written in the religious Dhamma (Tham) script. Sponsors and donors may also have had such a background but were usually normal laypeople. In the Lao context, at least in Luang Prabang, the relatively high percentage of women serving as principal lay supporters is astonishing as is the presence of royalty among the sponsors and donors of manuscripts. Moreover, a closer study of colophons will also help us sharpen our understanding of the cooperation between scribes and sponsors/donors as well as the involvement of different sponsors/donors in the making of a manuscript. Although in recent years many projects have been carried out to preserve, document, and digitise manuscripts in various parts of Theravada Buddhist South-East Asia, much remains to be done in identifying either physically or culturally endangered collections of manuscripts, both in monastic repositories and private collections. It is the author’s great hope that this article will help raise awareness and speed up research in the diverse manuscript cultures of the Thai and Lao world, that constitute a most precious heritage of the region’s people.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Khamvone Boulyaphonh, Director of the Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang, for giving me the kind permission to publish the material under study. Thanks go also to Giovanni Ciotti, Silpsupa Jaengsawang, Sutteera Satayaphan, and an anonymous reviewer for their valuable comments and suggestions for improvement.

The research for this article was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany’s Excellence Strategy – EXC 2176 ‘Understanding Written Artefacts: Material, Interaction and Transmission in Manuscript Cultures’, project no. 390893796. The research was conducted within the scope of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at Universität Hamburg.

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Appendix: archival material

The first two digits of the code of the manuscripts kept at the Buddhist Archives of Luang Prabang (BAD) refer to the monastic repository (22 = Vat Maha That), the third digit denotes the writing support (1 = palm-leaf), followed by the last four digits denoting the individual manuscript according to the order of digitisation. The first 470 manuscripts were digitised with the support of the University of Hamburg's Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures while the remaining manuscripts (from no. 0471 upwards) were digitised with the support of the Digital Repository of Endangered and Affected Manuscripts in Southeast Asia (DREAMSEA). Thus only these manuscripts do have a DREAMSEA code as well and are accessible through the DREAMSEA website (<<https://www.hmmcloud.org/dreamsea/index.php>>).

- **BAD-22-1-0004:** *Matthu Anulom* (Conforming to the daily routine of the Buddha); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 56 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1293 CS, a *huang mot* year (1931 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0007:** *Ubpāt* (Chanting for warding off calamities); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 27 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1223 CS, a *huang hao* year (1861 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0032:** *Matthu Anulom* (Conforming to the daily routine of the Buddha); palm-leaf manuscript; ten fascicles with a total of 279 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1268 CS, a *hwai sanga* year (1906 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0152:** *Ninyai Phimpha Hamhai* (The Story about Bimbā's lamentations); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 30 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 2490 BE, a *moeng khai* year (1947 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0176:** *Pannya Parami* (Paññā Pāramī); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 8 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; undated.
- **BAD-22-1-0195:** *Unhatsavisai* (Uṇhassavijaya) (Victory in suppressing the heat); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 11 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1273 CS, a *huang khai* year (1911 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0196:** *Pannya Parami* (Paññā Pāramī); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 6 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1273 CS, a *huang khai* year (1911 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0216:** *Mangkhala 38* (Part of the Discourse on Blessings); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 16 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 2465 BE, a *huang hao* year (1922 CE).

- **BAD-22-1-0282:** *Sap Mahavak* (Words of the Great Group – part of the Abhidhamma); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 48 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1128 CS, a *hwai set* year (1766 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0375:** *Paet Mūn* (Eighty Thousand); palm-leaf manuscript; three fascicles with a total of 50 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1345 CS / 2526 BE, a *ka khai* year (1983 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0414:** *Matsima Nikai* (Majjhima Nikāya), palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle (No. 14) of 26 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1205 CS, a *ka mao* year (1843 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0482 (DS0011_00015):** *Chatuvik* (Title of a poem); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 10 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1231 CS (in fact: 1232), a *kot sang*a year (1870/1871 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0545(DS0011_00088):** *Sōng Khao Salak* (Benefits derived from offering food distributed by lottery tickets); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 8 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1308 CS / 2489 BE, a *hwai set* year (1946 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0573 (DS0011_000116):** *Sap Sai Nòi* (Words of the small victory); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 11 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 2482 BE, a *kat mao* year (1939 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0578 (DS0011-00121):** *Sai Luang* (The Great Victory), palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 8 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; a *kat set* year (no further date given).
- **BAD-22-1-0596 (DS0011_00139):** *Sap Phahung* (Sapta Bāhum – Words of eight verses about the Buddha's auspicious victories); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 6 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 2492 BE, *kat pao* year (1949 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0616 (DS0011_00159):** *Rattana Sutta* (Rattana Sutta – Discourse on the Triple Gems); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 13 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1310 CS or 2490 BE, *kat pao* year (1947 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0647 (DS0011_00197):** *Tamnan Nithan Vat Pha Kaeo Viang Din Dòi Tao* (The Chronicle of the monastery of Vat Pha Kaeo Viang Din Dòi Tao); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 16 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1281 CS, a *poek chai* year (1919 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0778 (DS0011_00344):** *Munlanipphan (Mūlanibbāna)* (Discourse on the way leading to Nibbāna); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 16 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1272 CS, a *kot set* year (1910 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0839 (DS0011_00405):** *Ban Ton* (The beginning section); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 33 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1220 CS, *poek sang*a year (1858 CE).

- **BAD-22-1-0904 (DS0011_00481):** *Yamuk* (Yamaka) (Book of Pairs); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 66 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 2512 BE, a *kat hao* year (1969 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-0933 (DS0011_00531):** *Sapphahung* (Words of the Bāhum Sutta or the Jaya Maṅgala Gāthā); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 8 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 2515 BE, a *tao chai* year (1972 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-1020 (DS0011_00663):** *Sap Patimok* (*Sapta Pāṭimokkha*) (Words of the Basic Code of Monastic Discipline); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 57 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1206 CS, a *kap si* year (1844 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-1082 (DS0011_00743-00759):** *Khutthakanikai* (*Khuddaka-Nikāya*) (Minor Collection); palm-leaf manuscript; 17 fascicles with a total of 139 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1200 CS, a *poek set* year (1838 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-1154 (DS0011_00848):** *Sap Khatha Thammabot* (*Gāthā Dhammapada*) (Words about the Buddha's Path to Enlightenment); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 147 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1187 CS, a *hap hao* year (1825 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-1160 (DS0011_00855-00865):** *Visaiya Banha* (Vijeyya's Problem); palm-leaf manuscript; 12 fascicles with a total of 148 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1222 CS, a *kot san* year (1860 CE).
- **BAD-22-1-1205 (DS0011_00962):** *Bòk Tua Akkhara Hai Thük Nak Bao* (Telling the correct pronunciation of [consonant and vowel] letters); palm-leaf manuscript; one fascicle of 158 folios; language: Lao, Pali; script: Tham Lao; 1253 CS, a *huang mao* year (1892 CE).

