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The Use of *Anisong* Manuscripts at Funerals in Northern Thailand and Laos

Abstract: The *anisong* manuscripts in this case study specify the rewards gained by people taking part in different funeral procedures and reflect various stages of the physical decay of corpses. The manuscripts were read aloud by monks who held sermons to affirm karmic rewards. Monks and novices were more familiar with Buddhist textual sources than laypeople and played a significant role in the production of *anisong* manuscripts. Many of the manuscripts in the examined corpus reveal textual revisions and (non-)textual paracontent associated with the interaction of the preaching monks and their sermon audiences. Since the funeral procedures were rituals performed again and again, the manuscripts were not just circulated but regrouped as necessary, and were also recopied, thereby serving as master versions from which to produce further exemplars.

1 Introduction

The Thai word *anisong* is derived from the Pali term *ānisaṃsa*, which literally means ‘rewards’, ‘benefits’, ‘advantages’ or ‘results of positive deeds’, and represents a textual genre of South-East Asia. Essentially, an *anisong* is a kind of Buddhist sermon declaring the benefits derived from meritorious acts. These benefits help improve the donor’s karma, but they can also be transferred to other people. Another term referring to *anisong* sermons or texts is the word *salòng* or *sòng*, derived from the Khmer word *chlòng*. While they are known as *salòng* sermons, or *thet salòng* (ເທດສະຫຼອງ), to people in Laos, they are referred to as *anisong* sermons, or *thet anisong* (ເທດສະນິສັງສິ), in northern Thailand (in what was formerly Lan Na). The titles of *anisong* texts in Lao manuscripts are mostly preceded by the term *salòng* or *sòng*, as in *Salòng cedi sai* (‘Rewards deriving from building sand stupas’), *Sòng fang tham* (‘Rewards deriving from listening to the Dhamma’) or *Salòng khamphi* (‘Rewards deriving from copying religious books’). *Sòng* or *salòng* (*chlòng* ឆ្លង, ສອງ/ສະຫຼອງ), corresponding to *chalòng* (ฉลอง, ‘to celebrate’) in Thai, is a derivative of the Khmer verb *chlòng*, which has various meanings: ‘to cross’, ‘to inaugurate’, ‘to dedicate’, ‘to celebrate’ and ‘to spread’. The contexts of *thet salòng* or *salòng* sermons are appar-

ently associated with ‘dedication’ and ‘celebration’, as the sermons are performed to mark the completion of ‘merit-making’, serving the function of acknowledging, celebrating, valuing and admiring the meritorious deeds accomplished by the donors. As Patrice Ladwig writes, ‘The public act of lauding [oneself] is called *saloong* in Laos (“to celebrate the outcome of the meritorious deed”) and the donors have variously been described as having prestige or being worthy of veneration’.¹

The sermon is held in public, thus it is ‘witnessed’ by all the participants at the funeral. The preaching monk acknowledges the merit and delivers the sermons to explain or ‘affirm’ the great rewards generated by the individual’s positive deeds. In Buddhism, such rewards are a result of the person’s generosity. The acquisition of rewards is celebrated afterwards. In exchange for their meritorious acts, *anisong* sermons are held to proclaim a person’s benevolent virtue and to promise generous donors commensurate gifts. Terminologically speaking, in northern Thailand, *anisong* signifies ‘the announcement of rewards’, while in Laos, the term *salòng* or *sòng* signifies ‘the announcement of completion’. Volker Grabowsky explains it as follows:

In the Buddhist context *Anisong* or *Salòng* [texts] (Lao, from Khmer: *chlañ* (ផ្កា)), ‘to dedicate’, ‘to celebrate’) – often contracted to *Sòng* – are used for homiletic purposes, such as performing sermons and preaching. Those texts, generally rather short (rarely containing more than twenty folios), describe the rewards in terms of merit, or literally the ‘advantage’ which a believer may expect from a particular religious deed.²

In the Buddhist social context, where the meritorious outcomes of praiseworthy activities are hardly quantifiable, such concrete manifestations – with particular reference to the Buddha, who announced or clarified these meritorious incentives – matter to people. The liturgical culture of delivering *anisong/salòng* sermons assuring virtuous individuals of their forthcoming bliss has been practised and passed down for centuries. Thanks to the ‘three characteristics’ (Pali: *tilakkhaṇa*)³ of Theravāda Buddhist doctrine, which relate to death and include transiency (Pali: *aniccā*), *anisong* manuscripts used particularly in the context of funerals or memorials outnumber those pertaining to other kinds of life-transition rituals.

¹ Ladwig 2008, 91. I have lightly edited this quote.

² Grabowsky 2017, 416.

³ The three characteristics are *aniccā* (‘impermanence’, ‘transiency’), *dukkhā* (‘state of suffering’ or ‘being oppressed’) and *anattatā* (‘soullessness’, ‘state of not being oneself’). See Payutto 2015, 89.

In the corpus of 705 manuscripts⁴ used for our research project ‘*Anisong* (Āṇisaṃsa) Manuscripts from Luang Prabang (Laos) in a Comparative Perspective’, based at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC),⁵ twenty-three manuscripts dating between 1838 and 2004 CE contain *anisong* texts used for preaching at funerals. These include nineteen fascicles (Thai: *phuk*) made of palm leaves and four volumes (Thai: *lem*) made of mulberry paper. The manuscripts are from Laos and northern Thailand. The two neighbouring regions have been closely connected by language, culture and political relations for a long time.

2 Funerals in Thai and Lao Buddhist culture

Buddhism elaborates cosmologies concerning death and the afterlife, and Buddhist monks are considered mediums or experts who allow the secular and sacred realms⁶ to connect with each other. According to the *tilakkhaṇa*, or three characteristics, death is the ultimate goal, which all living beings are destined

4 See Jaengsawang 2022, 391–478. The manuscripts have been sourced from eight collections and databases. These are the (1) Preservation of Northern Thai Manuscripts Project (PNTMP), (2) Digital Library of Northern Thai Manuscripts (DLNTM), (3) Dokumentarische Erfassung literarischer Materialien in den Nordprovinzen Thailands (DELMN), (4) Phayap University Archives (PUA), (5) a non-microfilmed collection (i.e. the collection of manuscripts at Wat Phra Koet and Wat Monthian that have not yet been digitised), the (6) Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts (DLLM), (7) Buddhist Archive of Photography (BAP) and (8) Volker Grabowsky’s Collection from Luang Namtha (CVG). *Anisong* manuscripts in the Preservation of Northern Thai Manuscripts Project (PNTMP), Digital Library of Northern Thai Manuscripts (DLNTM), Dokumentarische Erfassung literarischer Materialien in den Nordprovinzen Thailands (DELMN) and Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts (DLLM) can all be accessed online at <https://crossasia.org/>. *Anisong* manuscripts in the Buddhist Archive of Photography (BAP) can be accessed upon direct request to <https://www.buddhist-archive.org/>. *Anisong* manuscripts in the Phayap University Archives (PUA), the non-microfilmed collection and Volker Grabowsky’s Collection from Luang Namtha, however, are not available online.

5 It is sub-project A08, affiliated with the DFG Sonderforschungsbereich 950 (SFB 950, 2016–2019).

6 Patrice Ladwig has defined this ‘inter-realm communication’ in his studies on two ethnic Lao rituals of transferring objects to the dead, with reference to ontology and materiality: Bun Khao Salak (the festival of rice baskets drawn by lot) and Bun Hüan Pha (dedicating items provided in a human-sized artificial house to the dead). He studied the belief of Lao people in transferring things to their late family members at the two festivals. There are slightly different beliefs among the ethnic Lao. Some people believe that items offered to monks can actually reach the dead in the other sphere, whereas others, especially more orthodox Lao people, have a more rational point of view, believing that only dedicational merit can cross the border between the living world and that of the dead. See Ladwig 2012a.

to achieve. Mindfulness (Pali: *sati-sampajañña*) is emphasised in Buddhism as a means to gain self-control, realise what wholesome or unwholesome actions one has caused and confront the notion that death will eventually approach. Thanks to mindfulness, human beings can live their lives carefully, avoid risks that could potentially lead to their untimely death and spend their time on more meaningful things. Before the Buddha's complete extinction (*nirvāṇa*), he left one final maxim concerning mindfulness in relation to the world: 'Behold, O monks, this is my last advice to you. All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation'.⁷ This final maxim emphasises the changeability of everything – a quality we should be aware of. It characterises transience as being realised mindfully so that we spend our time looking for our own way of reaching *nibbāna* or enlightenment. The general purpose of organising funerals is to commemorate those whose lives have ended and to encourage the living to recognise and accept the uncertainty of life by referring to the dead as an example.⁸ The deceased may well have been praised as venerated or high-ranking figures, such as noblemen, scholars, wealthy men or senior monks, but they all inevitably reached the eventual and 'unchangeable' end of their mortal journey.

In Laos and northern Thailand, funerals are held indoors, at the house of the deceased or at a temple. A group of four monks⁹ is invited to chant the *Abhidhamma chet khamphi* ('Seven Books of the Abhidhamma'),¹⁰ the *Mayala* (the story of the Venerable Monk Malaya, who travelled to heaven and hell and met the future Buddha Metteyya),¹¹ an *anisong* sermon, as well as the *Namo tassa*,

7 Quoted from the '(Part Two) 31. The Buddha's Last Words', part of an abridged retelling of the story of Buddha Gotama, entitled *Life of the Buddha*, for secondary-school pupils and general readers, on the website Buddhist Studies: Buddha Dharma Education Association & BuddhaNet <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/lifebuddha/2_31lbud.htm> (accessed on 13 February 2023).

8 Thammaporn 2016, 42.

9 In general, at least four monks are invited to attend a funeral and preach until the day of the cremation. The number of monks is more flexible on the occasions of the seventh day, the fiftieth day and the hundredth day of commemorating the deceased, and is decided by the funeral organisers.

10 Justin McDaniel argues that the title *Seven Books of the Abhidhamma* is misleading, because the text does not contain the entire seven volumes of the *Abhidhamma*. Rather, it is a commentary on it (McDaniel 2008, 233).

11 In Ladwig's view, 'Although the Lao and Thai versions of Phra Malai – a text also recited at funerals – are based on the figure of Māleyyadevatthera, they seem to have merged to a certain degree with the figure of Moggallāna due to their similar themes. The accounts of Phra Malai

Itipiso, and *Pha hung* chants – or as many of these as time allows – before the cremation. Ashes and bones are then collected to be enshrined. Participating in a funeral is the last opportunity to give one's condolences to the living relatives. Funerals are hosted by the deceased's family members and relatives, some of whom – particularly the males – are specially ordained as novices or monks in a short-term ordination procedure known as *buat na fai* (lit. 'cremation-faced ordination'). *Buat na fai* is carried out specifically on the morning of the cremation. Depending on their availability, the ordained males may temporarily retain their status as monks until the evening or the third, seventh or fifteenth day after the cremation to show their gratitude to the deceased relative.¹² The merit derived from *buat na fai* is dedicated (Thai: *song sakan*) to the deceased person, or *peta*,¹³ who is believed to gain this merit offered by humans.

3 Commissions of *anisong* manuscripts used at funerals

On the basis of evidence found in their colophons, as in other cases of religious book dedications, the *anisong* manuscripts were produced and donated to monasteries so they would be preserved until the era of the future Buddha.¹⁴ The merit derived from copying religious manuscripts and donating them to monas-

are more widely known than those of Moggallāna, but I think they should be discussed together and seen as a unit'. Ladwig 2012b, 128.

¹² Phra A-thikanratana Ratano 2018, 1.

¹³ Ladwig writes, 'The word *peta* in Pāli usually signifies "hungry ghost", but its uses in early Theravāda Buddhism are far from clear. The term can denote ancestor (from Sanskrit *pitṛ*), but also hungry ghost. Further discussions of this will exemplify that this double meaning is also on some level alive in the Lao expression. Historically speaking, the offering to *peta* is linked to the Brahmanic ritual practice of *śrāddha*, in which the ghost as a liminal being is transformed into an ancestor'. Ladwig 2012b, 126.

¹⁴ According to Daniel M. Veidlinger, 'In Lan Na, those responsible for the production of manuscripts were quite conscious of their importance for storing texts. As we will see, many of the manuscripts possess colophons stating explicitly that they were made in order to preserve the teachings of the Buddha for 5,000 years' (Veidlinger 2007, 6). This is based on the belief in Buddha Metteyya, the fifth Buddha, who will arrive after the current five-thousand-year era, during which the religion will gradually disappear: 'In the future the religion will decay as people lose their insight into the meaning of the teachings, neglect their practice, and eventually lose the texts themselves. Thus the three divisions will fade from the world in the reverse order that they develop in people of faith, and Buddhism will be no more'. Veidlinger 2007, 59.

teries can also be dedicated to the donor, not just the deceased. Since monks were responsible for giving sermons at funerals and were able to access religious sources relatively easily, monks and novices were the main sponsors and scribes of such manuscripts (see Subsection 4.2), whereas those manuscripts written by laypeople were used as master copies rather than as presentation copies for ritual use¹⁵ (see Subsection 5.1). According to the colophons I have examined, not a single manuscript was produced for a specific funeral or after a person had passed away. As funerals were generally held within ten days of a person's death, family members tended to spend more time dealing with funeral arrangements than commissioning a manuscript. After the donations, *anison* manuscripts were stored in monastic libraries and used only sporadically. A number of these manuscripts were stored for long periods without being used at all, and consequently many leaves have pale, mirror-image imprints of the ink on adjacent leaves that look like a faint second layer of writing (Fig. 1). This implies that the leaves had been gathered and kept in a tightly bound fascicle for some time after they had been inscribed and dedicated to a monastery; the manuscripts were written in advance and stored for later use on specific occasions.

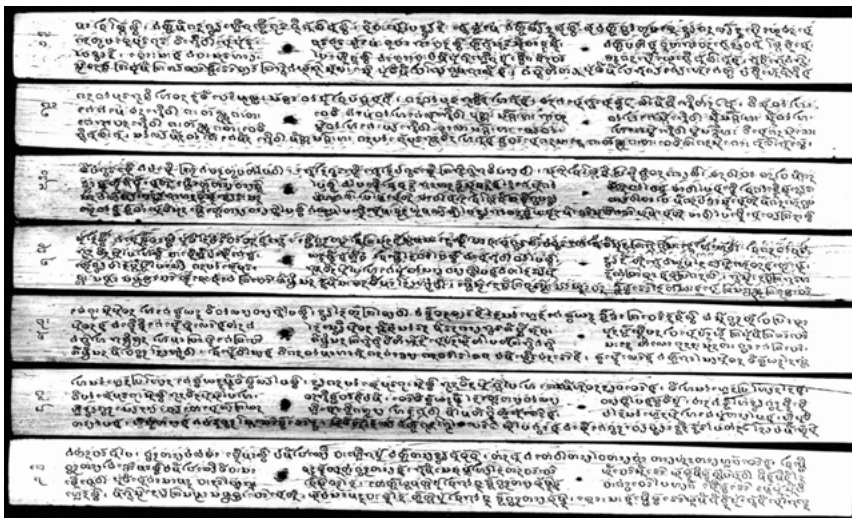


Fig. 1: Traces of writing from adjacent leaves imprinted on the surface, reading *Sòng anison bun thi dai than pai ha phu tai* ('Rewards deriving from dedicating merit to the dead'). DLLM, 06011406006-04.

15 BAP, BAD-13-2-034 (2004 CE), BAD-13-2-037 (2004 CE).

Besides enumerating rewards deriving from participation in funerals, the manuscripts also contain clues about traditional funerals. They partly serve as manuals demonstrating how to properly perform a funeral. The titles of various *anisong* texts on funerals refer to cemetery rituals that reflect the tradition of destroying corpses by burning them in a fire; these include *Anisong phao phi*,¹⁶ *Sòng phao phi*,¹⁷ *Anisong chapanakit*¹⁸ and *Salòng pong sop lü phao phi*,¹⁹ all of which essentially mean ‘rewards deriving from the cremation of corpses’.²⁰

Anisong sermons at funerals basically remind the audience how transient life is; they comfort their sadness and assure them of the dedicated merit supporting the spirit in its otherworldly existence. On the one hand, the participants feel considerable grief; on the other, they are rewarded for producing merit for the deceased via the so-called *Song sakan* ritual activity (สังสการ), as expressed by such titles as *Anisong than [pai] ha khon tai*,²¹ *Anisong song sakan*²² and *Sòng anisong bun thi dai than pai ha phu tai*,²³ each of which refers to the merit earned by the dead and the funeral participants. In order to teach laypeople to be conscious of and compassionate about life changes, some texts describe the physical decay occurring after death. The following example from *Anisong sanra* (‘Rewards deriving from participation in funerals’) narrates the story of ten cattle boys who burned the corpse of a dead bird and earned heavenly merit from it:

ในโลกนี้บ่มีนบ่เที่ยง บ่เป็นแก่นเป็นสาร บ่ใช้ตนใช้ตัวของตัว มาตราว่าผม ขน ทั้งเนื้อหนัง ดับ ปอด ไล่ ฟ่องทั้งมวลก็ใช้ของตัว ก็ยอมเป็นสาธุการณะแก่แรงกา แก่มด แก่ปลวก ก็อนิจจาทุกตัวสัตว์ทั้งหญิงชายก็เหมือนกัน เมื่อเป็นตัว มาตราว่าผม ขนทั้งเนื้อหนัง ดับ ปอด ไล่ ฟ่องทั้งมวล บ่ใช้ของตัว ก็ยอมเป็นสา(ธุ)รณะแก่แรงสารพัด [...] ข้าวของทั้งมวลก็หวงแห่น อันนั้นของกู อันนั้นของเอ็ง ครั้นว่าตายกระทำกริยาอันตายนั้น มาตราหมากคำ ๑ ก็บ่ได้แล ตัวเราตัวท่านทั้งหลายก็เหมือนกันแล แต่เมื่อยังเป็นตัวคือว่าบ่ทันตายนั้น ขนก็รัก ปีกก็รัก (กระ) ดูกก็รัก

Things in the world are impermanent; they are not of any substance and will not exist forever; the hair, skin, flesh, liver, lungs and intestines [of the dead] do not belong [to them], but [will] be left to the vultures, crows, ants and termites. No matter whether they are male or female, they are equally [destined to die]. As long as they are alive, their hair, skin,

16 PNTMP, พร 0106004-01.

17 BAP, BAD-13-1-0157.

18 Non-microfilmed collection, PNTMP, นน 11-06-003-01.

19 BAP, BAD-13-2-034.

20 Jaengsawang 2022, 255.

21 PNTMP, ขม 0106001-05.

22 PNTMP, นน 0620021-00.

23 DLLM, 06011406006-04.

flesh, liver, lungs and intestines do not belong [to them]; they [will] be left to the vultures. [...] All belongings are highly cherished; this is mine and that is yours. When death comes, not even a piece of betel can be taken along [with you]. We are no different than birds; as long as we are alive, we love our hair, wings and bones.²⁴

However, judging by the different handwriting styles it contains, the manuscript entitled *Anisong phao phi bò hai* was obviously written by two different scribes (Fig. 2).²⁵ The manuscript comprises eleven folios; it is kept at Wat Phrabat Ming Müang, Phrae province, and may have resulted from a scribal class in which a group of monks and novices shared palm leaves for scribal training.²⁶

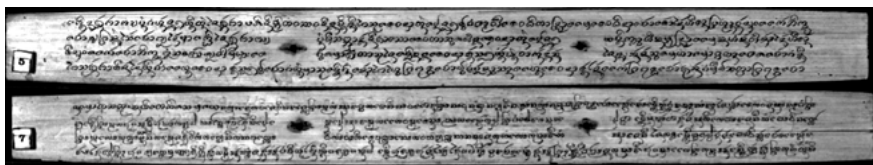


Fig. 2: Handwriting by two different scribes. *Anisong phao phi bò hai* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals'). PNTMP, พร 0406012-03.

Besides manuscripts intended to increase the number of religious texts that existed and to provide training for scribes, some manuscripts were created to convert texts written in less familiar scripts and languages into more familiar ones in order to facilitate monastic usage. The following colophon mentions the manuscript's primary rationale: the abbot had assigned a monk to inscribe an *anisong* text on a palm-leaf manuscript in order to educate laypeople on *karma*. The text was transcribed and translated from Central Thai:

พระพุทธศักราช ๒๕๒๓ ปีสัณวอก เดือน ๔ ขึ้น ๗ ค่ำ วันพฤหัสบดี ยามเที่ยง หมาย
มีข้าพเจ้าทั้ง ๒ คือ ๑ สาธุใหญ่สมมติ เจ้าอธิการวัดใหม่ มีศรัทธาออกใบลาน ๒
ได้มอบให้เจ้าภิกขุพนผลบุญเทพอักษร เป็นศรัทธาอดทนเขียนแปลออกเป็นตัว
อักษรธรรม เพื่อเทศนาให้ประชาชนผู้ได้เข้าใจดีเป็นความลาวเรานั้น ให้แจ้งรู้บาป

²⁴ PNTMP, พร 0406012-01, fol. 2^v. The manuscript is dated 1911 CE. All translations of manuscript passages into English are my own.

²⁵ PNTMP, พร 0406012-03.

²⁶ Justin McDaniel compares the shared use of palm leaves in a scribal class to the training of medical students and car mechanics: 'since palm leaf is relatively difficult to prepare for inscribing, it would have been more efficient to train many students on one manuscript, like many automobile repair students train on one engine or many medical students observe a surgery on a single body'. McDaniel 2008, 144.

บุญคุณโทษหนักเบา นั้น มูลเดิมตั้งเป็นตัวอักษรไทย คำความไทย ย่านผู้ฟังนั้นไม่เข้าใจดี ฉะนั้นจึงได้เขียนแปลออกเป็นอักษรธรรมเทศนาให้ประชาชนผู้ได้เข้าใจดีนั้น ขอบุญกุศลจงคำชูแก่ตัวข้าพเจ้าทั้ง ๒ ได้ตั้งคำมกและความปรารถนานั้นทุกประการเทอญ นิพพาน ปจฺจโย โหนตุ อนาคต กาเล สาทุ

In BE 2523 [i.e. 1980 CE], a *san wòk* year, on the seventh waxing-moon day of the fourth [lunar] month, on Thursday²⁷ at noon, (1) Sathu Nyai Somdi, an abbot of Vat Mai, provided palm leaves so that (2) Phikkhu [i.e. monk] Phan Phon Phi Bun Theppaaksòn could transcribe [the original text] and carefully inscribe [the new text] in Tham script in Lao for homiletic use by laypeople [to allow] Lao audiences to comprehend good and bad karma. The original version was written in the Thai language in Thai script. [We, the commissioners,] were worried that [the original version] prevented Lao people from understanding [its content]. As a result, [we] reproduced it in Tham script for liturgical use. May [the merit of the manuscript's production] support both of us and fulfil all our wishes. *Nibbāna paccayo hontu anāgate kāle sādhu sādhu* (May this be a cause for reaching *nibbāna* in the future).²⁸

Another example is a palm-leaf manuscript entitled *Sami tham ngan sop uthit hai kae phariya thi dap khan pai* ('Rewards for a husband who has held a funeral dedicated to his late wife') (1945 CE). According to its colophon, the manuscript specifically records a sermon text read out at the funeral of a master monk's ex-wife and originally written in Central Thai script. The manuscript was transcribed into Dhamma Lan Na script to facilitate its circulation and is kept at the monastic library at Wat Ban Ûam in Lampang province. See the following colophon:

เทศนาในงานสามีทำศพอุทิศให้อภริยาพระอาจารย์วงศ์เจ้าสามกักรามวัดบ้านเอี่ยม ได้ยกออกจากอักษรไทยหือเป็นภาษาไทยลาวเหนือเหมือนกัน สร้างไว้สำหรับหือพระไตรปิฎกวัดบ้านเอี่ยมเมื่อพระพุทธศักราช ๒๔๘๘ ตัว ปีกาเร้า เดือน ๑๐ ขึ้น ๓ ค่ำ วันผัด (พฤหัสบดี) มีผู้ต้องการยืมเอาไปทางใด ขอเอามาไว้วัดบ้านเอี่ยมตั้งเก๋าสัมมาที่ใด สัมไปทีนั้น อย่าไปลืมนะ

[The text was recited] as a sermon at a woman's funeral, hosted by her husband, namely the funeral of the ex-wife of master monk Wong from Wat Ban Ûam. The manuscript was transliterated from the original text, written in Central Thai script, into Lao Nua [i.e. Northern Thai] script to provide the monastic library at Wat Ban Ûam [with a copy] in BE 2488 (1945 CE), a *ka rao* year, on the third waxing-moon day of the tenth [lunar] month,

²⁷ This day corresponds to Thursday, 12 March 1981 CE.

²⁸ *Sòng anisong bun thi dai than pai ha phu tai* ('Rewards deriving from dedicating merit to the dead'). DLLM, 06011406006-04, fol. 10^r.

on a Thursday.²⁹ The borrower should return the manuscript to Wat Ban Ŭam; please return things to their proper locations. Do not forget [to do so].³⁰

The core reason for commissioning the manuscripts was related to the religious belief in sustaining Buddhism by copying religious texts to be stored at monastic libraries. Despite funerals being a life-transition ritual to commemorate the deceased, the funeral participants also earn merit or *puñña* by contributing to the *anisong* manuscripts in which the liturgical *anisong* texts were recorded to help the preaching monks. The manuscripts are accordingly the result of the belief in merit being generated by arranging funerals.

4 Manuscript uses at funerals

4.1 Objects and rituals

The manuscripts forming the corpus of this study are made of palm leaves and mulberry paper. They have different layouts and different kinds of visual organisation. The nineteen palm-leaf manuscripts clearly outnumber those made of mulberry paper, of which there are only four. The latter are multiple-text manuscripts (MTMs) that include *anisong* texts used for the funeral liturgy, whereas the nineteen palm-leaf manuscripts are single-text manuscripts (STMs) and composite manuscripts (COMs), except for the manuscript coded BAP, BAD-13-1-0157 (1944 CE), an MTM that includes four other *anisong* texts used on different religious occasions.³¹ There are two different manuscript units in Northern Thai and Lao manuscript culture: fascicles (Thai: *phuk*) and bundles (Thai: *mat*).

In terms of the number of texts, one or more texts in the same production unit (same time, same production agents) can be written in one or more fascicles, depending on their length. No matter how many fascicles contain the given texts, a single production unit including one text is regarded as a single-text

²⁹ This date corresponds to Thursday, 12 July 1945 CE.

³⁰ *Sami tham ngan sop uthit hai kae phariya thi dap khan pai* ('Rewards for a husband who has held a funeral dedicated to his deceased wife'). PNTMP, ๙๗ 0420097-02, fol. 17^v).

³¹ This particular manuscript contains five texts: *Sòng dōk mai thup thian* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of flowers, incense sticks and candles'), *Sòng haksa sin* ('Rewards deriving from precept observance'), *Sòng fang tham* ('Rewards deriving from listening to the Dhamma'), *Sòng phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participating in funerals') and *Sòng maha wetsandòn chadok* ('Rewards deriving from listening to Vessantara Jātaka').

manuscript, while a unit including several different texts is considered a multiple-text manuscript.

A unit consisting of several folios combined in a single binding, with one or two strings through one or two holes in the folios, is called a *phuk* ('fascicle'), no matter how many texts it contains. Several fascicles can be combined to make a larger unit – a bundle (*mat*). A bundle can include one or more fascicles. In terms of this classification scheme, a fascicle is defined as a sub-unit of a bundle.

The codicological units of *anisong* manuscripts are based on these parameters and defined as follows. Single-text manuscripts are codicological units that each include a single text, no matter how many fascicles they have. Multiple-text manuscripts are codicological units that include more than one text. It does not matter how many fascicles there are (which obviously depends on the length of the written texts). Composite manuscripts are codicological units that include several fascicles produced at different times by different people and thus constitute a mixture of production units. Each of the fascicles in a composite manuscript can thus be a single-text fascicle or a multiple-text one, depending on the scribe's intention. Accordingly, single-text and multiple-text manuscripts both contain texts from a single production unit, whereas composite manuscripts are mainly concerned with objects derived from different production units.

Sometimes *anisong* and non-*anisong* fascicles are grouped into one and the same bundle. The fascicles may be from different production units despite being combined in the same bundle. In the case of *anisong* manuscripts, the fascicles would originally have been commissioned at different times and places, then later grouped into bundles to form a larger unit, i.e. a composite manuscript³² (see Section 5), based on its practical function – especially in the case of ritual use – or similar textual themes.³³ Different elements of the manuscripts – their page layouts, covers, foliation/pagination and revisions – will be discussed below, both in terms of palm-leaf manuscripts and mulberry-paper manuscripts.

³² A composite manuscript takes the form of a bundle in northern Thailand and Laos, and includes several fascicles, some of which may contain similar textual themes; see Jaengsawang 2022, 36.

³³ See Jaengsawang 2022, 289–291.



Fig. 3a–c: An example of an *anison* palm-leaf manuscript used at funerals. *Sòng sak sop khon tai* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals'). BAP, BAD-13-1-0771.

In palm-leaf manuscripts, *anison* texts were written on four or five lines³⁴ on both the recto and verso sides of the leaf (Fig. 3a–c). The texts inscribed on the two sides are upside down in relation to each other, making it easy for preachers to turn over each leaf and continue reading the manuscript while sitting and addressing their audience. Symbols indicating pauses between sentences or between Pali and vernacular words are included to help the preacher. The visual organisation of palm-leaf manuscripts is not much different than that of mulberry-paper manuscripts.

Thanks to the various shapes and sizes of mulberry paper produced, mulberry-paper manuscripts could be designed in a wide variety of ways, not only in the case of *anison* manuscripts. The four mulberry-paper manuscripts examined in this study are multiple-text manuscripts; one contains non-*anison* texts, while the other three³⁵ do feature *anison* texts. The first manuscript with non-*anison* texts is a book with a whirlwind binding (PNTMP, นน 0620021-00; Fig. 4). The texts included presuppose magical uses involving spirits and deities. All the texts are connected, and their titles are in the left-hand margin on the same page as the beginning of the texts.

³⁴ There are generally four lines in those from Laos, but five lines in those from northern Thailand.

³⁵ BAP, BAD-13-2-034 (2004 CE), BAD-13-2-037 (2004 CE), BAD-13-2-087 (year unknown).



Fig. 4: Beginning of *Anisong song sakan*, with its title at the top of the left margin. *Anisong song sakan* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals'). PNTMP, ๙๙ 0620021-00.

Three other mulberry-paper manuscripts have been made in a leporello (concertina) format. Each of them is a multiple-text manuscript and includes different *anisong* texts recited on various religious occasions.³⁶ They are made of connected sheets of mulberry paper with similar templates for the covers. The texts are preceded by large titles at the beginning. Only one side of the connected paper was written on, while the other side was left blank. To achieve a horizontal text layout, the paper was folded into parts, similar to the pothi or oblong

³⁶ BAP, BAD-13-2-034 contains four texts: *Salòng ciwòn* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of monks' robes'), *Salòng haksà sin* ('Rewards deriving from precept observance'), *Salòng pha phutthahup* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of Buddha images') and *Salòng pong sop lü phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals'). BAP, BAD-13-2-037 contains two texts: *Salòng pong sop lü phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals') and *Salòng ciwòn* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of monks' robes'). BAP, BAD-13-2-087 contains two texts: *Anisong fang tham* ('Rewards deriving from listening to the Dhamma') and *Anisong phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals').

format representing the traditional shape of palm-leaf manuscripts. The oblong shape of palm-leaf and mulberry-paper manuscripts dictates how the preacher should hold the manuscript during the sermon. Two of the three manuscripts were produced in 2004 CE by a former monk (Thit) called Niao Maniwong, who made them as master versions for producing further copies (see Subsection 5.1). Both covers were made using the same template, and the *anisong* texts used for funeral sermons were photocopied and therefore identical. Thus, it is hard to tell which one was produced first. In the following figure, the covers are similarly embellished, with decorated margins and tables of contents flanked by two twin curves and floral drawings (Fig. 5a–b). The one on top was perhaps the model for the one below. Judging by the simplicity of the ornamentation on the covers, its lack of polychromy and the humble floral design, the manuscript was meant to be used for liturgical purposes.



Fig. 5a–b: Covers of two palm-leaf manuscripts written by Niao Maniwong, a former monk/scribe. BAP, BAD-13-2-034, BAD-13-2-037.

Instead of having leaves that count foliation, as in the case of palm-leaf manuscripts, a numbering system that counts pages is employed in oblong mulberry-paper manuscripts. Nai Tham numerals,³⁷ commonly used in religious texts, are provided for the pagination. Dotted lines are frequently found, indicating opportunities for improvisation on the part of the preachers, who sometimes speak to the audience before or during a sermon. In the manuscript reproduced in

³⁷ In general, Nai Tham numerals and Hora numerals are found in northern Thai and Lao manuscripts. The two kinds of numerals are quite different. Nai Tham numerals are used in religious texts, while Hora numerals, which originated in Burma, are used in manuscripts containing secular texts; see Jaengsawang 2022, 138.

Fig. 6, for example, lines 9 and 10 of the text display such dotted lines. The sermon is not interrupted by the dotted line; rather, preachers can hold a sermon with or without any improvisation. Before giving the sermon, they often demonstrate the deceased's virtue during his or her lifetime by describing the person's life and praiseworthy actions. Monks sometimes use soothing words to comfort the audience, and do so spontaneously. Interestingly, dotted lines can be found among the vernacular parts of the texts, letting preachers talk freely and interact with the audience.

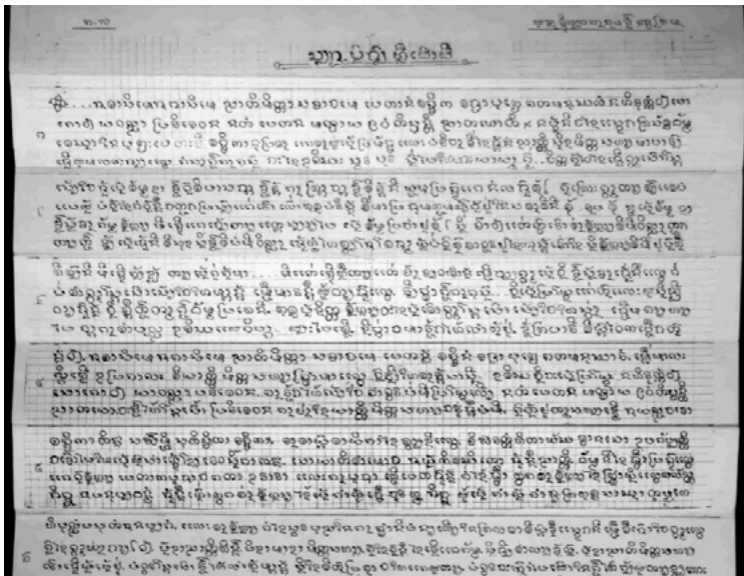


Fig. 6: Dotted lines indicating improvised speech. BAP, BAD-13-2-034.

Since written manuscripts were made by hand in one go and scribal mistakes obviously occurred from time to time, one can often find traces of revisions in the works, such as deletions made using white chemical erasers and new additions added in ink. The manuscripts were read out loud by the preaching monks; the texts themselves were not supposed to be shown to the audience. Revisions made in ink would not have had any impact on the sacred nature of the texts. Misspelled or incomplete words and abbreviations are found in the manuscripts, which were either due to carelessness or introduced deliberately to save space on the palm leaves, which were precious resources. Experienced preachers can certainly understand indistinct words (written in Pali or the ver-

nacular) and intuitively recognise incorrect or abbreviated spellings. Novices or newly ordained monks, however, may not really know whether such words in the manuscripts are correct. Additions and revisions, sometimes done with ink pens and chemical erasers, reflect the fact that funeral preaching was by no means restricted to well-experienced or trained monks; *anison*g sermons could actually be delivered by monks with very different levels of experience, as the texts were not solely in Pali. In the manuscript reproduced in Fig. 7, traces of white chemical eraser can be seen in many places. We cannot be sure who revised the texts this way, however, as information of this kind was not recorded.

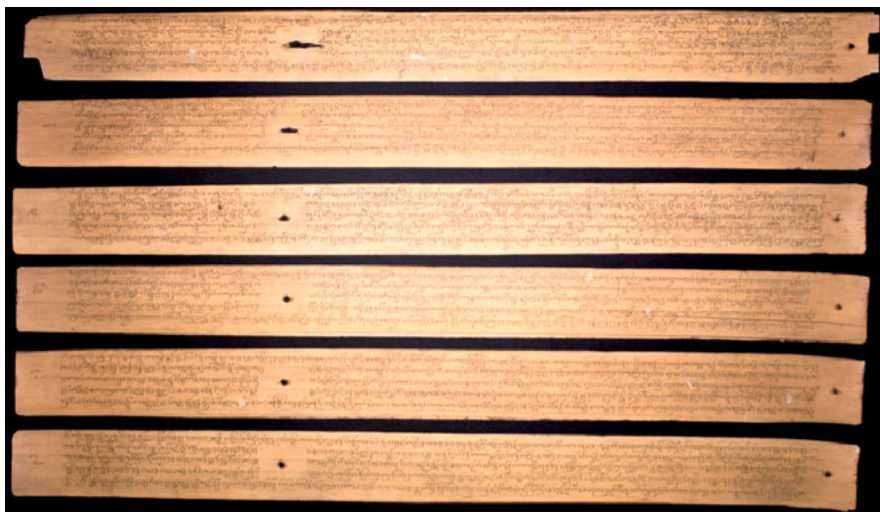


Fig. 7: Textual revision marks. *Anison*g *song* *sakan phi tai* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals'). DLNTM, ซม 0606003-04.

In the first folio of the manuscript entitled *Sòng sop khon tai* (DLLM, 06011406004-05), there is a sentence that reads as follows: ห่มผ้าแล้วเข้าไปอยู่ในธรรมาสน์อาสนะ ('Wear [your] robes and remain at the pulpit'). This short comment was written in Dhamma script and obviously addresses monks and novices, reminding them to follow certain rules while preaching. Another manuscript (shown in Fig. 8), entitled *Anison*g *phao phi*, from Phrae province, includes a foliation remark written in Central Thai script, reading หน้าต้นอาสน์สงฆ์เผาผี ('first page of *Anison*g *phao phi*'). This was no doubt intended for those responsible for assisting the preaching monks, but who did not understand Dhamma script, such as monastic servants and *sangha* volunteers, who were supposed to put the manuscript in order again

after its use; *anisong* manuscripts intended for funerals were used not only by monks, but by laypeople or monastic volunteers who assisted the preaching monks before and after the sermons.

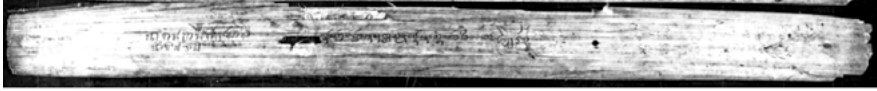


Fig. 8: Central Thai script on the leaf of a manuscript colophon. *Anisong phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals'). PNTMP, พร 0106004-01.

4.2 Texts and rituals

In the manuscripts, funeral rites and the rewards deriving from being involved in such rites are described, revealing funeral culture and activities. One clear example is a multiple-text manuscript (PNTMP, นน 0620021-00) made of mulberry paper including *Anisong song sakan*, which explains and enumerates the rewards earned by attending each step in a funeral. Various procedures are involved in a funeral: carrying corpses to funerary locations (merit due: a reward of 300 *kappa*),³⁸ cremating corpses (three *koṭi*),³⁹ preparing or leading funeral processions (800 *kappa*), playing musical instruments during a funeral procession (300 *kappa*), following behind funeral processions (two *kappa*) and being ordained as a monk or novice at funerals (a reward of 400 *kappa* and rebirth as a celestial deity living in a seven-*yojana*-high⁴⁰ golden castle and being served by seven *koṭi* angels). In Buddhism, those who take part in funerals for relatives or non-relatives believe they will be given 'magnificent merit', have their wishes fulfilled and experience enlightenment (*nibbāna*). Only paternal grandparents (*pu*, *ya*) are mentioned in the manuscripts; those who host funerals for their *pu* (paternal grandfather) will be rewarded with 'glorious merit' for seventy million *kappa*, and those who host funerals for their *ya* (paternal

³⁸ A *kappa* in a world eon, a world age, or a world cycle (Payutto 2015, 317). The Buddha explained that a *kappa* can be likened to an enormous piece of rock that is seven miles long, seven miles wide and seven miles deep in dimension. Once every one hundred years, a *deva* ('deity'), taking a piece of very fine cloth, rubs it until it is no more; this is the length of time of one *kappa* (Suvanno 2001, 48).

³⁹ One *koṭi* equals ten million (in years or number).

⁴⁰ One *yojana* equals sixteen kilometres (ten miles).

grandmother) will be rewarded the same. This practice reflects northern Thai paternalistic society and is also shared by many other east Asian cultures.⁴¹

Some words in the titles of the manuscripts in this case study are concerned with paying commemorative respect to the dead and dedicating merit to them: *song sakan* (สังสการ), *than ha phu tai* (ทานหาผู้ตาย), *plong sop* (ปลงศพ), *sarira* (สรีระ), *sop phi tai* (ศพผิตาย), *sak sop* (ซากศพ), *phao phi* (เผาผี), *chapanakit* (ฌาปนกิจ). Funeral participation is thus a merit-making process for the attendees and deceased alike. The participants are also involved in corpse management. The process of destroying corpses is effected through cremation. Traditionally, this was done outdoors at a local cemetery and the attendees placed a wooden flower on the corpse. Nowadays, before being put in a coffin, the corpses are also exposed and attendees are allowed to pour water onto the deceased's right hand. The practice is known as *rot nam sop* (รดน้ำศพ). The display of corpses is relevant to *asubha-kammaṭṭhāna* contemplation,⁴² which is part of the forty 'subjects of meditation' (*kammaṭṭhāna*).⁴³ Gruesome corpses are sometimes portrayed in the manuscript texts so that readers realise life is transient and death and decay inevitable. In the manuscript entitled *Anisong song sakan* (PNTMP, นน 0620021-00), a *sutta* from the Theravāda Buddhist Canon (*Tipiṭaka*) called the *Amata-sutta* has been added at the very end of the colophon. It reads as follows: อานิสงส์สังสการมาจากธรรมอมตสรีระสังสการ บอกไว้ ('*Anisong song sakan* is derived from *Amata sarira sakan*'). The *Amata-sutta* (อมตสูตร) is included in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, in the Suttanta Piṭaka section of the *Amata-vakka* (อมตวรรค), and describes the *satipaṭṭhāna* ('four foundations of mindfulness')⁴⁴ expounded by Buddha Gotama, which lead us to *nibbāna* or the deathless state (*amata*).

⁴¹ Paternalistic leadership entails three dimensions: *authoritarianism* (hierarchical dynamics between leaders and subordinates and authorities to control and punish people), *benevolence* (nurturing and supporting subordinates) and *moral character* (behaving as a role model with moral integrity). Cheng et al. 2013, 2.

⁴² *Asubha-kammaṭṭhāna* contains contemplations on corpses at ten different stages of decay: *uddhumātaka* ('swollen corpse'), *vinilaka* ('bluish-coloured corpse'), *vipubbaka* ('festering corpse'), *vicchiddaka* ('disjointed corpse'), *vikkhāyitaka* ('gnawed corpse'), *vikakhittaka* ('mangled corpse'), *hatavikakhittaka* ('hacked and scattered corpse'), *lohitaka* ('bleeding corpse'), *puḷuvaka* ('worm-infested corpse') and *aṭṭhika* ('skeleton'). Payutto 2015, 247–248.

⁴³ The subjects of meditation include *kaṣiṇa* ('ten meditation devices'), *asubha* ('ten kinds of foulness'), *anusati* ('ten recollections'), *appamaññā* ('four unbound states of mind'), *āhārepaṭikūlasaññā* ('perception of the loathsomeness of food'), *catudhātu-vavaṭṭhāna* ('analysis of the four elements') and *arūpa* ('four absorptions of the formless spheres'). Payutto 2015, 277.

⁴⁴ The four foundations of mindfulness are *kāyānupassanā* ('contemplation of the body'), *vedanānupassanā* ('contemplation of feelings'), *cittānupassanā* ('contemplation of mind') and *dhammānupassanā* ('contemplation of "mind objects"'). Payutto 2015, 141.

The term *amata panha* or ‘questions on immortality’ is also found in another manuscript, entitled *Anisong phao phi* (DELMN, 321), narrating the story of King Pasenadi Kosala, who questioned Buddha Gotama about the rewards deriving from participating in different stages of funerals. The manuscript is made of palm leaves and was inscribed by a monk named Intha,⁴⁵ revealing that the *sangha* members enjoyed the privilege of having wider access to religious-textual sources.

5 Multiple-text manuscripts and composite manuscripts

Many of the *anisong* manuscripts contain more than one text. To understand how these manuscripts were produced, employed and stored, it is useful to distinguish between multiple-text manuscripts (MTMs) and composite manuscripts (COMs), as we saw previously in Subsection 4.1. When using these terms, we need to keep in mind that much of the codicological scholarship that has employed them used the codex as its paradigm. Once bound, a codex is relatively stable and does not allow for easy modification. Palm-leaf manuscripts are more flexible in this regard: generally speaking, folios in a palm-leaf manuscript fascicle can be removed or added simply by loosening its bookbinding thread.

The term ‘multiple-text manuscript’ was first suggested by Harunaga Isaacson.⁴⁶ Multiple-text manuscripts, in J. Peter Gumbert’s definition, designate codicological units produced from two or more texts ‘in a single operation’,⁴⁷ or a ‘production unit’ resulting from one process delimited in time and space.⁴⁸ An MTM contains several texts in a single production unit, thereby aggregating various bits of information into a textual unit produced at a single chronological moment. Limited access to writing supports was a leading reason for writing multiple-text manuscripts. In order to produce a palm-leaf writing support, for example, leaves of palm trees take up to ten days to prepare before the surface is ready to be inscribed. In the past, manuscripts made from palm leaves were therefore less accessible than other kinds of writing supports, such as mulberry paper or industrial paper. Sponsors had to think carefully about exactly what they should commission the scribes

⁴⁵ อินทะภิกขุพรรณาดำรงด้วยตนเองเดียวแล (‘Intha Bhikkhu wrote [the manuscript] on his own’).

⁴⁶ Prof. Isaacson first suggested this term in Hamburg during discussions with members of DFG Research Group 963 ‘Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Africa’ (2008–2011).

⁴⁷ Gumbert 2004.

⁴⁸ See Friedrich and Schwarke 2016, 15–16.

to write on the material, as the scribes had to complete the writing in one go; the writing support was thus provided by estimating the number of palm leaves required for the whole text. Multiple texts could be included in a single fascicle in which at least one front folio and one rear folio were needed as covers. The texts were written one after the other with a small symbol between the previous text and the next one. This was much better than having a scribe write every single manuscript over and over again whenever the sponsors desired, which would have consumed a considerable amount of material and possibly led to a shortage of it.

The other related term, ‘composite manuscript’,⁴⁹ is also a codicological unit made up of formerly independent units.⁵⁰ In northern Thailand and Laos, a composite manuscript is a bundle of works including several fascicles. These individual works sometimes contain texts on similar subjects that were made at different times, and only later combined to form a bundle. In his 2016 article “‘One-Volume Libraries’ and the Traditions of Learning in Medieval Arabic Islamic Culture”, Gerhard Endress examines *maǧmū’a* codices (*maǧmū’a* means ‘collected’ or ‘put together’), distinguishing familiar types, including MTMs and composite manuscripts, in a way that can be compared with manuscripts with several content units in northern Thai and Lao manuscript cultures:

Composite Manuscripts, *recuelis factices*, were bound together from several cahiers or codicological units that in the first instance were produced and put to use separately, and then bound by bookseller or librarian, or the scribe himself. Multiple-text compilations (MTMs) organised and united by one scribe, and written in a continuous effort by a single hand. The text of one treatise would traverse the quire boundary after a quire had been filled. (A frequent practice, in the Arabic book as in the Latin West, consists of adding a catchword [*reclamans*] at the bottom of one quire pointing to the first word of the following quire in order to avoid disorder.) These would grow in the course of several months, or even years, before they were finally bound by the *muǧallid* ‘bookbinder’ in the service of the *madrassa* and library foundations, or in the market by ‘papeliers’, *warrāqūn*, who sold both paper and copies of books by commission.⁵¹

As for *anisong* manuscripts from northern Thailand and Laos, one can identify manuscripts as multiple-text or composite by looking at the colophons where scribes (or their sponsors) wrote their wishes, intentions and other matter. Par-

⁴⁹ In 1939, the German medievalist Edward Schröder (1858–1942) distinguished between *Sammelhandschriften* and *Miszellanhandschriften* (Friedrich and Schwarke 2016, 3), which were both called ‘composite manuscripts’ by Lynn Thorndike (1882–1965). Their meaning is similar to ‘collecting manuscripts’ or multiple-text manuscripts. The term *Sammelhandschriften*, however, has a narrative connotation.

⁵⁰ Friedrich and Schwarke 2016, 16.

⁵¹ Endress 2016, 178.

acontent⁵² appearing in the manuscripts may indicate whether they were produced as a single unit but written by different people, or whether they were made for different donors. There are five multiple-text manuscripts and two composite manuscripts among the manuscripts in the corpus examined in this study.

5.1 Multiple-text manuscripts

As for multiple-text *anisong* manuscripts in northern Thailand and Laos, one fascicle (*phuk*) contains various *anisong* texts that are used on different occasions; the texts were thus mixed for the purpose of making a collection. There are distinctively rare cases in which *anisong* MTMs also include non-*anisong* texts in the same unit. Multiple-text manuscripts are found more frequently in northern Thailand than in Laos. Each contains several *anisong* texts that are supposed to be used in a range of different rituals, hence MTMs in northern Thailand served as textual *anisong* collections. MTMs could be written by monks or ex-monks. Sponsors who donated money to commission the copying of the manuscripts are mentioned in the colophons, sometimes accompanied by the names of scribes. A number of manuscripts display the names of familiar scribes who also wrote other manuscripts, which were sponsored by different donors. A scribe could therefore be hired to inscribe manuscripts by various sponsors.⁵³

Most of the five multiple-text manuscripts are made of mulberry paper, with the exception of BAP, BAD-13-1-0157 (1944 CE), which is made of palm leaves.⁵⁴

52 Paracontent, which has been discussed in an occasional paper published by the CSMC, is defined as data about manuscripts regarded as physical objects. It can have a bearing on both the core content and the manuscript itself and can also tell us something about the manuscript, helping us to reconstruct the activity of a specific scholar. This relates to colophons, titles and commentaries, for example, but also page or folio numbers, quire numbers and catchwords; see Ciotti et al. 2018.

53 There is also the case of groups of commissioners producing a number of manuscripts. A two-man commission consisting of the Supreme Patriarch and a former monk called Wandī worked together in Luang Prabang from 1962 to 1970 CE to make eight palm-leaf manuscripts containing fourteen *anisong* texts; see Jaengsawang 2022, 219–220.

54 The five texts are *Sòng dòk mai thup thian* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of flowers, incense sticks and candles'), *Sòng haksā sin* ('Rewards deriving from precept observance'), *Sòng fang tham* ('Rewards deriving from listening to the Dhamma'), *Sòng phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals') and *Sòng maha wetsandòn chadok* ('Rewards deriving from listening to Vessantara Jātaka').

The remaining four are PNTMP, ๙๙ 0620021-00 (year unknown),⁵⁵ BAP, BAD-13-2-034 (2004 CE),⁵⁶ BAP, BAD-13-2-037 (2004 CE)⁵⁷ and BAP, BAD-13-2-087 (year unknown).⁵⁸ Besides *anisong* texts used for funerals, the various texts included in the five multiple-text manuscripts were intended for gift-giving rituals and other miscellaneous rituals. Gift-giving is considered a fundamental practice in Buddhism, indeed the most fundamental one of all. Gift-giving occasions and religious events in general are closely associated with *anisong* sermons, as they are mainly held with the expectation of being rewarded with merit; the sermons thus play a role in confirming beneficial returns in one's next life.⁵⁹ Some rituals are not specifically held on a certain occasion,⁶⁰ but can also be performed in a variety of situations. *Anisong* sermons are mainly characterised by allowing devotees to earn merit via self-improvement by following Buddhist precepts and rules, listening to the Dhamma, doing meditation, considering or contemplating one's self alone, wishing for good things and reciting holy prayers. Acts of merit are basically done for different purposes at different times. For instance, *anisong* sermons explaining the rewards earned by taking care of one's own parents can be held at funerals or at the traditional New Year's celebration, when all the family members meet up.⁶¹

Thus, the mixture of texts in the five MTMs does not reflect any textual similarities, but rather their frequent use on religious occasions. One clear case is the mulberry-paper manuscript coded BAP, BAD-13-2-037, which includes two *anisong* texts: *Salòng pong sop lü phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals') and *Salòng ciwòn* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of monks' robes'). The two texts can both be used at funerals. Offering robes (Thai: *ciwòn*, or *pha bangsukun*) to monks is another activity performed at funerals. Before a cremation begins, a set of monk's robes is placed on sacred threads between the coffin and the monk, symbolising the dedication of monks' robes by the dead.

55 The manuscript contains numerous texts used for magical rituals.

56 This manuscript contains four texts: *Salòng ciwòn* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of monks' robes'), *Salòng haksá sin* ('Rewards deriving from precept observance'), *Salòng pha phutthahup* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of Buddha images') and *Salòng pong sop lü phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals').

57 The manuscript contains two texts: *Salòng pong sop lü phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals') and *Salòng ciwòn* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of monks' robes').

58 The manuscript contains two texts: *Anisong fang tham* ('Rewards deriving from listening to the Dhamma') and *Anisong phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals').

59 See Jaengsaewang 2022, 256.

60 Regarding the different types of rituals, see Jaengsaewang 2022, 274.

61 See Jaengsaewang 2022, 274.

Bangsukun (บังสุกุล) means ‘being full of dust’ and denotes uncleaned cloth that has been disposed of as an ‘unused’ object. During Buddha Gotama’s lifetime, monks were requested to find themselves ‘unused’ cloth and make it into robes for themselves; they were not allowed to ask laypeople explicitly for robes. As regulated by the Buddhist canon, which elaborates the concept of detachment, Buddhist monks have to take such cloth and use it to make robes for themselves regardless of its condition.⁶² This tradition has developed from Buddhist canonical conventions describing how Buddhist monks once took ‘unused’ cloth from roads, forests and even cemeteries (the clothes left on corpses there) and used it as their robes. Offering robes at funerals is therefore considered an example of merit-making on behalf of the deceased.

Multiple-text manuscripts were sometimes commissioned to provide further copies, as in the case of the manuscripts coded BAP, BAD-13-2-034 and BAP, BAD-13-2-037. According to their inventory sheets, they are kept in a cabinet in the prayer room (*hong wai phra*) at the abode of the Venerable Sathu Nyai Khamchan (1920–2007) at Vat Saen Sukharam, Luang Prabang, where the owner could easily access them for his own use. The manuscripts were written by Thit Niao Maniwong,⁶³ a Buddhist scholar in Luang Prabang. He wrote a number of *anisong* manuscripts made of mulberry paper. The honorific title ‘Thit’ refers to the scribe’s ex-monk status; he undoubtedly experienced learning Tham script during his monkhood. The mulberry-paper manuscripts made by him were all produced with the same layout, composed of similarly styled covers and paper connected in a single long sheet with oblong folds (Fig. 9).⁶⁴ Whether or not he designed the covers himself is unclear. The colophons mostly include blank spaces with dotted underlines that are provided for filling in the names of sponsors and merit recipients

⁶² See the *Nissaggiyakaṇḍa*, describing ten regulations pertaining to robes in Vinaya Piṭaka, the second volume of the Buddhist canon known as the *Tiṭṭhaka*.

⁶³ No further information about him exists apart from a study by Bounleuth Sengsoulin, who mentions his social status pertaining to a specific dating system: ‘Thit Niao Maniwong (Thit Niao) was a Buddhist scholar in Luang Prabang who followed the newly introduced orthographic system of the Tham-Lao script and the new way of writing manuscripts – both the system and the way might have been put into place by Sathu Nyai Khamchan. However, Thit Niao did not use two dating systems in the same manuscript, whereas some manuscripts initiated by Sathu Nyai Khamchan regularly contain two dating systems, the Buddhist and Minor Eras. Therefore, Thit Niao had his own way of dating manuscripts’. Bounleuth 2016, 240–241.

⁶⁴ MTM containing four texts: *Salòng ciwôn* (‘Rewards deriving from the donation of monks’ robes’), *Salòng haksā sin* (‘Rewards deriving from precept observance’), *Salòng pha phutthahup* (‘Rewards deriving from the donation of Buddha images’) and *Salòng pong sop lū phao phi* (‘Rewards deriving from participation in funerals’).

(Fig. 10)⁶⁵. The abbreviation ‘ဂ.လ.’ on some of the title pages means ‘already checked’ (ဂသလံ့). Presumably, Thit Niao Maniwong intended the manuscripts to serve as master copies from which to make future exemplars.



Fig. 9: An MTM containing four texts, cover page. BAP, BAD-13-2-034.

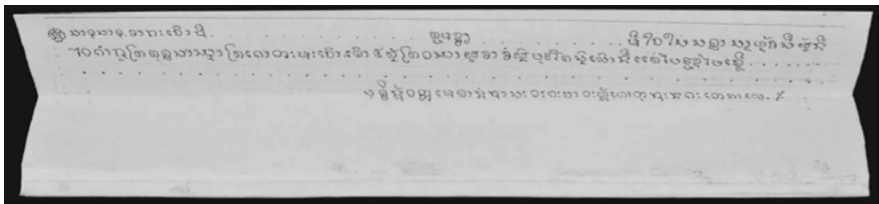


Fig. 10: An MTM containing four texts, colophon. BAP, BAD-13-2-037.

5.2 Composite manuscripts

In *anisong* composite manuscripts made in northern Thailand and Laos, each bundle contains more than one fascicle. Each fascicle was originally made by different production units at different times and with the financial help of different sponsors, and the fascicles were combined into bundles to serve particular purposes. Some were collected on the basis of similar textual themes, while others were combined so they could be employed on similar occasions. The two composite manuscripts in this case study are PNTMP, နမူ 03-06-320-428⁶⁶ and DLLM, 01012906002-

⁶⁵ MTM containing four texts: *Salòng pong sop lū phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals'), *Salòng ciwòn* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of monks' robes'), *Salòng pha phutthahup* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of Buddha images') and *Salòng pong sop lū phao phi* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals').

⁶⁶ The whole bundle is coded PNTMP, နမူ 03-06-320-428, but the individual fascicles inside are uncoded. The fourteen fascicles are *Anisong liang phò liang mae*, *Anisong khao phan kôn*, *Anisong sapphathan*, *Anisong sia phi*, *Anisong buat mai*, *Anisong sang tham*, *Anisong kwat wat*, *Anisong kathinathan*, *Anisong pi mai*, *Anisong pha bangsukun*, *Anisong pidok*, *Anisong chapanakit*, *Anisong pi mai* and *Anisong bòk fai*.

04. The former contains fourteen fascicles, each of which contains a single text. These were probably mostly used as sermon texts in gift-giving rituals and calendrical rituals without any thematic similarity or with a common purpose. The latter contains five fascicles; only one contains multiple texts, whereas the remaining four are single-text items. They are *Salòng sop* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals') (1904 CE), *Thesana chapanakit wiphak* ('Liturgy at funerals') (year unknown), a multiple-text fascicle⁶⁷ (year unknown), *Sòng sop* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals') (1846 CE) and *Sòng sop phi tai* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals') (year unknown). Each of these texts was written in a separate fascicle in different years and then later added to a bundle because of their thematic similarity and common purpose: to serve as funerary liturgical texts. The sponsorship and authorship of these five fascicles were dominated by *sangha* members, monks and novices.⁶⁸ They were a particular group with broader access to religious sources than other people and were in charge of ritual chanting at funerals, thereby producing sermon texts that served their practical uses. Only one fascicle, entitled *Sòng sop*, was sponsored by a group of laypeople (in 1846 CE), and, according to the colophon,⁶⁹ it was initially donated to a monastery along with six other texts written in fourteen fascicles before it was picked out to be re-grouped into the current bundle.

⁶⁷ This fascicle contains three texts, making it a multiple-text manuscript: *Sòng sop* ('Rewards deriving from participation in funerals'), *Sòng pitaka* ('Rewards deriving from copying religious books') and *Sòng kammawaca* ('Rewards deriving from sponsoring ordination ceremonies').

⁶⁸ ผู้ข้าชื่อว่าจัวเป้าได้สร้างหนังสือสองศพ ('I, a novice called Pao, produced this manuscript, entitled *Sòng sop*'), พระทองสังข์ แก้วสีเรือง สุวันโน ลิกขาเปติ ('Phra [monk] Thongsang Kaeosi-ruang Suvaṇṇo inscribed [this manuscript]'), เจ้าหม่อมหล้า ได้เขียนหนังสือสองศพไว้กับศาสนา ('Cao Mòu [monk] La inscribed this manuscript, entitled *Sòng sop*, for the Buddhist religion') and พุชิตติยวงศาเป็นผู้รจนาสร้างหนังสือสองศพผัดตาย ('Thu [monk] Khattiyavamsā inscribed this manuscript, entitled *Sòng sop phi tai*').

⁶⁹ หมายถึงมูลศรัทธาพ้อหม่อมอ่อนดาและภรรยาบุตรนัดดา มีใจใส่ศรัทธาสร้างปัญญาบารมีหลวงมี ๘ ผูกแล สุวรรณกุมารมี ๒ ผูกแล ศรัทธาวิมาลา ๑ ผูกแล กุสลาวิณัจญกถา ๑ ผูกแล หนูคำ ๑ ผูกแล หนูเผือก ๑ ผูกแล สองสบ ๑ ผูกแล หมดเท่านั้น ('[The production of this manuscript was sponsored by] principal initiators including Phò Mòu (monk) Ònta, his (ex-)wife, his children and his grandchildren, who had the ardent religious faith to sponsor eight fascicles of *Panya Barami Lüang*, two fascicles of *Suvaṇṇakumāra*, one fascicle of *Saddhāvimāla*, one fascicle of *Kusalavinicchaya-gathā*, one fascicle of *Nu Kham*, one fascicle of *Nu Phüak* and one fascicle of *Sòng sop*').

6 Manuscript circulation

Funerals are important because they are life-transition rituals. The manuscripts discussed here were required for funerary rituals and were therefore in high demand, but limited in number and kept at monasteries. Accordingly, in the past, *anison* manuscripts used for funerals were often borrowed and circulated in the community. Ownership notes found in several *anison* manuscripts reflect this, their aim being to ensure that the manuscript was returned to its proper place. The manuscript entitled *Sòng sak sop khon tai* (BAP, BAD-13-1-0771) was sponsored by a group of laypeople and inscribed by a monk associated with Vat Siang Thòng, but it is currently kept at Vat Saen Sukharam. The manuscript must have been circulated among local monasteries in Luang Prabang until it ended up being stored in its current monastic repository. An ownership note added to the last folio – simply the name ‘Vat Saen’ – evidently relates to this culture of manuscript circulation. Admonitions about returning manuscripts to their rightful places (monasteries) are sometimes found along with affiliation markers. A palm-leaf manuscript kept in Lampang province includes an admonition and the following ownership statement:

ผู้ต้องการยืมเอาไปทางใด ขอเอามาไว้วัดบ้านเอื้อมตั้งเก่า สัมมาที่ใด สัมไปที่นั้น
อย่าไปลืมเนื้อ

Borrowers should return the manuscript to Wat Ban Ûam; please return things to their rightful location. Do not forget.⁷⁰

Another notable example is a multiple-text palm-leaf manuscript coded BAP, BAD-13-1-0157 (1944 CE) (see Figs 11–13). It contains five texts: *Sòng dòk mai thup thian* (‘Rewards deriving from the donation of flowers, incense sticks and candles’), *Sòng haksa sin* (‘Rewards deriving from precept observance’), *Sòng fang tham* (‘Rewards deriving from listening to the Dhamma’), *Sòng phao phi* (‘Rewards deriving from participation in funerals’) and *Sòng maha wetsandòn chadok* (‘Rewards deriving from listening to Vessantara Jātaka’). Besides having an ownership note like the previous one (‘Vat Saen’; Fig. 11), the foliation system of the manuscript was also designed with its circulation in mind. On their recto side, the folios are marked with Nai Tham numerals in the left-hand margin, ordering the folios of each text (Fig. 12), while the verso side of the folios is

⁷⁰ PNTMP, สป 0420097-02, fol. 17^v.

marked with syllables,⁷¹ ordering the folios of the whole manuscript fascicle (Fig. 13). Each of the five texts has the same template of headings and is followed by blank folios serving as separators, thereby enabling specific texts to be picked out and ‘borrowed’ individually without affecting any of the adjacent texts and then returned to the correct place in the fascicle afterwards. This particular manuscript circulated among local temples, which shared it,⁷² and judging by the co-existence of two different foliations,⁷³ each of the individual texts was borrowed by different users (either a preaching monk or one of the users added an ownership label to indicate the manuscript’s origin). Foliation could be done in accordance with the use of manuscripts in a community, as Bounleuth Sengsoulin has explained:

The different ways of counting the leaves of various manuscripts indicate that the Buddhist scholars of Luang Prabang have established their own rather idiosyncratic pagination system for palm-leaf manuscripts. Both traditional numerals and the orthographic system of Sanskrit and Pali have been applied in order to list the leaves of manuscripts.⁷⁴

71 Unlike paper manuscripts, palm-leaf manuscripts are mostly numbered using a combination of consonant and vowel graphemes, according to the order used for the arrangement of words written in Devanagari and other Indic scripts (for the sake of simplicity, I will call it just ‘Sanskrit orthography’ here). This system of foliation is especially used for manuscripts that contain religious texts. The first twelve folios would start with a *k* (a voiceless and unaspirated velar), the first consonant of the alphabet, which is then combined with twelve vowels – *a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, e, ai, o, au, aṃ, aḥ* – used in Sanskrit. Apart from the last one, these vowels are pronounced in a similar way to the corresponding vowels in Lao. The first twelve folios would be paginated, for example, as follows: *ka, kā, ki, kī, ku, kū* and so on, which corresponds to one, two, three, four, five, six etc. (up to twelve). In the case of a longer text, i.e. a fascicle of a palm-leaf manuscript comprising more than twelve leaves, the remaining consonants, such as *kh, g, gh, ṇ, c, ch, j, jh, ñ* and so forth, would likewise be combined with the same set of twelve vowels. Khamvone and Grabowsky 2017, 20–21.

72 Manuscripts were shared by local temples and circulated among them. They were sometimes kept at a specific monastery and borrowed by monks from other temples.

73 Numerous palm-leaf manuscripts found in the abode of the Venerable Monk Sathu Nyai Khamchan Virachitto are also foliated using two systems, numerals and words. As Khamvone Boulyaphonh and Volker Grabowsky have observed, ‘The numeral was mostly written in the left-hand margin of the first page of each leaf, whereas the numerated word was placed in the traditional manner. Some palm-leaf manuscripts have been foliated twice, first with the combination of consonant and vowel graphemes as described above and a second time (mostly not by the original scribe but by a later user) by using numerals’. Khamvone and Grabowsky 2017, 21.

74 Bounleuth 2016, 61.



Fig. 11: A multiple-text manuscript containing five *anisong* texts. BAP, BAD-13-1-0157, fol. 1' to 5'.



Fig. 12: *Sòng dòk mai thup thian* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of flowers, incense sticks and candles'). BAP, BAD-13-1-0157, fol. 1' to 5'.



Fig. 13: *Sòng dòk mai thup thian* ('Rewards deriving from the donation of flowers, incense sticks and candles'). BAP, BAD-13-1-0157, fol. 6'.

7 Conclusion

Funerals are held to commemorate the dead and remind the attendees to be aware of the transience of life. Besides describing the rewards one could gain from taking part in different funeral processes, *anisong* manuscripts delineate the various stages of physical decay that corpses undergo. *Anisong* sermons are given by monks to promise forthcoming rewards to the participants themselves and to the dead. Funerals are organised in the form of social activities and can be attended by family members, relatives and friends of the deceased as well as other people, all of whom receive rewards. The *sangha* community was familiar with Buddhist textual sources, including the frequently mentioned *Amata-sutta*, and was therefore particularly responsible for producing *anisong* manuscripts. Since holding sermons was a practice that was not restricted to well-trained preachers, mistakes and revisions are commonly found in the manuscripts in our corpus, but they never devalue the sacredness of the manuscripts, as they were corrected by the preaching monks and the texts were always read aloud. *Anisong* manuscripts provide evidence of interaction between monks and their lay audience during sermons, in which the monks were expected to wear suitable attire and talk to the attendees to alleviate their grief as need be. Since funerals have remained a living tradition, the manuscripts were sometimes regrouped to create new bundles used for subsequent funerals. In some cases, the bundles could be undone and individual sections could be taken out and reinserted later. Funerals were such regular occurrences that *anisong* manuscripts were also used as master versions to make further copies. Mulberry-paper manuscripts were produced in a pothi shape to imitate palm leaves when this natural material started to become rare.

Manuscripts

DLNTM = Digital Library of Northern Thai Manuscripts

Vientiane, National Library of Laos, ขม 0606003-04. อานิสงส์สังสารนิคตตาย [*Anisong song sakan phi tai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na; 9 fols; c. 1297 (1935 CE).

PNTMP = Preservation of Northern Thai Manuscripts Project

Chiang Mai, Wat Chiang Man, ขม 0106001-05. อานิสงส์ทานไปหาคนตาย [*Anisong than pai ha khon tai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na; 5 fols; undated.

Lampang, Wat Ban Uam, ลป 0420097-02. สามิทำงานศพอุทิศให้แก่ภริยาที่ดับขันธไป [*Sami tham ngan sop uthit hai kae phariya thi dap khan pai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na; 18 fols; CS 1307 (1945 CE).

Nan, Wat Monthian, นน 03-06-320-428. รวมอานิสงส์: อานิสงส์เลี้ยงพ่อเลี้ยงแม่; อานิสงส์ข้าวพันก้อน; อานิสงส์สรรพทาน; อานิสงส์เสียดิ; อานิสงส์บวชใหม่; อานิสงส์สร้างธรรม; อานิสงส์กวาดวัด; อานิสงส์กฐินทาน; อานิสงส์บิใหม่; อานิสงส์ผ้าบังสุกุล; อานิสงส์ปิฎก; อานิสงส์ฌาปนกิจ; อานิสงส์บิใหม่; อานิสงส์บอไฟ [*Anisong liang phò liang mae; Anisong khao phan kòn; Anisong sapphathan; Anisong sia phi; Anisong buat mai; Anisong sang tham; Anisong kwat wat; Anisong kathinathan; Anisong pi mai; Anisong pha bangsukun; Anisong pidok; Anisong chapanakit; Anisong pi mai; Anisong bòk fai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; CS 1263 (1901 CE).

Nan, Wat Pa Müat, นน 0620021-00. อานิสงส์ส่งสการ [*Anisong song sakan*], mulberry-paper manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na; 16 fols; undated.

Nan, Wat Phra Koet, นน 11-06-003-01. อานิสงส์ฌาปนกิจ [*Anisong chapanakit*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na. Undated.

Phrae, Wat Phrabat Ming Müang, พร 0406012-03. อานิสงส์เผาไฟให้ [*Anisong phao phi bò hai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na; 11 fols; CS 1200 (1838 CE).

Phrae, Wat Sung Men, พร 0106004-01. อานิสงส์เผาผี [*Anisong phao phi*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na; 11 fols; undated.

Phrae, Wat Sung Men, พร 0406012-01. อานิสงส์สรีระ [*Anisong sarira*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na; 8 fols; CS 1273 (1911 CE).

DLLM = Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts

Luang Prabang, Vat Mai Suvanna Phumaram, 06011406004-05. สองศพคนตาย [*Sòng sop khon tai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; 19 fols; CS 1310 (1948 CE).

Luang Prabang, Vat Mai Suvanna Phumaram, 06011406006-04. สองอานิสงส์บุญที่ได้ทานไปหาผู้ตาย [*Sòng anisong bun thi dai than pai ha phu tai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; 10 fols; CS 1342 (1980 CE).

Vientiane, National Library of Laos, 01012906002-04. รวมอานิสงส์: สองศพ; เทศนาฌาปนกิจวิภาค; สองศพ; สองศพ; สองศพผิตาย [*Sòng sop; Thesana chapanakit wiphak; Sòng sop; Sòng sop; Sòng sop phi tai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; 66 fols; CS 1266 (1904 CE).

DELMN = Dokumentarische Erfassung literarischer Materialien in den Nordprovinzen Thailands

Lamphun, Wat Huai Nam Dip, 321. อานิสงส์เผาผี [*Anisong phao phi*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Pali and Thai; script: Tham Lan Na; 13 fols; CS 1295 (1933 CE).

BAP = The Buddhist Archive of Photography

Luang Prabang, Vat Saen Sukharam, BAD-13-1-0157. รวมอานิสงส์: สองดอกไม้อูปเทียน; สองเผาผี; สองมหาเวสสันดรชาดก [*Sòng dòk mai thup thian; Sòng phao phi; Sòng maha wetsandòn chadok*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; 40 fols; CS 1306 (1944 CE).

- Luang Prabang, Vat Saen Sukharam, BAD-13-1-0771. สองซาทศพนคนตาย [*Sòng sak sop khon tai*], palm-leaf manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; 10 fols; CS 1313 (1951 CE).
- Luang Prabang, Vat Saen Sukharam, BAD-13-2-034. รวมอาณิสงส์: สองจีวร; สองรักษาสิล; สองพระพุทธรูป; สองปลงศพหรือเผาผี [*Salòng ciwòn; Salòng haksà sin; Salòng pha phutthahup; Salòng pong sop lù phao phi*], mulberry-paper manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; 12 sides; CS 1366 (2004 CE).
- Luang Prabang, Vat Saen Sukharam, BAD-13-2-037. รวมอาณิสงส์: สองปลงศพหรือเผาผี; สองจีวร; สองพระพุทธรูป; สองปลงศพหรือเผาผี [*Salòng pong sop lù phao phi; Salòng ciwòn; Salòng pha phutthahup; Salòng pong sop lù phao phi*], mulberry-paper manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; 7 sides; CS 1366 (2004 CE).
- Luang Prabang, Vat Saen Sukharam, BAD-13-2-087. รวมอาณิสงส์: อาณิสงส์พึงธรรม; อาณิสงส์เผาผี [*Anisong fang tham; Anisong phao phi*], mulberry-paper manuscript; language: Lao and Pali; script: Tham Lao; 20 sides; undated.

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