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Journal of the Siam Society

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THE SIAM SOCIETY
UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE

120TH ANNIVERSARY

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The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage
131 Sukhumwit Soi 21 (Asoke Montri Road) Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Tel. +66 2 661 6470-7; Fax. +66 2 258 3491;
Email: info@thesiamsociety.org

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*See Cheng & Walker, this volume, for a discussion of the piece

Editorial

Welcome to the first part of Volume 112 of the *Journal of the Siam Society* (JSS), a milestone edition that underscores our enduring dedication to scholarly exploration in and cultural preservation of Thai and neighboring cultures. As we embark on this journey, we carry both a sense of excitement and a touch of nostalgia, honoring the memory of colleagues and friends recently lost, starting with an obituary of the late John Joseph Toomey (1945–2021), a cherished life member of our society. In forthcoming issues, we will honor the legacies of Gérard Diffloth (1939–2023) and Elizabeth H. Moore (1948–2024), commemorating their profound impact on Mon–Khmer and Burmese studies, respectively.

This edition is distinctive as we transition to a new era at JSS, introducing a fresh editorial team and board members. In this transition, we extend our sincere gratitude to Chris Baker and Paul Bromberg for their remarkable editorial leadership over the past decade. Their dedication steered the JSS ship with great success and accomplishments.

In celebrating the 120th anniversary of the Siam Society, we are privileged to showcase an insightful biographical reconstruction by Volker Grabowsky, shedding light on the life of Oskar Frankfurter, a founding member, and former President of the Siam Society (1906–1917).

Diving into a diverse array of research studies, Pia Conti explores Buddhist tantric art in the 10th-century Khmer empire while Marcus Bingenheimer & Paul McBain guide us through a revisit of Chinese temples in Bangkok. Terry E. Miller & Taywin Promnikon unfold a fading narrative of 150 years of musical memory in Thailand's Lopburi province. Gregory Kourilsky provides a comprehensive review article of the Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition of meditation, often dubbed *kammatthan*. Finally, Javier Schnake offers a fresh edition and translation of the Mahākassapa's *Parinibbāna*, providing a glimpse into the rich Pali literature composed locally.

With this issue, we introduce four new sections. First, in "From the Archives", Maëlle Pennéguès brings to light a hidden gem—a newly unearthed travelogue to Siam in 1685 by a French missionary, enriching our understanding of historical journeys to the region. This handwritten travel report, accompanied by an annotated transliteration, is accessible on the web for consultation as supplemental material on our ThaiJo website.[1]

[1] As a reminder, JSS was formerly available through the Siam Society's main site (https://thesiamsociety.org/publications/journal-of-the-siam-society/). The general information and back-issues of volumes 1–95 (1904–2008) remain on that site, but new issues from 2009 appear only on the ThaiJo website, accessible here: https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/pub_jss.

Second, in "Literature Escapes", Émilie Testard explores versions of *Lilit Phra Lo*, while Tony Waters delves into the intriguing *Nithan Thong-in* by King Vajiravudh.

Third, in another fresh addition to JSS, "Museum Spotlights", Sofia Sundström, Yuyu Cheng & Trent Walker, and Naomi Wang illuminate our pages with discoveries from various museum collections worldwide, showcasing the richness of cultural artifacts from Thailand and the region.

Finally, rounding out this edition with glimpses into recent "Events and Exhibitions", are Alexandra Green's exploration of *Burma to Myanmar* at the British Museum, and Gomesh Karnchanapayap's description of a unique Metaverse performance of *Mali Bucha* in Singapore.

And, of course as expected, a full panoply of book reviews is available for consultation. We invite you to immerse yourselves in the diverse tapestry of knowledge and discovery woven within these pages. Thank you for your support and interest in the Siam Society's continuing journey.

Nicolas Revire
Managing Editor
journal@thesiamsociety.org

Journal of the Siam Society

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In Memoriam: John Joseph Toomey (1945–2021)

John Toomey at Ueno Park in Tokyo, Japan, photographed by his good friend, Mr Shima Motoi (Fall 2019)

John Toomey, the offspring of Irish emigres to Illinois, USA, was born on 3 January 1945 in Chicago, and attended a rural school in Wilmington, Will County, about an hour's drive from downtown Chicago. His father was a railroad laborer, his mother a homemaker. John was the eldest, but his younger brother predeceased him.

One of his father's avocations was to breed and raise horses that he rented to dude riders on weekends. While reminiscing about feeding the horses oats and water as a youngster, he acknowledged the fear they might bite off his fingers. Eventually, John even broke in young colts. During summers, he became a part-time rodeo hand. Although feisty old steeds threw him off several times, John never gave up and continued to teach dudes how to ride and shovel manure into the compost heap and/or throw hay into the stalls.

John's formal schooling took place in a Catholic parochial environment where earnest Jesuits drummed catechism into him. By dint of this repetitive routine and strict discipline, John developed a wide repertoire of facts and figures he could expound at will.

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As a member of the US Department of Defense Overseas, John qualified via correspondence courses to teach world history, art, and the humanities. Therefore, for twenty-one years, he was a high school teacher of military offspring for US Department of Defense Overseas Dependents Schools in three locations: (1) Würzburg, Germany (1982–1984); (2) Okinawa and Yokohama, Japan (1985–2001); and (3) Seoul, South Korea (2002–2005).

While posted to Japan for sixteen years, John simultaneously pursued a master's degree in art history and specialized in Far Eastern art at Sophia University in Tokyo. He studied both Japanese and Korean. Over time, he earned a teacher's certificate in "The Way of Tea" and Japanese traditional music, specializing in the *koto* (箏).

John became a fully certified teacher of the tea ceremony in Japanese (his personal tea name: Sofu, 1988), and Korean tea etiquette (personal tea name: DaMi, 2000), in the Urasenke (裏千家) school tradition. Thus far, John has been the only foreigner appointed head of tea schools in Seoul, 2003–2005, and subsequently in Thailand, 2005–2021.

On a recent visit to his former house in Pathum Thani, north of Bangkok, eight different koto instruments were counted, each in its individual case. John's musical aptitude probably stemmed from his father's second avocation: playing the guitar at weddings in a small country-western band on weekends.

When John opted to take early retirement at sixty, he scouted around to identify a less expensive locale than Japan. After pragmatically assessing various options, he recognized Thailand's benefits. John found congenial accommodation in Pathum Thani province and settled into a three-bedroom double-storied house in a gated housing estate.

With the assistance of a Thai friend, John's corner plot became an exotic oasis. Sparing no expense, over the course of nearly sixteen years in this exclusive community, John transformed his spacious, albeit boxy, two-storied Italianate house into a vibrant museum that focused on exquisite works of fine art. John filled its rooms with a choice collection of original paintings and sculptures, ceramics and vintage photographs, handwoven textiles and wooden furniture from Japan and Korea, and other locations. John cultivated interesting people in tandem with collecting a wide array of artwork. His outstanding *objets d'art* gained the reputation of being a veritable museum of unique collector's items. John served as its sole curator until the COVID-19 pandemic hit Thailand.

Before early 2020, if a visitor asked John about a certain piece, he would give a lengthy account of where he bought it, its original provenance, perhaps the artistic school or craftsman that fashioned it, who might have owned it previously, and more. Hardly any of this invaluable information was written down, except for a few notations scribbled on the plywood box containing the artwork. John stored all the details in his head.

As a certified tea master or *chajin* (茶人), he converted the driveway and carport into a custom-built double *chashitsu* (茶室) or two-part tearoom with woven *tatami* mats, wooden alcoves for hanging scrolls, and shelves for

floral arrangements. He installed the prerequisite coal-burning hearth sunken deep in the floor to boil the spring water required for preparing green tea known as *matcha* (抹茶).

The surrounding landscaped grounds were in harmony with the inner peace of the tearoom. The garden set the mood for a once-in-a-lifetime tea ceremony. John guided his art form by four basic principles: harmony 和 (*wa*), respect 敬 (*kei*), purity 清 (*sei*), and tranquility 寂 (*jaku*). His every movement, step and moment were precisely defined.

During John's active retirement, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the study of art. He tirelessly promoted and disseminated knowledge, news, and research findings on a wide array of topics pertaining to Southeast Asia and the Far East. One of his online platforms was the website *Japan Today* (launched in 2000).

He single-handedly launched and wrote for the *Thai Textile Society Newsletter*, for which he contributed knowledgeable articles. John likewise supported Dr Roxanna Brown (1946–2008) in setting up the Southeast Asian Ceramic Museum in 2005 at Bangkok University, Rangsit campus. Even after her untimely demise, John continued to contribute features in its *Southeast Asian Ceramic Museum Newsletter*.

John also played a major role in the National Museum Volunteers (NMV began in 1969). He delivered lectures (videotapes of some presentations and tea ceremony demonstrations are posted on YouTube) and wrote prodigiously for its publications, including the *National Museum Volunteers Newsletter*.

He received a special Heritage Award, comprising an illustrious certificate and pin, from HRH Maha Chakri Princess Sirindhorn on 3 January 2014 (his 68th birthday) on the lawn of the Bangkok National Museum. According to MR Chakrarot Chitrabongse, a great-grandson of King Rama IV and former Permanent Secretary for the Thai Ministry of Culture, this Thai award is the highest that can be conferred on a foreigner in recognition of achievements in the conservation, preservation, and promotion of art and culture of the Thai National Heritage.

In addition, John delivered lectures and contributed articles, conducted study tours, and gave tea ceremony demonstrations at The Siam Society in Bangkok (he was a Life Member) and at his personal tearoom in Pathum Thani. John also represented The Siam Society at the 2012 International Conference organized by The State Museum of Ethnology in Warsaw, Poland, entitled, "Korea: Art and Artistic Relations with Europe/Poland".

Owing to his association with the world's only lacquerware museum (Der Museum für Lackkunst in Münster, Germany), in 2010, John initiated the First International Conference on Lacquerware in Bangkok; five years later, he spearheaded the Second International Conference on the Study of Oriental Lacquer in Bangkok. John was also affiliated with the Southeast Asia Library Group (SEALG) and The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

John likewise maintained close ties with the National Museum of Singapore and the National University of Singapore.

Of course, his closest associates were in Japan (such as at the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties [Tobunken]) and South Korea (Cho-Am Tea Culture Association in Daegu, Seoul).

During his final six years, John suffered from physical exhaustion, stress, and what he euphemistically dubbed "over-volunteering". After John died on 27 August 2021 at the Thammasat University Hospital in Rangsit, Thailand, due to complications from COVID-19, his many friends and associates turned to assisting Mr Tanarat Luangaphiban, the beneficiary of John's estate. The latter plans to convert the Pathum Thani house and its impressive art collection into a private museum.

Annual memorial services, featuring a tea ceremony, are conducted by John's devoted friends and disciples. John Toomey was a remarkable individual, truly a congenial and generous person who enjoyed sharing whatever he knew. If he did not know something, he knew where he could find the answer, or who to ask. Few academics possess this kind of humility.

John often concluded his emails with, "If one hasn't time for a cup of tea, why speak of enlightenment?" He then would advise: "Put the kettle on and rest in the mind that abides nowhere".

Kim Matics
Life Member of The Siam Society
info@thesiamsociety.org

Oskar Frankfurter: A Biographical Reconstruction

Volker Grabowsky[1]

Abstract—This article reexamines the life of Dr Oskar Frankfurter (1852–1922), co-founder and president of the Siam Society from 1906 to 1917. Despite his impactful contributions to Thai studies and culture during his tenure as chief librarian of the Vajirañāṇa National Library, his life remains shrouded in obscurity. Drawing from recently discovered archival sources in Thailand, Germany, and the UK, the article explores Frankfurter's early years in Hamburg, his influential career in Siam from 1884 to 1918, and his role in establishing Thai Studies in Germany. The narrative is structured to cover key life phases, offering a glimpse into the fascinating legacy of this forgotten luminary.

Keywords: Bangkok; Hamburg; Oskar (Oscar) Frankfurter; Siam Society; Thai Studies in Germany

Introducing Oskar Frankfurter

In 2024, the Siam Society in Bangkok celebrates its 120th anniversary. Dr Oskar Frankfurter (alternatively spelled Oscar),[2] a once-renowned German scholar and co-founder, served as its president from 1906 until 1917, shaping the society's trajectory in its formative years more significantly than perhaps any other individual. Despite his profound influence, Frankfurter has largely faded from public memory, remembered only by a small number of specialists.[3]

Frankfurter dedicated nearly half of his life to Siam (modern-day Thailand), serving the Siamese Government as the chief librarian of the Vajirañāṇa National Library from 1905 onwards. He authored numerous works on Thai (Siamese) language, culture, and history. However, details about his life remain elusive, with only a single, poor-quality portrait of him being published (Wright & Breakspear 1908: 251).

Drawing from newly unearthed material from archives in Thailand, Germany, and the United Kingdom, as well as private collections, this article seeks to reevaluate Dr Frankfurter's life (1852–1922). It traces

[1] Asia-Africa Institute, Universität Hamburg. Email: volker.grabowsky@uni-hamburg.de.

[2] The earliest dated documents, such as Frankfurter's school certificate (1874), the documents pertaining to his doctorate (1878), including his signature under a handwritten *curriculum vitae*, as well as archival documents issued by German authorities (German Embassy, Foreign Office, etc.) write his name as "Oskar". Apparently, at some moment during his stay in Siam, Frankfurter changed the spelling of his first name to "Oscar", following English orthography, as testified in his marriage certificate (1910) and death certificate (1922).

[3] Some basic information on his life and work can be found in Stoffers 2012. An earlier short appreciation is given in Velder 1962: 52f.

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his journey from his early years in Hamburg to his extended residency in Siam between 1884 and 1918, his struggles during Siam's declaration of war against Germany in July 1917, and his eventual passing in his hometown of Hamburg.

Of particular interest is Frankfurter's unexpected tenure as a Siamese language instructor at the newly established University of Hamburg, a role he held until his death on 1 October 1922. This discovery sheds light on his pivotal role in laying the groundwork for Thai Studies in Germany.

While this article focuses on reconstructing Frankfurter's life, his multifaceted contributions warrant a more comprehensive exploration. His founding role in the Siam Society, tenure as its secretary and president, and scholarly achievements merit further in-depth examination,[4] which will be undertaken in a subsequent issue of this journal.

Childhood, Education and High School Years

Oskar Frankfurter was born 23 February 1852 in Hamburg, the youngest child of Dr Naphtali Frankfurter and Amalie Maier. Naphtali, his father, was born in 1810 in Oberdorf, Württemberg, southwestern Germany. He studied philosophy first in Heidelberg and thereafter in Tübingen where he earned a doctorate in 1833. After his marriage with Amalie, a young woman from Leimen, near Heidelberg, Naphtali took over a rabbinate near Heilbronn in December 1834 and moved with his young family to Hamburg in 1840. There he became the rabbi at the New Israelite Temple in the Poolstraße, the center of the liberal Jewish reform church (Wilck 2004). He was closely connected to influential Jewish personalities of the day, including Dr Gabriel Riesser (1806–1863), a leading pioneer of Jewish emancipation who eventually became a *Oberlandesgerichtsrat* (councilor in a higher regional court) the first Jewish judge in Germany (Schoeps 2020: 45), and Salomon Heine, a banker and notable philanthropist from the Free and Hanseatic City (*Freie und Hansestadt*) of Hamburg (Steckmest 2017: 24). In 1848, Naphtali was elected to the Hamburg City Council (*Hamburger Konstituante*), a body of 188 members, which granted legal and economic equality to Hamburg's Jews in February 1849.

Oskar Frankfurter had several elder siblings. His sister Ida, nine years his senior, was of particular importance, not least because Oskar would later marry Ida's daughter, his niece, Amély Toni Lefeld, in 1910 (see below). Naphtali Frankfurter died on 11 April 1866 at the age of 56. Oskar was only 14 years old at the time. We do not know how the father's death impacted the well-being of the family. We may assume that Naphtali had taken precautionary measures so that his family could count on at least some financial and other support from the Jewish community. Based on contemporary address books for Hamburg (*Hamburger Adreßbuch*), we are able to identify the area where the widow, Amalie Frankfurter, lived with her children. While the Frankfurters had been living presumably in an official residence (*Dienstwohnung*) of the New Israelite Temple, at Poolstraße 12, from 1846 until 1866, they moved after Naphtali's death to a new residence at

[4] Brief mention of Frankfurter's work for the Siam Society can be found in Warren 2004: 10–12.

Figure 1: The Johanneum high school in Speersort street, Hamburg, in mid-19th century © Kunsthalle Hamburg

Hohe Bleichen 24, Terrasse 2, which, at that time, was a prominent address in the city.

In the mid-19th century, compulsory schooling did not yet exist in Hamburg; it was introduced only in 1871. The liberal Jewish community had its own school, the Hamburg Israelite Free School (*Israelitische Freischule*), founded in 1815. During Oskar Frankfurter's childhood and youth, this school enjoyed a good reputation under its director, Anton Rée, a reform educationist who transformed the school from a religious institution into an interdenominational school. We do not know for sure whether Oskar, who was a weak and ailing child, attended this school. However, there were only a number of prestigious private schools in Hamburg and wealthy parents usually organized private home schooling for their children as well, especially for their sons. His father Napthali had built an impressive library during his rabbinate in Württemberg. That library contained not only theological books, but also the works of classical Roman writers, such as Seneca, Ovid, and Tacitus, as well as the German classics and works of philosophy. Thus, we may assume that, from early childhood, young Oskar had access to a huge body of knowledge through his father's books and, presumably, family discussions (Müller 1916: 76).

The earliest evidence of Oskar Frankfurter's school attendance is from 1872, when, at the age of 20, he enrolled in the humanist Johanneum Gymnasium (*Gelehrtenschule*; high school) near the mayor's office and the Petri Church **[Figure 1]**. Most of his peers in the *Unterprima* (Grade 12) were considerably younger than he was. His late enrolment was because the young Oskar had spent five years working in a trade before discovering his "love for books". In his handwritten *curriculum vitae*, in Latin,

which he submitted in 1878 with his doctorate to the University of Göttingen, he noted that he decided to devote himself to the study of the "literas".[5]

Frankfurter received an excellent education at the Johanneum, the only higher education institution in Hamburg in those days. The school instilled strict discipline and routine in its students and teaching emphasized classical education, with Latin and ancient Greek as the major foreign languages. In addition, a broad range of subjects was taught, including German, French, English, History, Mathematics, and Physics. Frankfurter's Latin teacher was a leading expert on Roman poet Horace. One of Frankfurter's classmates, five years his junior, was Heinrich Rudolf Hertz (1857–1894), the famous German scientist who proved the existence of electromagnetic waves.[6] Werner von Melle, the later founder of the University of Hamburg and First Mayor of the Hanseatic city, who was also attending the same school, once remarked that the Johanneum emphasized individual freedom and creative thinking, in contrast to the Prussian traditional school system, which was based on regimentation and enforcement (Richter 2016: 48 ff). Nevertheless, the extent to which young Oskar's education at the Johanneum profoundly influenced his development remains unknown.

Shortly before the *Abitur* (or *Matura*, final graduation), Frankfurter was forced to leave the Johanneum school because of serious health problems. He went to Kiel, a major industrial town and population center in Schleswig-Holstein, situated almost 100 kilometers north of Hamburg, on the shores of the Baltic Sea. His departure certificate (*Abgangszeugnis*) from the Johanneum, dated 20 October 1874, states: "Oskar Frankfurter has visited this school of high learning since 1872, starting with the *Unterprima* class and latterly, since Easter 1874, he attended the *Oberprima* class, but has to leave school because of his ailing health, to be in Kiel under the supervision of a medical doctor".[7] According to Frankfurter's *curriculum vitae*, this medical doctor was the renowned Prof. Karl Bartels (1822–1878), an internist and pathologist, known for research on kidney disorders. Though Frankfurter does not disclose any details about his illness, it is likely that it was somehow related to Bartels' field of expertise.[8]

Frankfurter's bad health in his final high school years may have affected his performance. The Johanneum certificate classifies his general attitude to learning as "good". Oskar was said to be diligent and thoughtful and "he made every effort, although this was not consistently successful due to interruptions in school attendance and insufficient prior

[5] Oskar Frankfurter, "Auctor de vita sua", in Archiv der Universität Göttingen, Philosophische Fakultät, Vol. 164, Folio 146, recto. The Latin original reads: "[...] *quinque per annos rei mercatoriae operani dedi. Sed cum iam dudum literas singulari amore amplexus essem occasione data his me tatam dedere constitui* [...]".

[6] "Student directory (*Schülerverzeichnis*) 1874" of the Johanneum, courtesy of the administration of the Johanneum, Hamburg.

[7] The German original reads: "*Oskar Frankfurter hat die hiesige Gelehrtenschule seit 1872 von der Klasse Unterprima an besucht und war zuletzt, seit Ostern 1874 Schüler der Klasse Oberprima, aus welcher er jetzt ausscheidet, um infolge seines kränklichen Zustandes in Kiel unter Aufsicht seines Arztes zu sein*" (my translation).

[8] For a biography of Karl Bartels, see Feiner 1970: 64–65.

knowledge".[9] It seems that diligence and perseverance were the most notable character traits of the young Frankfurter, whose attitude towards teachers and peers was considered positive. In spite of his rabbinic family background, he did not participate in the optional Hebrew language class and, due to his fragile health, he also did not participate in physical education. His knowledge of German language and literature was evaluated "between satisfactory and good", while his Latin and Greek were considered "not very satisfactory", and his performance in mathematics and physics "hardly satisfactory". In the two modern foreign languages, English and French, Frankfurter's achievements were deemed "not satisfactory".

One may speculate whether Oskar Frankfurter suffered simply from a specific, temporary illness or rather from a general physical weakness. Later correspondence with Prof. Kuhn (see below) show that Frankfurter regularly spent several weeks in the spa towns of Bad Kissingen (letter dated 14 September 1895) and Karlsbad (letter dated 14 October 1902) during his frequent visits to Germany from Siam. In February 1902, he even arrived ill in Germany and had to undergo surgery in Berlin. The recuperation process lasted until June of that year. In Frankfurter's own words, this "severe operation" was "a consequence of the tropical climate" and "took away all [he] saved".[10] On 5 February 1908, the *Straits Budget* (Singapore) noted that "Dr Frankfurter, attached to the Siamese Government, was recently reported to be in hospital in Berlin, suffering from Bangkok's usual complaint—abscess of the liver" (p. 4).

Student and Young Scholar

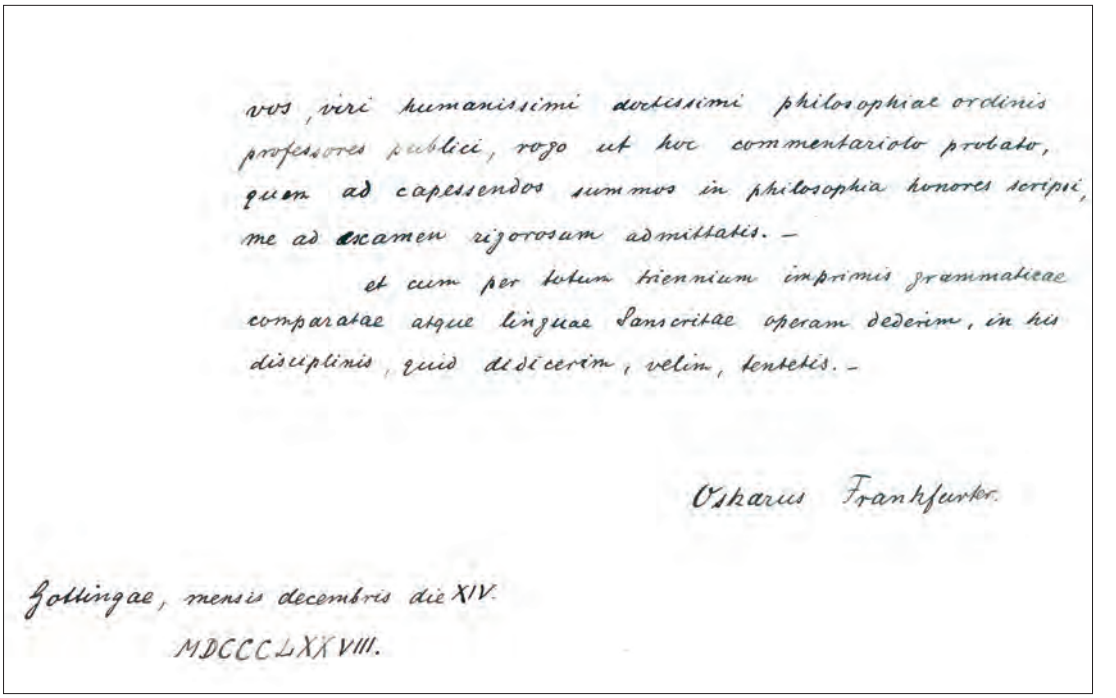
We have no documented evidence of where Oskar Frankfurter went to finish his final year of high school. He attended the *Kieler Gelehrtenschule*, which, at that time, was the only school to offer a comprehensive higher school education in Kiel. Frankfurter himself mentions "the highly educated Konrad Niemeyer", who was director of the school from 1869 until 1890.[11] In 1874, Frankfurter completed high school with the *Abitur* (*Matura*) and embarked on his higher studies in comparative linguistics—with Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit—at the universities of Göttingen and Berlin under the Indologist Theodor Benfey (1819–1896) and the linguist August Fick (1833–1916), respectively. Frankfurter earned his doctorate in a very specialist topic of classical Greek philology: the phenomenon of epenthesis.[12] Epenthesis ("Insertion") means the addition of one or more sounds to a word, especially at the beginning or end of a syllable, or between two syllabic sounds in a word. Prof. Benfey, a renowned linguist, and Sanskrit specialist at the time, wielded significant influence over the young

[9] The German original reads: "[*Er war*] *nach Kräften bemüht, wenngleich er infolge der Unterbrechungen im Schulbesuch und mangelhafter Vorkenntnisse nicht immer im Erfolg beständig war"* (my translation).

[10] Letter of Oscar Frankfurter to HRH King Vajiravudh, 13 June 1917. In National Archives of Thailand, ศร 11/18.

[11] Archiv der Universität Göttingen, Philosophische Fakultät, Vol. 164, Folio 146, recto. The Latin original reads: *"cum iterum iterumque in mortem riderem ad cuniam Bartelsium confugi atque ut auxilio eius uti possem Kiliae mansi, ibique gymnasium quod Konradus Niemeyer vir erudissimus moderabatur adii"*.

[12] Frankfurter, Oskar. *Über die epenthese von j (i) F (u) im griechischen*. Göttingen, 1879.


vos, viri humanissimi doctissimi philosophiae ordinis professores publici, rogo ut hoc commentariolo probato, quem ad capessendos summos in philosophia honores scripsi, me ad examen rigorosum admittatis. –

et cum per totum triennium imprimis grammaticae comparatae atque linguae Sanscritae operam dederim, in his disciplinis, quid didicerim, velim, tentetis. –

Oskarus Frankfurter.

Gottingae, mensis decembris die XIV.
MDCCCLXXVIII.

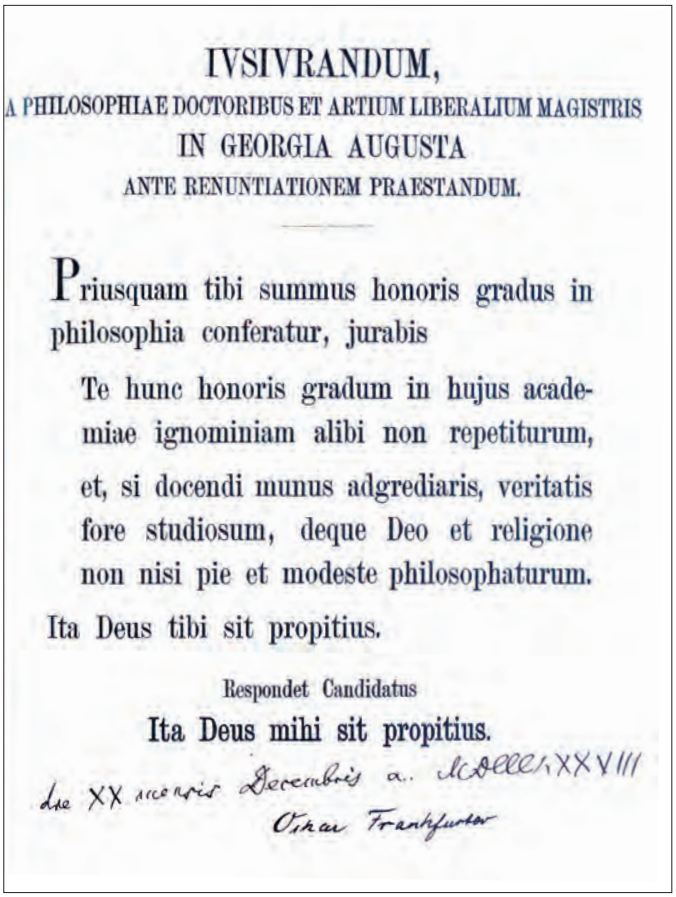
Figure 2: Handwritten cover letter in Latin requesting examination for his doctoral degree in comparative grammar and Sanskrit, Göttingen, dated 14 December 1878, and signed "Oskarus Frankfurter" © Universitätsarchiv Göttingen

Frankfurter (Bezzenberger 1902: 358). It was to Benfey that he dedicated his doctoral dissertation. Following an official request penned by Frankfurter in Latin **[Figure 2]**, the oral examination took place on 19 December 1878.

While Prof. Fick examined Frankfurter in the field of comparative linguistics, Prof. Benfey continued the examination with Sanskrit, allowing the candidate to translate a hymn of the *Ṛgveda*.[13] Oskar Frankfurter subsequently took his official vows on 20 December 1878 **[Figure 3]**.

Frankfurter's dissertation was published as a monograph in spring 1879. Some time after 1879—not in 1874 as Otto Franke mistakenly claims in his obituary (1922–1923: 153)—he went to Oxford to study with Prof. Max Müller (1823–1900), one of the greatest Sanskrit scholars of his time. When Frankfurter arrived at Oxford, Müller had already abandoned his professorship and devoted all his energies to research and publications. In Oxford, Frankfurter probably deepened his own studies and may have assisted Müller in his work. Robert Childers (1838–1876), another esteemed Pali and Buddhist scholar at Oxford University, had passed away prior to Frankfurter's arrival, thus preventing the publication of his Pali Grammar, for which he had completed a draft version. It is possible that Müller employed Frankfurter to help conclude Childers' unfinished projects. In any event, Frankfurter made Childers'

[13] Archiv der Universität Göttingen, Philosophische Fakultät, Vol. 164, Folio 144, recto and verso.



IVSIVRANDUM,
A PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTORIBUS ET ARTIUM LIBERALIUM MAGISTRIS
IN GEORGIA AUGUSTA
ANTE RENUNTIATIONEM PRAESTANDUM.

Priusquam tibi summus honoris gradus in philosophia conferatur, jurabis

Te hunc honoris gradum in hujus academiae ignominiam alibi non repetiturum, et, si docendi munus adgrediaris, veritatis fore studiosum, deque Deo et religione non nisi pie et modeste philosophaturum.

Ita Deus tibi sit propitius.

Respondet Candidatus

Ita Deus mihi sit propitius.

die XX mensis Decembris a. MDCCCLXXVIII

Oskar Frankfurter

Figure 3: Oath taken by Oskar Frankfurter after submission of his doctoral dissertation, dated 20 December 1878 © Universitätsarchiv Göttingen

Classified List of Pali Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library ready for publication in 1880. Frankfurter also had contact with another Pali scholar, Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843–1922), Professor of Pali at the University of London from 1882 until 1904. In 1883, Frankfurter published his own *Handbook of Pali*. He dedicated his work—in friendship and respect—to Richard Morris, vice-president of the Philological Society, who devoted his later years to studying the Pali language and literature.

During the final year of his stay in Oxford, and during the subsequent two decades, Frankfurter had an occasional correspondence with Ernst Wilhelm Adalbert Kuhn (1846–1920), Professor of Aryan philology and comparative Indo-European linguistics at the Ludwig-Maximillians-Universität in Munich since 1877. The fourteen extant letters that Frankfurter sent to Kuhn between February 1883 and December 1905 are part of Kuhn's estate, kept at the State Library of Munich. This most interesting exchange reveals that Frankfurter had already begun to learn the Siamese language while in Oxford. In a letter to Kuhn, dated 11 February 1883, Frankfurter claimed not only that his Pali Handbook would be ready for printing

"in about fourteen days", but also that his study of the Siamese phonetic shift was "almost finished". One month later, on 10 March 1883, Frankfurter lamented that, "because of manifold reasons", Prof. (Albrecht) Weber (1825–1901), a German Indologist and historian, was unwilling to send Frankfurter's study of the Siamese phonetic system to the Berlin Academy of Sciences for publication. Since it was written in English, Frankfurter should submit it to the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* published in London instead. In a letter dated 15 June 1883, Frankfurter offered Prof. Kuhn his expertise in "as far as the languages of Farther India (*Hinterindien*) are concerned", mentioning in particular Siamese, Burmese, and Khmer (*Siamesisch, Birmanisch, Kambodisch*).

We may surmise that Frankfurter also made during this period the acquaintance of the Siamese diplomat Prince Prisdang (พระองค์เจ้าปฤษฎางค์; 1851–1935), who was appointed Siamese ambassador to England in 1881. Moreover, according to archives at the University of Oxford related to foreign students, Prince Svasti Sobhana (พระองค์เจ้าสวัสดิโสภณ; 1865–1935), the youngest son of King Mongkut (r. 1851–1868), was enrolled as a student at the Balliol College from 1883 until 1886.[14] Due to these obvious personal connections with Siamese princes at Oxford, and his at least basic knowledge of the Siamese language, Frankfurter may have been recruited, via the Siamese Consulate-General in London, to the service of Prince Devawongse Varopakar (กรมพระยาเทวะวงศ์วโรปการ; 1858–1923), who shortly after became Minister of Foreign Affairs for Siam in 1885, a position he held until his death. We know from Frankfurter's letter to Kuhn, dated 29 November 1883, that he had received Prince Devawongse's offer that very same day. He planned to leave England in around fourteen days, would make a stopover in Hamburg for another two weeks, and then embark on a steamboat for the Far East. On 26 January 1884, the steamboat *Anadyr* reached the Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) capital Colombo, as we learn from another letter to Kuhn in which Frankfurter elaborates on the genetic relationship between Siamese and a number of other Asian languages (such as Khmer, Chinese, and Tibetan). In mid-February 1884, Frankfurter arrived in Singapore, as acknowledged by the *Strait Times* in a short announcement under the column "News of the Week", on 16 February 1884: "Amongst the passengers by the last French Mail steamer was Dr Oscar Frankfurter, the author of the Pali grammar published last year by Messrs. Williams & Norgate. Dr Frankfurter is on his way to Bangkok, to take up an appointment under the Siamese Government".

Professional Career in Siam

Oskar Frankfurter had originally planned to stay in Siam only for a couple of years, aiming to study the Siamese language and culture *in situ*. In the end, he spent 34 years—half of his life—in that country. As Stoffers (2012) remarks, when working as an interpreter for Prince Devawongse, and as a translator for

[14] "Early Thai Students at Balliol College", notes by Anna Sander, College archivist and curator of manuscripts, Oxford University, 2016. See: https://balliolarchivist.wordpress.com/2016/10/06/early-thai-students-at-balliol-college/#:~:text=1871%3A%20As%20far%20as%20can,%5D%2C%20of%20Bangkok%2C%20Siam (accessed 24 February 2024).

various German projects in Siam with a modest salary equivalent of US$ 20 a month, Frankfurter was more interested in furthering his philological and historical studies. In 1885, after he had just settled in Siam, he sold a Buddhist manuscript to the (Ethnological) Museum für Völkerkunde of Dresden. It would be the only manuscript that Frankfurter reportedly sold to institutions in Germany.[15]

Frankfurter was unpretentious, modest, and a mediator; he was a networker in the best sense of the word. These character traits are reflected in an incident that occurred in the early years of his stay in Siam. In April 1888, a significant incident unfolded near the Lotus Gardens (*lan bua*; ลานบัว) of Prince Svasti, eventually escalating into a diplomatic crisis involving German Ambassador Peter Kempermann (1845–1900), who held the title of minister resident, and Siamese officials. The wives of both Kempermann and a German merchant in Siam were brought to Prince Svasti by the police for unlawfully plucking flowers in the lotus garden. Following a brief inquiry, they were allowed to leave. The German ambassador, angered not only by the disrespectful treatment of the women by the police, but also highly critical of how the Siamese officials handled the situation, expressed his dissatisfaction to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Devawongse. Oskar Frankfurter, serving as the secretary to Prince Devawongse at the time, played a pivotal role in mediating between the parties involved. He demonstrated diplomatic sensitivity and worked diligently to de-escalate the tense situation between HE Kempermann and Prince Devawongse. This effort was later acknowledged by Kempermann in his letter, dated 15 June 1888, to German chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898): "Dr Frankfurter is a capable philologist and a good German; he has done his utmost to mediate between me and the princes".[16] The English translation of an article published in a Siamese newspaper, done by Frankfurter himself, was severely criticized by Mr Gould, the British Embassy's official translator, who argued that Frankfurter had wrongly rendered the Siamese word *phuying* (ผู้หญิง) as "lady", instead of translating it, correctly, as "woman", insinuating that the German scholar intentionally obscured the deprecating description of the two German women in the Siamese newspaper article (*ibid*.). Arguably, Frankfurter's mediation skills rather deserved a note of praise.

In 1895, the general advisor to King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910), the Belgian lawyer Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns (1835–1902), invited Frankfurter to become his general secretary. One of the key tasks that the Siamese Government expected of its foreign advisor, as David Neuhäuser (2019) states in his doctoral dissertation on the role of foreign advisors and experts

[15] This fairly large manuscript comprised 399 palm leaves and contained a Pali grammar text titled *Culasaddanitipakaraṇam* written in Khom script, a Khmer-derived script still widely used at that time for the writing of religious texts in central and southern Thailand. See Terwiel 2017: 17.

[16] The original in German reads in full length as follows: *"Dr Frankfurter ist ein tüchtiger Philologe und ein guter Deutscher, er hat sein Möglichstes gethan, zwischen mir und den Prinzen zu vermitteln, seine Übersetzung kann aber schon deshalb auf Wörtlichkeit keinen Anspruch machen, weil sie zur Veröffentlichung in einer englischen Zeitung bestimmt war, mithin von der Genauigkeit mangels der Form geopfert werden müßte"* (my translation). In Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, R901/2510, No. 33 (RZ 602/251033).

in implementing King Chulalongkorn's program of reform, was managing relations with the press. When the monarch discovered, on return from his first journey to Europe in 1897, that the Siamese press had reported details of the king's travel route, he asked Frankfurter to thoroughly inspect all press reports about royal activities from then on. Rolin-Jaequemyns persuaded the king to step back from this idea, arguing that the government could be made responsible for the contents of press reports in the future. Thus, the press remained free, and Frankfurter was spared the role of censor (Neuhäuser 2019: 154–155).

When Rolin-Jaequemyns resigned from his position in 1901, Frankfurter was employed by the Ministry of Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (กรมพระยาดำรง ราชานุภาพ; 1862–1943), who had a personal interest in various academic fields, such as history, archeology, literature, and languages. In 1902, Frankfurter was sent as King Chulalongkorn's delegate to the International Congress of Orientalists in Hamburg.[17] Prior to this, he had undergone an urgent surgery in Berlin in February of the same year as mentioned above.

The most significant step in Frankfurter's career in Siam was his appointment as chief librarian of the newly founded Vajirañāṇa National Library (หอสมุดพระวชิรญาณ), precursor of the modern National Library of Thailand, by royal decree of 12 October 1905. Frankfurter belonged to a group of seven personalities who formed the National Library's leadership: His Royal Highness the Crown Prince (and later King) Vajiravudh was the Library's president accompanied by a supervisory council of four princes and high-ranking dignitaries, with Prince Damrong Rajanubhab as its most prominent figure. Thus, Frankfurter became the person responsible for the strategic planning of the acquisition of manuscripts, books, and other printed records to be acquired by the Vajirañāṇa National Library. He was assisted by a Siamese librarian, Phra[ya] Vichit Dharma Parivatr (พระ[ยา] วิจิตรธรรมปริวัตร).[18] Within a decade, Dr Frankfurter contributed decisively to the creation of an internationally respected institution **[Figure 4]**.

This accomplishment was well expressed in Otto Franke's obituary, which summarizes Frankfurter's work, from his perspective, and probably based on information provided by his widow:

> The Library, which originally was designed to contain the whole of the native literature, was completely alienated from that aim, if it ever did anything for it. It had become a clubhouse in which young people played billiards and read European newspapers. The bookshelves were filled with literary trash from Europe; scholarly works on Siam were very scanty in number; scholarly works on Siam were nonexistent. After Prince Damrong took over the superintendence

[17] Letter from Oskar Frankfurter to Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, dated 13 June 1917. In National Archives of Thailand, ศร 11/18.

[18] "National Library for Siam Established by the King", in *The Bangkok Times*, 14 October 1905.

Figure 4: Sahathai Society Building, the seat of the National Library in the Royal Palace, in approx. 1905–1916 © National Archives of Thailand

> in 1905 and had obtained the German scholar as director of the institution, Frankfurter formed the Siamese National Library out of this utterly neglected lumber room; everything in the national literature that still remained to be hunted out was brought together and classified. At the same time Frankfurter was at great pains to bring together also all-important European works on Siam and on India, the motherland of Siamese culture. So began a scholarly institution which did not have its equal in East Asia, apart perhaps from the great Japanese libraries.[19]

On Sunday, 8 February 1914, Dr O. Frankfurter celebrated the 30th anniversary of his entry into Siamese Government service, a period that the Singapore press praised as "unique for one man from the West".[20] Half a year later, in September 1914, German emperor William II (r. 1888–1918) conferred the Fourth Class of the Red Eagle on him. This prestigious award was not only recognized by the press in Frankfurter's hometown, Hamburg, but also by the Western community in Bangkok,[21] even though World War I had just started in Europe. During the following two and a half years, Frankfurter continued his responsibilities as chief librarian of the Vajirañāṇa National Library and a month before his 65th birthday received the highest order that could be bestowed on a foreigner by the Siamese king at the time. Frankfurter's life-time merits in the service of Siam were recognized by King Vajiravudh or Rama VI (r. 1910–

[19] See Franke 1922–1923 for the German original. The English translation appeared in *Bangkok Times*, 12 June 1923.

[20] *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 14 February 1914.

[21] *Straits Echo*, 24 September 1914.

1925) with the Third-Class Order of the White Elephant.[22] On 13 June 1917, Frankfurter asked for retirement, which was granted to him. His letter of resignation addressed to Prince Damrong Rajanubhab and intended to be forwarded to King Vajiravudh is worth quoting in its entirety:

> I think the moment has come where I should place my resignation before Your Royal Highness [Prince Damrong Rajanubhab] with the request to very kindly submit same to His Majesty the King. I may add that I had the intention of doing so already some time ago when I hoped I might close my career in Siam with the installation of the Reference-Library. As the fulfilment of this hope, however, was prevented by the outbreak of the war, I feel it incumbent on me to submit my resignation to your Royal Highness now.
>
> Your Royal Highness will readily understand that it is impossible for me to leave Siam as long as the war is raging, and I trust that I am not approaching Your Royal Highness in vain in asking Your Royal Highness to allow me to continue my active service as heretofore until the end of the war.
>
> It is my intention to settle in the University of Leipzig, the chief market for the international book-trade, in the hope that it will be possible for me in this way to assist in the acquisition of a Reference-Library which it was long in the intention of Your Royal Highness to form. I would, therefore, consider it a special favor if, after my departure, I would be allowed to use my leave, which has now accumulated during seven years for this purpose.
>
> As Your Royal Highness is aware, it was not possible for me to make any savings as a severe operation which I had to undergo in 1902 and which according to the view of the physicians was a consequence of the tropical climate took away all I had saved. My salary was only such that it was sufficient for living and the present war demanded from everyone he could spare.
>
> It is known to your Royal Highness that I married in the year 1910 and I consider it my duty, as far as it is in my power, to provide for the support of my wife after my death. I trust, considering the kind consideration Your Royal Highness always had towards me, not to appeal in vain to Your Royal Highness if I ask Your Royal

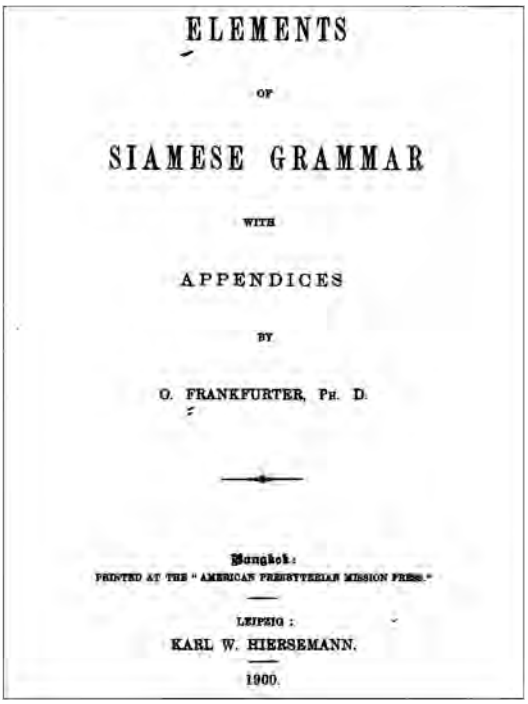
[22] Among the other German experts present in Siam, only Luis Weiler (1863–1918), Director General of the Royal State Railways had since held a higher-ranking order, namely, the Second Class of the White Elephant. See *South China Morning Post*, 11 August 1916; also *Hamburger Correspondent*, 7 March 1917. It is interesting to note that the Siamese Government had originally proposed the order of the Fourth Class of the White Elephant of Siam to Frankfurter. See "Letter from HE Phya Nond Buri, Siamese Minister in Berlin, to HE Baron Marshall von Bieberstein, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Berlin, dated April 5, 1892". In National Archives of Thailand, กต 41/74, เอกสารสถานทูตในเยอรมัน, กล่อง 3. The classes I to IV of the White Elephant Order were introduced in Siam by royal decree of 1869 (Suphot 2017: 103).

> Highness to submit to His Majesty the King my humble request that besides the pension due to me by law and by the will of His Majesty, a further remuneration should be granted to me for the support of my wife at my death. [...]
>
> I have the honor to remain Your Royal Highness' most humble and most obedient servant. O. Frankfurter.[23]

It is interesting to note from this letter that Frankfurter had the intention to return to Germany and attain a position at the prestigious University of Leipzig to further his own historical and philological studies. At the same time, he could still assist the Siamese Government from afar in building up a "reference library", since Leipzig had been the main center of printing and publishing in Germany until 1945 and the location of one of the largest annual book fairs in Germany and Europe. However, shortly after sending the above letter, Siam declared war on Germany and Austria–Hungary on 22 July 1917, and the life of Frankfurter took a dramatic turn, as we will see below.

Private Life

Little is known about Oskar Frankfurter's private life in Siam. One valuable source is the diary of Dr Friedrich Schäfer (1868–1914), a German surgeon who served in the Siamese army between 1909 and 1914. Schäfer's diary, covering the period 1909–1912, describes Frankfurter as a man anyone interested in Bangkok ought to know. It seems that it was him who introduced the newly arrived German medical doctor to the social life in the Siamese capital. After 25 years in Bangkok, Frankfurter had become "an integral part" (*ein integrierender Bestandteil*) of the city. Schäfer praises Frankfurter as a "thoroughly learned scholar" (*ein grundgelehrtes Haus*) who knows the old scriptures "like the back of his hand" (*wie seine Westentasche*) and "reads the most difficult texts in Pali and Sanskrit language books". However, though Frankfurter had authored "a very valuable essay on Siamese grammar" **[Figure 5]**, his fluency in colloquial Thai is described as less impressive. Frankfurter "had matured to someone who must be called a magnificent elderly scholar. In any case it is justified to treat him with great esteem".[24]


ELEMENTS

OF

SIAMESE GRAMMAR

WITH

APPENDICES

BY

O. FRANKFURTER, PH. D.

Bangkok:
PRINTED AT THE "AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSION PRESS."

LEIPZIG:
KARL W. HIERSEMANN.

1900.

Figure 5: Front cover of *Elements of Siamese Grammar*, 1900 © Open Source

[23] "Letter from Oscar Frankfurter to King Rama VI", dated 13 June 1917. In the National Archives of Thailand, ศร 11/18, 2453 BE (1910 CE).

[24] The original in German reads: *"Er hat sich nach und*

Figure 6: Oskar and Amély Toni Frankfurter after their marriage, *circa* 1910
© National Archives of Thailand

On 3 November 1910, Oskar Frankfurter married his niece Amély Toni Lefeld, 22 years his junior, in their hometown Hamburg. Frankfurter was already 58 years old. Witnesses to the marriage were Amély Toni's brother Max Lefeld and the German Consul-General for Siam, the merchant Martin Ernst Pickenpack from Hamburg. Frankfurter's marriage had caught the European community in Bangkok by surprise. Two portrait photos, one of which we illustrate here **[Figure 6]**, showing the couple together were probably taken in a photo studio shortly after the couple's return to Bangkok.[25] Schäfer writes in his diary in an entry dated 9 July 1911:

> In the last year, he was in Europe and there he married, to our general surprise, one of his nieces. Mrs Frankfurter is also very clever, even almost erudite, and gifted. She speaks quite a number of foreign languages, though she might not have gone that deeply like her husband. After the expectation of a child, following the initial rush of delight, has proved to be premature, Mrs Frankfurter has decided to search the purpose of life in the support of her husband in his profession, and thus she has now become his secretary.[26]

Schäfer emphasizes that the Frankfurters were sociable and their spacious residence a place of "good cuisine and impeccable wine" (Schäfer 1991: 277). In a photograph provided by members of the Lefeld family, we see the Frankfurters in a familiar environment, sitting in the garden of their residence in Bangkok, which was situated at Sa Pathum Road (now Rama I Road) **[Figure 7]**.[27] Dr Frankfurter's house must have been well known among the community of Western expatriates living in the Siamese capital at the time. In March 1909, Frankfurter's spacious residence was the scene of a "daylight murder" when a young Swiss resident, Maximilian Kaiser, who worked for a German–Siamese trading company, was attacked and stabbed by some thieves who had entered the servants' quarters of the residence.[28]

The Frankfurters were likely among the few German expatriate residents in Siam who had been living there the longest when the German Club (*Deutscher Klub*) commemorated its 25th anni-

nach zu dem ausgewachsen, was man einen prächtigen alten Gelehrten zu nennen pflegt. Jedenfalls ist man berechtigt ihn mit grosser Hochachtung zu behandeln" (Schäfer 1991: 85; my translation).

[25] The photos are kept at the National Archives of Thailand under "persons unknown", suggesting that the archivists were unable to identify Oskar Frankfurter and his wife, which seems rather strange given his prominent role in establishing the Royal Library situated next to the Archives.

[26] The original in German reads: *"Im vergangenen Jahr war er in Europa und da hat er sich plötzlich zur allgemeinen Überraschung verheiratet, und zwar mit einer seiner Nichten. Frau Frankfurter ist gleichfalls sehr klug, ja beinahe gelehrt und begabt. Sie spricht allerhand fremde Sprachen, wobei sie freilich durchaus nicht so in die Tiefe gegangen zu sein scheint, wie ihr Gatte. Nachdem die im ersten Rausch des Entzückens aufgetauchte Aussicht auf ein Kind sich als verfrüht erwiesen hat, hat Frau Frankfurter beschlossen, in der Unterstützung ihres Mannes in seinem Berufe ihren Lebenszweck zu suchen und so ist sie jetzt seine Sekretärin"* (Schäfer 1991: 276; my translation).

[27] Photo courtesy of Sandra and Guilherme Cruz, São Paolo, Brazil, whose support is gladly acknowledged here.

[28] See "Daylight Murder", in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 19 March 1909.

Figure 7: Oskar and Amély Toni Frankfurter sitting in the garden of their home in Bangkok, *circa* 1910
© Sandra & Guilherme Cruz

versary in 1916. However, the booklet documenting the founding and development of the German Club makes no mention of Oskar Frankfurter, neither as one of the forty founding members—though by April 1891, Frankfurter had already been living in Bangkok for seven years—nor as a member of the Club's board in any of the years between 1891 and 1916.[29] Thus, on the one hand, regrettably we are confronted with a lack of documentary evidence regarding Frankfurter's membership of the German Club and of his participation in the Club's activities, either as member or guest. On the other hand, there is no evidence that he was isolated within the German community because of his Jewish background. Indeed, at some moment between 1878 and 1910, Frankfurter must have converted from the Jewish faith to Christianity, since his marriage certificate of 3 November 1910 identifies both Oskar Frankfurter and his wife Amély Toni as being of "Lutheran faith".[30] However, religion does not seem to have played a dominant role in Frankfurter's life. The fact that the Frankfurter couple insisted on cremation in their last will, which was anathema to any faithful Jew and still rare among Christians, shows that the Frankfurters may have opened themselves, at least in a cultural sense, to Buddhist ideas and practices during their long stay in Siam. In any case, far from being isolated from the German community, O. Frankfurter was occasionally consulted by the German Embassy to help open communication channels to the Siamese authorities and to give advice in matters related to his knowledge of the Siamese language.[31] Nevertheless, he oriented himself more towards the wider Western community in Bangkok, as evidenced by his prominent role in the Siam Society, the founding of which he very much promoted and inaugurated at a gathering at the Oriental Hotel on 26 February 1904 (Warren 2004: 1).

Internment and Return to Hamburg

The quiet and serene life of the Frankfurters in Siam ended abruptly in July 1917. This was also the case for hundreds of other

[29] See Deutscher Klub Bangkok 1916. As for the founding of the German Club, see also Catthiyakorn 2012: 24f.

[30] Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 332–5 Standesämter.

[31] For example, Frankfurter's academic advice was sought whenever the German Embassy was in search for a new translator.

Figure 8: Central Building (*Mittelbau*) in Bangkok where Germans and Austro-Hungarians were interned in late 1917 © Sandra & Guilherme Cruz

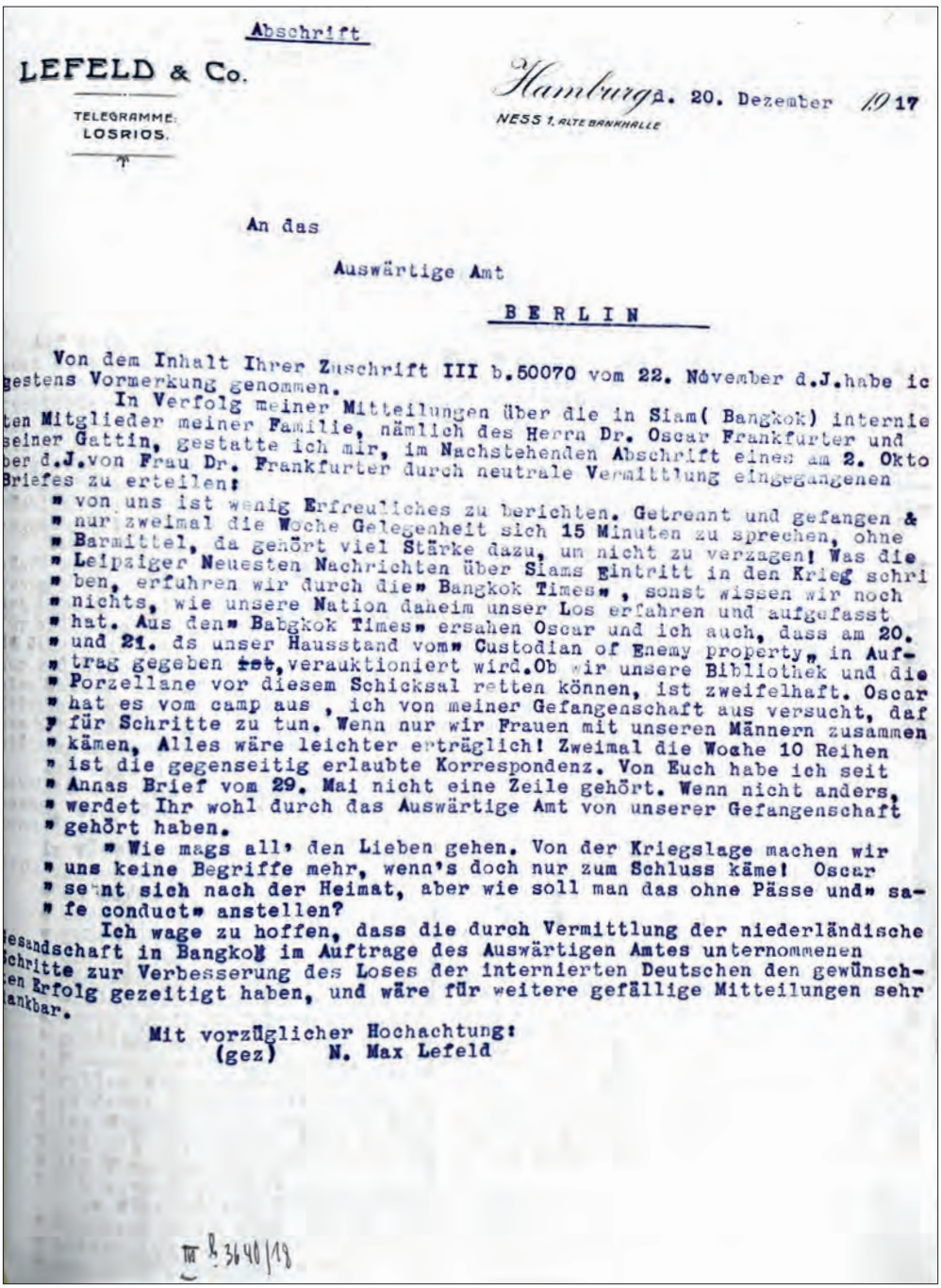
German and Austro–Hungarian citizens. After Siam's declaration of war against the central powers (*Mittelmächte*), these individuals became "citizens of enemy nations" (*khon chonchat sattru*; คนชนชาติศัตรู). Men, women, and children were interned overnight. Little is known about internment in Bangkok. German government sources from November 1917 estimate the total number of German citizens registered in the lists of the German Embassy in Bangkok at 229, 37 of whom were women and 42 children. Together with German evacuees from China and Japan, as well as members of ships' companies, the total number of Germans amounted to roughly 300.[32]

The internment of German and Austro–Hungarian citizens was carried out in a planned and organized manner within a couple of days. While the roughly 300 men (190 Germans and some 100 Austro–Hungarians) were detained in two internment camps, in Bangkok **[Figure 8]** and Ayutthaya, under difficult but nevertheless tolerable conditions, according to Stefan Hell (2017: 99), the 101 enemy women and children, among them 22 from Austria–Hungary, were interned at the German Club and three adjacent buildings on Surawong Road. Thus, the Frankfurter couple was separately interned, sharing their fate with other German and Austro–Hungarian couples. The Dutch Ambassador Domela Nieuwenhuis, who took over the representation of German and Austro–Hungarian interests in Bangkok, informed the Siamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs about Dr Frankfurter's deteriorating health, which made it an urgent task to allow him "to leave the internment camp to be treated by his wife" (cited in Hell 2017: 98).

In several letters sent by Max Lefeld **[e.g., Figure 9]**, Amély Toni Frankfurter's brother and owner of a food wholesale company in Hamburg, to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Auswärtiges Amt*),[33] he referenced excerpts from correspondence received from his sister in Bangkok. In these letters, she conveyed her wish for individuals aged over sixty to be granted release and repatriated to Germany. Hell concludes that the Siamese Government was inclined "to allow Frankfurter and his wife to leave Siam for Germany out of respect for his contributions to Siamese culture, but the British legation objected, thereby providing another striking example of the sway it held over Siam's foreign ministry" (2017: 98). Hell's claim about a

[32] Letter from German Embassy in Stockholm to Chancellor (*Reichskanzler*) Georg von Hertling, dated 19 November 1917. In Bundesarchiv, R 901/83626, No. 183.

[33] See, for example, Letter of Max Lefeld to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 2 February 1918. In Bundesarchiv, R 901/83626, No. 183.



Abschrift

LEFELD & Co.

TELEGRAMME:
LOSRIOS.

Hamburg 1. 20. Dezember 1917

NESS 1. ALTE BANKHALLE

An das

Auswärtige Amt

BERLIN

Von dem Inhalt Ihrer Zuschrift III b.50070 vom 22. November d.J.habe ic
gestens Vormerkung genommen.
In Verfolg meiner Mitteilungen über die in Siam(Bangkok) internie
ten Mitglieder meiner Familie, nämlich des Herrn Dr. Oscar Frankfurter und
seiner Gattin, gestatte ich mir, im Nachstehenden Abschrift eines am 2. Okto
ber d.J.von Frau Dr. Frankfurter durch neutrale Vermittlung eingegangenen
Briefes zu erteilen:

» von uns ist wenig Erfreuliches zu berichten. Getrennt und gefangen &
» nur zweimal die Woche Gelegenheit sich 15 Minuten zu sprechen, ohne
» Barmittel, da gehört viel Stärke dazu, um nicht zu verzagen! Was die
» Leipziger Neuesten Nachrichten über Siams Eintritt in den Krieg schri
» ben, erfuhren wir durch die» Bangkok Times» , sonst wissen wir noch
» nichts, wie unsere Nation daheim unser Los erfahren und aufgefasst
» hat. Aus den» Babgkok Times» ersahen Oscar und ich auch, dass am 20.
» und 21. ds unser Hausstand vom» Custodian of Enemy property» in Auf-
» trag gegeben ~~ist~~, verauktioniert wird.Ob wir unsere Bibliothek und die
» Porzellane vor diesem Schicksal retten können, ist zweifelhaft. Oscar
» hat es vom camp aus , ich von meiner Gefangenschaft aus versucht, daf
» für Schritte zu tun. Wenn nur wir Frauen mit unseren Männern zusammen
» kämen, Alles wäre leichter erträglich! Zweimal die Woche 10 Reihen
» ist die gegenseitig erlaubte Korrespondenz. Von Euch habe ich seit
» Annas Brief vom 29. Mai nicht eine Zeile gehört. Wenn nicht anders,
» werdet Ihr wohl durch das Auswärtige Amt von unserer Gefangenschaft
» gehört haben.
» Wie mags all» den Lieben gehen. Von der Kriegslage machen wir
» uns keine Begriffe mehr, wenn's doch nur zum Schluss käme! Oscar
» sehnt sich nach der Heimat, aber wie soll man das ohne Pässe und» sa-
» fe conduct» anstellen?
Ich wage zu hoffen, dass die durch Vermittlung der niederländische
Gesandschaft in Bangkok im Auftrage des Auswärtigen Amtes unternommenen
Schritte zur Verbesserung des Loses der internierten Deutschen den gewünsch-
ten Erfolg gezeitigt haben, und wäre für weitere gefällige Mitteilungen sehr
dankbar.

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung:
(gez) N. Max Lefeld

III b 3640/18

Figure 9: Letter of Max Lefeld to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Auswärtiges Amt*), dated 20 December 1917 © Volker Grabowsky

fundamentally positive attitude of the Siamese authorities towards Oskar Frankfurter seems to be supported by a letter from the secretary of the Vajirañāṇa National Library to the Ministry of Interior, arguing that the Library Council, led by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, expressed reservations

about urging the retrieval of the royal decoration from Dr Frankfurter, an individual deemed an enemy national currently held in confinement. The secretary suggested an alternative approach, proposing that Frankfurter be subjected to separate control.[34] This intervention was to no avail and Frankfurter had to return his Third-Class Order of the White Elephant medal like all other German experts did.[35]

Finally, in January 1918, Oskar and Amély Toni Frankfurter were deported to Sholapur (Solapur), in the region of Maharashtra, in western India, where they could live together as a couple under tolerable conditions. This is confirmed in a letter Mrs Frankfurter sent to a female friend in Bangkok, who forwarded it to the *Bangkok Times*: "I am glad to report I am again with my husband, and we are having a very pleasant time together. We are allowed to go everywhere we want, without police or military supervision. The only thing is: When shall we Huns be free?" (9 April 1918). This is also confirmed in several letters Amély Toni Frankfurter sent to her brother Max Lefeld in Hamburg, who reported their content verbatim to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We reproduce here one such example from this correspondence:

> [Quoted from Amély Toni Frankfurter] "In February of this year, German men and women were separately deported. On the 16th we were in Singapore, and on the 26th in Madras. Finally, on the 28th we arrived here (in Sholapur). Fortunately, Oscar and I are here reunited. We live in a small house and our old friends Mr and Mrs Bremer live next door. [...] Almost all of us have arrived here like beggars. Our money and property are now with the Custodian in Bangkok. [...] We are here in good and just hands, are adequately nourished, and finally enjoy good treatment. Therefore, do not worry about us" (Her emphasis).[36]

In June 1918, while still in internment in India, and five months prior to the end of the war, Dr Frankfurter filed a claim against the Siamese Government for the outstanding balance of pay owed to him for July through October 1917, along with additional expenses. The specifics of these claims are outlined in the subsequent list:

[34] Secretary of Vajirañāṇa National Library to the Ministry of Interior, dated 6 August 1917. In National Archives of Thailand, ศร 070/28/1. The original in Thai reads: กรรมการหอสมุดมีความขัดข้องที่จะไปเรียกเครื่องราชอิศริยาภรณ์ ที่ดอกเตอร์แฟรงก์เฟอร์เตอร์เป็นชนชาติศัตรูอยู่ในที่ขัง เสนอว่าอยู่ในปกครองเปนเอกเทศ.

[35] As for a list of German experts in the service of the Siamese government who were obliged to return their titles and decorations, see "Siam in the War. Titles and Decorations Gone", in *South China Morning Post*, 11 August 1917.

[36] Letter sent by Max Lefeld to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 30 May 1918. In Bundesarchiv, R 901/83626, No. 183. The original German text reads: *"Am 12. Februar a.c. wurden deutsche Männer und Frauen getrennt deportiert. Am 16. waren wir in Singapore, und am 26. in Madras. Endlich am 28. kamen wir hier an. Zum Glück sind Oscar und ich hier wieder zusammen. Wir bewohnen ein kleines Haus und nebenan wohnen unsere alten Freunde Herr und Frau Brehmer.* [...] *Wir sind fast* [a]*lle wie Bettler hier angekommen. Unser Geld und Eigentum liegt beim Custodian in Bangkok.* [...] *Wir sind hier in guten, gerechten Händen, werden anständig ernährt, und geniessen endlich gute Behandlung. Also sorgt Euch nicht um uns".*

@1,000 ticals a month	4,000
10% house rent	400
Confiscated money in S.C.B. [Siam Commercial Bank]	550
Confiscated fixed deposit & interest thereon up to October 1917	624
Books sold to the National Library	599
Value of books intended for the Princess [*sic*] Damrong in hands of Custodian of Enemy Prop[erty]	100
Value of horses sold by Custodian	161
Amounts due to me by Dr O. Schneider, L. Weiler, and A. Gerber in hands of Custodian	220
20 shares in *Bangkok Times*, deposited in S.C.B.	1,000
18 shares in *Mekhong Rly. do. do. do.*	1,800
Inventory of house property confiscated against my wish	7,000
Value of confiscated library	8,000
Curiosities	1,000
Value of manuscripts confiscated	2,000
Compensation of the value of pictures handed over to Rob. Lenz & Co. Bangkok for sale which were confiscated by the Siamese Government on [the] outbreak of war	1,500
Pay during leave of fourteen months. Tic. 1,000 per month plus 10% house rent. Compensation	15,400
Compensation of return journey £100	1,308
Total	**45,662**

Source: "From J.E.C. Jukes Esq. to the Government of India, Home Dept. Bombay Castle, 7 June 1918, Enclosure No. 2". In National Archives of Thailand, กต 65.6/10 กล่อง 2 คำร้องของหมอแฟรงฟูร์เตอร์และกัปตันกอตเซว่า รัฐบาลทรัพย์และ ร้องขอเบี้ยบำนาญ

Most important were the claims to pensions—1,000 ticals (or baht) per month—which the Siamese Government had already promised after Frankfurter had asked for his retirement in April 1917, two months after his 65th birthday.[37]

Among the total claims of more than 45,000 ticals were 8,000 ticals that he estimated to be the value of his personal library. Frankfurter's library must have been impressive indeed. According to a diary entry of Major Erik Seidenfaden (1881–1958), one of his colleagues at the Siam Society, Dr Frankfurter is described as a "little white-haired and amiable Jew" and "an excellent philologist", who "has a good library on Siam".[38]

[37] The amount of Frankfurter's monthly salary is confirmed in a letter to Prince Damrong, dated 16 June 1917, just a few weeks before the Siamese declaration of war on Germany. In National Archives of Thailand, ศร 11/18, ดอกเตอร์แฟรงค์เฟอรเตอร์จะขอลาออกจากราชการ [Dr Frankfurter asks for retirement from office].

[38] Erik Seidenfaden's diary, dated 8 September 1914. I am grateful to Søren Ivarsson for directing my attention to and translating this entry from Danish

As Germany and Siam had not yet restored their diplomatic relations (this happened in 1925), Germans living in Siam had to file their claims with the Siamese Embassy in Copenhagen. The internal communication among various Siamese Government agencies show that direct compensation was rejected on the grounds that Frankfurter, along with other interned Germans, having left India on 29 December 1919, had not yet arrived in Germany by 10 January 1920, the day when the Treaty of Versailles came into force, and thus a Siamese caretaker or Custodian (*phu phitak sap chonchat sattru*; ผู้พิทักษ์ทรัพย์ชนชาติศัตรู) had to receive the compensation for the citizens of the former enemy countries.[39]

In a rather lengthy process, it was finally decided that Frankfurter could no longer be compensated for his library, which had counted more than 1,400 volumes, because these books were already sold. The only compensation that was acknowledged were 31,177 baht and 42 salueng—a salary and a pension, respectively, for the period 22 July 1917 until his death on 1 October 1922. This final decision was made on 12 March 1923, almost half a year after Dr Frankfurter's death.[40] There is no documentary evidence of whether or not compensation was later paid to his widow, Amély Toni Frankfurter, née Lefeld. There is no doubt that the loss of his personal library greatly affected Oskar, as Otto Franke makes clear in his obituary. "Frankfurter remained convinced that whatever might happen to his other property, this library must be his inviolable". Franke continues: "This loss was for him absolutely unimaginable; he would not for a moment believe in the deceitful reservations of the Siamese".[41] Indeed, half a year after his return to Hamburg, Dr Frankfurter urged the Siamese authorities to return his personal library, a rather "unique collection of Siamese literature, the historic literature of Siam and Buddhism", he had "collected with great care" and the possession of which was "a necessity" to continue his studies during the rest of his life.[42]

Another disappointment was what Frankfurter perceived as treachery—in the words of Otto Franke—by his successor as chief librarian of the Vajirañāṇa National Library. Shortly before his retirement, in summer 1917, a 31-year-old fellow of the École française d'Extrême-Orient received instructions

for me. On Seidenfaden, see Ivarsson & Sing 2022.

[39] See "Extract of Resolution of Meetings of Controllers of Allied Clearing Offices". In National Archives of Thailand, กต 65.6/10 กล่อง 2, คำร้องของหมอแฟรงฟูร์เตอร์และกัปตันกอตเซว่ารัฐบาลทรัพย์และร้องขอเบี้ยบำนาญ [Request by Dr Frankfurter and Captain Götsche to ask the Siamese Government for a pension].

[40] The document says: ด้วยได้รับหนังสือที่ ๒๓๘/๒๓๕๙๖ ลงวันที่ ๘ เดือนนี้ว่า ทรงพระกรุณาโปรด เกล้าฯ พระราชทานพระบรมราชานุญาตให้กระทรวงพระคลังฯ จ่ายเงินเบี้ยบำนาญหมอแฟรงเฟอร์เตอร์ ตั้งแต่วันที่ ๒๒ กรกฎาคม พ.ศ. ๒๔๖๐ ถึงวันที่ ๑ ตุลาคม ๒๔๖๕ รวมเป็นเงิน ๓๑๑๗๗ บาท ๔๒ สตางค์ ให้ผู้พิทักษ์ ศัตรูแล้วนั้น ได้ทราบแล้ว. See National Archives of Thailand, *ibid*. The settling of the liquidation proceeds of the confiscated private German properties in Siam was finalized only in 1925 following tedious negotiations between the German and Siamese governments. For details, see Catthiyakorn 2012: 36–43.

[41] See Franke 1922–1923: 155 (in German). For the English translation, see *Bangkok Times*, 12 June 1923.

[42] "Letter from Dr O. Frankfurter, 19, Innocentia Strasse, Hamburg, to His Excellency Phya Visan Botchanakit, His Majesty's Minister in Copenhagen, dated July 18th., and received July 23rd., 1920". In National Archives of Thailand, กต 65.6/10 กล่อง 2.

Figure 10: Postcard showing the main building of the Universität Hamburg, opposite Dammtor Station, 1922 © Gaby von Malottki

regarding the organization of the Library. "In unsuspecting confidence, Dr Frankfurter gave all the information asked for despite friendly warnings, and was friendly and helpful to the Frenchman" (Franke 1922–23: 155). This young Frenchman was none other than George Cœdès (1886–1969), who became Frankfurter's successor in January 1918 and may have profited greatly from the elderly German scholar's gentle advice.

The Final Journey

The Frankfurters were, therefore, registered in Hamburg once again, from 16 February 1920, at Innocentiastraße 19, the home of Oskar's brother-in-law, Max Lefeld. Frankfurter's route from his home in the urban district of Harvestehude, to the university near Dammtor station **[Figure 10]**, was rather short. On 28 August of that year, the Frankfurters drew up a joint last will, which, as mentioned above, stipulated that both wanted to be cremated. The will also states that Ms Frankfurter's sister (Ida) should receive an amount of 20,000 marks and that other relatives should be given the rest of the money.[43] It is difficult to say how much this was in terms of present-day spending power. In any case, it was a substantial amount of money at the time. This is even more surprising since the Frankfurters had to leave their belongings behind in Bangkok and were "practically without means" when they

[43] "*Testament von Dr Oscar Frankfurter und seiner Ehefrau Amélie*" [Last will of Dr Oscar Frankfurter and his spouse Amély], opened on 4 November 1922. Found in Archives of the Amtsgericht Hamburg.

returned to their hometown, Hamburg.[44] However, it is possible that the Frankfurters still owned property in Germany and may also had received material support from Frankfurter's nephew and brother-in-law, Max Lefeld.

Beginning in spring 1921, Dr Frankfurter taught the Siamese language at the Universität Hamburg, which had just been founded in 1919, immediately after the end of World War I. The course catalogue (*Vorlesungsverzeichnis*) for the "Seminar for the Language and Culture of China" (*Seminar für Sprache und Kultur Chinas*) included the teaching of "Siamese for Beginners" (Siamesisch für Anfänger) and "Siamese for Advanced Learners" (*Siamesisch für Fortgeschrittene*) taught twice weekly in a private environment, presumably in Frankfurter's home. We do not know who studied Siamese with him at that time, but it was certainly a small and exclusive group of students. Oskar Frankfurter's death on 1 October 1922 put an end to this first attempt of Siamese teaching at a German university.[45]

Following his last instruction, Frankfurter was cremated. Hamburg had a crematorium since 1891, one of the first three in Germany. There was a small cemetery where his remains found final rest. The crematorium still exists, but the building is no longer used for its original purpose. Today, it houses a kindergarten. The cemetery has been abandoned too, but urns may still remain underground. The fact that the cemetery has long been abandoned makes it difficult to locate Frankfurter's grave. However, we (i.e., the author and Gaby von Malottki) succeeded following the traces left by his widow, who survived her late husband by eight years. Amély Toni Frankfurter spent the last years of her life in Berlin, where she died of suicide on 19 December 1930. In her own last will, she once again emphasized her wish to be cremated. Her last resting place was directly next to her husband.[46] Through the number assigned to her grave, it was possible to obtain confirmation that Oskar Frankfurter's ashes were once lying there as well.

Scholarship and Legacy

Dr Oskar Frankfurter, a prominent and long-serving German expert in the Siamese Government during the reigns of Kings Chulalongkorn and Vajiravudh, left an enduring legacy that transcended his national and cultural background. Despite his German nationality and Jewish heritage, these aspects were not central to his reputation among the Siamese elite or the European expatriate community in Siam. Instead, he was widely regarded as an international scholar, a renowned philologist, and

[44] See source above in note 42.

[45] The teaching of the Thai language at the University of Hamburg resumed only in 1958, when Oscar Benl, Chair of Japanese Studies invited Luang Kee Kirati Widyolar, who had been Siamese language instructor at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin (now HUB) during the late 1920s and the 1930s under Prof. Walter Trittel. At the same time the lawyer Klaus Wenk began his second academic career in the field of Thai philology at Hamburg.

[46] Archives of Amtsgericht Berlin, Aktenzeichen 60/6VB82/1931: Nachlaß Amély Toni Frankfurter. I am most grateful to Gaby von Malottki for having initiated the search for the remains of the Frankfurters.

historian who chose to publish the majority of his academic work in English rather than his native language.

Beyond his academic achievements, Frankfurter was a skilled "networker", adept at bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds for shared endeavors. His instrumental role in founding The Siam Society underscores his commitment to fostering intellectual collaboration. A more in-depth examination of his presidency at the society warrants a separate article.

The tragic turn of events in 1917, Frankfurter's final year in Siam, highlights the interconnectedness of an individual's life with the fate of their homeland. Despite limited knowledge of Frankfurter's political leanings, his minimal involvement in the German Club suggests a lack of narrow-minded nationalist ideologies. Intended to depart Siam after his retirement in the latter half of 1917, his plans to take a position as a librarian at the University of Leipzig, the center of German book production at that time, to help build up a reference library in Bangkok, were disrupted by World War I. Forced to return to Germany under unexpected circumstances, he left behind his private library, the destiny of which remains unexplored. Frankfurter's life concluded in Hamburg, his native city, where he pioneered the introduction of Siamese language instruction at a German university.

The obituary published in the *Bangkok Times* on 1 November 1922, aptly encapsulates Dr Frankfurter's legacy. Described as "essentially a scholar" who had gained the friendship of influential individuals, his passing was mourned not only for his scholarly contributions but also for the loss of a cherished friend.

Acknowledgments

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Gaby von Malottki for having initiated the research on Oskar Frankfurter's life in 2018. Much of the findings on the genealogy of the Frankfurter and Lefeld families reflect our joint endeavor. I am also grateful to her as well as to Catthiyakorn Sasitharamas, Sutheera Satayaphan, Hans Michael Hensel, Graham Jefcoate, Jan Dreßler, and Singkha Grabowsky for their invaluable assistance in archival research. Their insights and critical remarks greatly enhanced the quality of this article. Special thanks are due to Sandra and Guilherme Cruz, descendants of the Lefeld family in São Paulo, Brazil, for generously sharing information on the genealogy of Oskar and Amély Toni Frankfurter, along with family photographs. I am also indebted to Søren Ivarsson for his translations of Seidenfaden's diary entries related to Frankfurter, and I appreciate the contributions of two anonymous reviewers. Any remaining shortcomings rest solely on the author's responsibility.

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Vajradhātvīśvarī and Vairocana: Mirror Tantric Images in 10th-Century Cambodia

Pia Conti[1]

Abstract—This article explores a collection of ten-armed, five-headed figures featured in 10th-century Khmer Buddhist miniature shrines. While traditionally identified as representations of Prajñāpāramitā, the female deity embodying "the Perfection of Wisdom", this article puts forth a new interpretation, suggesting these images depict the Khmer iteration of two dual tantric Buddhist deities, Vairocana and Vajradhātvīśvarī, linked to the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṁgrahanāmamahāyānasūtra* (STTS). The key insight for this hypothesis stems from an examination of a newly identified shrine located in the Battambang National Museum featuring mirrored male and female figures, prompting a reconsideration of their traditional identification. The link to the mentioned STTS text provides an explanatory framework for the unique iconographic features of these images.

Keywords: Ancient Cambodia; Buddhist Iconography; Khmer Tantric Deities; *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṁgrahanāmamahāyānasūtra* (STTS); Vairocana and Vajradhātvīśvarī

Buddhist Tantric Trends in 10th-Century Cambodia

The 10th century in the Khmer empire witnessed a notable surge in Buddhist tantric practices, well-documented through scholarly investigations. For instance, key tantric texts, such as the *Karandavyūhasūtra*, the *Mahāvairocanasūtra*, and the *Compendium of the Truth of All the Tathāgatas* or the *Sarvatathāgatatattva-saṁgrahanāmamahāyānasūtra*, abbreviated as STTS, emerged during this period and were commented on by Hiram Woodward (2007; 2015) and Peter Sharrock (2013). Traditional Mahayana scriptures, including the *Large Prajñāpāramitā Sutra* and the *Madhyāntavibhāgaśāstra,* were also referenced in inscriptions (Cœdès 1954).

The era prominently featured representations of buddhas and bodhisattvas such as Lokeśvara, Vajrapāṇi, and Prajñāpāramitā. Noteworthy Buddhist temples like Bat Cum and Prasat Phnom Trap provided insights, with Bat Cum displaying tantric inscriptions (K. 266–8) and Prasat Phnom Trap featuring reliefs of Buddhist deities (Cœdès 1908b; Woodward 2015). Miniature shrines from Banteay Meanchey province and the Khorat Plateau, along with a Buddhist hermitage with a stone inscription (K. 290; Cœdès 1908a), underscored the prevalence of monks and hermits in the region.

My present investigation delves into the significance of multi-headed deities, focusing first on the 968 CE inscription of Wat Sithor (K. 111; Cœdès 1937–66: VI). This inscription, detailing Buddhist

[1] SOAS–University of London (*Alumna*).
Email: piaconti@live.com.

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Figure 1: Female deity (Vajradhātvīśvarī?), Kbal Sre Yeay Yin, Phnom Srok, Cambodia, late 10th c., National Museum Cambodia, Phnom Penh, H.: 187 cm, sandstone, inv. no. Ga 1735 © Pia Conti

Figure 2: Male deity (five-headed Vairocana?), Kbal Sre Yeay Yin, Phnom Srok, Cambodia, late 10th c., Musée Guimet, Paris, H.: 230 cm, sandstone, inv. no. MG 17487 © Pia Conti

scriptures introduced by Kīrtipaṇḍita, a high official in Jayavarman V's administration (968–1001), includes the STTS. This tantric text serves as a pivotal source inspiring depictions of five-headed and ten-armed figures, a theme explored in-depth below.

Male or Female Deities?

A brief review of the two images presented as **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** reveals a depiction of a female and a male five-headed, ten-armed, crowned deity standing in a tri-lobed niche surrounded by flowers. These images embellish the exterior of two four-sided Buddhist shrines, known as *caitya* in the literature, or miniature tower shrines, originating from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin in Banteay Meanchey province, Cambodia. While both figures have traditionally been identified as representing Prajñāpāramitā, the female deity embodying "the Perfection of Wisdom" and often referred to as the "mother of buddhas"—a significant principle in Mahayana Buddhism—this conventional

attribution prompts a re-evaluation of the interpretation.

The image depicted in **Figure 2** is distinctly male, attired in a monk's robe (Baptiste & Zéphir 2008: 166), yet scholars consistently overlooked this detail.[2] Upon closer examination of its upper body, one observes that the line delineating the upper robe has been deliberately scratched out. It appears that the act of depicting a five-headed tantric figure adorned in a monk's robe (the fifth head also intentionally chiselled out) caused discomfort to someone, possibly a devotee. This discomfort is evident in their attempt to erase the hem of the robe. This act of vandalism diminishes the clarity of the image wearing a monk's robe, casting doubt on whether it truly represents a buddha.

Such an act of destruction may be motivated by the belief that a depiction of a buddha should not feature five heads. Alternatively, if it was a reaction from followers of Śaivism, it might suggest that only a representation of Sadāśiva, one of the highest forms of Lord Śiva, is permissible with five heads, not a buddha. Sadāśiva holds a central role as the principal deity in dualistic Śaivism, historically revered in ancient Cambodia. His five heads symbolize distinct tantric revelations or *āgamas*. It is plausible that his five-headed form could have influenced the imagery within Buddhism.

An alternative rationale for the perplexity surrounding the misidentification of what I interpret as a multi-headed buddha may stem from the presence of a different representation on the opposite side. On this opposing side, a more conventional Khmer buddha image, characterized by a single head, sits cross-legged in meditation, protected by a multi-headed *nāga* **[Figure 3]**. Instances of two buddhas depicted on similar shrines or miniature shrines are infrequent, though exceptions exist.[3] I will revisit this observation later, addressing the unique juxtaposition of two distinct buddha representations—a traditional *nāga*-buddha and a tantric buddha manifestation with multiple arms and heads—both featured on the shrine now housed in the Musée Guimet and propose a plausible explanation.

Miniature Shrines as Devices for Devotional Meditation and Transformation?

The shrines originating from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin on Phnom Srok stand as miniature stone monuments, barely exceeding two meters in height. Comprising various elements meticulously arranged to form a sacred space, these structures differ from conventional boundary stones that delineate sacred sites. Rather, I suggest that these shrines were designed as aids for meditation, guiding devotees in invoking the deities depicted on them into their hearts.

[2] For the identification as Prajñāpāramitā, see *inter alia* Finot (1925: 252–253), Lobo (1997: 244), and Woodward (2015: 242). Multzer O'Naughten (2016: 38) points out a problem with the identification of the male figure as Prajñāpāramitā but does not offer any further clarification.

[3] One of the exceptions can be seen on the stele BBK.0071 from the Battambang National Museum which features a seated *nāga*-buddha and a standing buddha with the double gesture of argumentation. Also, the stele hailing from Khum Prei, Angkor, now in the Angkor National Museum, features two similar buddhas. For an image, see Woodward 2015: 229.

Figure 3: Buddha (Śākyamuni?) on the *nāga*, Kbal Sre Yeay Yin, Phnom Srok, Cambodia, now in Musée Guimet (cf. Fig. 2) © Pia Conti

Contrary to boundary stones, which mark physical borders, the shrine of Kbal Sre Yeay Yin may have served as conduits for a profound spiritual connection. The intention might have been for devotees to identify with the spiritual qualities of the displayed deities, essentially transforming themselves into embodiments of these divine entities. This transformative process, known as *devatāyoga*, involves the devotee selecting a "chosen" or "cherished deity".

Structured into three distinct parts—a pedestal, a band adorned with displayed images, and a mostly empty superstructure embellished with lotus flower bands—these shrines hold symbolic significance. According to Wibke Lobo (1997: 242), interpreting this tripartite structure reveals a profound symbolism. The stylized lotus at the object's tip symbolizes *nirvāṇa*, representing the transcendent and is devoid of specific representation. The middle section, adorned with depictions of buddhas and bodhisattvas, is suggestive of *saṁsāra*, where individuals amid life's struggles find a path to access *nirvāṇa* in the form of a deity.

Engaging in the visualization process of a deity becomes an expedient means for devotees to embody the qualities and attributes of these divine entities. The square pedestal at the base of the shrine symbolizes the material world or *saṁsāra*, where individuals labor in their quest for enlightenment. By contemplating this representation of the macrocosm, devotees are guided to connect with the process of liberation, thus enriching their spiritual journey.

Iconography and Context of Four-Faced Shrines

The figures at the center of this article, featuring multiple heads and arms, are all depicted on four-faced shrines which were set up around 989 CE (Baptiste & Zéphir 2008: 183–185). There are very few known freestanding images from this time of multi-armed deities made in stone.[4] This could be

[4] One exception is a female figure with sixteen heads and six arms in the Musée Guimet whose identity has until now been a mystery (Baptiste & Zéphir 2008: 246). There are, however, more examples of multi-armed and multi-headed bronze images of Lokeśvara, discussed by Green (2014) and Piriya (2012: 292), from the 10th century, and there are later, 11th and

because the images have an entirely different function from freestanding images which can be individually worshipped and are usually housed in a temple or a shrine. The significance of these figures appears to derive from their association with other deities, forming a *maṇḍala*, that is, a circle of deities that requires a distinct interpretation. Given that the figures under discussion are always presented alongside others that explicitly contextualize the STTS, I will interpret them within this framework.

The stone miniature shrines under discussion here generally feature four standing images of buddhas or bodhisattvas facing the cardinal directions. These monuments are quite unique to ancient Cambodia. Their closest counterparts in South Asia are the Licchavi shrines of the Kathmandu Valley, produced in the 6th to 8th centuries (Gutschow & Gellner 1997: 175–178). Whereas in Nepal, the principal buddhas or bodhisattvas are sitting or standing, in 10th-century Cambodia, they typically stand, except for representations of a buddha sitting on the *nāga* **[Fig. 3]**.

Most four-faced shrines hail from the northwestern region of Cambodia, namely from Ta Muan near today's Thai border, from Thma Puok, from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin, and the newly identified one from Prasat Samre Namtaov (Prasat Nam Tau?),[5] also on Phnom Srok. The miniature monuments seem thus essentially localized in time and space.

Two of the shrines discussed in this article **[Figs 1–3]** hail from a group of four found originally at Kbal Sre Yeay Yin, Phnom Srok (IK. 758). The four were briefly discussed by Louis Finot in an article on "Lokeśvara en Indochine" (1925). There, he named the objects *caitya* for lack of a better word (*ibid*.: 251).[6] These ornamented shrines were later transferred to various museums such as the Musée Guimet in Paris, the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, and the Angkor National Museum in Siem Reap.

According to the archive photos taken in the 1920s, the shrines seem to have been arranged in pairs, cordoning off a sacred space, like a *sīmā* or demarcating stone **[e.g., Figure 4]**. However, it is essential to note that the appearance of potentially enclosing a sacred space in the photographs may be wrong and influenced by the angle and method of photography. Currently, there are no reported foundations of temples or monasteries at or near the site and further information can only be obtained through excavation. This absence of archeological information seems to suggest that these structures did not function as *sīmā* but as protective monuments, and possibly as visualization aids for *devatāyoga*, as suggested by

12th century, representations of multi-headed and multi-armed Heruka and Prajñāpāramitā. More precisely, there are about ten twenty-two-armed and eleven-headed bronzes of Prajñāpāramitā, mirroring the eleven-headed Lokeśvara, known to date from that later period. For images of the eleven-headed Prajñāpāramitā, see *inter alia*, Piriya (2012: 295), Chemburkar (2022: fig. 27), and Kim (2022: 178–179).

[5] Prasat Nam Tau, perhaps an alternative spelling for Prasat Samre Namtaov, can be located in the vicinity of Kbal Srei Yeay Yin. This stele has never been published as far as I am aware.

[6] Some steles were partly discussed in Lobo (1997: 59), Baptiste & Zéphir (2008: 183) and, recently and more extensively, in Woodward (2015) and Multzer O'Naughten (2016).

Figure 4: Two shrines at Kbal Sre Yeay Yin, Phnom Srok (IK. 758) *in situ* © EFEO Archive (CAM00848)

another similar shrine and associated inscription found on a nearby site at Thma Puok.

The Inscribed Shrine of Thma Puok

The inscribed shrine from Thma Puok was used by Finot to explain the findings of Kbal Sre Yeay Yin. The two sites are only a few kilometers apart. The monument from Thma Puok depicts three four-armed female figures displayed in niches on three sides **[Figures 5a–c]** and a male Lokeśvara displayed on the fourth side **[Fig. 5d]**. In the upper registers in small niches, we find sitting images in meditation. On the Thma Puok shrine the female images are clearly representations of Prajñāpāramitā, represented with four arms and hands, holding the common attributes of a book, a rosary, a lotus, and a flask (Bhattacharyya: 1968, *sādhana* 156).

The Thma Puok shrine is distinct from those coming from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin. It is unique and looks more like *un édifice en réduction*, a sort of tapering temple building with four niches above the main image. It is conceivable that the upper levels of these ornamented monuments suggest the heavenly realms in which the bodhisattvas appear to help guide humans in the earthly sphere. The shrine from Thma Puok holds significant value, not only for its aesthetic appeal but also for providing insights into the function of similar sacred objects. Additionally, its pedestal is adorned with a long and evocative inscription on the four faces.

The inscription of Thma Puok K. 225 has been written in Sanskrit in the name of a yogin called Padmavairocana who has erected the shrine and images of the "mother of the jinas", of Indra, of Maitreya, of Lokeśvara and of Vajrin (Vajrapāṇi) in the year 989 CE (911 *śaka*). The holy man, who has arrived near his deliverance from existence, has set up the images in the four cardinal directions, as well as "in the mind of the people who suffer from grief and in the happy hearts of good people". This verse is significant because it suggests that the shrine functions as a meditation aid for devotees who engage in *devatāyoga*. By helping to erect the images in the mind and heart of the people who seek deliverance the monument can be read as an expedient means to liberation.

The inscription also reveals that Padmavairocana had set up a temple

Figures 5a–d: Shrine featuring three Prajñāpāramitās (a–c), four-armed with attributes, and a four-armed Lokeśvara (d), Thma Puok, Phnom Srok, Cambodia, late 10th c., National Museum Battambang, H.: approx. 130 cm, sandstone, inv. no. BBK 0064, with inscription K. 225 on the pedestal © Wibke Lobo

dedicated to a female deity (most likely Prajñāpāramitā) who seems to be the sage's favorite Buddhist deity. The inscription further states that a female and a male temple servant, as well as an elephant, are given to the deity for the foundation's upkeep. In its opening stanzas, the inscription invokes the Buddha, Prajñāpāramitā, Lokeśvara, Vajrin, and Maitreya. I give here my abridged version of the first five stanzas translated by George Cœdès in French (K. 225; 1937–66: III, 68–69):

> I. May he who is unique, divide himself into several [entities] to satisfy the desire of his followers, just as the moon's reflection in several ponds, may the Buddha protect you!
>
> II. May Prajñāpāramitā, the virtuous mother of the Jinas, even of those who are not yet born, protect you from evil, you who are the best of men!
>
> III. I honor Lokeśvara with devotion [...] elevated like Amitābha.
>
> IV. Victory belongs to Vajrin [...] circle of the sun.
>
> V. Honor to Arya Maitreya whose compassion, joy, indifference, patience, and other qualities [...]

Though the opening verses honor several deities, the adorned shrine itself portrays only two clearly, viz. Prajñāpāramitā and Lokeśvara. As

described earlier, Prajñāpāramitā is represented three times and Lokeśvara just once. Finot (1925: 261) suggested that the absence of other deities on the Thma Puok shrine implied their possible representation on different structures, yet no such objects have been discovered nearby. Importantly, Finot utilized the listed deities to tentatively identify the figures depicted in the Kbal Sre Yeay Yin set **[Figs 1–4]**. This attempt seems to be the primary reason why the multi-headed male deity observed on one of the shrines **[Fig. 2]** was subsequently and uniquely associated with Prajñāpāramitā, despite a lack of compelling evidence beyond her written mention in the adjacent Thma Puok inscription.

On the Thma Puok shrine, Prajñāpāramitā is represented as one-headed and four-armed with the eponymous book in her upper left hand. Her representation is therefore significantly different from the female images found in Kbal Sre Yeay Yin which do not hold books in their hands. This dissimilarity prompts the question of whether the female deity depicted on one of the Kbal Sre Yeay Yin shrines is truly Prajñāpāramitā, as Finot suggested, or possibly another closely related Buddhist deity.

The 10th-century Khmer Buddhist inscriptions offer limited assistance in addressing this problem since they make no mention of any female deity apart from Prajñāpāramitā. Without inscriptional support, identifying the deities becomes a challenging task, requiring a methodical approach to gather circumstantial evidence. In the following discussion, I contend that the most probable candidate is a tantric incarnation of Prajñāpāramitā known as Vajradhātvīśvarī. The rationale behind this assertion involves several steps, acknowledging that certain questions remain unanswered.[7] However, a crucial element supporting this identification is a newly identified shrine in Battambang.

The Shrine of Prasat Samre Namtaov

On a recent visit to the Battambang National Museum, I saw a shrine said to come from Prasat Samre Namtaov which shows two five-headed, ten-armed figures, on opposite sides, one male and one female, linked by a Lokeśvara in the center **[Figures 6 a–c]**. As **Figure 6a** clearly shows the image is female with a pleated robe and a flap in front, similar to the sarong clothing seen on **Figure 1**. She has ten well defined arms and hands and five chiselled-out heads. The figure on the right **[Fig. 6c]** shows a five-headed and ten-armed male deity in a monk's dress which is like the garment seen in **Figure 2**. The image is missing two of its heads.

The ornamented shrine, while incomplete, distinctly reveals the Khmer conceptualization of a ten-armed buddha and a ten-armed female deity. Positioned on the same monument facing each other, it is not possible to

[7] One unresolved issue lies in the diversity of representations on the four shrines from Kbal Srei Yeay Yin. Among these are a male jina with five heads (potentially Vairocana?), a five-headed and ten-armed female deity (possibly Vajradhātvīśvarī?), a depiction of a female deity with five heads but only four arms, and a stele featuring a three-headed female deity alongside a one-headed female deity (presumably Prajñāpāramitā?). Each of these depictions merits individual scrutiny to gain a more nuanced understanding of their symbolic significance. For visual references of these figures, refer to Multzer O'Naughten 2016: figs 4–7.

Figures 6a–c: Shrine possibly featuring Vajradhātvīsvarī (a), Lokeśvara (b), and Vairocana (c), Prasat Samre Namtaov, Phnom Srok, Cambodia, late 10th c., National Museum Battambang, H.: approx. 200 cm, sandstone, inv. no. B54 (old) or BBK 0158 (new) © Pia Conti

categorize both figures as female. Their positioning indicates a deliberate mirroring.

The presentation of mirror images on the same structure suggests that both female and male elements are essential for attaining enlightenment. The concept of the union of a male and female deity is a foundational aspect defining many strands of tantric doctrine. However, in the absence of inscriptions, identifying these two images raises questions. What do they represent and how can we interpret the multiplicity of limbs? Could these figures serve as an allegory for enlightenment proposed by a specific text or tantric environment? Further insight may be gleaned from the STTS tantric scripture.

Quincunx of Buddhas and the STTS

As discussed above, the STTS—which introduces a series of *maṇḍala*s—was one of the important scriptures brought to ancient Cambodia in the 10th century. The most important of these is the *vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala* which presents a total of thirty-seven deities symbolizing different aspects of the mind on the way to enlightenment. Most importantly this tantra solidified the concept of the

Five Buddha families (Snellgrove 1987: 196–197). The concept was taken up by many commentators and became central to the belief system, signifying the universality of the buddha principle.

The central figure in the STTS and the lord of the *vajradhātumaṇḍala* is Buddha Vairocana. He is conceived as the *saṁbhogakāya* of Buddha Śākyamuni (Kwon 2002: 32). According to the theory of the *trikaya* or three bodies of the buddha, the term *saṁbhogakāya* signifies "a glorified form" of the buddha or his "enjoyment" form. The buddha aspect becomes transcendent and immortal, as opposed to the mortal body of Buddha Śākyamuni. In Mahayana Buddhist doctrine, this mortal body, called *nirmāṅakāya*, is given to a buddha while he exists in human form on earth and lasts until he dies.

The origin story of the STTS relates that the tantra is taught by the enjoyment form of Buddha Vairocana to all buddhas and bodhisattvas gathered in Akaniṣṭha heaven, the highest spiritual abode, whilst his human form, his *nirmāṇakāya*, meditates on earth under the bodhi tree. The bodhisattvas Lokeśvara and Vajrapāṇi are among the listeners in Akaniṣṭha heaven. Vairocana is also lord over four directional buddhas: Akṣobhya to the East, Ratnasambhava to the South, Amitābha to the West, and Amoghasiddhi to the North.

In the system of the STTS, these Five Buddhas or Jinas (conquerors) are also seen as homologies of the Five Aggregates, the Five Wisdoms, and the Five Poisons. All these correspondences are made within the STTS or its corpus of commentaries. The all-important role of the number five leads me to suggest that the male five-headed buddhas may indeed personify the concept of the Five Buddhas, with Vairocana as the central character. No other Buddhist concept evokes such a strong connection.

If the multi-limbed male deity represents Vairocana, the Buddha's *saṁbhogakāya*, the *nāga*-buddha, on the opposite side of the shrine, must be Śākyamuni, his *nirmāṅakāya*. This suggestion is bolstered by the observation that the *nāga*-buddha **[Fig. 3]** is portrayed without a crown, just with his monkish curls, whereas the Vairocana on the opposite side is visibly crowned **[Fig. 2]**. The STTS states clearly that buddhas wear a "gem crown" as a sign of their sovereignty over the triple world. As Kwon (2002: 44) translates: "[Vairocana] was bestowed with the consecration of the Dharma sovereignty over the three worlds by means of the gem-diadem of all the Tathāgatas".

My identification of the uncrowned *nāga*-buddha as Śākyamuni therefore differs from the interpretations proposed by Sharrock (2011) and Woodward (2015: 226) which identify the *nāga*-buddha as representing Mahāvairocana.

Using my identification and examining the Guimet shrine from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin **[Figs 2–3]**, we can account for all the images. In the origin story of the STTS, Vairocana in his *saṁbhogakāya* form teaches the tantra in Akaniṣṭha heaven to a group of bodhisattvas including Vajrapāṇi and Lokeśvara, while the *nāga*-buddha as the *nirmāṅakāya* of Śākyamuni on earth meditates under the bodhi tree. The Vajrin or Vajrapāṇi on this shrine **[Figure 7]** is interestingly three-headed and wearing a Five Jina crown, so the image is highly infused with the Five Buddha family system of the STTS.[8]

[8] For a discussion of the elaborate figure of Vajrin, see Lobo 1997: 244.

Vajradhātvīsvarī: Mirror-Image of Vairocana?

If we accept the proposition that the five-headed, ten-armed male crowned figure represents Vairocana **[Figs 2, 6c]**, we may look for a solution regarding his female mirror-image **[Figs 1, 6a]**. Here we have a female form with four extra heads; we want to enquire what these heads may stand for. The STTS lists a second *maṇḍala*, called the *guhyamaṇḍala* or "diagram of secrets". This diagram is also called *dhāraṇīmaṇḍala* or "diagram of spells or consorts". The diagram represents the mystic knowledges, gestures, and symbols of the Five Buddhas, in feminine form.[9] The STTS relates that each jina of the *mahādhātumaṇḍala* emits a spell or gesture. Thus, Vairocana emits the spell/gesture Vajradhātvīsvarī, Akṣobhya emits Vajravajriṇī, Ratnasambhava emits Ratnavajriṇī, Amitayus/Amitābha emits Dharmavajriṇī, and Amoghasiddhi emits Karmavajriṇī (Kwon 2002: 94). These "spells" also correspond to the four great *pāramitā*s or perfections (Lokesh Chandra & Snellgrove 1981: 30–31). The perfections are, according to Lokesh Chandra and Snellgrove, clearly personified and conceived as "goddesses".

It should be noted that there is another *maṇḍala* in which Vajradhātvīśvarī plays a role in the STTS; this is the *padmaguhyamaṇḍala*, in which she is accompanied by four *pāramitā*s (Kwon 2002: 226).[10] This *maṇḍala* also appears in the *Sarvadugatipariśodhanatantra*, a text translated into Tibetan in the late 8th century and is thus almost contemporary with the STTS. There, Vajradhātvīśvarī is more explicitly part of a sacred circle, representing the female aspect of Vairocana (Huntington & Bangdel 2003: 122). She appears as the central deity surrounded by Vajravajrinī, Ratnavajrinī, Dharmavajrinī, and Karmavajrinī. Vajravarman, a Tibetan contemporary commentator, equates in his exegesis "the mother of the *tathāgata*s" with Vajradhātvīśvarī. In this tantric commentary, Prajñāpāramita's epithet "mother of the *tathāgata*s" is given to the female deity Vajradhātvīsvarī (Skorupski 1983: 315).

In the *Kriyāsaṁgraha*, a ritual manual relating to the *vajradhātumaṇḍala* (Skorupski 1998: 187), written a few centuries later, *Vajradhātvīśvarī* is also visualized as consort of Vairocana, whereas the other four female deities are assigned to their usual partners. Vajradhātvīśvarī is called by the tantric master with her mantra, "Ohm Vajradhātvīśvarī Hūm, consecrate me!" (*ibid.*: 85), and participates in other rituals, where she is clearly conceived as the partner of Vairocana.

The 11th-century Indian pandit Maitrīpa, who studied at Nalanda and Vikramaśila, explicitly links the Five Jinas with the Five Goddesses in his *Compendium of the Nondual Vajra (Advaya vajrasaṁgraha)*. He also unequivocally

[9] *Vidyā* or *mudrā* are used interchangeably. *Mudrā* may be in general rendered as gesture, sign, or seal, but also as female consort, especially in a tantric context. In the introduction to the *Kriyāsaṁgraha*, Skorupski (2002: 18) states that the "devotee may envisage the deities or their symbols in a *sādhana* or mystical practice". Furthermore, the *Kriyāsaṁgraha* clearly calls a woman involved in tantric rituals a *dhāraṇī* or a *vidyā* (*ibid.*: 124).

[10] I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for guiding me to this *maṇḍala* in the STTS, and for also pointing out Vajradhātvīśvarī's role in the *Sarvadugatipariśodhanatantra*.

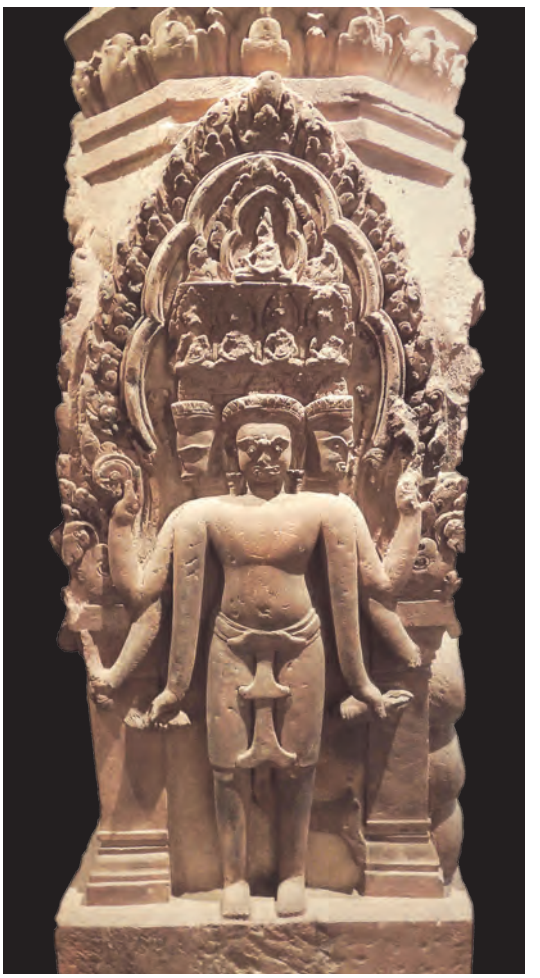

Figure 7: Vajrin (Vajrapāṇi), Kbal Sre Yeay Yin, Phnom Srok, Cambodia, now in Musée Guimet (cf. Figs 2–3) © Pia Conti

equates Vajradhātvīśvarī with Prajñāpāramitā. The text makes it clear that the male and female elements work closely together to form a unity. David Snellgrove remarks that in this tantric tradition "a fifth goddess is sometimes mentioned as a partner of the chief buddha-manifestation at the center of the *maṇḍala*. She may be known as the Lady (Bhagavatī), as suchness (Tathatā), as Voidness (Śūnyatā), as Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā), as Limit of Reality (Bhūtakoṭi), or as Absence of Self (Nairātmyā), for she possesses the true nature of Vajrasattva and is the Lady of the *Vajra* sphere (Vajradhātvīśvarī)" (1987: 208–209).

Further evidence for the centrality of the relationship between Vairocana and Vajradhātvīśvarī is found in contemporary Java where Vairocana is frequently mentioned in a Javanese text called the *Saṅ Hyaṅ Kamahāyānikan* (SHK) or the *Holy Scripture Pertaining to Mahāyāna*. Vajradhātvīsvarī plays an important role in this text which has been dated between the 8th and the 10th century. The scripture comprises two parts: (1) *The Sang Hyang Kamahāyānan Mantranaya*, meaning *The Mantra System of Mahāyāna*, and (2) *The Saṅ Hyaṅ Kamahāyānan Advaya Sādhana,* or *The Mahāyāna Method for Attaining Non-Duality*.

The *Advāya Sādhana* describes a four-fold way to liberation which every practitioner of this particular Mahayana creed must follow. The four female deities play an important role in a section of the text which can be interpreted as a recasting of the Bodhisattva Path. This section is called the *paramamārga*, i.e., the supreme path. It defines Prajñāpāramitā, the highest principle of the path, as the "insight that everything considered part of the world, [everything] found in the ten quarters of the world [...], along with the external body as well as the metaphysical [entities], and all beings, all actions, all results—[...] whether with form or formless, are in essence empty (*śūnya*)" (Lokesh Chandra 1995: 368).

The *paramamārga* rehearses the Bodhisattva Path by explaining the meaning of the six *pāramitā*s or perfections—generosity, morality, patience, vigor, concentration or meditation, and wisdom. Prajñāpāramitā is the essence

of these *pāramitā*s, because, without wisdom the fulfilment of the first five perfections does not lead to liberation. This point is repeatedly stressed in all Wisdom texts and the SHK stands firm in this tradition. Prajñāpāramitā is then given the name Vajradhātvīśvarī and evoked in the following way: "Srī Vajradhātvīśvarī is extraordinary in wisdom and at the same time very beautiful and exceptional in her service to lord (Bhaṭāra) Vairocana. She is the essence of the six *pāramitā*-s" (*ibid*.). Interestingly, the six perfections and the four female deities are then interpreted as the ten stages of the Bodhisattva Path.

Considering the above discussion, I propose to read the female five-headed and ten-armed figure on the Kbal Sre Yeay Yin shrine in the Phnom Penh Museum **[Fig. 1]** as well as the Prasat Samre Namtaov shrine in the Battambang Museum **[Fig. 6a]**, as representing Vajradhātvīśvarī, the tantric embodiment of Prajñāpāramitā. Similarly, I read the five-headed and ten-armed male figure seen on the Guimet shrine from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin **[Fig. 2]** and the Battambang shrine from Prasat Samre Namtaov as representing Buddha Vairocana **[Fig. 6c]**.

Symbolism of Five-Headed and Ten-Armed Deities

The presence of Vajradhātvīśvarī on Khmer stone miniature shrines is truly remarkable, as she manifests as a fully developed tantric deity adorned with multiple heads and arms. In contrast, only two known bronze depictions of Lokeśvara from the 10th century showcase this bodhisattva with eleven heads and twenty-two arms. Interestingly, Lokeśvara's eleven-headed form enjoyed widespread popularity in various Buddhist regions at the time, possibly reaching ancient Cambodia from neighboring Campā (Green 2014: 70). Unlike the familiar and widespread nature of Lokeśvara's eleven-headed manifestation, Vajradhātvīśvarī stands out as a distinctive figure within the Khmer tradition of mainland Southeast Asia.

The female figure from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin housed in Phnom Penh **[Fig. 1]** features five heads with diadems and heavy earrings. The front face displays a benevolent smile. The expression of the faces on the side are harder to read. These latter faces have sterner expressions, whereas the ones on top look almost male. It must be remembered that the small faces are less than five centimeters in height, so it is quite difficult to give them a definite expression. The body of the deity is clearly marked as female: she displays breasts with two beauty lines underneath and she wears a sarong with the frontal goffer typical for 10th-century female attire.

We have discussed the five heads and their probable meaning extensively above. As shown, the number five is frequently used in the STTS and is central to its theology. Since in this scripture Vajradhātvīśvarī is the queen of her *maṇḍala*, I propose to read the faces as representing the Five Goddesses and therefore the Five Wisdoms. Acquiring these wisdoms will lead to liberation through the tantric path.

The ten arms can be interpreted as symbolic references to the ten stages of the Bodhisattva Path, as expounded, for instance, in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (Dayal 1970). In this scripture, each of the ten

stages corresponds to the mastery of a specific perfection. The inclusion of ten arms in the visual representation may serve to portray the systematic and progressive development that a bodhisattva undergoes on their journey toward perfection.

The narrative unfolds in a step-by-step fashion, aligned with the sequential mastery of perfections associated with each stage on the Bodhisattva Path. As the devotee engages in this spiritual odyssey, the initial transformation into a bodhisattva marks the beginning. Dedicated progress across all ten stages ultimately leads the aspirant to buddhahood. The significance of the ten *bhūmi*s or stages resonates deeply in the STTS, emphasizing the swift achievement of both the bodhisattva-*bhūmi* and the buddha-*bhūmi* for the earnest practitioner.

Reflecting upon the depiction of the multi-headed buddha **[Fig. 2]**, I propose a similar interpretation. The five heads could symbolize the Five Buddhas, with the central head representing Vairocana, embodying the transcendent essence of the mortal Buddha Śākyamuni. The remaining four heads may correspond to the celestial buddhas: Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi. Notably, the five heads are adorned with a diadem and substantial earrings, deviating from the monastic aspect of the buddha under the *nāga*, who is devoid of jewelry and earrings **[Fig. 3]**. This intentional use of jewelry elements in the multi-headed buddha likely alludes to the tantric enlightenment of Vairocana.

The ten arms, in turn, could symbolize the Bodhisattva Path. It is only when a buddha attains the 10th stage or *bhūmi* of this path that the STTS can be unveiled to the world. This intricate symbolism suggests a profound connection between the physical representation of Buddha Vairocana and the spiritual journey encapsulated within the tenets of the Bodhisattva Path.

Symbolism of the Hand Gestures

A further unusual trait is displayed by the five-headed and ten-armed figures displaying a series of unfamiliar hand gestures. Whereas in early Buddhism hand positions usually referred to a specific episode of the historical Buddha's legend, with the emergence of tantrism, hand gestures acquired esoteric meanings. In tantric rituals, bending a finger inside, touching another finger, or forming a fist is often done in very quick succession to accompany sacred utterances or mantras or in order to "seal" (*mudrā*) a particular meaning. *Mudrā* become "manual signals indicative of various ideas" and "the manipulations of fingers work(s) as if to supplement the power of words" (Saunders 1960: 5).[11]

Taking a close look at the ten hands of Vajradhātvīśvarī depicted on the shrine from Kbal Sre Yeay Yin at the Phnom Penh National Museum, we can see that they display a series of gestures which seem to convey esoteric meaning

[11] The term *mudrā* has a complicated history, but became most important in Buddhist tantric literature, where tantric deities which require visualization use these ritual gestures. This practice started in the late 8th-century with the *Guhyasamājatantra*, see Smith 2015. The terminology used here in the reading of the gestures is taken from general Indian manuals on *mudrā*s or *hasta*s such as the *Abhinayadarpanam* by Nandikeśvara (Ghosh 1957), and modern compilation manuals such as Bunce 2001.

Figures 8a–b (proper right and left):
Hand details of Vajradhātvīśvarī (cf. Fig. 1) © Pia Conti

[Figures 8a–b]. The top proper right hand has the ring and the index finger bent, while the little and middle finger and the thumb are straight **[Fig. 8a]**. This gesture is called *śukatuṇḍahasta* and may signal at times an "angry" or "fierce" mood (Bunce 2001: 220). Bunce (2001: 220) gives also "shooting an arrow" as a meaning of the gesture, which more likely stems from theatre performances and not tantric ritual. An alternative denotation given in the manuals is the "telling of a mystic secret" (Ghosh 1957: 66–70). This reading

would fit well with the interpretation of a spiritual figure such as Vajradhātvīsvarī.

The top proper left hand displays a different gesture: all fingers are straight, except for the ring finger **[Fig. 8b]**. This gesture is called the *tripātakā* which literally means "three parts of the flag". It denotes a crown, the *vajra*, light (Bunce 2001: 242), and wisdom (Nair 2020). The gesture on the second proper right hand **[Fig. 8a]** is undecipherable whereas the second left hand shows the middle finger bent **[Fig. 8b]**. This gesture may be identified as the *śūnyahasta* or *śūnyamudrā* (Bunce 2001: 221). *Śūnya* is the Sanskrit word for "emptiness" or "voidness", a key Mahayana concept. Both deities—Prajñāpāramitā and Vajradhātvīśvarī—symbolize emptiness (*śūnyatā*), as already mentioned (Snellgrove 1987: 208–209). This reading of the "empty-handed" gesture enhances our understanding of the deity's iconography.

The right third and fourth proper hands are undecipherable **[Fig. 8a]**, but the third left hand shows again the *tripātakā* (possibly symbolizing wisdom), and the fourth left hand **[Fig. 8b]**, the *śūnya gesture* symbolizing emptiness (Bunce 2001: 221). Finally, the fifth right hand **[Fig. 8a]** is in *varada*, that is, the gesture of "granting a boon" or "fulfillment of a vow" (Bunce 2001: 267), whereas the fifth left hand **[Fig. 8b]** shows the gesture of "emptiness" again.

Intriguingly, the Vajradhātvīśvarī depiction hailing from Prasat Samre Namtaov, now in the Battambang Museum **[Fig. 6a]**, also displays several gestures which show some similarity to the relief housed in the Phnom Penh Museum. Clearly visible on the top proper left hand is the bent ring finger which makes it a *tripātakā* gesture. Some of the hand gestures are more three-dimensionally worked than on the Phnom Penh shrine, such as the third proper left hand which shows the *śūnya* gesture. One can see the thumb is indented to meet the middle finger. The Vairocana figure, depicted on the rear of the shrine from Prasat Samre Namtaov, also exhibits distinctive *mudrā*s in the hands that have remained intact **[Fig. 6c]**.

Although the presentation of these ritual hand gestures might not be as intricate as observed in the Japanese context, where detailed charts elucidate their esoteric meanings, we can reasonably assert that these gestures convey profound messages. Notably, Vajradhātvīśvarī's bent middle finger in the third and fifth hands, for instance, signifies *śūnyatā*—the emptiness she embodies. Additionally, the array of other hand gestures can be interpreted as embodying or shaping the very concepts that lead to enlightenment.

Unlocking Khmer Enlightenment

In conclusion, this article has endeavored to illustrate that the five-headed and ten-armed depictions, discovered on 10th-century Khmer shrines from Phnom Srok in northwest Cambodia, representing both male and female figures, embody profound spiritual entities. Specifically, these depictions are now identified as Vairocana, a tantric manifestation of Buddha Śākyamuni, and Vajradhātvīśvarī, a tantric manifestation of Prajñāpāramitā, the goddess of Transcendent Wisdom. Within the intricate tapestry of the *vajradhātu*- and

the *guhyamaṇḍala* of the STTS, these deities assume pivotal roles, symbolizing a male and female enlightenment matrix. A notable revelation emerges when recognizing the interconnectedness of the "twin" or mirror-image figures on the Battambang shrine from Prasat Samre Namtaov, highlighting the inherent complementarity of male and female principles in the profound pursuit of enlightenment.

These intricate images, with their nuanced details, potentially symbolize a spectrum of spiritual concepts. From the Five Goddesses, the Five Jinas, the Five Wisdoms, and the Five Aggregates to the ten-staged Bodhisattva Path, each element within these depictions serves as a profound guide along the spiritual journey towards enlightenment. What further enhances the significance of these depictions is their unique form, unparalleled in the broader Buddhist world. This distinctiveness marks a profound and singular contribution from Khmer sculptors to the rich imagery of enlightenment in ancient Cambodia.

Acknowledgments

I dedicate this article to my friend Wibke Lobo, who joined me in exploring Khmer Prajñāpāramitā imagery years ago. Wibke's invaluable input and sharing of Battambang object photos **(Figs 5a–d)** have enhanced this journey. Special thanks also to the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive remarks, and to Isabelle Poujol for permitting the publication of the EFEO archive photo **(Fig. 4)**.

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In the Footsteps of Wolfgang Franke: Revisiting Chinese Temples in Bangkok

Marcus Bingenheimer[1] & Paul McBain[2]

Abstract—In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Chinese immigrants constituted up to 50% of the population in Bangkok. Beyond their religious role, Chinese temples served as community centers, fostering social connections, news exchange, and providing entertainment for newcomers in the Thai capital. With archival records scarce, the preserved epigraphy within these temples emerges as a crucial historical source. This article revisits Wolfgang Franke's documented sites from the 1970s and 1980s, finding that the inscribed objects generally remain intact, and indicating stability in Bangkok's Chinese temple culture over the last fifty years. Addressing the lack of a comprehensive listing of Chinese temples and their locations, the article presents a geo-referenced survey, significantly expanding previous lists. The survey data are available online as supplemental material, contributing to the documentation of Chinese religious sites in Southeast Asia. The article concludes by reflecting on the historical evolution of temple construction in Bangkok.

Keywords: Bangkok; Chinese Immigration; Chinese Inscriptions and Temples; Geo-referenced Survey; Thailand; Wolfgang Franke

The Legacy of Wolfgang Franke

Between approximately 1965 and 1990, the renowned German Sinologist Wolfgang Franke (1912–2007) conducted extensive fieldwork in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.[3] His aim was to record the epigraphic traces of overseas Chinese immigrants to Southeast Asia. By collecting such data with technology available at the time—camera and pen—he created invaluable records of the inscriptions. Chinese epigraphic materials, he wrote, contain a wealth of information on the customs and beliefs of overseas Chinese individuals, groups, and institutions "which are often not visible at first sight, but can only be picked out and little by little elaborated"

[1] Corresponding author. Temple University, Philadelphia. Email: bingenheimer@temple.edu.
[2] Pridi Banomyong International College, Thammasat University, Bangkok.

[3] Franke published his findings regarding Malaysia in three volumes (1982–1987), followed by three on Indonesia (1988 and 1997), and one tome on Thailand (1998). While Franke's work remains difficult to access, there has been continued interest in Chinese temple epigraphy in Southeast Asia and well researched volumes on Singapore (Dean & Hue 2017) and Hong Kong (Li 2023) have appeared in recent years. For an overview of the spread of Chinese temple networks in Southeast Asia, see Dean 2019; for a concrete example of the spread of a temple network from Shantou to Bangkok, see Yau 2021.

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(Franke 1998: 14). Following in Franke's footsteps, this study has been an attempt to find ways in which we can document more fully and elaborate upon this wealth of information.[4] Returning to the temples that he documented several decades earlier, we record some of the changes that have occurred since Franke's visits. We build on his project by further surveying and geo-referencing Chinese temples in Bangkok, to better pick apart those "not visible at first sight" which can lead us to better understand the development of Chinese society and religion there.

After a century of assimilation, it is easy to forget that in the 19th and early 20th century Bangkok very much "had the stamp of a Chinese city", with about half of the population being first- or second-generation immigrants (Skinner 1957: 87–88). When King Rama I (r. 1782–1809) set up the palace of his new capital on the eastern bank of the Chao Phraya River, a community of Chinese immigrants was cleared off the land. With the traditional Siamese system of *corvée* labor barely functioning at the turn of the century, King Rama III (r. 1824–1851) instituted a period of increased immigration of Chinese workers to build his temples and canals. Chinese immigration only increased during the remainder of the 19th century. The Bangkok Passenger Steamer Company opened a popular line between Shantou (汕头市) and Bangkok in 1882, and the arrivals of Chinese immigrants doubled until, likely due to a surge in Siamese nationalism and anti-Chinese sentiment, numbers of new arrivals dipped in the early 20th century (Sng & Pimpraphai 2015: 191). Chinese immigrants were central to the formation of Bangkok and, hence, central to the formation of the modern Siamese state and its culture.[5]

Despite the importance of temple life to overseas Chinese and the wealth of historical information they contain about these communities, temples are generally given short shrift in studies of the Chinese diaspora in Thailand. Of the pioneering monographic studies on the Sino–Thai such as Landon (1941), Purcell (1951: Part III), Skinner (1957 & 1958), and Coughlin (1960), only Landon (1941: 100–117) and Coughlin (1960: 92–115) include a chapter on Chinese religion at all.[6] Newer overview studies on the history of the Sino–Thai such as Sng & Pimpraphai (2015) or Wasana (2019) hardly mention religion at all. The lack of interest in Chinese temples is foreshadowed in the assumptions of the Protestant German missionary Karl Gützlaff (1803–1851) who wrote in the 1830s that the Chinese in Bangkok tended to rapidly adapt to the religious customs of the Siamese and that "within two or three generations" all Chinese "become wholly changed to Siamese" (Ho 1995: 26). Yet, over the course of the century after Gützlaff made this observation, the number of Chinese temples in Bangkok more than doubled. These temples, then, can

[4] See Streiter et al. (2019) for a more detailed overview of Franke's project and strategies to digitize the information.

[5] For the economic impact of Chinese elites, see Wasana 2019.

[6] Both Landon and Coughlin underestimate the number of temples in Bangkok (see below) and were little interested in them. Temple culture plays even less of a role in general geographic studies of Thailand such as Pendleton 1962.

provide valuable insights into the resilience of Chinese religion and identity in Bangkok, highlighting its strength rather than its decline.

Indeed, Chinese temples and the epigraphic traces they contain are one of the few sources we have to understand the history and development of Chinese society, identity, and religion in Thailand. Questions which can be investigated by documenting and collating data on Chinese temples include the relationship of Chinese religion and Thai religious art and ritual and how that relationship compares to the role of overseas Chinese religion elsewhere, such as in Indonesia, Malaysia, or Cambodia.[7] What were the exact roles of "speech groups", such as Teochew or Hakka, for the formation of temples, and were these "speech groups" really as rigid as we suppose?[8] Temples also play a role for the Chinese philanthropic associations, which though less mentioned than speech groups became in many ways more important in the second half of the 20th century.[9] While this article does not set out to answer all of these questions, it assesses the current state of epigraphy and provides the so-far largest survey of Chinese temples in Bangkok, as a first step in uncovering the patterns beneath which the answers to these questions lie.

Terminology

While the English word "temple" is a relatively flexible term that encompasses a variety of sites, Thai parlance maintains a clear conceptual difference between *wat* (วัด) and *sanchao* (ศาลเจ้า). *Wat* is generally translated as "monastery" or "temple" and is used for Theravada temples as well as monasteries that are registered with the Chinese and the Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist associations of Thailand. The expectation is that a *wat* houses ordained monastics of some sort. In the case of Chinese temples, *wat* generally translates *si* (寺).

Sanchao, which in Thailand is often translated into English as "shrine" is a compound of the Sanskrit *śāla* "hall" and the Khmer–Thai *chao* "deity, lord". It is generally used for religious buildings that house Chinese deities. *Sanchao* are maintained by lay people and may be owned privately or communally. Usually, the main deity is present at the central altar, but most *sanchao* have additional altars for other deities. The Chinese name of sanchao in Bangkok usually ends on *miao* (廟) or *gong* (宮), sometimes on *tang* (堂) or *tan* (壇).[10]

[7] Franke (1998: 12) even opines that a "syncretism" of Chinese religion and Thai Theravada Buddhism is a "common feature" in Thailand.

[8] According to a list of Chinese speech group associations registered with the government in the 1950s, the main groups were the Teochew (Chaozhou), Hakka, Hokkien (Fujian), Hainan, Taiwan, Canton (Guangdong) and Jiangxi–Zhejiang (Skinner 1958: 23). For the term "speech group" (*fangyanzu* 方言組) instead of e.g., "language group", see Skinner 1957: 35.

[9] On *shantang* (善堂) type associations in Thailand, see Formoso (1996, 2003), and Kataoka 2015; for the Shantang connections between Chaozhou, Malaysia, and Singapore, see Tan 2012.

[10] Another Thai term, *rongchae* (โรงเจ), might in English be called a "temple". This translates to Chinese *zhaitang* (齋堂) "vegetarian hall", or, at times, *shantang* (善堂). Still other sites in our survey are located on the premises of religious organizations, which in Thai may be called *samakom* (สมาคม), usually characterized as *huiguan* (會館), "meeting hall", or

For this study, we take a "Chinese temple" to be a building or annex with doors that is mainly used for worship and has at least one altar on which one or more Chinese deities are enshrined. Usually, an active temple has a caretaker present and is closed at certain hours. This excludes the sometimes elaborate roadside shrines which are dedicated to a deity but generally do not have "opening hours" or a caretaker present. It also excludes shrine rooms that are part of an apartment flat. As always, some borderline cases remain. For instance, we include the shrine to Rama I near the Flower Market (Pak Khlong Talat; ปากคลองตลาด) and the small Bentougong (本頭公) shrine in Ratchathewi at the canal behind the Novotel Hotel because, although they have no doors, they are still significant temple-like structures.[11] Where a temple seemed closed during our recent survey, we were not always able to ascertain whether it is still active, and some temples on our list might be closed permanently. Moreover, some sites on the list are under threat by real-estate development and might vanish soon, like the Tianhou Gong (天后宮; bt-mb-139[12]) near Chulalongkorn University.[13]

Past and Present: Chinese Epigraphy and Culture in Bangkok Temples

During his visits in the 1970s and 1980s, Franke documented more than 250 Chinese sites all over Thailand with a focus on recording the epigraphy.[14] In the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), he recorded inscriptions at twenty temples (*miao* 廟, *si* 寺, *gong* 宮),

xiehui 協會, "association", in the Chinese name. There is also *mulanithi* (มูลนิธิ), "foundation", usually for *jijinghui* (基金會) or *shantang* (善堂) in Chinese and, very rarely, the sanskritic *wihan* (วิหาร), from vihara. Pornpan & Mak (1994: Ch. 2, and App. 2.2) analyze the different Chinese terms closely and use a mixture of architectural terms and deities as the typology for their most comprehensive listing.

[11] The spelling of temple names is not standardized and can vary quite a bit, reflecting the multilingual and weakly regulated environment. There is always at least one Chinese and one Thai name, but many temples have multiple names, e.g., "official" and informal names, old and new, or full and abbreviated ones. Sometimes, the Thai name merely mirrors the Chinese, some other times it is, to a degree, independent (see e.g., Table 1b in Ho 1995: 37). The Thai transcription of Chinese temple and deity names also varies widely because the pronunciation of the Chinese names themselves varies according to the form of Chinese that is transcribed. For instance, the local protector god Bentougong, the most common Chinese deity in Bangkok, is found spelled in various ways, including: ปึงเถ่ากง, ปึงเถ้ากง, ปุ่งเถ่ากง, ปุนเถ้ากิ่ง, ปุนเถ้ากง, บึงท้าวกง, ปุงเท่ากง, etc. For even more, see Supakan 2559: 19–26 (esp. table on p. 25 listing different spellings for each syllable). For this paper, wherever possible, we take the Chinese characters as they appear over the entrance of the temple building as the main name. We transcribe these in *pinyin*; of course, we are fully aware that the modern Mandarin label often does not reflect what most people who frequent the temple call it.

[12] These references indicate the data provided independently in **Appendix 1** and/or **2**, published separately online at: https://doi.org/10.69486/112.1.2024.4b.

[13] Developers built a "copy" of this temple nearby (bt-mb-141), which was supposed to appease the community, and perhaps the goddess. As of May 2023, the community of the original temple, the Mae Thapthim Saphan Lueang (แม่ทับทิมสะพานเหลือง; 黃橋天后聖母宮), was, however, still trying to preserve the original temple.

[14] Franke (1998: 1) reported to have visited Thailand on multiple occasions in 1971–1976 and 1982–1991. Short reports of two journeys (1973 and 1982) provide some insight into his *modus operandi* (Franke & Walravens 2005: 285–296, 430–448). His main collaborators were Pornpan Juntaronanont, Lee Kheng Teo, and (his wife) Chün-yin Hu. His research in Thailand was part of a larger project that aimed at documenting epigraphic traces of the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia.

six cemeteries (*yishan* 義山), two clan associations (*huiguan* 會館), one hospital (with a sizable shrine to Guanyin), one school, and one ancestral temple (*zongci* 宗祠). Such inscriptions are found on stone steles, both freestanding or embedded in walls, on bells, incense burners, and wooden plaques. Most inscriptions are monolingual, but there are some bilingual ones as well in Thai and Chinese.

As a historian, Franke was interested in the epigraphic traces of overseas Chinese in general, not merely inscriptions at religious sites. In this article, our focus is solely on religious sites. Our main research question was what changes had occurred regarding epigraphy in the forty to fifty years after Franke's visits. What was lost, what was added, what had changed? To that effect, we revisited nine temples of Franke's twenty temples to ensure a large enough sample. The sample includes one Chinese Buddhist *wat* (A 1.1), and a Guanyin temple (A 1.10), the rest of the sites are dedicated to various deities. The immigrant group distribution in the sample is incidental and not representative.[15] More precisely, three of the nine temples were maintained by Hainanese (A 1.5, A 1.7, A 1.8), two by Hakka (A 1.1, A 1.4), two by Hokkien (A 1.2, A 1.6), and two by Teochew (A 1.3, A 1.10) immigrants. The visited temples are as follows:[16]

A 1.1 永福寺 Yongfu Si (Wat Bamphen Chin Phrot, วัดบำเพ็ญจีนพรต)

A 1.2 順興宮 Shunxing Gong (Chow Sue Kong Shrine, ศาลเจ้าโจวซือกง)

A 1.3 大本頭公廟 Da Bentougong Miao (Lao Pun Thao Kong Shrine, ศาลเจ้าเล่าปูนเถ้ากง)

A 1.4 新本頭公廟 Xin Bentougong Miao (Sin Pun Thao Kong Shrine, ศาลเจ้าซินปู้นเถ้ากง)

A 1.5 水尾聖娘廟 Shuiwei Shengniang Giao (Chao Mae Thapthim Shrine, ศาลเจ้าแม่ทับทิม)

A 1.6 仙公宮 Xiangong Gong (Siang Kong Shrine, ศาลเจ้าเซียงกง)

A 1.7 泰華聖娘廟 Taihua Shengniang Miao (Thai Hua Shrine, ศาลเจ้าไท้ฮั้ว)

A 1.8 昭應廟 Zhaoying Miao (Chiao Eng Biao Shrine, ศาลเจ้าเจียวเองเบี้ยว or Bang Rak Shrine, ศาลเจ้าบางรัก)

A 1.10 觀音聖廟 Guanyin Shengmiao (A Nia Shrine, ศาลเจ้าอาเนี้ย)

Comparing and contrasting materials from our visit with Franke's documentation, our finding overall is that most objects that he documented in the 1970s and early 1980s were still found intact. With a few exceptions, the communities that maintain the temples have preserved the inscribed objects well. In some cases, however, wooden plaques have gone missing (in A 1.5, A 1.8, A 1.10). At Taihua Shengniang Miao, we were unable to locate the oldest donor list of 1866 (A 1.7.1), and a longer donor list of 1895 (A 1.7.3) and thus Franke's transcriptions of these lists are now the

[15] The Teochew were the largest immigrant group in Bangkok, followed by the Hokkien, Hakka, Hainanese, and a relatively small community of Cantonese. Baffie (2001: 257) mentions fourteen Hainanese "sanctuaries" in Bangkok, based on information found on a Hainanese internet site (now gone), while Achirat's list (CGB) contains only seven Hainanese temples.

[16] Franke's A 1.9 is the famous and large, but not very representative, Wat Mangkon Kamalawat (วัดมังกรกมลาวาส), also known as Wat Leng Noei Yi (วัดเล่งเน่ยยี่; Ch: Longlian Si, 龍蓮寺), which we did not include in the sample. The temples were visited repeatedly in fall 2022 and spring 2023. See also **Appendix 2** (online).

only existing record of these 19th century actors. With one exception (A 1.8.4), inscribed bells were all still present and a good number of 19th century bells still ring in the temples of Bangkok. Importantly, at several sites (in A 1.3, A 1.5, A 1.6, A 1.8, A 1.10), new donor lists have been added. For example, at the Guanyin Shengmiao (A 1.10), a large metal donor tablet commemorating a large renovation in the early 1990s was installed in the front court of the temple, which records more than 240 names. This demonstrates that the recording of patronage in donor lists continues as usual, even if some of the more recent donor inscriptions are now bilingual, in Chinese and Thai, such as the one commemorating the construction of the new Tianfu Dimu 天父地母 pavilion at A 1.3 in 2012.

In analyzing Franke's documentation, our follow-up study reveals that the published record of individual temples is more fragmented than anticipated.[17] Franke nowhere promises a comprehensive record; obviously the number of objects he was able to include was limited due to the constrains of a print publication.[18] Nevertheless, we found that at some sites the objects recorded by Franke are only a fraction of the material present. At Shunxing Gong (A 1.2), Shuiwei Shengniang Miao (A 1.5), and Zhaoying Miao (A 1.8), Franke documented only around 20–30% of inscriptions on display. All three are Hainanese temples, which seem to have a particular predilection for a dense program of calligraphic tablets hung under curved ceilings. When confronted with a larger number of inscribed objects than he could include, Franke sensibly gives precedence to the oldest dated inscriptions.

Although our follow-up study indicates that inscribed objects have been preserved relatively well in Bangkok's temples over the last forty years, an assessment of the vitality of Chinese religious heritage overall requires that other indicators, for example, the role of literacy, must be considered. Not captured by an epigraphic survey, for instance, is the ability of people to read the inscriptions. We cannot expect that in the past all, or even most, visitors to a temple were able to read Chinese. Moreover, at religious sites especially, inscriptions have emblematic and decorative value beyond their content, such as Latin inscriptions in Christian churches, which were also often not accessible to all members of a parish. We noted that at Yongfu Si (A 1.1), although all items that Franke documented are still present, the *duilian* (對聯; "couplets") A 1.1.3a (assuming the order in Franke is correct) had been mistakenly rehung with sides reversed. Elsewhere, the right and left sides of a *duilian* pair have been exchanged (A 1.5.7b). This is an indicator of a loss of Chinese skills since the correct order is easy to ascertain if one can read the characters and identify their tones.[19] Anecdotal evidence

[17] For an account of how the photos were developed and the inscriptions transcribed, see Franke & Walravens 2005: 294.

[18] On one journey alone, he took over 1,400 photos (Franke & Walravens 2005: 287). We made several attempts to find negatives or original photos, but to no avail. A former collaborator for the Indonesian volume confirmed that the originals had not been archived in any systematic way.

[19] For a detailed overview of duilian prosody, see Yu 2000.

gathered during our fieldwork points to a decline both in the ability to speak at least one form of Chinese as well as in Chinese reading literacy among the visitors to the temples. Many caretakers we encountered were neither able to read the inscriptions nor speak any form of Chinese.[20] This is in line with what is known regarding the decline of Chinese skills among the Sino–Thai in general (Morita 2003).[21]

Another aspect of textuality, not covered by a survey of inscriptions, is the presence of printed religious literature, often offered freely to visitors near the entrance of Chinese temples. These religious tracts range from canonical and apocryphal sutras to morality books (*shanshu* 善書), hagiographies, booklets for sutra-copying practice, as well as laminated cards with a printed *gāthā* or *dharāṇi* perhaps with dots by which to trace one's progress in recitation. The free distribution of such printed material is an important feature of the text-temple nexus, and the tradition is very much alive in Chinese temples in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and to a lesser degree even in Malaysia and Indonesia. Compared to the communities in those countries, we found this aspect of temple culture much reduced in Bangkok. Again, this must be seen as a direct result of the lack of Chinese skills among those who frequent the temples. Some temples provide recitation booklets in which the Chinese characters are glossed with Thai letters to clarify the pronunciation, like the way *bopomofo* (Mandarin phonetic symbols) transcription is used in recitation manuals in Taiwan or *pinyin* in Malaysia. However, in Bangkok comparatively few texts are on display and religious literature in Chinese for free distribution is comparatively rare, especially in non-Buddhist temples. Here too more studies are needed for a better overview. Such studies would have to take the history of Chinese language printing in Thailand into account.

Still another feature of temple life that seems to have changed since Franke's survey are the temple processions (*youshen* 游神) in which (images of) the deities seated on palanquins are paraded through the streets. Such processions are very much part of Chinese temple life, remaining ubiquitous in Taiwan and other parts of the Chinese world. Historically, they were an important feature in Bangkok as well. Documents by government officials in 1892 describe large-scale processions with fireworks and costumes in which Chinese gods or "lords" (*chao*; เจ้า) were invited from separate Chinese shrines to participate at a larger shrine, then taken back by procession. Chinese opera productions were intended "for" these gods and there were usually Chinese palanquins present so that the gods could "leave" the shrine afterwards (Achirat 2565: 25). Although most temples in Bangkok have retained their set of wooden signs and the wooden replica of weapons, which are part of the parade, the processions themselves have mostly lapsed. Caretakers

[20] There were exceptions to this general impression. At Shuiwei Shengniang Miao (A 1.5) for example, there always seemed to be people speaking Chinese. A dedicated survey probing the remaining Chinese skills in Thailand would be helpful. It would be interesting to know, for example, whether some speech groups have preserved their form of Chinese more successfully than others.

[21] For a contemporary account of the repression of Chinese education in Thailand, see Skinner 1957: 365–372.

usually cite the dense traffic and inconvenience, but the end of processions deserves notice.

Yet another aspect of Chinese temple culture, ritual Chinese opera performances (*choushenxi* 酬神戲 or *shengongxi* 神功戲 in Chinese, *ngiw* งิ้ว in Thai) in the temple yard, seems not to have diminished in popularity. In our sample group, both the Shuiwei Shengniang Miao (A 1.5) and the Shunxing Gong (A 1.2) have dedicated stages in their front yards where performances are staged several times a year. Anecdotal observation at other sites too suggests that annual or biannual performances during temple festivals seem to continue. Both the past and present practice of Chinese opera performances in Thailand deserve further research.[22]

Another noteworthy change in some temples is how religious images are moved or displaced. For example, at Shuiwei Shengniang Miao (A 1.5), Franke's documentation (1998: 22) allows us to see that the left altar hall used to be dedicated to the Three Great Emperor Officials (三官爺爺, 三官大帝). However, today this shrine hall has been taken down and the space is currently used as a storeroom. In the altar hall to the right, Bentougong has been joined by Guan Yu.[23]

At Dabentougong Miao (A 1.3) the titular Bentougong altar is not in the center facing the door but to the right after the entrance on the right. The deity on the main altar is Xuanwu 玄武 (= Da laoye 大老爺).[24] It has been suggested that the temple dedicated to Xuanwu was built by the Hokkien community (an 1824 bell inscription mentions a Hokkien donor), but later came to be maintained by Teochew immigrants and was re-dedicated to Bentougong.[25]

Such shifts in the worship of deities at specific locations are not the primary focus of this research project. However, observing how deity statues are exhibited in each temple can offer fresh insights into the dynamics of the "social network" of Chinese deities in Bangkok.

[22] Perhaps along ethnomusicological lines such as the dissertation on Chinese Mahayana music in southern Thailand by Rewadee (2010: 64), which mentions Teochew opera performances during religious festivals in the 19th century.

[23] The Bentougong (本頭公, ปุนเถ้ากง) cult is specific to the oversea Chinese in Thailand, Cambodia, and parts of Malaysia, where it has been attested since the 18th century (Chia 2017: 449). The deity under this name is not worshipped in China, yet there are records of his cult in Thailand since at least the Ayutthaya period. *Khamhaikan Khun Luang Ha Wat* (คำให้การขุนหลวงหาวัด), "Testimony of the King Who Entered a Wat", a chronicle likely from the end of the Ayutthaya period, mentions that a Bentougong shrine existed north of a market at Wat Doem (วัดเดิม) canal in Ayutthaya. Today, more Chinese temples in Bangkok are dedicated to Bentougong than to any other deity.

[24] The temple website explains that "according to the hierarchy of the deities, Da laoye ranks above Bentougong, who is a local deity. Therefore, Da laoye became the main protective deity of this Puntaokong temple" (若按神職級別則大老爺比地方神的大本頭公高，所以；大老爺才成為這座大本頭公廟的鎮廟神明). See: http://laopuntaokong.org/altar/index_cn.asp (accessed June 2023). For an extensive study of the Bentougong cult in Bangkok, see Supakan 2559.

[25] Ho (1998: 28–29) considers this as an example of a "temple coup", by the economically prosperous Teochew majority group over the Hokkien, though it could also have been a more benign amalgamation of communities and interests.

Survey of Chinese Temples in Present-Day Bangkok

Revisiting Franke's sites, we noticed that there was no comprehensive listing of Chinese religious sites in Bangkok. Below, we take stock of previous surveys of Chinese temples in Bangkok, then introduce our own, which builds on and significantly expands on these previous efforts.

In 1994, Pornpan Juntaronanont and Lau-Fong Mak published a large and deeply researched study of Chinese temples in Bangkok and Singapore, trying to come to terms with their imagery, calendar, and rituals. The survey was published in a monograph series in Taiwan and remains a foundational, comprehensive study of Chinese temples in the region. Unfortunately, it was largely forgotten and not cited by any of the surveys that followed (except by Franke).[26] Pornpan & Mak (1994: 5) mention a list of 227 temples in Bangkok, of which 118 had a known foundation date. The exact source for these numbers is unclear, but they seem to originate from government sources (*ibid.*: 4). The survey itself does not include a complete list, however, perhaps because many locations could not be confirmed. The most comprehensive listing of sites in Pornpan & Mak is found in their Appendix 2.2 (1994: 132). It comprises 125 temples "organized" in 13 (mutually overlapping) architectural and religious categories: *tan* 壇 (6 sites), *ma* 媽 (6), *niang* 娘 (3), *di* 帝 (3), *tang* 堂 (2), *mu* 母 (4), *zu* 祖 (3), *shi* 師 (4), *gong* 公 (12), *gong* 宮 (18), *miao* 廟 (39), *qita* 其他 (12), *fosi* 佛寺 (13). The rather vague addresses and the fluid naming conventions provided in this list make it difficult to confirm whether the sites still exist thirty years later (2024).[27]

Only a few months after Pornpan & Mak's survey appeared in Taiwan, another smaller, but still important, survey appeared. Chuimei Ho's 1995 article in the *Journal of the Siam Society* lists 35 out of 38 Chinese temples the author visited in 1991, focusing on the Sampheng quarter, which in terms of modern *khet* (เขต) or districts includes all of Samphanthawong, the south of Pom Prap Sattru Phai, and, across the river, the northern bank of Khlong San.[28] This region, often perceived as "Chinatown", is what appears in our survey as the main cluster containing 43 out of all located temples **[Maps 3–4]**.[29] Although Ho's list is focused only on this limited area of Bangkok, it already includes more temples than Franke documented for all

[26] Pornpan is listed as co-editor in Franke's Thailand volume, but according to the acknowledgments (Franke 1998: 3), she joined Franke's team only in 1989 to edit the Thai–Chinese inscriptions for publication, not during the data collection in the 1970s and early 1980s. It is thus possible that her own survey was inspired by Franke's work.

[27] We were only able to confirm approximately 70 of the 125 entries. We might simply have missed some sites; others are almost certainly gone (or have been moved) due to city development in the indicated area. For instance, of the 13 Buddhist sites, only 6 were still identifiable. Generally, the smaller and newer a site in 1994, the less likely it is that we can still find it today.

[28] The list is somewhat confusing. Items 7, 16 and 17 are missing. A footnote explains that 7 and 17 "are not used" (Ho 1995: 36). Of the remaining 35 sites, we were only able to identify and geo-reference 29 sites.

[29] For an overview of the development of this area, which was also home to sizable Indian and Vietnamese communities, see Courtine 2001.

the capital. Ho's main aim was to trace the early geographic spread of Chinese temples based on their founding dates. She proposes three phases. In phase one, the oldest temples were built on the banks of the Chao Phraya, roughly along the stretch between the Phra Pokklao and the King Taksin Bridge. Next, the temples along the Sampheng Road (today Soi Wanit 1, ซอยวานิช ๑) were established as that neighborhood became the center of Chinese commerce in Bangkok. Third, for the last quarter of the 19th century, Ho finds a movement north from Sampheng Road into, and along, its parallel Charoen Krung Road which was completed in 1864. This credible narrative corresponds well to the growth of the main cluster. However, like Franke and Duan, Ho does not include the second main cluster of equally old temples in Thonburi and the exact relationship between the two clusters awaits further research.

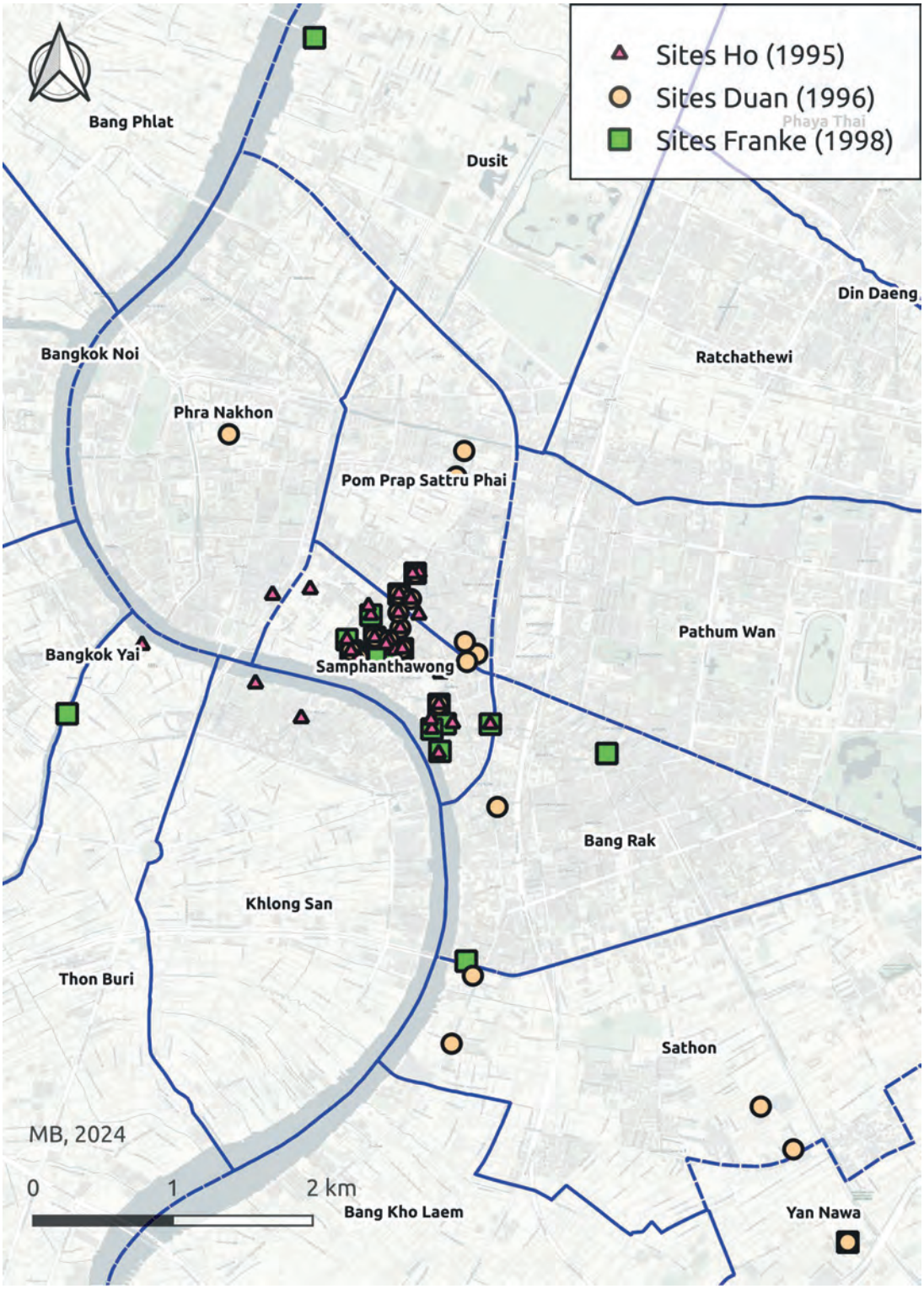
In 1996, Lisheng Duan published a rich account of 60 Chinese temples all over Thailand, complete with floor plans and images. The descriptions often contain transcriptions of epigraphy found at the temples. Of the 60 temples, 24 are in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. As the term *simiao* (寺廟), "temple", in the title implies, Duan does not distinguish between *wat* and *sanchao*.

As **Map 1** illustrates, Ho, Duan, and Franke provide little information about sites in Thonburi and Khlong San. Although there is a considerable overlap in the Samphanthawong district, there is little overlap in other districts, indicating that there are many more temples outside of Samphanthawong. How many? Earlier studies by foreign observers heavily underestimate the number (and role) of temples.[30] Ho (38 temples in Bangkok), Duan (24), and Franke (20) sampled the field without intending a comprehensive survey.[31] These researchers did unfortunately not reference Pornpan & Mak's earlier survey (125 temples).

A collaboration between the City Planning Department of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and Silpakorn University in the early 2010s updated city records and published a comprehensive list of temples. The project was motivated at least in part by concerns of cultural heritage preservation. A decision was made to narrow down the scope to *sanchao* "shrines" within the 50 districts of Bangkok. The results of the collaboration were published first in 2016 as *Chinese Shrines—The Faith of Bangkok* (hereafter CSFB), a lavishly produced, bilingual Thai–English hardcover volume, which provides historical outlines, descriptions, floor plans, and color images of 45 temples. An appendix lists 124 temples (including the 45 described in the main part), sorted by *khet* or district, accompanied by a single thumbnail image for each site. A similar list of 129 temples, now sorted by deity

[30] Coughlin speaks of "about a dozen large and small edifices scattered throughout the Chinese districts of the city" (1960: 94) which he found "not rewarding in appearance [...] nondescript [...] sooty and faded". He also presents a statistical comparison of Chinese and Thai temples and writes that "out of 17 [Chinese Mahayana] monasteries, 15 were in the Bangkok area" (*ibid.*: 97). A generation before him, Landon wrote "while there are only six Buddhist temples for the Chinese [in Bangkok], there are countless road-side shrines where joss paper is burned" (Landon 1941: 100).

[31] An even smaller sample is Kulsiri 2053, which describes the history and ritual practice at nine prominent Chinese temples.



Map 1: Bangkok sites listed by Ho, Duan, and Franke © Marcus Bingenheimer

group, was included as appendix in *Chinese Gods in Bangkok* (hereafter CGB) by Achirat Chaiyapotpanit (2565). Achan Achirat, a Professor at Silpakorn who had been part of the original collaboration with the City Planning Department (2559), further enriched the list by identifying the main deity figure at the sites, and, where possible, the speech community, as well as information regarding founding dates.[32]

These two related lists (CSFB & CGB), together with the previous studies by Pornpan & Mak, Ho, Duan, and Franke, served as the starting point for our own survey.[33] The main problems with the CSFB & CGB survey are the absence of Chinese characters, the unnecessary omission of "temples" referred as *wat* or *si* (寺), a lack of awareness of previous studies, and a lack of location references beyond the khet or district. Strangely, the CSFB & CGB survey omits some districts such as Rat Burana, Bangkok Noi, and Suan Luang all of which have a few older temples. Due to the lack of clear location indicators, we were unable to locate 18 of the 129 temples listed in CGB. The CSFB survey also missed quite a few old and important *sanchao*.[34] The list in CGB includes some sites missed in its earlier iteration in CSFB.[35]

Our own survey, created in 2022–2023, includes, wherever possible, coordinates and at least one Chinese name for each site **[Map 2]**.[36] As of January 2024, our list contains 199 geo-referenced sites.[37] That is to say, we were almost able to double the number of geo-referenced sites from the CSFB & CGB survey. Next to site visits, Google Maps and other online tools played an important role in data collection. In the event, it turned out that geo-referencing via Google Maps was more precise and more efficient than using GPS apps or GPS enabled cameras on-site. We did not try to contribute to the photographic record, beyond experimenting with photogrammetry and indoor 360° panoramic photography. Generally, for public sites such as our temples, the benefit of fieldwork photography must

[32] Achirat's bibliography in CGB (2565) contains relatively few works specifically on Chinese temple culture in Thailand, and, despite including some English and Chinese sources, does not mention any from Pornpan & Mak (1994), Ho (1995), Duan (1996), or Franke (1998). Especially remarkable is the extra work he put into researching the dating, speech group, and iconographic program of a temple, without engaging with the similar information collected by Pornpan & Mak.

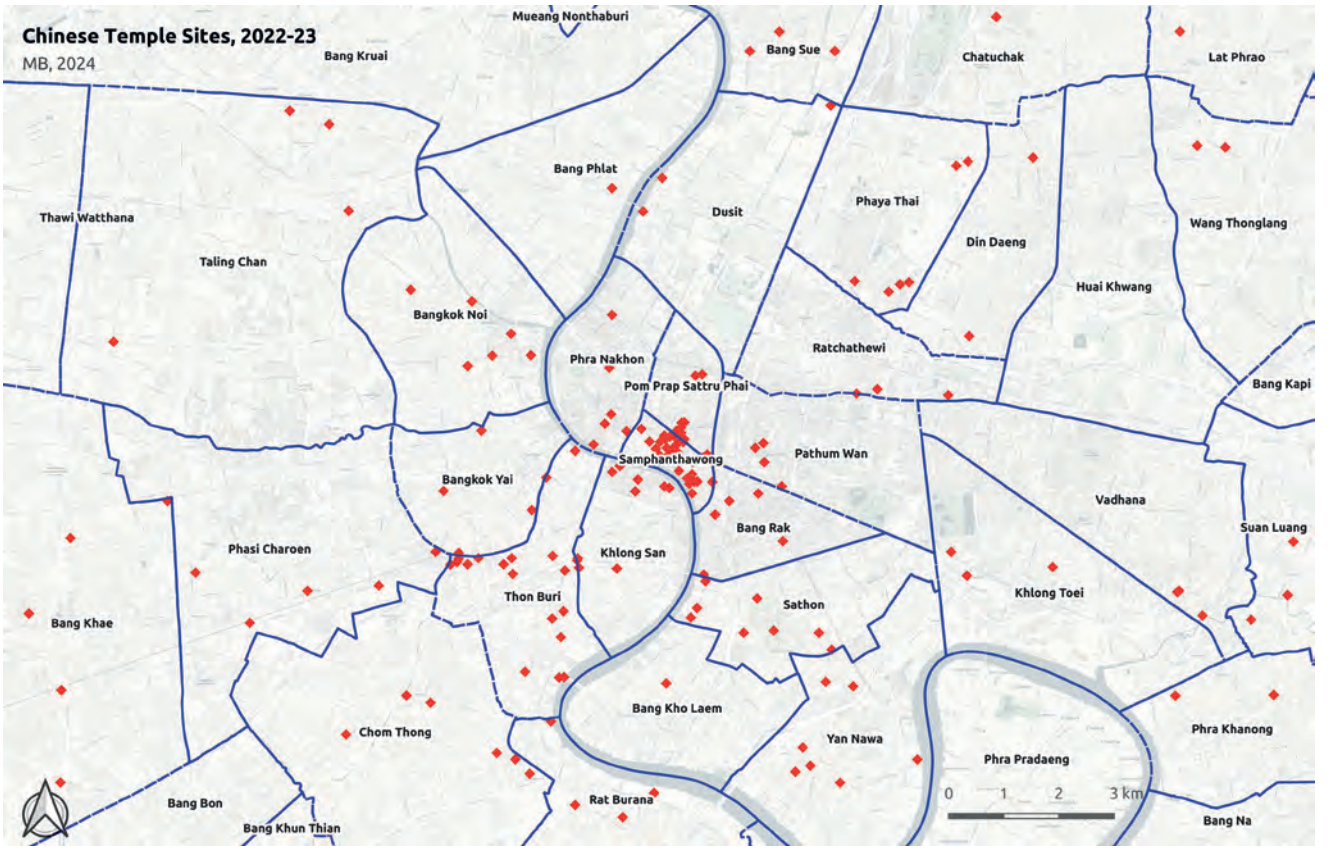
[33] CSFB (2016: 44) states that the team worked from a list of 261 shrines of which they were able to confirm 124 which had "official residence registration" and were open to the public. Of these 261, 77 temples came from an early 20th century list created as part of a registration initiative under Rama VI and which were included in Sec. 5 of the "Local Administration Act" of 1914. This list of 77 (or a later iteration) is reproduced in Jesada (2561: 48–49) and deserves further study.

[34] For instance, Taihua Shengniang Miao (A 1.7/bt-mb-144) or Xiangong Gong (bt-mb-143), both of which were included by Ho, Duan, and Franke. Similarly, Longwei Gumiao (bt-mb-152), one of the oldest shrines in Bangkok (with a bell dated 1843) was overlooked.

[35] The lists are identical. In **Appendix 1** (online): Cgb-30, Cgb-31, Cgb-37, Cgb-39, Cgb-119 are not in CSFB. Csfb-a124 seems not to appear in CGB. Cgb-40 seems identical with cgb-42.

[36] The Chinese name is generally cited according to the inscription over the entrance to the main hall. Coordinates are given to six decimal places (with 0.000001 ~ ca 11cm).

[37] The discrepancy consists of the 18 temples in the CSFB & CGB survey that we were unable to locate. These are often small, difficult to find, Bentougong sites. We suspect the "Banyan Shrine" (bt-mb-076) is the small shrine in Talat Noi at 13.733962, 100.512046. Also, csfb-a45 and csfb-a45 might be listed separately but are actually part of csfb-a44 (= bt-mb-44).



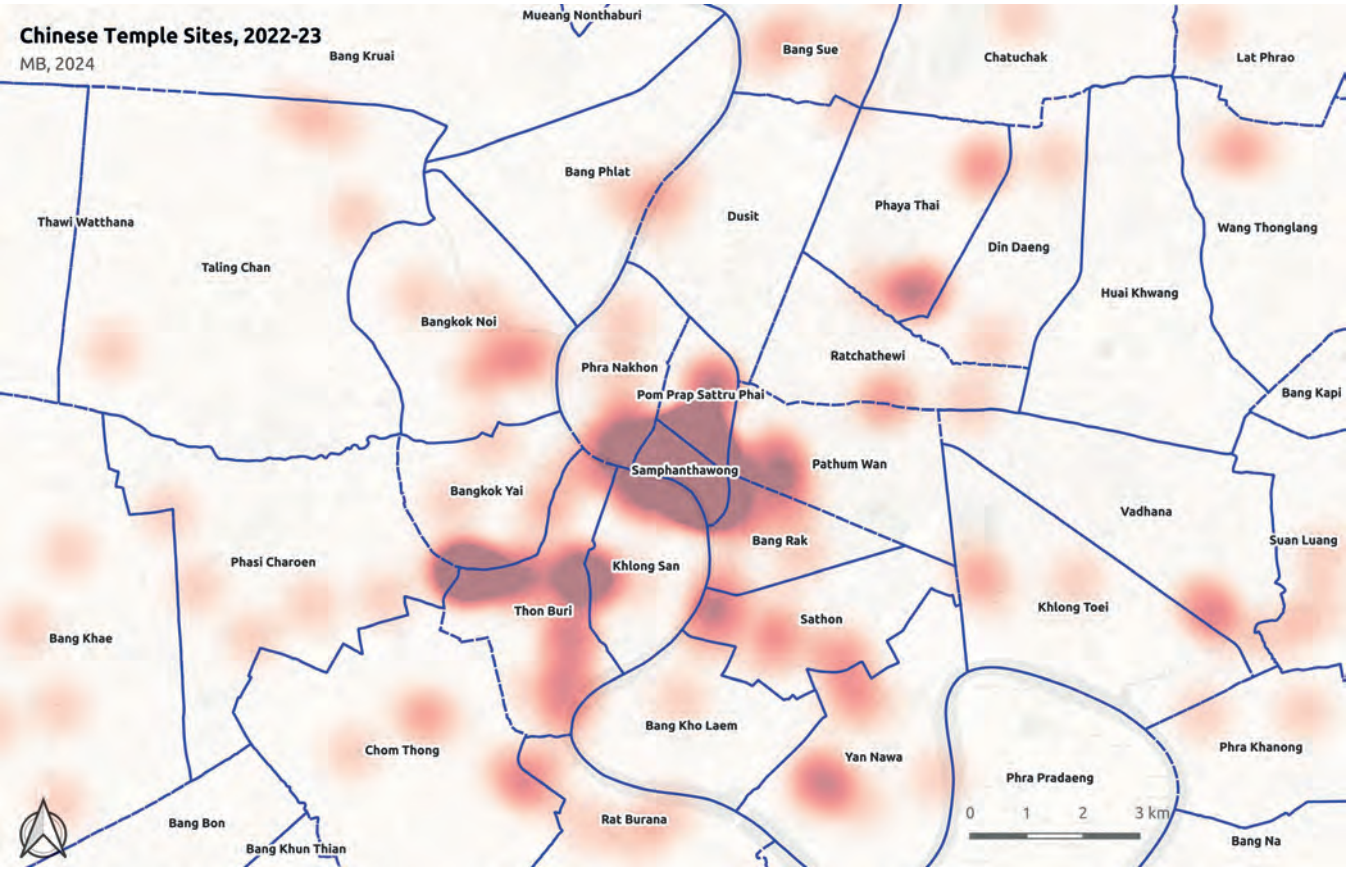
Map 2: Locations of Chinese temples (2023 survey) © Marcus Bingenheimer

be considered in the context of the large amount of readily available images on Google Maps, Instagram, and other online platforms.[38]

As usual, when it comes to what to include, there are a handful of borderline cases. Next to *wat* and *sanchao* "temples", we have included temple-like buildings at cemeteries, clan ancestral shrines, and religious buildings at speech group associations. We also included the handful of "Vietnamese" (*annam nikai*; อนัมนิกาย) Buddhist temples (e.g., bt-mb-147 or 149), which in Thailand are usually considered distinct from both *sanchao* and *chin nikai* (จีนนิกาย) or Chinese Mahayana Buddhist temples (Liu 2020). However, the difference of these temples to so-called "Chinese" temples in terms of architecture, iconography, and ritual, is not greater than the difference between *sanchao* temples of different speech groups.

Other borderline cases, without doors and a mixed program of Thai-style murals and Chinese inscriptions, are the shrine to Lord Taksin in Bangkok Noi (bt-mb-191) and the shrine to Rama I near the Flower Market (bt-mb-160). Sometimes, there seems to be no clear

[38] The FROGBEAR workshop held in Bangkok on 24 May–2 June 2023, documented some 25 sites from our survey. Photography from that workshop can be accessed as part of the FROGBEAR database (https://frogbear.org/). A related GitHub organization collects GIS data layers for sites in Southeast Asia at https://nanyang-data.info/. A large dataset of fieldwork photography taken at more than 800 Chinese cemeteries has been published by Oliver Streiter (2017).



Map 3: Heatmap view of Map 2 © Marcus Bingenheimer

connection to Chinese religion at all, for instance, with the small shrine to "Father Chui" (พ่อจุ้ย; bt-mb-097) or the shrine next to the Banyan tree (*sanchao tonsai*, ศาลเจ้า ต้นไทร) in Talat Noi (bt-mb-076). But such cases are few and widely dispersed, and Chinese temples are almost always easily identified as such.

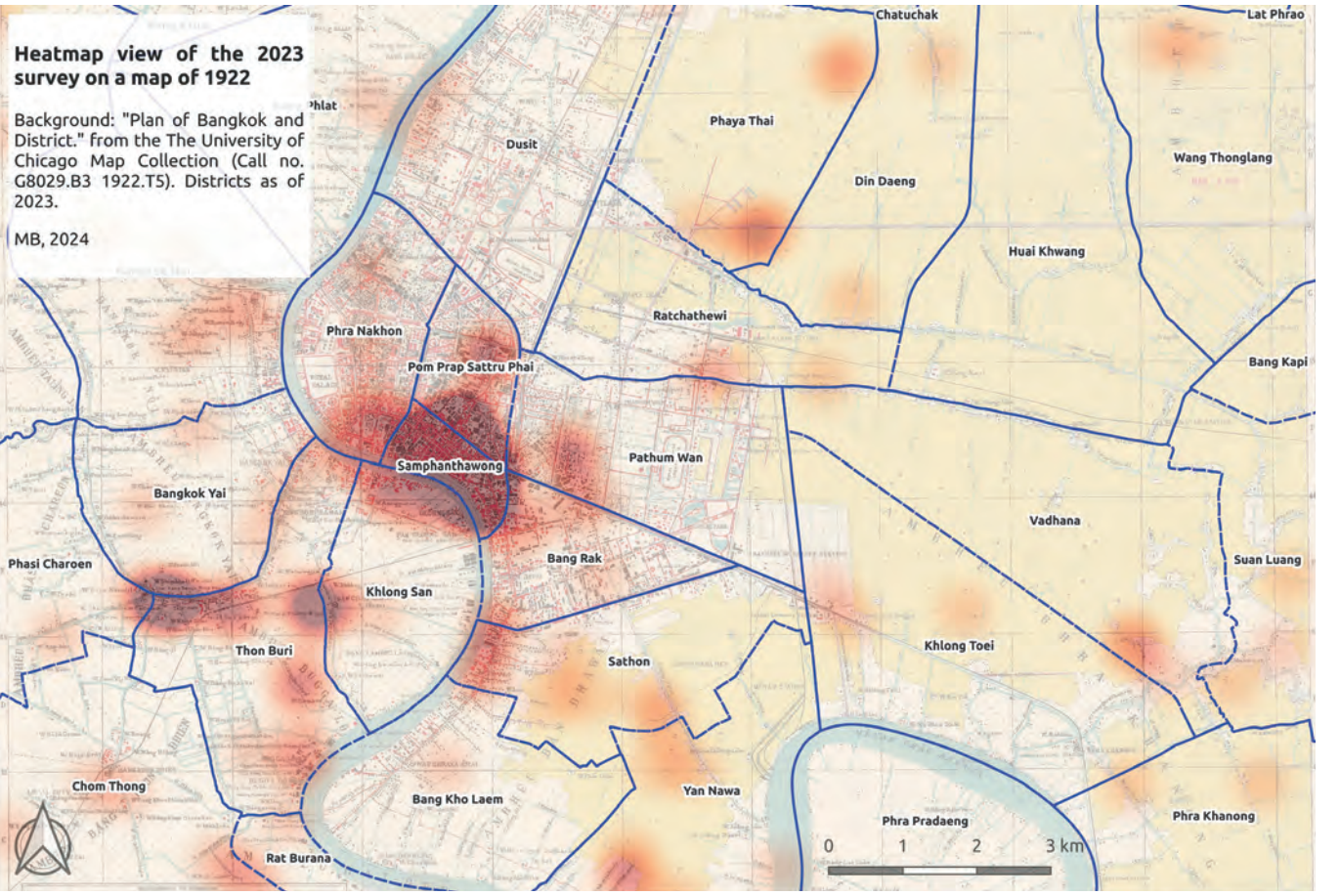
The heatmap view **[Map 3]**, a mode of display that highlights distribution density, clearly shows two main clusters of Chinese religious structures, the better known one in the Sampheng quarter (including the sites on the northern bank of Khlong San), and a second in and around Thonburi, an area which sees less tourism, but which was central to Bangkok's early history.

This relationship is also reflected in **Table 1**. Even based on modern district borders, which do not necessarily reflect historic settlement and building patterns, Samphanthawong and Thonburi have the highest number of temples. In this case, Pom Prap Sattru Phai belongs to the same cluster as Samphanthawong, as do the temples on the northern bank of Khlong San across from Samphanthawong.

Table 1: Number of Chinese Temples per District

No. of Temples	District (*khet*)
29	Samphanthawong (สัมพันธวงศ์)
18	Thonburi (ธนบุรี)
11	Pom Prap Sattru Phai (ป้อมปราบศัตรูพ่าย)
10	Khlong San (คลองสาน)
8	Sathon (สาทร)
7	Yan Nawa (ยานนาวา)
6	Phra Nakhon (พระนคร), Phaya Thai (พญาไท), Bangkok Noi (บางกอกน้อย), Chom Thong (จอมทอง), Bang Khae (บางแค)
5	Bang Rak (บางรัก), Rat Burana (ราษฎร์บูรณะ), Phasi Charoen (ภาษีเจริญ), Bang Sue (บางซื่อ)
4	Pathum Wan (ปทุมวัน), Bangkok Yai (บางกอกใหญ่), Taling Chan (ตลิ่งชัน), Bang Khun Thian (บางขุนเทียน), Suan Luang (สวนหลวง), Don Mueang (ดอนเมือง)
3	Dusit (ดุสิต), Min Buri (มีนบุรี), Chatuchak (จตุจักร), Prawet (ประเวศ), Khlong Toei (คลองเตย), Ratchathewi (ราชเทวี), Vadhana (วัฒนา)
2	Phra Khanong (พระโขนง), Nong Chok (หนองจอก), Bang Khen (บางเขน), Bang Kapi (บางกะปิ), Nong Khaem (หนองแขม), Din Daeng (ดินแดง), Wang Thonglang (วังทองหลาง)
1	Lat Krabang (ลาดกระบัง), Bang Phlat (บางพลัด), Bang Kho Laem (บางคอแหลม), Lat Phrao (ลาดพร้าว), Sai Mai (สายไหม), Khan Na Yao (คันนายาว), Nong Khaem (หนองแขม)

Total: 199



Map 4: Temple distribution (2023 survey) in Bangkok (1922 base map)
© Marcus Bingenheimer

Map 4 illustrates the distribution of temples within our survey area against the backdrop of a 1922 city map,[39] providing contextual insight into their density. The largest cluster of temples in the Sampheng quarter is obvious and tallies with the most densely populated area of the city one hundred years ago. The more interesting cluster is perhaps along the *khlong* (canal) Bang Yai in Thonburi to the west that takes a south turn into Rat Burana. This region was, for most of its history, more agricultural than commercial. Writing in the 1830s in *Nirat Suphan* (นิราศสุพรรณ), the poet Sunthon Phu (สุนทรภู่; 1786–1855) described the area as follows: "On both sides sprout flowers/Ravishing and refreshing to behold/I see groups of people doing farm work/Enticing ladies all along the canal".[40] Those Thonburi temples were probably frequented by

[39] Printed by the Thai Royal Survey Department. The digital facsimile used here is made available by the University of Chicago as part of the "University of Chicago Map Collection". See: http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/maps/asian-cities/G8029-B3-1922-T5.

[40] สองฝั่งพรั่งพฤกษพลอย/เพลินชื่น ชมเอย/แลเหล่าชาวสวนหน้า/เสน่หน้องคลองสนอม. Cited in Damrong 2549: 211.

Chinese immigrants who had taken to intensive farming along the *khlong*s to the west of the Chao Phraya, perhaps the same people whom Sunthon Phu describes.[41] It reminds us that, against modern perceptions, not all Chinese in early Bangkok were low-wage laborers, traders, or businessmen.

Historical geography also explains the prominent absences of temples in some quarters. That there are virtually no Chinese temples in Huai Khwang or Din Daeng and very few in Vadhana or Phra Khanong is because these districts, which today are densely built-up urban environments, were mere rice fields on the outskirts of Bangkok one hundred years ago. At the time those fields became part of the city in the 1930–1960s, the Sino–Thai were under strong pressure to assimilate and the founding of new temples, a hallmark of Chinese identity, was not feasible.[42] Also changes to the immigration law in the 1930s greatly reduced new immigration from China, obviating the need to build more settlements and temples for newcomers.[43] This is one of the reasons why there are more (and larger) Chinese temples today in Bang Khae, Phasi Charoen, and other suburban districts which were developed only in the last 50 years, than there are in Vadhana, Din Daeng, or Ratchathewi, which became part of the urban center in the mid-20th century.

The old cemeteries of the different Chinese speech groups, but also of Christians, Muslims, and Parsis, used to be in the southern outskirts surrounded by fields and well connected to the river via *khlong*s. Today they are in busy Sathon, engulfed, but not obliterated, by high-rise development.

Two aspects have been set aside for the time being and are not included in the survey data. First, studies of Chinese temple culture in Southeast Asia usually consider the speech groups (Teochew, Hokkien, Hakka, etc.) associated with a site.[44] Historically, many, probably most temples used to be associated with one speech group. However, the current situation, and indeed a more nuanced picture of the past, calls for restraint in employing this mode of categorization to temples today. While the association with a speech group is certainly important for the history, architecture, and iconography for most of the older temples, it is difficult to ascertain how much speech groups are still relevant for more recent temples. At times, temples were founded by one group, but are now maintained by another. Still other temples were never closely associated with a particular group. Doubts about accuracy and heuristic value apart, the lists provided independently by Pornpan & Mak (1994) and by Achirat (2565) are valid attempts to approximate what is known today about the temple-speech group relationship.[45]

[41] For a mention of these immigrants in the context of *khlong* excavation, see Tanabe 1977: 64.

[42] The dearth of new Chinese temple construction between 1925 and 1955 is well illustrated by Pornpan & Mak (1994: 7, Table 1.5).

[43] See Landon 1941: 197–214.

[44] The most comprehensive list associating Chinese temples with speech groups is the appendix to Achirat (2565). Ho (1995), Duan (1996), and Franke (1998) also associate speech groups to the temples they surveyed.

[45] Adjacent to a discussion of speech groups and their deities (Achirat 2565: 169–206), Achirat also considers iconographic differences between speech groups. Statues in Teochew temples, for instance, tend to

Second, there is the rather important matter of deities and their presence in Chinese temples, which comes with its own difficulties of categorization. For instance, the female littoral deities, that in Chinese are distinguished as Tianhou 天后 (or Mazu 馬祖) on the one hand, and the Hainanese Shuiwei Shengmu 水尾聖母 on the other, are both usually called Mae Thapthim (แม่ทับทิม) in Thai, a name also used sometimes for Bentouma (本頭媽), the wife, or the female form, of Bentougong. The fluidity of the pantheon is one of the reasons we still lack an authoritative study of the deities of the overseas Chinese.[46] Moreover, the tutelary deity of the temple is not always the main deity. As noted above, in Franke's A 1.3 (bt-mb-85) Xuanwu sits on the main altar, not Bentougong. Thus, identifying the main deity is not really sufficient to characterize a site. Most temples have three or more altars and often the combination of deities is relevant.[47] The survey by Pornpan & Mak (1994: Appendices 2.6 and 2.8) is still the best attempt at mapping this aspect of the field. Ample room remains for more research and better documentation, but we must leave that to future iterations of the survey.

Beyond the Survey

In the foregoing, we have described our efforts to build on previous studies to create a new survey of Chinese temples in Bangkok. In the first section, we compared epigraphic materials documented by Franke in the 1970s and 1980s with the present. This revealed that most epigraphic material is still in place, demonstrating a good degree of care for these sites by the communities that run them **[Appendix 2: Online]**. We also noted evidence of a decline in Chinese literacy, strong indication of the continuing importance of donor lists and Chinese opera productions, and a decline in the significance of processions. During our study, we realized the need for a comprehensive, geo-referenced survey of Chinese temples and shrines in Bangkok. Such a survey is now made available in **Appendix 1** and online.[48] The hope is that such a birds-eye view will help to establish a good basis for further research. A comprehensive database of Chinese temples could allow research into the complex relationships between speech groups, deity cults, religious change, and conversations between Thai and Chinese religiosity in Bangkok. We extended existing surveys

have their feet resting below their seat and pointed symmetrically, whereas in Hokkien shrines the statues' feet are in different poses more expressive of movement (*ibid*.: 55).

[46] Here too, Franke's listing (1998: 749–777) of deities associated with sites in Thailand was pioneering. The term "fluid pantheon" is borrowed from Faure (2015), many of whose findings about Japanese deities can be applied to deities in Southeast Asia.

[47] A wide spectrum of iconographic detail remains to be explored. Achirat notes that in a mural at Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, painted in the 1830s, an image of a Chinese man on a boat worshipping a riverside shrine is painted in the *chawet* (เจว็ด) style, with the flame-like frame of many Thai religious statues. Indeed, the same amalgamation of Chinese and Thai artistic style in religious icons can be found at a Bentougong temple in the Dusit area which contains a Bentougong statue holding a lotus stem and framed in *chawet* style. It was made by a Chinese craftsman imitating Thai artistic forms to sculpt this Chinese immigrant deity (Achirat 2565: 87–88).

[48] Mainly as part of https://github.com/nanyang-temples/thailand-public (visualized: https://nanyang-data.info/), where the data will be developed in the future. The dataset on which this article is based is also archived in a Zenodo repository.

by adding exact location data which allows discussion of the distribution of temple as clusters and visualization of the historical spread of temple construction in Bangkok. Such a perspective highlights a little discussed cluster of sites in the Thonburi region and helps to understand the absence of Chinese temples in many districts which are today considered part of the urban center of Bangkok.

Furthermore, our survey allows for a better estimate for the total number of Chinese temples in Bangkok. The Ministry of the Interior's Bureau of Registration registered 675 Chinese temples in Thailand overall, of which only 79 are in Bangkok.[49] This means more than half of the sites in our survey are not registered to date. Our survey is also significantly larger than that of Pornpan & Mak (1994) which listed 125 temples and that of the City Planning Office (2016) which stood at only 124 temples.

The total count of 199 confirmed sites in our survey can be compared to the 448 Thai Buddhist *wat*s and the 157 Islamic mosques in Bangkok for which the city government has published geo-referenced datasets.[50] In light of these numbers and our experiences in collecting the data, we estimate that with dedicated effort an additional 20–50 more Chinese sites might be found. It thus appears that, as of 2023, there are at least 199 and probably not more than 250 Chinese temples (as defined above) in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. With these results in place, we could next take a closer look at the different deities housed in these temples, the relationship between primary and secondary altars, and analyze donor lists to map communities over time. This study marks just the beginning of a collective endeavor to meticulously uncover the subtle traces that Franke initiated decades ago, gradually revealing insights not readily apparent at first glance.

[49] The Bureau of Registration in the Ministry of the Interior maintains a registry of Chinese temples in Thailand (Department of Provincial Administration 2542). The documents and the respective laws are provided online: https://www.bora.dopa.go.th/CallCenter1548/index.php/menu-general/12-service-handbook/general/41-general-shrine (accessed October 2023). The numbers cited can be found in the Shrine Registration Manual (คู่มือการปฏิบัติงานทะเบียนศาลเจ้า). The registry is obviously not comprehensive; Jesada concludes: "The total number of Chinese shrines in Thailand cannot yet be conclusively determined" (2561: 47; our translation).

[50] Distributed by the Bangkok Geographic Information Technology Center (BMA GIS Center) at Bangkok City Hall. See: http://www.bangkokgis.com/modules.php?m=download_shapefile (accessed September 2023).

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Abbreviations

CGB = [*Chinese Gods in Bangkok*] Achirat 2565

CSFB = [*Chinese Shrines–The Faith of Bangkok*] City Planning Department 2559

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Fading Musical Memory: 150 Years of Lao Phuan Singing in Lopburi, Thailand

Terry E. Miller[1] & Taywin Promnikon[2]

Abstract—As a consequence of numerous wars and forced migrations, the Phuan kingdom, which once flourished on the Plain of Jars in Laos, was obliterated during the 19th century. Much of the population was force-marched down to the Mekong Valley and into northeastern and central Thailand. One of the last contingents settled in central Thailand's Lopburi province, in the district of Ban Mi. After nearly 150 years of exile there, only two living traditional singers of *khap phuan*, both around 90 years of age, could be found and were recorded in 2012 and 2013. Since our initial documentation of them and their *khaen* mouth organ accompanist, all have passed away, leaving no one to carry on the tradition. This article examines these musical fragments and compares them to the living music found in the old Phuan area. Due to the stark differences between Ban Mi singing and modern *khap phuan*, we aimed to identify what was preserved in Thailand and what this reveals about Phuan history and migration.

Keywords: Forced Migration; *Khap Phuan* Tradition; Lopburi Province; Music of Laos; Musical Memory; Phuan Kingdom

Prologue

In January 2012, retired Thai music teacher and co-author Taywin Promnikon, of Lopburi province in central Thailand, suggested that he and I visit the district of Ban Mi (บ้านหมี่) and specifically the village of Ban Sai (บ้านทราย) on the western side of the province to meet two elderly Thai Phuan (พวน; Lao: ພວນ) singers and their mouth-organ accompanist. These musicians were said to be the community's last living practitioners of Phuan traditional singing. The Phuan are descendants of an historical Lao sub-kingdom located on the Xiang Khuang

[1] Corresponding author. Kent State University (*Emeritus*). Email: tmiller1@kent.edu.

[2] Singburi School (Retired).

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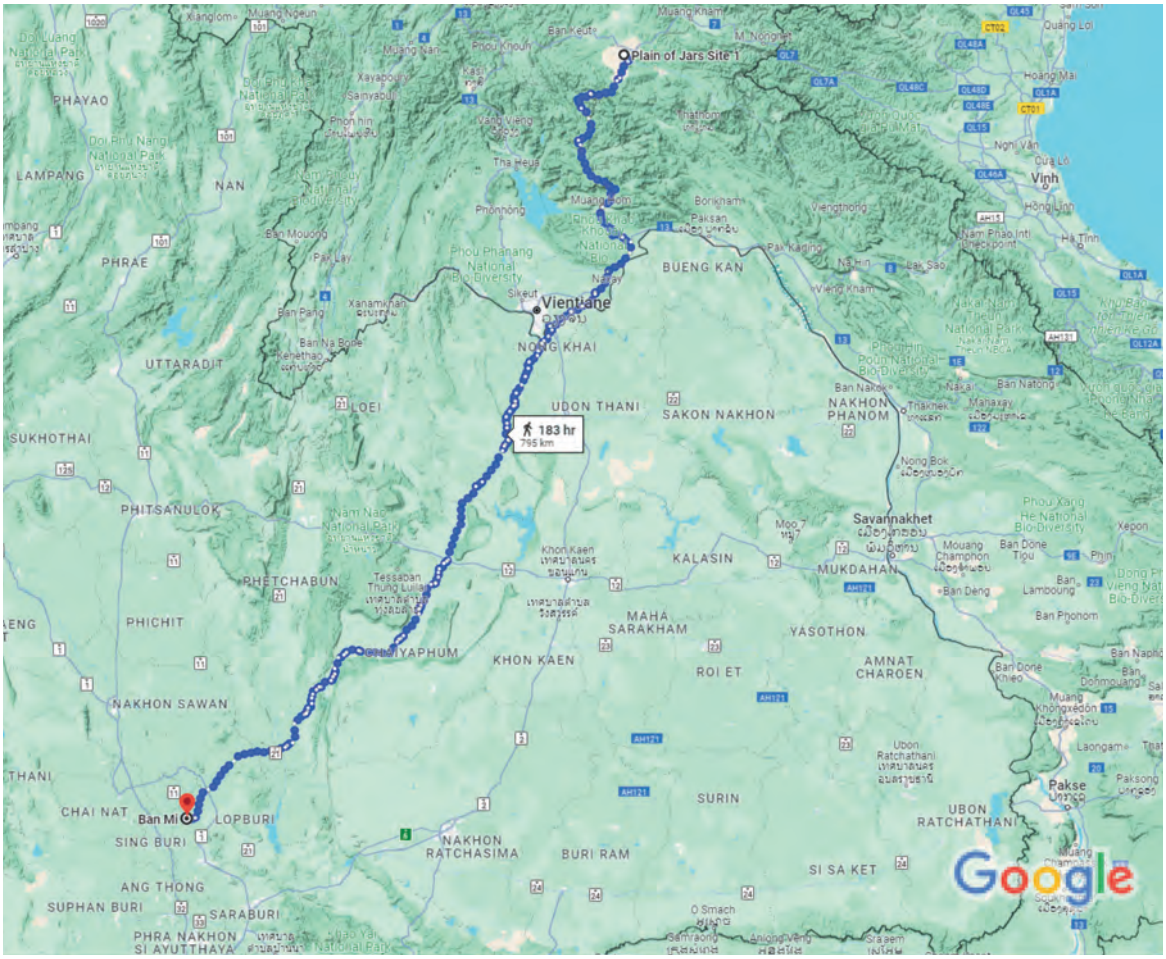
(ຊຽງຂວາງ; Th.: Chiang Khwang, เชียงขวาง/เชียงขวง) Plateau in the area of the prehistoric Plain of Jars northwest of Vientiane, Laos. Their repartee singing genre, called *khap phuan* (ขับพวน), is unique in central Thailand but related to many local singing genres of other Lao-descended cultures widespread in and characteristic of northeast Thailand. It is, however, unrelated to either the unaccompanied repartee songs known as *phleng phuean ban* (เพลงเพื่อนบ้าน) of central Thai villages or the elaborate instrumental and vocal music, "Thai classical music", of the Thai/Siamese court and aristocracy. Intrigued, we wondered how Phuan living in central Thailand would have preserved a style of singing from a remote area of Laos, hundreds of kilometers to the northeast across the Mekong River.

Ban Mi district consists of 22 sub-districts, the latter further divided into 157 villages. The musicians we visited lived in Ban Sai (บ้านทราย) sub-district, about 30 km north of Lopburi city. Our first meeting took place in the local museum (พิพิธภัณฑ์ไทยพวนบ้านทราย) where Phuan artifacts have been preserved, including examples of its famous *mat mi* (มัดหมี่; ມັດໝີ່) style of weaving cotton and silk. Virtually all the inhabitants of this district are descendants of Phuan who came from Laos in the later 19th century **[Map 1]**.

At this event, organized expressly for us, the singers were supported by an audience of fellow residents and introduced by their most prominent leader and proponent, Mrs Thongmak Charoenrat (ทองมาก เจริญรัตน์). As an introduction, the singers and audience all began by singing several central Thai songs called *ram thon* (รำโทน), dance songs accompanied by a small single-headed drum called thon that had been adopted over time. *Ram thon* was the basis for what became Thailand's best-known contribution to social dancing, *ram wong* (รำวง) or "circle dance", thought to have been introduced during the administration of Prime Minister Plaek Phibun Songkhram (in office: 1938–1944 and 1948–1957) by his wife, Lady La-iat (ละเอียด พิบูลสงคราม; 1903–1984).

Following the performance of the *ram thon* songs, the two *khap phuan* singers, Mrs Sa-nguan Pradapmuk (สงวน ประดับมุข), then 93 years old, and Mrs Mueang Tonchan (เมือง ต้นจันทร์), 89 years old, sang, accompanied on the *khaen* (แคน) free-reed mouth organ by Mr Pho Anthachai (โพธิ์ อัญฑะชัย), 77 years old. Though of advanced age and frail, each was able to sing with clear pronunciation and stable pitch **[Figure 1]**.

We returned the next year, 2013, and recorded both singers again, this time at the home of Mrs Thongmak. By our third and last visit early in 2020, only Mrs Mueang remained alive, but since then she too has passed, leaving none of the original three alive. No one who attended the first meeting was aware of any other living traditional singers, in Ban Mi district or in other nearby Phuan communities. No one had apprenticed to these singers to preserve and pass on their musical knowledge. No one was aware of any residents who had ever gone to visit the Phuan area of Laos or of any visitors from there. According to these witnesses, the Phuan of Ban Mi have been cut off from their original homeland since settling here in about 1876. Thus, these two singers were



MAP 1: Excerpt of map showing the likely overland journey of approximately 800km (8 days walking) from the Plain of Jars in Xiang Khuang to Ban Mi district in Lopburi © Google Maps

amongst the last practitioners of a music genre that had survived for nearly 150 years: their passing marks the near extinction of *khap phuan* in the Lopburi region and likely in Thailand generally (see, however, ***ADDENDUM***).

In 1991 and 2013 we travelled to Laos around Phonsawan, the largest city on the Xiang Khuang Plateau, and made field recordings of and conducted interviews with *khap phuan* singers. These recordings can be compared to the *khap phuan* singers recorded in Ban Mi. But, surprisingly, even inexperienced ears would immediately recognize that *khap phuan* from Ban Mi in no way resembles *khap phuan* as sung today in the former Phuan kingdom in Laos. This obviously raises many questions which we will address below. The most comprehensive study of the Phuan, by Snit Smuckarn and Kennon Breazeale (1988), provides a highly detailed history of the Phuan but does not discuss Phuan singing. The following discussion attempts to sort out the complex historical relationships between the Phuan in Thailand and those in Laos and address possible explanations for this musical discrepancy. Understanding this

Figure 1: Mrs Sa-nguan Pradapmuk (left) and Mrs Mueang Tonchan (right) with *khaen* accompanist Mr Pho Anthachai in the center, January 2012 © Terry Miller

may shed further light on the journey of the Lao Phuan to central Thailand.

Musical Context

Numerous local singing genres—prefixed with either *khap* (ขับ) in the north or *lam* (ลำ) in the south—exist throughout Laos. Some denote a place. For example, *lam khon sawan* (ລຳຄອນສະຫວັນ; ลำคอนสวรรค์) references the area of Sawannakhet along the Mekong River and *khap sam nuea* (ຂັບຊຳເໜືອ; ขับซำเหนือ) references the capital of Houa Phan province near the Vietnamese border. Others denote an ethnic group, such as *lam phu thai* (ລຳຜູ້ໄທ; ลำผู้ไท) or the genre under study, *khap phuan*. Both terms denote repartee singing in which male and female singers alternate, accompanied by one or more instruments. The *khaen* (ແຄ້ນ) is normal for lowland Lao genres, although some performances add other instruments. *Khap thum luang phabang* (ຂັບທຸ້ມຫຼວງພະບາງ; ขับทุ้มหลวงพระบาง), a genre of the old court city, uses a small "classical" ensemble.[3]

[3] Some observers also apply *khap* to upland Tai and non-Lao/Tai singing, such as *khap tai dam* (ຂັບໄຕດຳ; ขับไต๋ดำ). However, though linguistically related to Lao and other branches of the Tai family, these latter genres only vaguely resemble those of the lowland Lao or Phuan. Singing of the Khmu and Hmong, who are linguistically Austro-Asiatic, is fundamentally distinct from all Lao genres.

Today's *khap phuan* in Xiang Khuang is sung as repartee, that is, the alternation of male and female singers, each accompanied by a male playing the *khaen*, with fourteen or sixteen pipes. The *khaen* is the most typical instrument of the Lao culture, found in most areas of Laos and throughout northeast Thailand. Singers perform memorized poetry typically in *klon* (กลอน; Lao: *kon*, ກອນ) form, where a verse has four lines, each with eight syllables. Some poetry is constructed to allow for a modest degree of improvisation to fit circumstances. However, while audience members may believe that *mo khap* (ໝໍຂັບ or หมอขับ; lit. "singers of *khap*") improvise their poetry on the spot; this is erroneous. Few singers have that capability. The male sings first, then the female, continuing to alternate in this manner throughout the performance. The majority of the poetry relates to courtship and male-female relations. The female may respond by speaking the poetic response, called *wao phanya* (ເວົ້າຜญา or เว้า ผะหยา; lit. "speaking wisdom"), which may or may not have a singsong or heightened speech quality reflecting the lexical tones of the Phuan language poetry.

Today's *khap phuan* as heard in the area of the original kingdom is in duple meter that, if written into Western staff notation, would be in two-beat "measures". The singer emphasizes the lowest pitch of five, which could be expressed as A B C D E. Typically, the rhythm is "slow, quick-quick" (or quarter note, eighth, eighth). The *khaen* accompaniment for *khap phuan* is semi-improvised in a pentatonic mode expressible as A C D E G; in northeast Thailand this mode is known as *lai yai* (ลายใหญ่ or ลายไหย). The first beat of each measure is a multi-note sonority ("chord" in Western thinking) followed by a monophonic, melismatic melodic phrase in free rhythm.

By contrast, the *khap phuan* of the two women we recorded separately in Ban Mi, Lopburi, had no male counterparts, and thus the repartee aspect had been lost. They performed in non-metrical speech rhythm. The singers followed a pentatonic scale encompassing pitches A C D E G, declaiming the poetry in separate phrases. Normally both male and female singers perform similarly, but without male singers, this is uncertain. Additionally, their *khaen* player was minimally skilled, but, as he was the only living *khaen* player known among the Phuan in central Thailand, it is unclear if he came from a long tradition or merely learned enough to accompany the two remaining female singers. If the answer is the latter, then perhaps someone else had played *khaen* earlier. With all three musicians now deceased as of June 2020 and no known successors, the tradition has nearly become extinct (see, however, ***Addendum***).

Possible Explanations

That the *khap phuan* known today in Xiang Khuang is clearly different from the *khap phuan* documented at Ban Mi raises numerous questions regarding why this is so. At least four explanatory theories are possible:

1. The Ban Mi singers preserve an earlier form of *khap phuan* which underwent change in Laos, making it a "survival phenomenon".

2. The Phuan in Ban Mi did not actually originate in Xiang Khuang and,

consequently, what is called *khap phuan* in Ban Mi is a different genre.

3. The Phuan in Ban Mi became mixed with non-Phuan Lao during the forced migration from their homeland and absorbed a non-Phuan style.

4. What is known as *khap phuan* in Xiang Khuang today is a genre borrowed from another ethnic group after the Phuan kingdom declined and the culture failed.

Testing each of these theories requires an examination of Phuan history and of the many forced migrations from their homeland to Siam (modern-day Thailand). Snit and Breazeale detail how the Phuan kingdom's location on a relatively fertile plateau in central Laos made them the flashpoint for numerous conflicts in the 18th and 19th centuries involving two Lao kingdoms—Luang Phrabang and Vientiane—along with Siam, Vietnam, and Chinese bandits called the Haw or Ho. During that period lesser Southeast Asian kingdoms customarily paid tribute to more powerful entities, entering into a relationship of suzerainty. Because of the Phuan kingdom's location, however, it often had to pay tribute to multiple powers to remain viable. While the Lao kingdoms also submitted to Siamese suzerainty in the 1770s after King Taksin's restoration of the Siamese kingdom in Thonburi, these relationships were rarely stable, with many attempts on the part of the Lao remaining in Laos to play one power against another. The Lao, however, failed at this and, as a result, a Siam army under the future Siamese King Rama I invaded Vientiane and other parts of Laos again in the late 1770s and carried off the royal family and other groups to Thonburi.

After Siam, from its new capital at Bangkok established in 1782 by the successor Chakri dynasty, allowed Lao Prince Anuwong (เจ้าอนุวงศ์ or ເຈົ້າອານຸວົງສ໌; r. 1805–1828) to return to Vientiane, and after ascending the throne, he launched an ill-fated rebellion against Bangkok in 1827 which led to a second invasion of Laos and the near destruction of Vientiane. The Phuan were caught in the middle when Anuwong fled to their old capital, now Mueang Khun (เมืองคุณ or ເມືອງຄູນ), seeking protection from the Vietnamese/Annamese Nguyen court in Hue, who were then involved with the Phuan. The Siamese captured Anuwong and took him back to Bangkok where he died in November 1828. The unfortunate Phuan ruler, Prince Noi (เจ้าฟ้าน้อย or ເຈົ້າ ນ້ອຍ), was taken to Annam and executed in 1830. During the 1830s and 1840s the Siamese, operating from Nakhon Phanom on the right bank of the Mekong, continued to raid Laos and resettled most of the Lao population from the left bank of the Mekong into what is now northeast Thailand (commonly called Isan). But many of the resettled Lao remained loyal to Vientiane, sometimes trying to return. As punishment, the Siamese forced the escapees to move deeper into Siam to live in the provinces surrounding Bangkok.

Beginning in 1834 the Siamese also came into conflict with Annam over territory in what is now Cambodia. Because the Phuan had also sought protection from the Vietnamese at various times, the Siamese punished the

Phuan by forcing large groups to migrate to and down the Mekong River's right bank. The Siamese continued to raid Lao villages from 1837 to 1847 and forcibly moved much of the remaining population to the right bank. Snit and Breazeale write, "Entire Lao villages were forced to move across to the right bank, so that they could never serve as sources of food, supplies or transport labour to any Vietnamese invasion force" (1988: 18). Indeed, the stated goal of the Siamese during this period was to depopulate the Phuan kingdom.

> Beginning in 1834, new Phuan villages spread gradually across this area [northeast Thailand below Nong Khai down to the Chi River] along and near the Mekong itself and simultaneously in some ethnically Thai towns as well. In April 1834 orders were sent from Bangkok to the Thai commander at Nongkhai, instructing him to continue the depopulation of the Phuan State and to scour the plateau region of its people. 'It would be well if someone can go up to prevail upon and take the Phuan families, so that the Phuan State will have no population at all remaining' (Snit & Breazeale 1988: 23).

During the following decades, though, many resettled Lao snuck back to their home villages in Laos. Under pressure from the Siamese, Lao officials forced many of these returnees back to various left bank locations pending resettlement in Siam. Snit and Breazeale do not specify whether any Phuan who had returned to their homeland were again forced out, possibly to areas along the Nguem River north of Vientiane.

During the middle years of the 19th century the Siamese refrained from further forced migrations from the Phuan area, but by 1875 the Chinese Haw had not only occupied various Phuan villages but were raiding Lao villages along both sides of the Mekong. Many Phuan fled further inland in Isan, away from the river. To counter this rapid expansion of Haw power, the Siamese counter-attacked and after killing their leader, drove the Haw back to the Xiang Khuang Plateau, the Phuan homeland. But the Siamese also rounded up the fleeing Lao and Phuan, sending them to Bangkok as prisoners. Eventually the Siamese and Lao armies reached Xiang Khuang, captured most remaining people and looted anything not already taken by the Haw, sending the captives towards the Mekong.

Though 1876 proved to be the final year of forced migrations, it was also among the cruelest. As Xiang Khuang was depopulated, both Lao and Phuan were forcibly moved into several areas of northeast Thailand. Among them was a group of 5,700 who were force-marched far enough into the region that they could board barges to float down the Chao Phraya River, disembarking into resettlement camps north of Bangkok. Having left their homeland with virtually no provisions, medicine, or possessions, they suffered on this forced march to the point that around 3,000 died *en route*. For the first time, foreign residents in Bangkok became aware of this incident, investigated, even interviewing captives.

Eventually the prisoners were resettled over a broad area in the provinces ringing Bangkok in the central plain, including one group sent to Phromburi, a district town of Singburi province along the Chao Phraya River at today's Wat Amphawan (วัดอัมพวัน), one of central Thailand's most revered temples. Some of the Phromburi group moved east into Lopburi province and founded numerous villages in today's Ban Mi district, the community of the two singers of *khap phuan* that we documented.

The early life of the Phuan in the Lopburi–Singburi area was arduous at best. Snit and Breazeale write:

> Non-Thai villagers who were brought down to the central plain for resettlement did not have freemen status. They were kept entirely separate under the designation of "captive labourers" (*chaloei suk* [เชลยศึก]) [...]. Undistinguishable physically from the Thai, the Phuan were integrated into the peasantry—but only as labour units. From time to time, when town registers were revised, all able-bodied men were tattooed with registration numbers, with men from the captive labour villages receiving special tattoos to identify their status. Their labour was a principal source of wealth for the royal family and other senior officials. Phuan and Lao men, for example, performed the heavy construction work for royal villas and monasteries in the provinces, including stone cutting and sculpting for which no skilled Thai artisans could be mustered.
>
> Royal paddy fields were tilled by Mon, Vientiane Lao, Phuan, Cham, Malay, Khmer and other ethnic groups seized during the wars in their homelands [...]. Phuan, Lao, Cham, Khmer, and even Vietnamese peasant units were the backbone of traditional infantry and naval forces around Bangkok up to the end of the nineteenth century [...]. Captive labourers were immobile units within society. Their status was essentially a closed caste, inherited from generation to generation [...]. Mobility through marriage was virtually out of the question for Phuan men, because of social pressures on Thai women not to marry beneath their own status (Snit & Breazeale 1988: 124–126).

Although Phuan remaining in Laos were no longer forcibly moved to Siam after 1876, the situation on the Xiang Khuang Plateau remained grim for the survivors. Some researchers estimate that the Phuan population had been reduced to just one quarter of its earlier size (Schliesinger 2001: 66). The Haw continued their widespread raids and domination of Xiang Khuang, pushing the Phuan into near exile in the southeast corner of their kingdom. In the 1880s the French began exploring Laos towards their planned colonization, sending Dr Paul Neis in 1883 to explore a possible trade route between the Mekong and northern Vietnam. While making the arduous trek up what he called the Nam Chau (Chau River), today thought to be the Nam Xong or Song River (ນ້ຳຊອງ; น้ำซอง), he encountered

the Phuan royal family fleeing the Haw, then the Haw themselves, forcing him to turn back and abort his mission (Neis 1997[1884]).

The Siamese, fearing encroachment by the French on territory they had once conquered, arrested the last Phuan monarch, King Khamti (ພະເຈົ້າຂັນຕີ; r. 1876–1880) and exiled him to Bangkok. A Siamese commissioner then oversaw the area, notwithstanding the continuing problems with the Haw, until 1893. In that year the French established their protectorate over Laos through a treaty forced on Siam following the Pak Nam Incident, when French warships approached Bangkok in the estuary of the Chao Phraya River. The few surviving members of the Phuan royal family were released, but most had already died, including King Khamti. In 1899, the Phuan kingdom lost any remaining autonomy, when the area was converted to the Lao province of Xiang Khuang.

Snit and Breazeale noted early in their study just how reduced the Phuan population had become by this time.

> The earliest census records (dating from 1889) estimated a total population of 24,920 for the Phuan State, of which 49 per cent were Phuan, 30 per cent Hmong, 14.3 per cent other hilltribes and 6.7 per cent were immigrants from Lao towns [...]. This distribution represented, however, a situation at the end of two generations of devastating warfare, which had probably reduced the Phuan population of the plateau by more than three-quarters (Snit & Breazeale 1988: 3).

If these figures are at all accurate, then at the end of the 19th century only about 12,000 Phuan remained in Laos. Great numbers of Phuan had been killed or forcibly moved to other areas, especially Siam, during the 19th century, leaving only a rump population to preserve and restore whatever culture made the Phuan unique. Were there enough skilled *khap* singers among them to preserve the genre known today in Xiang Khuang? Add to this that Xiang Khuang was the most heavily bombed place on Earth during the "Secret War" carried on by the United States, with unexploded ordnance continuing to kill people even today 50 years after the end of the Vietnam War. Untold numbers of people, no doubt including Phuan, were killed during this period. With the Phuan kingdom now fully absorbed into the Lao nation, there is little about modern life there to separate them from Lao culture generally except their individual and often miserable history.

The historical area of the Phuan kingdom, now Xiang Khuang province as configured in present day Lao PDR, has a mixed population totaling, according to a 2015 census, 244,684 people comprised of five ethnic groups: Tai Dam (Black Tai), Tai Daeng (Red Tai), Hmong, Khmu, and Phuan. Thus, today's Phuan are but a minority of the area's population. Because the former capital, the town of Xiang Khuang, now called Mueang Khun, was bombed into rubble during the Vietnam War, the present provincial government long ago moved to a new and more modern city, Phonsawan. The lead author of this article visited the province twice with the goal of documenting *khap phuan*

Figure 2: Traditional *khap phuan* with male and female singers accompanied by *khaen* free-reed mouth organ, Phonsawan, Laos, 2013 © Terry Miller

among other genres, first in 1991 when conditions were still extremely challenging and research strictly controlled by the government, and again in 2013 when researchers were free to find their own resources. On each visit the author was able to record notable traditional singers of *khap phuan* **[Figure 2].** The form of singing recorded on these trips has been the basis for comparison with the singing recorded in Ban Mi; as noted earlier, each style was distinct and unlike the other.

Drawing Conclusions about the Lopburi Singers

Phuan singing in Laos is distinctive among the repartee genres found throughout the country. *Khap phuan* in Lopburi is different not only from other khap heard anywhere, but even, and

especially, different from, *khap phuan* heard in Laos. Why this is so? This requires understanding how the Phuan in Ban Mi district might be related to their ancestors still living in Xiang Khuang.

The first clue appears after we answer the following question: if *khap phuan* in Lopburi is unlike *khap phuan* in Laos, is it similar to any other genre in Laos? Understanding that similarities do not prove a relationship; the lead author had noted early on in his research that the singing in Ban Mi strongly resembled another genre called *khap nguem* (ຂັບງึม) found along the Nguem River north of Vientiane around the city of Thulakom (ທุ่ะค็ม), previously field recorded twice in 1973 and 2006. Unlike Lao *khap phuan* today, the *khaen* in *khap nguem* begins in free rhythm while the first singer, normally the male, also sings in free rhythm using the same scale as heard in Ban Mi. The *khaen* more or less follows the singer's contour and fills in gaps between sung phrases. The female can respond with singing or by speaking (*wao phanya*), which was also true in the modern *khap phuan* recorded in Phonsawan. But it was still too premature to say that *khap phuan* in Ban Mi is in fact *khap nguem*.

Since first encountering *khap nguem* in 1973, we had also wondered why it was so different from the *lam* genres found from Vientiane to the south in Laos, though vaguely similar to *lam thang yao* (ລำทางยาอ) heard in nearby northeast Thailand. Having the prefix *khap* raised another question: could it have originated somewhere further north among other genres with the same prefix? If it were true that the Ban Mi style was equivalent to *khap nguem*, might that suggest that at one time the Phuan had more than one style? While it is true that most singers in southern Laos and northeast Thailand can perform more than one lam style, this has not been true among khap singers in northern Laos. Additionally, the northern khap styles are more geographically isolated than the *lam* genres of the south, many of the latter existing side by side geographically. Then it is logical to ask, could the people and the singers of *khap nguem* in Thulakom be related to the Phuan of Ban Mi? Although Paul Neis encountered Phuan fleeing the Haw along the Song River, which flows down from the Xiang Khuang Plateau, the Nguem River also flows from the same plateau and could have been another exit route. If the people of Thulakom are descendants of the Phuan, does that mean that *khap nguem* is also Phuan? And if this is so, is it also possible that the Phuan refugees who settled along the Nguem River might have had too few practitioners—or even none—of the original form to keep it alive and adopted a local genre whose origin is unknown? Thus, addressing questions 3 and 4 raised earlier, there is the possibility that *khap nguem* was originally a non-Phuan genre adopted by them while exiled in that area.

In January 2020, while visiting Vientiane, the lead author had an opportunity to meet a professional *khap nguem* singer living within the city using the professional name Mo lam Phetwilai Sainam-nguem (ເพ็ดอิไล สายน้ำงึม or เพชรวิไล สายน้ำงึม).[4] During the interview

[4] This professional name identifies him as a singer of *khap nguem*.

we asked him to watch a video of the Ban Mi singers. He immediately, and without hesitation, said "this is *khap nguem*". In response to further questions, he said that he and the people living along the lower Nguem River north of Vientiane originally came from Xiang Khuang and were Phuan. He said that his grandparents still referred to themselves as Phuan, but after living there, the Phuan intermarried with the local population, mixing their language as well, and adopted (apparently) a local singing style now known as *khap nguem*. He said both genres had come from formal courtship; that is why the female may respond in heightened speech called *wao phanya*. He mentioned that in *khap nguem*, the *khaen* begins before the singer enters. Whereas in most Lao cultural areas courtship was performed in homes, among the Nguem River Phuan it took place along the riverbank or on a boat floating on the river.

We have not been able to document Phetwilai's assertions independently, but they are plausible because the Nguem River originates in northern Xiang Khuang and flows from there southwest towards Thulakom and then down to the Mekong east of Vientiane.[5] When the Phuan were forcibly moved from their homeland, one of the possible routes could have followed the Nguem River Valley, though Snit and Breazeale note that "It was a hard journey, on foot most of the way. Peaked mountains and chaotic forest along the trails gave way eventually to rounded hills [...] and finally the two central plains" (1988: 2–3).

Certainly, the people living in Thulakom also included lowland Lao. This is likely because the Siamese had been depopulating the Vientiane plain and entire left bank of the Mekong over many years, leaving the area bereft of population by the mid-19th century. But the issue is complicated because while some Phuan might have stayed in Thulakom, some Lao captives who had been moved to the right bank in what is now northeast Thailand escaped back home to Laos. Some of these escapees remained there while others were rounded up a second time and forcibly moved back to Thailand. Thus, because of the complicated mixing of people in this area, it would be risky to assert that *khap nguem* was the original *khap phuan*, also preserved at Ban Mi. This would require also arguing that today's *khap phuan* in Laos developed after 1876, possibly derived from another style found in that area but unknown today. It is also possible that at the time of the forced migration there had been two separate types of *khap phuan*, perhaps one associated with Chiang Khwang and the other with Chiang Kham, but because the two styles are radically different, this proposition seems unlikely. As noted earlier, other ethnic groups now share the plateau, but none of their singing genres is similar to *khap phuan* as heard today in Laos. Another relatively nearby genre, *khap sam nuea* from Houa Phan province, in no way resembles *khap phuan*. As known today, *khap phuan* in Laos is distinct from other

[5] The flow of the river is now interrupted, however, because of the construction of a major dam built to produce hydro-electric power.

genres nearby and throughout Laos. This bolsters the assertion that what we hear today on the Xiang Khuang Plateau is indeed the original *khap phuan*, but that of the Phuan of Ban Mi instead reflects singing that developed along the Nguem River, possibly an adoption of a genre from a different Lao ethnicity.

Having considered numerous possibilities, we offer the following explanation for why *khap phuan* in Lopburi, Thailand, differs from *khap phuan* in Xiang Khuang, Laos. The ancestors of the Thai Phuan in Lopburi evidently came to Siam from along the Nguem River in Vientiane province in 1876. Earlier those same people or their forebears either fled Xiang Khuang for refuge nearer Vientiane or were forcibly moved there during one of the depopulations of the Plain of Jars. These refugees lived in these locations long enough to intermarry with local Lao and adapt to a different form of *khap* singing, either because there were no skilled practitioners of Xiang Khuang style, or they found *khap nguem* more appealing or accessible. That community, possibly one that included non-Phuan, was later forcibly marched and barged to Lopburi in the mid-1870s but was able to maintain the *khap nguem* style. However, because they were Phuan by memory and custom, they called it *khap phuan*. They managed to pass it from one generation to the next until it came to reside in only two elderly singers. Since no one from the younger generations found it of interest, it dead-ended in 2020 with the death of the last living singer. Unless there are as-yet undiscovered singers of the tradition among Phuan communities in other provinces, *khap phuan* in Thailand is extinct. The probability of finding additional singers is low, however, because Ban Mi was the largest and most intact Phuan community and no one in Ban Mi was aware of any other singers. Additional efforts were made to find any surviving singers elsewhere in 2023 but to no avail (see ***Addendum***, however).

What should the Ban Mi community of Lopburi think of this finding? Their entire identity as Thai Phuan, distinct from surrounding central Thai and non-Phuan Lao descendants, depends on their having come from Xiang Khuang, Laos. Culturally, they are primarily known for their *mat mi* textiles, not their now-extinct singing style. Both the Phuan Cultural Center at Lopburi's Ratchaphat University and the Ban Sai Museum emphasize textiles over other cultural aspects. Indeed, their ancestors did come from Xiang Khuang originally, though the process was likely far more complex than they realize. And the Phuan communities of Ban Mi district, although having been borne of tragedy and brutality, now stand proud of their heritage while benefitting from the prosperity of modern central Thailand. It is doubtful that anyone would be concerned that all these years they have been calling their local singing *khap phuan* when it is only comparable to contemporary *khap nguem*. The Phuan kingdom of earlier times is little more than a vague memory even for the Phuan still living there today. Clearly, the Phuan of both areas now prefer living in their own time over that of an imagined and lost past.

Addendum

On 17 February 2024, as this article was going to press, the authors learned of two hitherto unknown singers of *khap nguem* living near Lopburi city and apparently not known to the singers in Ban Mi district. Retired Thai army colonel Somyot Phonyiam (สมยศ พลเยี่ยม), a native of Roi Et province and descended from Lao wiang (forcibly removed from the Vientiane area in Laos), mentioned playing *khaen* to accompany them at Phuan festivals. The singers are Mr Kesom Lasakun (เกษม ลาสกุล), age 77, and Mrs Makrut Thong (มะกรูด ทอง), age 88, both from the village of Ban Namchan, Khao Sam Yot sub-district, City district, Lopburi province (บ้านน้ำจั้น ตำบล เขาสามยอด อำเภอเมือง ลพบุรี จังหวัดลพบุรี). They told us their ancestors had escaped from the rest of the Phuan captives into the forests and mountains around present-day Lopburi and now inhabit around six villages. Because both male and female can sing, they preserve the original repartee format. Otherwise, their singing is the same as that heard in Ban Mi. The authors have initiated a project to document their poetry and singing as well as encourage younger individuals to learn and pass on their musical and poetic knowledge.

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The "*Kammatthan* Buddhist Tradition" of Mainland Southeast Asia: Where Do We Stand?

Gregory Kourilsky[1]

Abstract—This review article explores the distinctive Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition of meditation, so-called *kammaṭṭhān*(*a*) or *yogāvacar*(*a*) tradition in recent literature, initially identified by T.W. Rhys Davids in the late 19th century. French scholars like F. Bizot and British scholar K. Crosby have continued to study this tradition, revealing its unique practices and vernacular literature in mainland Southeast Asia. Crosby's recent work, *Esoteric Theravada: The Story of the Forgotten Meditation Tradition of Southeast Asia* (2020), is critically examined in this study. The analysis assesses her new findings, discusses her sources, and offers reflections to enhance understanding within contemporary Buddhist studies.

Keywords: Esoteric Theravada; *Kammatthan* Buddhist Tradition; Kate Crosby; Southeast Asian Buddhism; Tai–Khmer Meditation Practices

More than a century ago, T.W. Rhys Davids, the founder of the distinguished Pali Text Society in the UK, published the romanized edition of a meditation treatise titled *Vidarśanapota* (Vid), written in both Pali and Sinhalese. He freely translated it as *The Yogāvacara's Manual* in 1896. Thomas William Rhys Davids, along with his wife Caroline Augusta Foley who wrote the preface to the translation of Vid (F.L. Woodward 1916), found themselves puzzled by this Buddhist text. In their views, it differed in many respects from the conceptions and teachings contained in the Pali corpus of the Mahāvihāra, which is, in principle, the authoritative source of the tradition of Buddhism labeled as "Theravada". These differences pertained to "spiritual exercise" or meditation (P., *kammaṭṭhāna*),

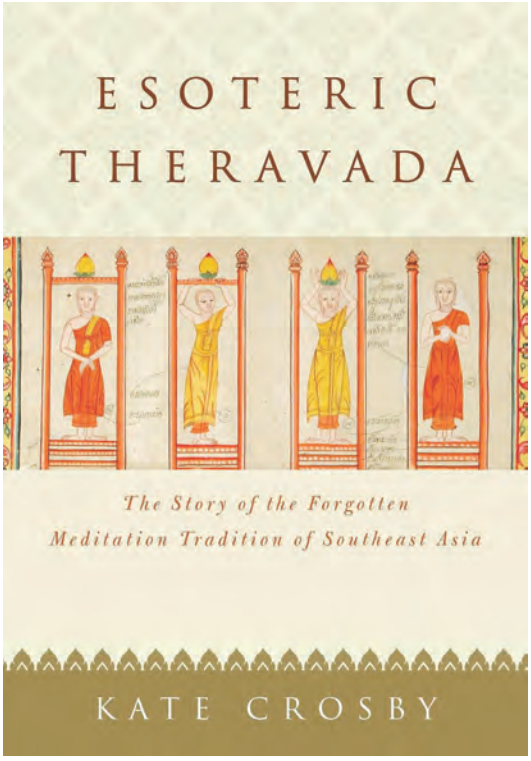

Figure 1: Book Cover of *Esoteric Theravada* © Shambala Publications

[1] École française d'Extrême-Orient, Bangkok.
Email: gregory.kourilsky@efeo.net.

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while simultaneously relying on Pali terminology and Buddhist conceptions found in the *Abhidhamma* and Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* (T.W. Rhys Davids 1896: vii–xxx; C.A.F. Rhys Davids 1916: xiv).

Since then, French scholars have identified a number of texts, most of which were composed in mainland Southeast Asia, evidently related to the *Vidarśanapota* and seemingly reflecting a distinctive form of Buddhist practice (e.g., Leclère 1899: 42–43; Finot 1917: 76–83; Cœdès 1956). However, it was only from the 1970s onwards that this tradition became the subject of more in-depth study, thanks to the pioneering works of François Bizot, then a researcher at the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). Bizot published a series of monographs and articles in French on the so-called *kammaṭṭhān*(*a*) or "*yogāvacar*(*a*) tradition", relying on related vernacular literature and distinctive rituals that he was able to find and observe in Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos. His work inspired several other specialists who have continued to conduct research on this tradition, such as François Lagirarde and Olivier de Bernon, also members of the EFEO.

British scholar Kate Crosby's keen interest in the subject emerged later, and since 2000, she has produced a number of English publications on this Buddhist trend, particularly related to its transmission in late 18th-century Sri Lanka. Her first book on this topic aimed to be a synthesis of what she called the *borān kammaṭṭhān* (see below for a critical discussion on this term), considering the reasons for its gradual disappearance, as its title suggests (Crosby 2013). Her latest book, *Esoteric Theravada*: *The Story of the Forgotten Meditation Tradition of Southeast Asia* (Crosby 2020) **[Figure 1]**, under review here, is a new attempt to outline this Buddhist tradition of meditation, addressing both historical and analytical aspects. The question of overlaps and repetitions with her previous monograph inevitably arises, to the extent that a significant number of passages are found verbatim in both volumes. Crosby acknowledges the duplications and justifies this by stating that "both the field and [her] knowledge have developed", adding that new authors have brought to light material significant enough to justify this new publication (p. 4). This review article aims to appraise her new findings in the book, provide an overview of her sources, and offer critical remarks on her analysis and avenues of reflection to enhance the understanding of this not well-known regional tradition in contemporary Buddhist studies.

What is the "*Kammatthan* Tradition"?

At the outset, it is crucial to emphasize that *Esoteric Theravada* may seem somewhat perplexing to readers unfamiliar with the so-called *kammatthan* tradition or those who are not acquainted with Bizot's previous work. In line with the latter, Crosby introduces this specific tradition of meditation as "distinctive from all other forms of Theravada meditation practice" (p. 30). This strong statement aligns with the labelling of this tradition as "unorthodox", which is indeed how it is perceived by scholars and some Buddhist practitioners in Southeast Asia. However, the author hardly explains at the beginning why, how, and to what extent this tradition

can be referred to as such, especially as the terms "distinctive" and "unorthodox" repeatedly appear throughout *Esoteric Theravada* (pp. 6, 25–34, 60, 63, 197, 234). Crosby discusses the validity of such qualifications in later chapters, but it is surprising that this terminology is not addressed at the outset. What the "old *kammatthan*"—which can more prosaically be referred to as the Tai–Khmer[2] method of Buddhist meditation—consists of will only be gradually and partially elucidated in her study.

In Chapter 1, Crosby looks "at attitudes to Theravada Buddhism and its meditation during the colonial period", in order to explain why this tradition came to be "marginalized and dismissed as contrived or corrupt" (p. 5). It is true that Buddhists in French and British colonies and protectorates often had to face "expectations of what Buddhism and religion should and should not be" (p. 12). One can nevertheless find curious such a methodological approach that begins a study by analyzing the alleged extinction of its very subject, without having previously provided an overview. Moreover, one may question the assertion that this tradition "disappeared" during the colonial period. Certainly, the Tai–Khmer method began to be overshadowed by Burmese "Vipassanā" techniques in the modern period, but Bizot witnessed and documented many related rituals and practices in the 1970s and Bernon as late as the 1990s. Crosby likewise extensively addresses the colonization issue in relation to British Burma and Europe, which, as we shall see, is not directly related to meditation.

Moreover, Crosby's approach amounts to considering this tradition mainly from an etic perspective—that of European scholars and reformist religious elites—rather than from an emic point of view, that of the local people, the Buddhist practitioners of mainland Southeast Asia. The issue of European views on the Buddhist religion that led to a kind of "neo-Buddhism" has been thoroughly addressed for the Theravada world, especially in the last few decades (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1992; Dapsance 2018). However, it appears from these studies that the movement some have called "Protestant Buddhism" was not specifically directed towards meditation—even less so to one method in particular—but more broadly to any facet of Buddhism that was considered as irrational such as divination, searches for supernatural power, spirit cults, protective spells, apocryphal works, and other indigenous practices. In fact, a whole segment of vernacular Buddhist literature and practice have been discarded over the last century, to such an extent that a number of texts and notions have become hardly comprehensible for most people, even scholarly monks.

The first attempt by Crosby to define the so-called *kammatthan* tradition appears in Chapter 2, but only in a limited fashion. She first cites an excerpt (p. 29) from a meditation instruction given by Luang Pu Sot Candasaro (หลวงปู่สดจนฺทสโร; 1884–1959),

[2] The term Tai here refers to populations speaking a Tai language, in particular the Siamese (central Thailand), the Yuon (northern Thailand and northwest Laos), the Lao (Laos and northeast Thailand), the Lue (northern Laos and Xishuanbanna State in China), the Khuen (Shan States of Myanmar), etc.

former abbot of Wat Paknam Phasicharoen (วัดปากน้ำภาษีเจริญ) in Bangkok, considered by the modern Thammakai movement (on which, see further below) to have rediscovered an ancient meditation technique believed to have been used by Buddha Gotama himself—a narrative that obviously serves to legitimize this modern movement. Luang Pu Sot's method, called *witcha thammakai*[3] (Th., วิชชาธรรมกาย; P., *vijjā dhammakāya*), is a modernized and simplified version of the so-called "old *kammatthan*" (Newell 2008: 256–257; *contra*, Niras 2015: 274–283), with which it has, moreover, significant differences. It is thus not representative of the tradition as a whole. While the first section of this chapter is supposed to depict the "distinctive features of Esoteric Theravada meditation", it only gives a few hints, both too general and too specific to be self-explanatory. To say that *borān* (*sic*) (lit. "ancient") meditation should start with evoking the five "joys" (P., *pīti*), which in the Pali commentarial literature are experienced in the approach to, and during, the first *jhāna* or "mental absorption" (pp. 30–31), although correct, is not sufficient to define the specificity of this teaching. This terminology is already well-known to anyone acquainted with Pali texts considered today as authoritative with regard to meditation, such as the (*Mahā-*) *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* (D II 290f; M I 56f), the *Visuddhimagga* (Vism) or the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (Abhidh-s), the latter being two "exoteric" Buddhist practice manuals. Crosby rightly identifies the fact that *nimitta*s or "signs" seen in meditation can appear to the meditator as "spheres of light" as an original feature of the tradition. Unfortunately, she only refers to this specificity and gives little further information on the subject in the rest of the book (pp. 56–57).

The concept of the "fetus as a model for spiritual transformation" (pp. 31f) is correctly identified, but the explanation the author gives is so terse that, once again, readers unfamiliar with this belief can hardly grasp what this is about. The same can be said for "the potency of the Pali language" and "numerology" (pp. 32f), which are presented as distinctive features but in terms too vague to be clear. It should also be pointed out that "the Pali alphabet understood as a creative and potent force" (*ibid*.) is not a conception that is specific to the Tai and Khmer traditions. It was already effective in Buddhism when practiced by the ancient Pyu and Mon, as evidenced in numerous early Pali inscriptions from upper Myanmar and central Thailand (5th–10th c.) bearing mantras and apotropaic formulae.[4] In fact, Vism as well as *Abhidhamma* commentaries already describe Pali as a magical language (Gornall 2020: 40). Moreover, Bizot and von Hinüber (1994: 38) have pointed out that numerology is not entirely absent from the Tipiṭaka.[5]

[3] Thai (and Lao) words in this article are romanized according to the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (RTGS). Khmer words are freely transcribed according to the actual pronunciation.

[4] See for instance Revire 2014. Also worthy of note is the *yantra* engraved on an Angkorian stone slab first found in Bat Chum temple (Cambodia)—and in other places such as Oudor Meanchey (Dominique Soutif, pers. comm.)—which represents lotus petals arranged into 49 squares and containing the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet (Cœdès 1952). This *yantra* is probably not, however, to be linked to those that are widespread in the Pali tradition of Southeast Asian Buddhism (see Bizot 1981b: 256).

[5] In particular, the number of syllables in the verses

The following brief section that examines "similarities with Tantra" (pp. 33f) rests on ambivalent and rapid comparison and is thus more confusing than enlightening. Much more can be said on this matter (see below). Then comes a brief overview of the two methods of meditations that are today recognized as authoritative for the Theravada tradition—at least among the religious elites and most Buddhist scholars—, that given by Buddhaghosa in Vism (fl. 5th c. CE), and the Burmese "Vipassanā" technique, which was introduced in 19th century-Burma and popularized by Venerable U Sobhana Mahāthera (Mahāsi Sayadaw, 1904–1982) in the mid-20th century, before it spread to Thailand and Sri Lanka. At this point in the book, these two methods are actually described in more detail (pp. 38–42) than is the "old *kammatthan*", to the extent that Crosby's discussion obscures comprehension of the latter practice.

This late and laconic description of the Tai–Khmer method of meditation in *Esoteric Theravada* is puzzling. For readers unfamiliar with this tradition, it can be useful at this point to draw on Bizot and Lagirarde's description of the distinctive traits of the path of the "practitioner of spiritual discipline" (Kh., យោគាវចរ, *yukiaveachor*; Th., โยคาวจร, *yokhawachon*; P., *yogāvacara*) towards deliverance:

> The *yogāvacara* must (1) recollect the successive stages of his [or her[6]] own embryonic formation within the maternal womb; (2) by means of breathing exercises, build up a new body, beginning with generating new organs made from syllables, which are encapsulated portions of the Dhamma; (3) visualize inside himself, at the level of the navel, this new body in the process of being created, which first takes the form of a one-inch tall buddha; (4) in the course of his lifetime achieve the building of this "body [made] of Dhamma" (P., *dhammakāya*), stripped of impurities, which at the moment of his death will take over his current body and lead him to *nibbāna* (Bizot & Lagirarde 1996: 38; my translation).[7]

From this short passage, one can already see that this technique primarily rests on the visualization and internal mimesis of the development of the embryo in the mother's womb, which aims to make the *yogāvacara* symbolically reborn in a new existence, deprived of all impurity. This process of initiatory *regressus ad uterum* (Bizot forthcoming), which the practitioner must carry out through meditation and breathing exercises in order to reach spiritual liberation, is unfortunately not clearly elucidated in *Esoteric Theravada*.

During this process, the *yogāvacara* goes through a series of individual physical

of praise to the Triple Gem—starting with *iti pi so*—totalize, by way of an artifice, the auspicious number 108 (Bizot & von Hinüber 1994: 38).

[6] The practice of *kammatthan* is also open to women and a woman can theoretically even be a master, even though such cases rarely occur.

[7] Crosby provides an English translation of this passage in a "Bibliographic essay" of Bizot's work along with a list of key features that characterizes, according to her, this tradition (Crosby 2000: 141–142, 170). Another excerpt of the *Saddavimala* is quoted by Crosby in *Esoteric Theravada* (pp. 105f), but is not explicitly related to meditation.

and psychological experiences, following a pattern presented to him—but never fully explained—by his "Master of initiation" (Kh., គ្រូកម្មដ្ឋាន, *kru kammatthan*; Th., ครูกรรมฐ์าน, *khru kammatthan*; P., *garu kammaṭṭhāna*). The Master ought to interpret signs (P., *nimitta*) of progression and thus determine whether or not his disciple is ready for stepping into the next stage or "topic of meditation" (Kh., មូលព្រះកម្មដ្ឋាន, *mul preah kammatthan*; Th., มูลพระกรรมฐาน, *mun phra kammatthan*; P., *mūlakammaṭṭhāna*). Experienced "signs" and "topics of meditation" may slightly vary from one master to another in terms of number, order, and details, and according to time and place, but generally follow the same pattern. Notwithstanding some distinctive features, this pattern broadly adheres to that given by Buddhaghosa in Vism (Bizot 1992: 49; Bernon 2000: 461f; Skilton & Phibul 2014: 92).

In mainland Southeast Asia, the initiation of the *yogāvacara* takes place within a highly ritualized framework, which highlights the intimate relationship between the disciple and his (or her) master. One illustrative example is the "ritual of salutation to the Master" (Kh., វន្ទាគ្រូព្រះកម្មដ្ឋាន, *vontia kru preah kammatthăn*), which takes place at the beginning of the apprenticeship and, in a simpler form, on a daily basis when the disciple reports to the Master what he (or she) experienced during the disciple's "meditation watches" (Kh., អង្គុយភាវនា, *angkuy phiaveania*; P., *bhāvanā*) (Bernon 2000: 416). A number of ritual objects are necessary for the disciple's initiation (e.g., incense sticks, candles, areca nuts, flowers, different kinds of trays), another peculiar feature of the Tai–Khmer method with regard to other meditation systems. Characteristic of this tradition is the "ceremony of compression" (Kh., ពិធីសង្កត់, *pithi sangkat*) during which the *yogāvacara* reproduces before the Master the same spiritual exercise he or she accomplished in his cell, in order to "generate" (Kh., បង្កើតស្ថិត, *bangkaet sthoet*) once again relevant *nimitta*s on defined parts of their body, viz., just under the navel, two finger-breadths above the navel, at the center of the abdomen, at the solar plexus, and at the level of the heart. This must be done according to six different schemes or "entrances" (Kh., ចូល, *chol*; Th., เข้า, *khao*), that is, in different predetermined orders, for example "in succession" (Th., ลำดับ, *lamdap*), viz., 1 2 3 4 5 5 4 3 2 1, "by alternation" (Th., สลับ, *salap*), viz., 1 3 2 4 3 5 5 3 4 2 3 1, "by inching forward" (Th., คืบ, *khuep*), viz., 1 4 2 5 3 5 2 4 1 3, etc. (Bizot 1992: 50f; Mettanando 1999: 210; and Bernon 2000: 492). This ritual is executed at the pace of the fall of small lead marbles from a lighted candle, on which they have previously been fixed, into a bowl of water placed underneath. At the sound of the fall, the *yogāvacara* moves on to the next topic of meditation (T.W. Rhys Davids 1896: xiii; Bernon 2000: 511f). In Cambodia, the making of the "beads of fixation" (Kh., ល្អកសង្កត់, *luk sangkat*) also follows a dedicated ritual process, which includes the engraving of magical diagrams (Skt., *yantra*) before melting and shaping. *Esoteric Theravada* is entirely silent on this whole distinctive ritual apparatus. In addition, the book does not give any detail on the crucial role the Master plays in the initiation of the disciple, the *yogāvacara*.

It should be borne in mind that the so-called *kammatthan* tradition of mainland Southeast Asia is not limited to meditation practice—this fact, by itself, makes the

designation quite problematic. As rightly stated by Crosby (pp. 68f), it also includes cosmogonies, creation myths, and narratives, which often parallel the *yogāvacara*'s visualization of the individual's physical and psychic conception with the genesis of the universe. In this vein, for example, the ancient Indian epic *Rāmāyaṇa* is reinterpreted in premodern Cambodia as if Rāma's action actually takes place within the human body (Bizot 1989). The tale of the "Fig tree with five branches", recorded in Bizot's pioneering eponymous book (1976),[8] is also significant since it relates the journey of the "spirit children" (Kh., ចិត្តកុមារ ចិត្តកុមារី, *cittakumāra cittakumārī*; Th., ลูกดวงจิต, *luk duang chit*). These children are on leave from Yama's realm in search of a new womb to be reborn in the Land of the Rose Apple tree (P., *Jambudīpa*), symbolic of the human sphere. To escape from the endless cycle of death and rebirth, they begin to search for a "jewel orb" (Kh., ដួងកែវ, *duang kaeo*; Th., ดวงแก้วมณีโชติ, *duang kaeo manichot*) which will allow them to access the "City of Nibbāna" (P., *nibbānanagara*). However, this jewel is hidden in the "Fig tree with five branches", guarded by six birds of prey called "*indriya*" (Kh., ឥន្ទ្រី, *entri*; Th., นกอินทรี, *nok insi*, "eagle"), which they must kill if they want to seize it. This narrative is obviously an allegory for the journey of the individual's psycho–physiological principle during transmigration (P., *nāmarūpa*, or *citta-viññāṇa*), in which Buddhist principles are metaphorically signified. The birds *indriya* (Th., *insi*) thus represent, through a phonic amalgamation, the faculties of sense (P., *indriya*).

[8] Lagirarde (1994) made a comparative study between Khmer and northern Thai recensions of this narrative.

This tradition has also developed a specific cosmogony that depicts the genesis of the universe from the five primordial syllables (P., *akkhara*) NA MO BU DDHĀ YA (*namo buddhāya*), "homage to the buddha(s)", which are associated with the five buddhas, the five elements (P., *dhātu*), viz., earth, water, fire, wind, ether, as well as the five aggregates (P., *khandha*) (Leclère 1899: 42; Bizot & Lagirarde 1996: 39f). The "holy jewel" (Th., พระแก้ว, *phra kaeo*) in turn creates the three syllables MA A U, which epitomize the three divisions of the Doctrine, namely, the *Vinaya*, the *Suttanta*, and the *Abhidhamma*. This is a Buddhist reinterpretation of the sacred mantra OṂ, which in Hinduism can symbolize—among other things—the Trimūrti, where the three Sanskrit letters A U M are equated to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, respectively (Gonda 1968: 222; Bailey 1979: 153). This cosmogenesis of the Tai–Khmer tradition is meant to serve as an introspective support to the *yogāvacara* during the process of the inner creation of a "body of the Dhamma" (P., *dhammakāya*, which can also take the more prosaic sense of "body of the Doctrine").[9] Similarly, the *yogāvacara* must find in himself the "teaching of the buddha", here materialized by "heart-formulae" (Kh., បណ្ដាល, *bandol*; Th., หัวใจ, *hua chai*), made of Pali syllables, which encapsulate fundamental principles of the Tipiṭaka such as MA A U, which gives rise to the head, the trunk, and the legs of the embryo, KU SA LĀ A KU SA LĀ (*kusalā akusālā*), which conveys his

[9] The double meaning of the term "body" is evident in the expression "the Triple Basket within" (Kh., [ត្រៃ]បិដកក្នុងកាយ [*trai*] *peidok knong kay*) found in Cambodian texts (Walker 2018: 531).

karmic acquisitions, A Ā I Ī U Ū E O which produces the organs, the aforementioned NA MO BU DDHĀ YA formula which creates the five constitutive elements of his body, as well as the five aggregates and physical components. These five syllables also link the individual with the persons he is in debt to for their "legacies" (Kh., គុណ, *kun*; Th., คุณ, *khun*; P., *guṇa*), who define him both biologically and socially in this world, namely, his mother, his father, his relatives, his prince, and his master or *kru* (Bizot & von Hinüber 1994: 39f). Not only the *yogāvacara*, but more broadly all Buddhist followers are required to "recollect [their] parents' legacies" (Kh., រលឹកគុណបិតាមាតា, *roluek kun beida mieda*; Th., รู้จักคุณพ่อคุณแม่, *ruchak khun pho khun mae*), that is, the bodily fluids and solid organs, which each mother and father pass on to their offspring during gestation. These bodily components, a total of 12 and 21 in number respectively, are assimilated to the water-elements (P., *āpodhātu*) and the earth-elements (P., *paṭhavīdhātu*). These components actually correspond to the stereotypical lists found in canonical and postcanonical texts when describing the parts of the human body (P., *dvattiṁsākāra*, "the 32 components") where they are depicted as topics of meditation for the *yoga* practitioner.[10] However, the connection established with the "legacies of the parents" is specific only to the Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition.[11] These concepts are not explained in *Esoteric Theravada*.

Until recently, analogies to this principle of rebirth in the womb could be observed during specific rituals in Cambodia, such as the *chak bangsokol* (ឆាកបង្សុកូល; P., *paṁsukūla*) in which the practitioner symbolically replicates the journey of a dead person between two existences, and simulates, through a walk in a labyrinth made of white cloth, his rebirth within and emerging from the matrix (Bizot 1981a).[12] Another example is the "cavern of birth" ritual, which was also recently still performed in Cambodia, where village pilgrims enact their own *regressus* in the womb just as does a practitioner of meditation.[13] As it happens, the ordination ritual (P., *upasampadā*) in this tradition also includes this symbolism, as the candidate is compared to a transmigrant entering into the womb, who is about to be "reborn" again, as his status of monk makes him a new being. The monastery as a whole participates in this metaphorical figuration: the preaching hall (P., *sālā*) represents the father, and the sanctuary (P., *vihāra*) or ordination hall (P., *uposatha*), the mother or maternal womb. The sanctuary's eight outer boundary stones (Kh., គោលសីមា, *koul seima*; Th., ใบเสมา, *bai sema*; P., *sīmā*)

[10] See Khp 2; M III 90; A III 323; A V 109; Vibh 82, 193f; D II 293; D III 104f; Vism 242f, etc. Tai–Khmer tradition lists 33 components instead of 32, as the last item, *matthake matthaluṅgaṁ* ("the brain in the skull") is divided into two components, brain and skull (Finot 1917: 81).

[11] On the importance of the "legacies" of parents in mainland Southeast Asian Buddhism, see Kourilsky 2007, and Kourilsky 2022: 162–166.

[12] This ritual is not attested in Buddhist practice in Sri Lanka and India. However, it can be compared to Japanese *kanjō* ritual, where monks simulate the buddha's journey towards enlightenment by walking through white sheets hung up to form a labyrinth (e.g., Strickmann 1996: 209).

[13] Described in Bizot (1980). This ritual is very similar to tantric rituals that are performed in Japan and other parts of East Asia (e.g., Stein 1988).

constitute symbolically the recipient's body openings which are the right and left eyes, the two nostrils, and so on, while the central stone (Kh., សីមាកិល, *seima kel*) acts as his navel (Bizot 1988: 36f, n. 31; Bernon 2000: 210–219). Furthermore, the different parts of the monastic cloth—seven in number in the Tai–Khmer tradition, three in the Pali *Vinaya*—are also associated with the different components of the matrix in such a way that, for example, the waist belt is equated with the umbilical cord, the upper robe (Kh., ចីពរ, *cheipor*; Th., จีวร, *chiwon*; P., *cīvara/uttarāsaṅga*) represents the placenta, and so on.[14]

Finally, Bizot documented various other distinctive regional features, with regard, for instance, to the ordination procedure and its liturgies, the monk's accessories such as the walking stick, the ecclesiastical grades sanctioned by dedicated rituals, etc.[15] The so-called *kammatthan* tradition can thus be described as a cultural bedrock that encompasses different worldviews, values, and conceptions, some of which are specific to this part of Southeast Asia. Although Crosby acknowledges that the "[old *kammatthan* is] part of a broader culture" (p. 68), she stays silent—aside from a short section on narratives (see below)—about any of these particularities, as the book mainly addresses meditation practice.

Terminological Issues

A number of terms Crosby uses for referring to her subject of study—the method of Buddhist meditation as practiced in premodern Cambodia, Thailand and Laos, and, earlier in Sri Lanka as well as related Buddhist practices and conceptions—deserve further discussion.

One may first reflect on the term "esoteric", which repeatedly occurs in the book, starting with its title. Other authors have also used this term to qualify specific features of Tai–Khmer Buddhism (e.g., Bizot 1980: 228, 253; 1988: 107; Cousins 1997: 185f; Bernon 2006: 62). More recently, however, some scholars have been critical of the use of this term for referring to this tradition (e.g., McDaniel 2011: 100–109; McGovern 2017: 6–10). Crosby uses this term, first, because the practitioner needs to receive an initiation, and there is a close relationship between the meditator and his master. On the one hand, initiation provided by a teacher to selected disciples is certainly a feature that has similarity with tantras (p. 34), the esoteric tradition of Indian Buddhism and Hinduism. On the other hand, the Master-student relationship does not, in fact, drastically depart from the wider traditional meditation type found in South Asia, which involves direct instruction from teacher to pupil. The qualification of the Master of meditation in the Tai–Khmer tradition as a "good friend" (P., *kalyāṇamitta*) in which complete trust and devotion is advocated is, for example, already found in Vism.[16] Therefore, this way of open transmission is not sufficient to qualify the Southeast Asian traditional meditation as necessarily "esoteric".

[14] For the full list, see Bizot 1980: 246.

[15] For an overview of these distinctive features, see Bizot 2000.

[16] Vism I 19, 89, 97–122, and Vism II 43f, 471–480. On the relationship of the disciple with the Master, see Gethin 2004: 203, 212. *Contra*, see Polak 2011.

At any rate, one may wonder to what extent the practice of this kind of meditation can be referred to as "esoteric", without clarifying it. As is well known, esoterism first refers to secret teachings, which in ancient Greece were reserved only to insiders (ἐσώτερος, *esóteros*; lit. "inner"). This term has also been used in Europe to designate teachings and trends within Christianity that belong to restricted groups of people. Nowadays, it more broadly refers to marginal currents of thought with a secret or strange component, which are accessible only to the initiated; in Europe, Freemasonry is a contemporary example of this. Certainly, Khmer Buddhists use the expression "inner path" (Kh., ផ្លូវក្នុង, *phloew knong*), referring to the practice of meditation in broad terms, in opposition to the sole study of texts, which is, conversely, considered as the "outer path" (Kh., ផ្លូវក្រៅ, *phloew krau*) (Bizot 1992: 33, 247). This distinction between study and contemplation as two different "burdens"—viz., *ganthadhura* and *vipassanādhura*—in fact corresponds to one which is also found in the Pali commentaries (e.g., Dh–a I 7, 68) without involving any kind of sectarianism. As for Chinese Buddhism, the doctrine of the buddha as a whole is considered the only true teaching, precisely because it is "internal" 內 (*nei*) (Strickmann 1996: 357). Likewise, the Tibetan word for "Buddhist" is ནང་པ་ (*nang pa*), literally meaning "insider", i.e., someone who looks inwards.

The term "initiation" is also worthy of closer consideration. According to the definition of esoterism given above, "the initiated ones" concern only individuals who have been accepted into a selected group. As a result, teachings are deemed "secret" to those who are external to this group. In China and Japan, for instance, the masters of tantric Buddhism or Taoism form a group of initiates, bound by secrecy, whose rites and texts remain largely inaccessible and unintelligible to the layman (Strickmann 1996: 46). In reality, "mystery" (μυστήριον, *mustérion* in Greek) is also part of Christianity and more broadly of every religion, at least during their earliest phase of development. Paul Lévy (1957: 97f) proposed classifying Buddhism as among the "mystery religions", which he said were characterized "by the fact that their principal rites and revelation are kept secret, [and consequently] create at least two classes within the societies in which they flourish: the initiated and the uninitiated". However, in the Tai–Khmer tradition, it is not only the uninitiated but the disciple himself who remains a stranger to the deeper meaning of the teachings he receives. The Master of initiation never gives any explanation to the disciple when interpreting the "signs" or *nimitta*s during the practical sessions. However, the reason for this omission is not necessarily to conceal the details of his method. It may also be that the actual basis of this structured technique is the concrete achievement of all stages of meditation rather than the intellectual understanding of this process. If the way of the *yogāvacara* is locally said to be "hidden" (Kh., លាក់, *leak*), it is because it rests on personal and solitary experience which cannot be taught by a lecture-based course as is the case for the teaching of the scriptures (P., *pariyatti*). Vernacular manuals teach that the ultimate Dhamma, secret to ordinary

mortals, lies hidden in the depths of the mind—i.e., the "Fig tree with five branches"—and only becomes perceptible, in the form of a jewel orb, after intense breathing exercises (Potprecha 2022: 36). The disciple thus receives a method, rather than a dogmatic teaching, which enables him to "seek within himself" (Kh., រកក្នុងខ្លួន, *rok knong khluon*) the path to purification (Bizot 1992: 33f). In other words, the Tai–Khmer tradition of meditation is a praxis in the Aristotelian sense of the term, rather than a theoretical or contemplative activity.

Additionally, Crosby convincingly argues that the "[old *kammatthan*] was visible, sponsored as it was at the highest levels of court society as well as practiced at key points in the Buddhist and harvest calendar among the rural population" (p. 19). How, then, can its practice still be regarded as esoteric?[17] Even more suggestive is her credible assumption that these practices were known, supported, and probably regarded as the conventional meditation system used by the Thai or Siamese and Lao religious elites until the late 19th century (p. 191; also Crosby et al. 2012: 19). In fact, this is perhaps not surprising if we look at tantric Buddhism in East Asia—also often labeled "esoteric"—which also received royal patronage and support from ruling elites and whose experts were in direct contact with emperors (Strickmann 1996: 40). Crosby's convincing presentation of the "old *kammatthan*" as a mainstream form of Buddhist meditation practice in pre-modern Thailand (formerly Siam) and Cambodia is arguably—and paradoxically—the main outcome of her book.

A further argument one could put forward to support this idea is linked to related rituals, such as that of the "Cavern of birth" in Cambodia (Bizot 1980) and distinctive ceremonies sanctioning ecclesiastical grades in Tai Lue communities of northern Laos (Bitard & Lafont 1957), in which pilgrims and villagers openly participate. Moreover, key notions of the tradition, such as the five joys or *pīti*s, can be found in learning contexts other than meditation, such as the ceremony of homage to the traditional dance master (Bernon 2000: 232). Even texts containing these types of teaching, far from being kept secret, can be read by the monks to their lay audience during ceremonies in the monastery. This is the case, for example, in Thailand and Laos with the *kayanakhon* (กายนคร, P. *kāyanagara*, "The body [as a] city"),[18] which sets out the mystical phylogenesis of man, described by analogy with the development of the characters of the alphabet and the "body of the Doctrine" (*dhammakāya*) (*ibid.*: 37). These examples show that this tradition was not reserved to a small number of initiated people but, on the contrary, was part of common knowledge and local cultural life.

Another argument put forward by Crosby for referring to this tradition as

[17] McGovern (2017: 8) argues the use of the word "esoteric" is acceptable for qualifying the Southeast Asian tradition as it "refers not to actual secrecy and marginality so much as a rhetoric of secrecy and a program of assigning deeper 'inner' meanings to outward forms". This is itself certainly not incorrect, but one could claim that any discipline—religious or not—includes advance levels of knowledge or practice that are taught or made accessible to only a limited number of students or apprentice. Yet not all of these disciplines are regarded as esoteric.

[18] This text also exists in Cambodia, under the title *Mul nokor* (មូលនគរ).

"esoteric" is the alleged circulation of a limited number of related manuscripts (p. 78). The "nine *borān kammaṭṭhān* manuals" she identifies at the Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts (DLLM) (pp. 81f) —which is indeed very few if one considers the over 12,000 titles accessible through this database[19]— apparently refers solely to texts titled *Munlakammatthan* (P., *Mūlakammaṭṭhāna*). Unfortunately, these only represent a tiny proportion of the whole corpus. It might have been preferable for her to try to access other titles such as ບົວອະພັນທະ *Bualaphantha* (P., *pavarabandha*), ພະທັມສາມໄຕ *Pha tham sam tai*, ສັທທາວິມາລາ *Satthavimala* (P., *Saddavimala*), ກາຍະນະຄອນ *Kanyanakhon*, ພະກັມມັດຖານ *Pha kammatthan*, ລັກຂະນະ *Lakkhana*, ປະຖົມພະຍານະກະສິນະ *Pathom phanyana kasina*, ອະພິທັມຮອມ *Aphitham hom*, and so on. In reality, hundreds of related texts are available on DLLM; the same can be said with other online or physical monastic collections found in Thailand.[20] As for Cambodia, the scarcity of texts related to traditional meditation is only due to the destruction of nearly all Buddhist manuscripts during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979), irrespective of their contents (Bernon, Sopheap & Kok-An 2004: xx). In the past, no monastic repositories would have contained only vernacular texts to the exclusion of others and, conversely, no monastic manuscript collections would have been solely limited to the "orthodox" corpus of the Mahāvihāra—providing this notion had a sense from a local perspective before the 19th century reforms.[21] The use and circulation of different texts, as well as the performance of rituals, heavily relied on personal preferences or the knowledge of monks rather than serving as a distinctive mark for belonging to a particular religious trend. Meditation practices changed according to time, context, and opportunities.

Let us now turn to the main terminological issue of Crosby's book, the term she uses for referring to the *borān kammaṭṭhān* (or *kammaṭṭhāna*), i.e., "the old meditation" system.[22] This term is questionable in several ways. A first issue is purely technical, as it represents an odd and hybrid combination of words in transcription and transliteration. An accurate transliteration in Pali should have been *purāṇa kammaṭṭhāna*, literally "old meditation practice", *purāṇ*(*a*) *kammaṭṭhān*(*a*) in Khmer (បុរាណកម្មដ្ឋន), *porāṇ*(*a*) *karma*[*ṭ*]*ṭhān*(*a*) in Thai (โบราณกรรม[ฏ]ฐาน), and *polān*(*a*) *kammatthān*(*a*) in Lao (ໂບລານກັມມັດຖານ). In all three vernacular languages, the original unvoiced consonant /p/ in Pali becomes voiced, while, on the other hand, the Pali voiced consonant /b/ becomes unvoiced—with an aspiration in Thai and Lao /ph/ and a particular tone. Oscillating between transliteration and free transcription, the term *borān kammaṭṭhān* is thus inconsistent. The correct (phonetic) transcription form in Thai, following the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (RTGS) and without any diacritics, is simply *boran kammatthan*.

[19] See: https://digital.crossasia.org/digital-library-of-lao-manuscripts/?lang=en (accessed 22 October 2023).

[20] See in particular the Digital Library of Northern Thai Manuscripts (DLNTM): https://digital.crossasia.org/digital-library-of-northern-thai-manuscripts/?lang=en (accessed 23 October 2023).

[21] On the concepts of Tipiṭaka or "Pali Canon" in the Theravada traditions, see Skilling 2022.

[22] Crosby has been using this term over the last decade (see, for example, Crosby, Skilton & Gunasena 2012).

An even more serious linguistic problem is the association of the two words together, as *boran kammatthan*. This is incorrect with regard to the local syntax of vernacular languages. In Khmer, as well as in all Tai languages, the determinatum always precedes the determinant or modifier, whereas in Indic languages like Pali and Sanskrit the qualifier before the qualified is generally the standard style for uncompounded words. Thus, the correct transcription and word order for "old meditation [system]" in Khmer, Thai, or Lao should be *kammatthan boran*.[23] It is surprising that the author constantly uses, even imposes, an expression that is just not accurate in any vernacular.[24] One can therefore only question the assertion, repeated twice by Crosby (pp. 1, 22 and n. 27), that "*borān kammaṭṭhāna* [...] was applied by early twentieth-century scholars in Thailand".[25] This expression is neither used in Cambodia nor in Thailand as far as I am aware.[26]

Moreover, to label this tradition "*boran*" ("old") implies accepting the terminology of reformists, which has a pejorative connotation.[27] Use of the qualification "old" or "ancient" (Kh., បុរាណ; Th., โบราณ; Skt.–P., *purāṇa* or *porāṇa*) is an expression coined by modernists to discredit a broad range of texts and practices especially found in vernacular Buddhist literature and rituals not recorded in the tradition of the Mahāvihāra. By contrast, the practices and written corpus of texts promoted by reformists—mainly printed editions and translations of the Pali Canon and its commentaries—were labeled as *samai* (Kh., សម័យ; Th., สมัย; P., *samaya*), viz., "[of present-]time".

To continue referring to this tradition as the "*kammaṭṭhān*(*a*)", or the "*yogāvacar*(*a*) tradition", consistently with Bizot and Bernon's usage, is also problematic. The fact is that both terms *kammaṭṭhāna* and *yogāvacara* are also widely used in Vism and *Abhidhamma* commentarial literature, to refer to "meditation" and "*yoga* practitioner", respectively. None of these terms, therefore, is appropriate as a label for an alternative method to practice spiritual

[23] Certainly, we find in Thai and Khmer terms as បុរាណវត្ថុវិទ្យា (*purāṇavatthuvidyā*), "ancient artefact", โบราณคดี (*porāṇagatī*), "archeology", or បុរាណកាល/โบราณกาล (*porāṇakāla*) "ancient times". However, these are neologisms that were implemented in modern times in academic contexts and elaborated on the model of Sanskrit and Pali compounds. Should this method be applied to our case, the correct form would be *purāṇakammaṭṭhāna* (*borannakammatthan* in vernacular transcription), a form which, in any case, is neither attested in Thai nor Khmer lexicons.

[24] Woodward (2020: 109) acknowledges that "the two words together sound weird to anyone who knows some Thai". However, he finds the term "useful [precisely] because of its artificiality [as] it means whatever Crosby, Skilton, and Phibul say it means".

[25] To support her assertion, Crosby provides a precise reference to a book published in 1936 by the Thai scholar Yasothonrat (see her bibliography) where this expression is supposed to occur on p. 2 (see also Crosby 2013: 129). However, I was unable to find this association of words either in the indicated page, or in the entire volume. In contrast, the word กัมมัฏฐานโบราณ *kammatthan boran* is widely attested in Thai publications (see for example, Phra Thep Nyanawisit 2558; and Sirisak 2559).

[26] This does not mean that it will never become locally recognized over time after repeated use in academic circles and scholarly publications. It has already been recently endorsed by some Thai scholars, such as Phibul Choompolpaisal, Potprecha Cholvijarn and Woramat Malasart (see references). One might assume that this will add more confusion than clarity in the future, as was the case with the modern creation of the Theravada category.

[27] This contrasts with Pali texts in Thailand where references to "ancient" (P., *porāṇa/purāṇa*) things generally carry a positive connotation, often used to legitimize discourse.

exercises and even less so to denote a particular form of vernacular Buddhism.

Nowadays, the custodians of this meditation tradition in Thailand—particularly at Wat Ratchasittharam in Bangkok—refer to it as *Phra kammatthan* (*matchima*) *baep lamdap* (พระกรรมฐาน (มัชฌิมา) แบบลำดับ), meaning "the progressive (and middle way) meditation method", or, more descriptively, *piti ha yukhon hok suk song* (ปีติห้ายุคลหกสุขสอง), translated as "[the method] of five joys (*pīti*), six pairs (*yugala*), and two wellnesses (*sukha*)"—which in this tradition correspond to the first three "topics of meditation" (P., *mūlakammaṭṭhāna*)—(Bernon 2000: 419; Skilton & Phibul 2014: 90). In this regard, it should be noted that the Thai term แบบลำดับ *baep lamdap*—as its Khmer equivalent ថ្នាក់ *thnak* signifies—literally means "in order", "in succession", or "gradually". Thus, it simply means that the disciple must go through different successive stages of spiritual attainment during his initiation cycle. This does not sound different from the conception of insight reflected in both the Pali *nikāya*s and Vism, in which the different states of mind developed in successive *jhāna*s likewise follow "a gradual progression" (Gethin 2019: 195). With all this in mind, the question arises as to whether the broader distinctive notions and practices depicted by Bizot, Bernon, and others could simply be referred to as Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition of meditation.

Apart from the problems of terminology mentioned above, some language inaccuracies, such as misspellings, can be noticed in the book, for example *baablumdup* (p. 86) instead of *baep lamdap* (see above paragraph), *bpap srei* (p. 221) instead of *chbap srei* (Kh., ច្បាប់ស្រី, "morals for girls"), *Thammavitjayanusat* (p. 190) instead of *Thammawitchayanusat* (Th., ธรรมวิจยานุศาสน์, lit. "Instructions on the conquest through Dhamma"),[28] etc. The few linguistic explanations provided by the author are also confused, as for example those that concern Thai honorifics (pp. 55f) or the use of the RTGS. Also lacking is clarification concerning vernacular words or expressions, central to some key-notions of this tradition. For instance, Crosby systematically translates the Sanskrit loan word *garbha* (P., *gabbha*) as "womb" (pp. 43, 57, 66, 139, 142, 151, 155, etc.), especially in the context of the spiritual exercise that consists, for the practitioner, to visualize a one-inch [approx. 2.5 cm] tall buddha at the level of the navel. Although Tai–Khmer tradition uses the obstetrical metaphor in the context of this exercise, there are others where the term *garbha* takes on the meaning of fetus or embryo. This ambivalence is actually also found in Sanskrit, where *garbha* can more broadly refer to both a "container" (womb) and a germ (embryo). Thus, the *yogāvacara* must distinguish between two types of visualization: (1) of himself or herself as an embryo in the mother's womb, the process of rebirth equated to the creation of the universe; (2) of a nascent new body "made of the Teaching (*dhamma*)" that must be built within the self. In the second case, the term "womb" is understood metaphorically, with the idea that any individual possesses within the self the "essence of

[28] This is the title of a book written by venerable Ubali Khunuppamacharn (พระอุบาลีคุณูปมาจารย์) or Chan Sirisantho (จันทร์ สิริจนฺโท; 1857–1932), first published in 1915 (2458 BE), mentioned by Crosby, without providing references.

a buddha" (*buddhadhātu*).[29] Crosby takes perhaps the word too literally when she remarks "the practitioner, whether male or female, is identified as female, at least symbolically" (p. 58)—while admitting that this identification is never established in the existing teachings.[30]

Another terminological problem may concern the general use of the term "Theravada". The subtitle of the book entails that the Tai–Khmer tradition of Buddhism belongs to this trend. The issue here is not to discuss the relevance of the term Theravada, which has been thoroughly addressed in recent studies.[31] What is significant with Crosby's book is rather the requirement to include this specific meditation technique or some of its features within the category of "Theravada Buddhism". This very categorization is regarded as problematic, at least to the eyes of Western scholars and modernist monks as will be discussed below.

An Enquiry into "Orthodoxy"

Talking about Theravada as a specific Buddhist school means that Buddhists who are believed to belong to this lineage share similar religious foundations, that of the Mahāvihāra school of Anurādhapura in Sri Lanka. It is now well-known that the use of "Theravada" to refer to a form of Buddhism was first coined only in the 20th century by Western scholars and formally adopted at the First Conference of World Fellowship of Buddhism in Colombo in 1950 (Perreira 2012: 454). This label was originally based on textual usage: those Buddhist communities which used, even only partially, the Pali Canon (Tipiṭaka)—believed to contain the original teachings of Buddha Gotama—were considered "Theravada". Therefore, the question arises: What do the canonical scriptures tell us about meditation and on what basis could a given form of meditation be called "orthodox" or, on the contrary, "unorthodox", as is the case for the Tai–Khmer method?

In the same way as in her previous book on this topic (Crosby 2013: 6), the author uses two "comparators" (p. 36) to evaluate the so-called "orthodoxy" of the technique that was in force in the Tai–Khmer cultural sphere, namely the *Visuddhimagga* (Vism) and the modernized form of meditation from Myanmar labeled Vipassanā (pp. 61f). The relevance of considering the Burmese method is questionable since it was established recently in the 20th century, even though supporters of the Vipassanā claim that it rests upon authoritative texts of the Pali corpus.[32] As for the Vism, despite the status that Buddhaghosa's work has achieved over the centuries, it does not make this manual of training for Buddhist practitioners of meditation the sole authorized source. Moreover, as Crosby notes, Vism is actually "a selective synthesis of canonical material

[29] This metaphor is extended when, for example, the monk's clothing does not fit regulation standards and he finds himself metaphorically in the situation of having a "miscarriage" (Kh., រលួត *ralut*) (Bizot forthcoming).

[30] In fact, Khmer language considers "Buddhist monk" as a distinct "gender" (Kh., ភេទ *pheit*) (Bizot forthcoming).

[31] See in particular Skilling 2009; and Skilling et al. 2012.

[32] It comes from mainly the Abhidh-s, a 12th-century text which is obviously not canonical. For a study that explores the rise and development of Vipassanā meditation in Myanmar at the turn of the 20th century, see Braun 2013.

that discarded some practices described in the Pali canon" (p. 40); by itself, it invalidates Buddhagosa as "a useful comparator". One can thus question Crosby's assertion that Vism "can also be taken to represent Theravada orthodoxy, making it a valuable reference point" (p. 35).

Rupert Gethin (2004: 202–207, 217) has shown that the Pali canonical corpus does not provide any indication of an "orthodox" way to meditate.[33] The few canonical *sutta*s that address meditation practice, which are often cited as references, such as the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (D I 47f), the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta* (D II 290f; M I 56f), or the *Ānāpānasatisutta* (M III 78f) give only general recommendations, such as searching for a quiet place, sitting down cross-legged, concentrating on some object of contemplation such as the breath, and endeavoring to attain certain mental states characterized by distinctive emotions and feelings.[34] Crosby correctly states that the issue is not so much a question of orthodoxy, i.e., correct doctrine, but one of orthopraxy or "correct practice" (p. 98).[35] Ultimately, however, the issue is whether or not a given method of meditation conforms to the teachings of the historical Buddha. Certainly, a number of techniques taught in the Tai–Khmer tradition, such as breath retention (Skt., *niśvāsa*), are absent from the Vism, while they may be found in various Hindu texts (Bizot 1976: 132). This is, however, insufficient to qualify these techniques as unorthodox from a Buddhist point of view.

Moreover, it should be borne in mind that meditation is not an invention of Buddhism. The historical Buddha, as told in the scriptures, received instructions on this matter by several different masters, who taught him "a form of early [Brahmanical] meditation" (Wynne 2007: 63). The criticism the Buddha eventually made against the spiritual practices he was taught was directed towards their mundane purpose, not their intrinsic technique. In fact, there is reason to believe that Buddhist meditation has been from early times connected with methods of *yoga* practiced in ancient India, even some features of the latter are rooted in the former.[36]

Thus, to describe the Tai–Khmer meditation tradition as "non-canonical" or "non-orthodox" has no tangible textual basis, and can therefore be considered speculative. Above all, from both the Sinhalese and Southeast Asian perspectives, the alleged orthodoxy of Theravada has always been evaluated through the purity of its lineage (P., *nikāya*), which rests primarily on *Vinaya* rules related to ordination procedure. Diverging ideas, conceptions, beliefs, or different spiritual practices have never been an issue as far as meditation techniques are concerned.[37] In this regard, the many

[33] T.W. Rhys Davids (1896: xxviii) also admitted that passages of the *piṭaka*s on meditation "throw little light on the details and process of the mystic exercises referred to".

[34] On this, see also Shaw 2006 and Wynne 2007: 63f.

[35] One could even argue that Buddhism as a whole is nothing more than an orthopraxy, as shown by the many rules laid down in the *Vinaya* and the high record of disputes within the Saṅgha throughout the centuries.

[36] For instance, recent works have highlighted the influence Buddhism exerted on Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (White 2014: 10f). Later texts, such as the *Amṛtasiddhi* of the *Haṭhayoga* tradition, evidently come from a Buddhist environment (Mallinson 2020: 410f).

[37] Bizot (1988) first made this observation by showing that Southeast Asian Buddhism had ordination procedures that slightly differ from those which are defined in the Sinhalese corpus. Although

occurrences of the word "lineage" in *Esoteric Theravada* (pp. xi, 25, 27, 40, 78, 86, 94, 98, etc.), referring to meditation teachings, is somewhat confusing.[38]

A close comparison with the Vism on the list of topics of meditation (P., *mūlakammaṭṭhāna*) on which the *yogāvacara* must concentrate shows more resemblances than differences. Here lies another main outcome of Crosby's study, although the author does not note that such correspondences have already been pointed out by Bizot (1992: 48–51) and, more thoroughly, by Bernon (2000: 235, 282f). However, these two scholars have highlighted the differences more than the similarities between the two systems and inferred that the Tai–Khmer method must have different roots. Crosby takes the opposing view by showing that, despite a different configuration, almost all of the topics of meditation as taught in the Sinhalese *Amatākaravaṇṇanā* are found in Vism. In this regard, the comparative tables given on pp. 46 and 51–54 are illuminating. It should be added that a number of meditation manuals that are found in Siamese, Lan Na (present-day northern Thailand), and Lao traditions reflect a close affinity with Vism, and may even explicitly refer to it.[39]

It is also significant that both terms—*kammaṭṭhāna* and *yogāvacara*—are, as said above, widely used in Vism, as well as in other *Abhidhamma* treatises, while they do not occur in the Tipiṭaka itself.

Following T.W. Rhys Davids, Bizot and Bernon also pointed out that the terminology used in the vernacular manuals largely rests on that of the Vism. In particular, both traditions give a central place to the *nimitta*s, which are "signs" that the *yogāvacara* experiences during his meditation sessions. Both also make the same distinction between two forms of sense stimuli: "experienced signs" (P., *uggahanimitta*) and "signs of counterpart" (P., *paṭibhāganimitta*) (Bizot 1992: 50f; Bernon 2000: 416).[40] Crosby notes that whereas "both the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Amatākaravaṇṇanā* teach the *nimitta* as the primarily visual characteristic of experiencing the outcome of a meditation, [...] their use in [*kammatthan*] texts is far more extensive" (p. 48). One may find that this difference is not enough to make it a "heterodox" method *per se*. Crosby rightly states that another dissimilarity between both systems—here again, already established previously by Bizot (1992: 47–56) and Bernon (2000: 246f)—is the preeminent role given to the five joys, "raptures" or *pīti*s which constitute the first five topics of meditation (p. 30). The five *pīti*s also occur in the Vism but have a different status, as the fifth and final stage is a constitutive factor of the first *jhāna*,

these differences led, at times, to controversies, even to some schisms in the Southeast Asian monastic communities with the creation of *sub-nikāya*s, it did not fundamentally revoke the sense of belonging to one and the same specific lineage of Buddhism, called Theravada today.

[38] Admittedly, initiation in the Tai–Khmer tradition of meditation links the disciple to a lineage of masters (P., *paraṁparā*). However, this lineage is supposed to go back to Buddha Gotama himself, or, according to other interpretations, to his disciple Aññāta-Koṇḍañña, or his son Rāhula (Mettanando 1999: 37, 45; Bernon 2000: 405–409, 471; Skilton & Phibul 2014: 109).

[39] This is the case, for instance, of the Khmer *Mūlakammaṭṭhān* and the Lao *Saddavimala* (see Bizot 1976: 107; Bizot & Lagirarde 1996: 46). Woodward (2020) also shows that "the program of meditation [included in an illustrated Siamese manuscript] is derived from the *Visuddhimagga*".

[40] The role of *nimitta* in the exercise of the *yogin* is actually explained in several other Pali texts—both older and later than the Vism—especially in *Abhidhamma* manuals (Cousins 2022: 7–11).

while the vernacular corpus includes them among the topics of meditation. More significantly, they are considered the main causative agent (Kh., ដើមហេតុ, *daoem haet*) of all other *mūlakammaṭṭhāna*s (Bernon 2000: 246, 261). Morover, the *pīti*s—as well as the *pāramī*s ("perfection") and the *kammaṭṭhāna*s—are considered "holy [entities]" (Kh., ព្រះ, *preah*; Th., พระ, *phra*) and have their own existence. This is attested through their "invocation" (P., *ārādhana*) by the *yogāvacara* in order for them to "arise" in his body, while in the teaching of the Mahāvihāra, they are merely seen as processes or states. But, once again, one may wonder whether this evolution in the conception of *pīti* is a feature that is so significant as to deny the so-called orthodoxy of the Tai–Khmer system.

Yet Crosby argues that precisely here lies the main distinctive feature of the traditional Tai–Khmer method as opposed to the *Visuddhimagga* and the Burmese Vipassanā systems. She argues that "meditation objects, processes, or states [...] are here all treated as being akin to subtle objects that can be physically manipulated inside the body of the practitioner, in combination with different aspects of consciousness and physicality" (p. 47). It is thanks to such required materiality that the *yogāvacara*, as Crosby puts it, aims to create "a new body, enlightened body" (p. 43), which entails that he is not only psychologically transformed, but also physically altered. As "the locus of personal transformation", the meditator's body is not only the object, but also the subject of his introspection, while other meditation systems today labeled as "Theravada" focus on only the transformation of mind (pp. 43, 236). The *yogāvacara*'s quest for the acquisition of supernatural bodily properties (P., *kāyasiddhi*) with the aim of transforming his body in the search for deliverance and making a "one-inch-tall buddha" appear within himself resonates with Hindu methods of *yoga* and tantrism, while highlighting the originality of this conception with regard to Pali texts of the Mahāvihāra (pp. 36, 203). In this regard, we can certainly follow Michel Strickmann (1996: 321) when he states that "tantric ritual intentionally creates visions, whereas traditional Buddhist meditation usually seeks to exclude them" (my translation).

One might add that the *yogāvacara*'s exercise in producing a "body of the Dhamma" (*dhammakāya*) within itself is no different from that of a tantric Buddhist practitioner who strives, as Rolf A. Stein (1988: 74) puts it, "to become a Buddha in his own body". In a manner analogous to the latter practitioner when he perceives the six bodily elements as identical to those of a buddha (Faure 2015: 61), the *yogāvacara* matches the 32 constituent parts of his new body in gestation with the "32 specific marks of a Great Man" or *dvattiṁsamahāpurisalakkhaṇa* (Bizot 1992: 30).

The observation of rites for "opening the eyes" (Kh., បើកព្រះនេត្រព្រះជីវិត, *baoek preah net preah chivit*) of statues in Cambodia, during which a buddha image is empowered by the recitation of "*dhammakāya* verses", [41] reveals the link between the process of animating religious images and the ordination ritual, especially through the obstetrical metaphor used in both ceremonies (Leclère 1899: 139, 152; Bizot 1994: 101–135).

[41] For a similar practice in northern Thailand, see Woramat 2021: 84–87.

This relationship is also visible in East Asian tantric Buddhism (Strickmann 1996: 192). Moreover, the use of "seed syllables" (Skt., *bīja-mantra*, Th., หัวใจ, *hua chai*) in this process is attested in both traditions.

Other similarities with tantric teachings can be noted, such as the aforementioned analogy between the macrocosm—the universe arising from primordial syllables—and the microcosm of the practitioner's own body, made through visualizations resulting from breathing exercises (Strickmann 1996: 46). Such similarities have led Bizot and others to talk, rightly or wrongly, about "tantric Theravāda".[42]

In contrast, some core aspects of tantrism are absent from the Tai–Khmer tradition of Buddhism, such as the identification—or union—of the officiant with the divinity (Bernon 2000: 384),[43] or, as Crosby rightly notes (p. 34), a call to social transgression and sexual representations. Moreover, Crosby makes the important point that this process of transformation, that of "an unenlightened individual to an *arhat*,[44] or Buddha", already inchoately exists in the *Abhidhamma* (p. 34). Therefore, she establishes a clear connection between the process by which the *yogāvacara* "gradually" builds his new body and that of the substitution of "certain types of *citta* [...] by other type of *citta*", both aiming to move the *yogāvacara* on the path to *nibbāna* described in the *Abhidhamma* (p. 43). More specifically, she relates the practice of gradually abandoning one set of mental states and replacing them with increasingly refined and healthy sets—substituting one combination for another—with "the *Abhidhamma* understanding of consciousness as composite and ever-changing" (p. 59). Hence, she interestingly asks whether the South-east-Asian meditation technique is a corruption of an original conception or, rather, "the only Theravada system of meditation that seeks to complete the process of transformation laid out in *Abhidhamma* [or later exegeses]" (p. 238).

The idea that the Tai–Khmer tradition partly rests on the *Abhidhamma* is actually not entirely new,[45] but Crosby is to be applauded for clarifying this connection between both traditions. This connection, however, deserves to be further explored. First, it is significant that in Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos, texts related to meditation are generally included in the *Abhidhamma* category, as evidenced, for instance, in the DLLM and DLNTM databases. In fact, some of these texts even include the word *Abhidhamma* in their title, such as the Lao ยอดอะพิทัม ເຈັດຄຳພີ *Yot Aphitham chet khamphi*, northern Thai อภิธรรมเจ็ดคัมภีร์รวม *Aphitham chet khamphi ruam*, Tai Lue อภิธรรมกัญแจ *Aphitam kanchae*, Khmer អភិធម្មត្រាំយត្រាំង្យ *Aphithoam trai troeng*, etc.[46] In this regard, Crosby's assertion that the "[*Abhidhamma*] framework is not immediately visible" in the tradition (p. 2) needs revision. This connection is not surprising considering that *Abhidhamma* texts and exegeses or

[42] See *inter alia* Bechert 1988: 10, 12; Bizot 1992: 27–31; also Crosby 2000. *Contra*, see Revire 2022: 252, n. 109.

[43] Union with the divinity (or a buddha) that the officiant has invoked is, according to Michel Strickmann (1996: 25, 85), what primarily characterizes tantrism.

[44] Or an *arahant* in the Pali tradition.

[45] See for instance C.A.F. Rhys Davids (1916: xiv–xv).

[46] For a complete translation of the *Abhidhamma chet khamphi ruam* ("A summary of the Seven Books of the *Abhidhamma*"), see Swearer 1995.

related compendia are locally regarded to serve as a basis for meditation (Sumanapada 2008: 271f). The reference to the *Abhidhamma* in the so-called *kammatthan* technique makes perfect sense when considering that parts of the *Abhidhamma* deal with "training subjects" or "topics of meditation" (P., *kammaṭṭhāna*) on which the meditator relies in order to achieve different "states of mind" (P., *jhāna*). The training subjects, in some late *Abhidhamma* treatises, consist precisely in describing the processes of creation, both physical and psychical, and the "active meditator" (P., *kārakayogin*) (Sacc 1) is prompted to make use of mental visualizations that are not unlike the teachings of the Tai–Khmer tradition.

Descriptions of the development of the fetus in the womb, which we have seen to be central to the tradition, are also partly inspired by the commentarial literature, including that of the *Abhidhamma* (e.g., Vibh-a 21f; Abhidh-av-ṭ II 172; Spk I 300f; Nidd-a I 247), where Buddha Gotama is said to have enumerated the initial phases of the genesis of the embryo by using similar metaphors such as a drop of sesame oil (P., *tilatelassa bindu*), the water having washed meat (P., *maṁsadhovana-udaka*), the leaden mud (P., *vilīnatipu*), the piece of flesh, and then the appearance of branches (P., *sākhā*) which will give limbs, and so on. The *Kathāvatthu* also discusses questions related to the embryonic development and the congeniality of the organs and senses (Kv 493f). Again in the *Abhidhamma* the seven-day period during which the embryo is constituted is expounded and "name and form" (P., *nāmarūpa*) are defined in detail. The "32 bodily constituents" (P., *dvattiṁsākāra*), the organs contrasted with the 12 "sense factors" (P., *āyatana*), and the four (or five) "elements" (P., *dhātu*) (Vibh 82, 193f) are also enumerated. From what precedes, we can see how and to what extent the vernacular teachings are fundamentally connected to the Pali *Abhidhamma* and other later exegeses that rely on it, such as Vism. In addition, Crosby pertinently observes that ultimately "all Theravada meditation systems, beyond the elementary practices of the initial stages, relate to *Abhidhamma*", starting with Buddhaghosa (p. 236). This again provides a new perspective on the issue of the alleged "unorthodoxy" of the Tai–Khmer tradition of meditation.

Having affirmed this embryology describing the processes of creation, the role that the Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition assigns to the *Abhidhamma* is obviously foreign to the teachings of the Mahāvihāra corpus as we know it. This distinctive role is surprisingly not addressed in *Esoteric Theravada* and yet it is essential. The "Seven books of the *Abhidhamma*" (Kh., អភិធម្ម ៧ គម្ពីរ, *Aphithoam 7 kompi*; Th., อภิธรรม ๗ คัมภีร์, *Aphitham 7 khampi*)—symbolized by the first syllables of their respective titles, viz., SAṀ VI DHĀ PU KA YA PA[47]—contribute to the development of the embryo, by making the body, form, and mind. Indeed, liquid and solid "elements" (P., *ākāra*) provided by parents are only "the wood" and "the tools", which are insufficient to create a complete human being. Some vernacular texts provide an alternative description of the role of the *Abhidhamma:* the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī, Vibhaṅga, Dhātukathā*, and the

[47] [*Dhamma-*]***Saṅ****gaṇī,* ***Vi****bhaṅga,* ***Dhā****tukathā,* ***Pu****ggalapaññatti,* ***Ka****thāvatthu,* ***Ya****maka* and [*Mahā-*] ***Paṭ****ṭhāna*.

Puggalapaññatti create the "sense organs" (P., *āyatana*) of sight, hearing, smell, and taste of the individual, respectively, together with the corresponding objects of consciousness (P., *ārammaṇā*); the *Kathāvatthu* creates his "formal body" (Th., รูปร่าง, *rup rang*), which is associated with the sense of touch; as for the last two books, the *Yamaka* and *Paṭṭhana*, they bring to the embryo spirit and breath, respectively (Bizot 1976: 89–92; Kourilsky 2015: 58–60).

In short, the Tai–Khmer traditional ontogenesis creates an osmosis between psycho-philosophical notions of the canonical *Abhidhamma* and vernacular conceptions relating to the creation of the individual and his relationship with his progenitors. This syncretism leads Crosby to ask—as did Bizot and others before her (e.g., Bizot & Lagirarde 1996: 46, and Bernon 2000: 641)—to what extent the conceptions underlying this method are a "corruption" of the original teachings of Buddha Gotama as recorded in the Tipiṭaka and whether the superimposition of the *Abhidhamma* terminology is "an attempt to make non-orthodox teachings appear orthodox" (p. 35). Bizot maintained throughout his work (e.g., 1976: 27) that the specific traits of this Tai–Khmer tradition were the heritage of a heterodox "non-Mahāvihāravāsin" school, coming from ancient Indian traditions already in place among Mon–Khmer populations, which was gradually replaced by the "orthodox" Mahāvihāra school of Sri Lanka.

Given that the Pali Canon and the commentaries (P., *aṭṭhakathā*s) include no thorough description of an appropriate way to meditate, nor forbid any kind of meditation (see above), the question of the orthodoxy of the so-called *kammatthan* method appears of little relevance. As it happens, very little, if anything, is known about how monks of the Mahāvihāra practiced meditation before the 18th century. Paradoxically, the Siamese-inspired *Vidarśana* is the oldest documented method found to date on the island of Sri Lanka. In premodern Myanmar, also, there is no evidence of the kind of meditation monks practiced before modern Vipassanā systems arose. On the contrary, there are hints that suggest that their methods had common traits with their Khmer and Tai neighbors, such as the practice of meditation in caves and tunnels used in Bagan as a kind of initiatory path (Lubeigt 1998: 268f).

To sum up, from a Theravada or Theriya perspective, orthodoxy is to be seen merely with regard to the purity of the lineage, which relies on the observance of the *Vinaya*, and the validity of ordination rituals and procedure. Significantly, Buddhist controversies in mainland Southeast Asia have concerned only points of *Vinaya* practice, not doctrine, such as the issues concerning the determination of monastic boundaries (P., *sīmā*), the correct pronunciation of Pali formulae, or monastic cloth, and so on. What connects the Saṅgha of mainland Southeast Asia together with Indo–Sinhalese Buddhism is its claim to belong to the same monastic lineage (Skilling 2009: 63). This connection is not locally claimed on the basis of particular worldviews, conceptions, textual corpus, or orientation in Buddhist practice, even less so on a proper method of meditation.

Exploring the Origins of the Tai–Khmer Tradition of Meditation

Scholars who have previously studied the Tai–Khmer tradition of meditation

have been puzzled by the fact that it rests on conceptions and terminology shared with the Mahāvihāra school, while at the same time having features that seem to drastically depart from Pali scriptures and meditation methods regarded by today as authoritative.[48] Some scholars have advanced various hypotheses to explain this apparent contradiction by attempting to trace the origins of its features outside the Theravada.[49] However, none of these hypotheses has yet proven to be more than conjecture.

Crosby (1999) has addressed this question, especially with regard to Bizot's earlier assumption that this tradition could be a reminiscence of the Abhayagiri school of Anurādhapura in Sri Lanka, supplanted in the 12th century by the Mahāvihāra. She advanced strong arguments that tended to invalidate this hypothesis. She investigated further possible roots in *Traditional Theravada Meditation* (2013) and continues in this vein in *Esoteric Theravada* (Chapters 4–5). Given the emphasis she already put on the connection with the *Abhidhamma*, it is surprising that Crosby does not follow up with her own hypothesis that the "old *kammatthan*" could be "a development within *Abhidhamma*-based Buddhism that formed organically within Theravada" (p. 35; see also above). Rather, she prefers to explore other tracks in order to search for the "origins" of this tradition.

Crosby uses a comparative approach as her main research method, chiefly with regard to other Indian religions, but also to broader systems of thought or technologies. To this reviewer, her comparisons are more often than not based on abstract representations and formal resemblances, irrespective of any historical or geographical consideration. Incidentally, the book does not include maps—or any other illustrations[50]—, which would have helped to understand better the centuries-long linkages Southeast Asia has had with the Indic world as well as the connections between Southeast Asian cultures themselves. For example, she highlights common traits with Ayurvedic medicine, such as the importance in both systems of balance or imbalance of the four or five constitutive bodily "elements" or *dhātu*s, viz., earth, water, fire, wind, and ether (pp. 115f). This comparison is, on the one hand, relevant to some extant since breathing techniques and physiological representations typical of the Southeast Asian tradition have a practical application in traditional medicine.[51] On the other hand, these conceptions are not phrased in the same terms and the

[48] The late Cousins (2022: 160) points out that scholars who have so far studied the *Vidarśanapota* and related texts found them "rather unusual, if not aberrant".

[49] For a good overview of these scholars' hypotheses, see Cousins 1997: 187, 191–193, and Cousins 2022: 161–163.

[50] One exception is the book cover **[Figure 1]**, which is extracted from an illustrated Siamese version of the Three Worlds cosmology (known as *Trai Phum* ไตรภูมิ), dated from the reign of King Taksin (1767–1782). This image, briefly described by Crosby on pp. 178–179, shows the eight stages of the *ariyapuggala* on the supramundane path. The last illustration is the figure of an *arahant*-to-be holding a "crystal ball". The same picture (coming from the same manuscript, which is held at the Museum für Asiatische Kunst in Berlin) has already been used as an illustration in two other recent articles (Terwiel 2019: 6; Woodward 2020: 107).

[51] This topic has been thoroughly addressed by Mettanando 1999 and Souk-Aloun 2001 (Crosby refers only to Mettanando).

role the Ayurveda assigns to "humors" (Skt., *doṣa*) mentioned by Crosby (p. 144) is, as far as I am aware, absent from the Tai–Khmer tradition of meditation.[52] Moreover, they are actually found in the *Abhidhamma* literature, where the five *dhātu*s are related to the five *khandha*s or aggregates and *ākāra*s *or* physical components, in spite of aforementioned divergences.

The author also gives parallel descriptions of embryological development in the Tai–Khmer tradition with Ayurvedic obstetrics (pp. 151–157). She assumes that "the methods for treating the unborn fetus in Ayurveda are applied [in the "old *kammatthan*"] in inducing change in the meditation practitioner as they generate a Buddha within themselves" (p. 151). She further states that in both systems "the delivery methods are applied with the help of the techniques of substitution and combination", the sole difference is that the Tai–Khmer method replaces Ayurvedic pharmaceutical substances by the *nimitta* that arise in meditation.

Crosby is right to highlight the prevalence, in the Tai–Khmer meditation method, of a "process of constant substitution [of different items such as syllables and experienced *nimitta*s] by directing it, generating higher states of consciousness to replace lower states in a detailed progression from ordinary mortal to enlightened being, to the attainment of *nibbāna*" (p. 238). In a recent article, Potprecha Cholvijarn (2021: 79–80) shows that the ritual reading of the *yantra*s worked on a similar principle of combinatorial substitution, applied in meditation through exercises involving the visualization of sequences of characters of the diagrams in successive orders. However, it is more difficult to follow Crosby's argument when she relies on the mere presence of this same notion of "substitution" in Ayurvedic medicine or in Brahmanical and Hindu rituals to establish a direct relationship between the latter and the so-called "old *kammatthan*". Once again, the reader is left wondering why the author does not further explore the plausible hypothesis that this type of process is essentially an extension of the concepts set out earlier in the *Abhidhamma* texts.

Furthermore, Crosby's statement, "the use of the intranasal cavity to bring the *nimitta* [...] into the body of the meditator at his or her 'womb' is based on the medical method of using the intranasal cavity of the mother to deliver pharmaceutical and alchemical substances into the body of the baby-to-be located in the mother's womb" (p. 157), rests upon a too literal interpretation of the existence of an alleged practitioner's "womb". Even if taken literally, the point is that any deduction from such a general analogy is bound to be hazardous.

At a more general level, one must ask if comparisons of this type constitute a reliable method. Firstly, common elements may not necessarily involve transmission or direct connection. One example Crosby gives is the right side/left side categorization and their association in the Tai–Khmer tradition with male and female—or *vice versa*—, which is found in Hinduism and

[52] Hippocratic medicine is also grounded on the correlation between the body's "humors" and the elements of the cosmos (earth, water, fire). The equilibrium or disequilibrium of these factors determines human health.

Vajrayana Buddhism (pp. 33–34, 152). Such a common concept says little about the relationship between these traditions. Gender-based polarizations are commonplace in many societies geographically and culturally remote from one another, in which, for instance, the male principle is linked to the sun, the right side, the eastern direction, etc., while the female principle is equated to the moon, the left side, the western direction, and so on (Bourdieu 1998: 112). The same applies to the *kammatthan* division of bodily components as to whether they come from the mother or the father, a division also found in the *Carakasaṁhitā* composed in Sanskrit (p. 153).[53] Not only is this conception found in other Indic texts such as the *Agnipurāṇa* (O'Flaherty 1976: 365f), but also in various societies throughout the world.[54] These descriptions do not reflect positive ontologies, but metaphors, or "fictions" (Godelier 2010: 165), which act as symbolic representations of filiation and heredity, and more broadly of hierarchies, ideologies and social organization.

Secondly, elements of comparison may not always be significant, especially when dealing with representations such as symbols or allegories. Comparing a symbol or allegory with another symbol or allegory amounts to placing two mirrors face to face, scarcely helping meaning. An exemplary case is the parallel Crosby makes between the practice of "old *kammatthan*" and alchemy (pp. 157–161), in particular the "purification of mercury used in turn in the purification of gold". The purification process that the *yogāvacara* follows would be, according to her views, comparable to "the purification of gold and silver in a furnace or crucible" as described in Indian treatises of alchemy (p. 158). This chemical process, she tells us, is presented in some Śaiva tantras as analogous to that which leads, through an inner transformation of the practitioner, to immortality. Arguments given for such a parallel include the use of a common allegory—viz., the creation of a new being through the union of male and female elements" (p. 60)—and vocabulary, such as "womb" (Skt., *garbha*, which, as written above, can refer to a "container" in its broader sense), and the significance given to "repetition". In this connection, Crosby's strongest argument is an excerpt from a Sinhalese litany, *Vākkapprakaraṇa*, in which the requestor asks to become "pure like silver or gold burnished in the mouth of a furnace" (p. 161).

Presented in this manner, it might seem no more than an unremarkable metaphor. The fact that it appears in two distinct corpora of texts, which are neither historically nor doctrinally related, restricts our ability to draw meaningful conclusions. To strengthen

[53] In this regard, Bizot (1976: 132) pointed out more relevant common features with *saṁhitā*s, such as the description of the body as a microcosmic replica of the universe or the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī*, the spiritual energy coiled at the base of the spine, through an initiatory process that must lead to the awakening of the yogin which is reminiscent of the possession of a "jewel", based at the navel.

[54] The idea according to which parents transmit defined bodily components (e.g., flesh, bones, skin, blood, breath, etc.) is found, for example, in China, Vietnam, Tibet, Assam, Siberia, and even in ancient Greece (as evidenced in Aristotle). It is also shared by several minority populations such as the Inuits (North America), Na (China), Trobrianders (Papua–New Guinea), Baruya and Telfolmin (New Guinea) peoples, and so forth. See Godelier 2010: 324, and Kourilsky 2015: 41–50.

her argument, the author could have underscored that this parallel finds resonance in early Mahayana texts. In these texts, the metaphor involves a goldsmith purifying gold, removing impurities repeatedly until pure gold is obtained, symbolizing the effort to purify one's mind when receiving teachings (Gómez 1987).[55] Similarly, Tibetan Buddhist tantras draw a comparison between the transformation of the "contaminated" body into a pure essence—taking the form of a bejeweled buddha image—and the alchemical process of turning iron into gold (Bentor 2020: 79–80). Noteworthy is the presence of this metaphor in the *Ghanavyūhasūtra* ("Sutra of the Dense Array"), a significant text in the Yogācara tradition. In this context, the "buddha-embryo" (Skt., *tathāgatagarbha*), inherent in all sentient beings, is equated to pure, luminous gold hidden in rock, revealed only through the practice of meditation.[56]

In this regard, it is surprising that Crosby does not attempt to connect the embryological representations of the Tai–Khmer tradition with the conception of *tathāgatagarbha* ("matrix/embryo of the one who has thus gone [i.e., a buddha]") developed in a number of Chinese and Tibetan schools of Buddhism. This conception rests on the idea, present in many Mahayana texts, according to which all living beings have in themselves the nature or essence of the/a buddha, that is, have the potential to attain buddhahood. These Mahayana schools have elaborated contemplative practices through which the meditator aims to develop an embryonic buddha to which he can—metaphorically—give birth. In the two short paragraphs Crosby dedicates to "similarities with Tantras" (pp. 33–34), the core conception of "buddha within" is not mentioned. Only later in the book (p. 43) does she mention the existence of this very notion among certain practitioners of the "old *kammatthan*", without, however, making any parallel with the Mahayanist views.

While these similarities among various Buddhist trends are noteworthy, caution should guide us against hastily concluding direct connections between them. It is plausible that the Buddhists in mainland Southeast Asia, akin to those in East Asia, might have developed ideas latent in early Buddhist writings, including those associated with the *Mahāvihāra*. A concept akin to *tathāgatagarbha* is *buddhaṅkura* (literally, "sprout of enlightenment"). In Pali commentaries (e.g., Dhp-a I 83, Ja VI 56), it metaphorically refers to one destined to become a buddha but locally took on the more literal meaning of "embryo of the/a buddha". In Thailand, this term evolved into a title for kings, signifying their future enlightenment (Potprecha 2022: 36).

In early canonical writings, the lower ordination symbolizes a "departure [from the family]" (P., *pabbajjā*), followed by an "entry into [the Buddha Gotama's] lineage" (P., *gotrabhū*). The metaphorical expression of this lineage change is the term "son (or child)" (P., *putta*) of the [historical] Buddha, used in early texts and contem-

[55] The metaphorical use of gold also appears in the Pali scriptures, but in a different form: the "true Dhamma" is associated with pure gold, and the corrupted Dhamma with counterfeit gold (S II 224). On this notion, see Eltschinger 2020: 155–156.

[56] See: http://tibetanbuddhistencyclopedia.com/en/index.php?title=Ghanavy%C5%ABhas%C5%ABtra (accessed 25 October 2023).

porary religious life to denote monks and sometimes lay followers.[57] The *upasampadā* rite, as traditionally conceived by Tai–Khmer Buddhists, materializes this metaphor by assimilating the candidate to a transmigrating being in the state of a fetus, ready to be born again with a new and pure body. This belonging to the new lineage is reactivated or reaffirmed monthly by monks during *uposatha* ceremonies, which have transformed into rites of purification in most Buddhist communities, deviating from their original collective confession purpose in the *Vinaya* (Faure 2015: 69). The qualification of a meditator as "one in the lineage of the *yogāvacara*" (P., *yogāvacarakulaputta*) in certain meditation texts, particularly those addressing the notion of *dhammakāya* (Walker 2018: 351; Woramat 2021: 84), is likely to be understood in this light.

Similarly, the notion of "body [made] of Dhamma" (*dhammakāya*), although reminiscent—but not identical—to that of *tathāgatagarbha* in Chinese and Japanese tantric Buddhism, is metaphorically present in canonical scriptures (Bizot 1992: 29; Woramat 2021: 85). Buddha Gotama often alludes to the "Doctrine as [his own] body" (*dhammakāya*) and claims that "whoever sees the Dhamma sees [him]" (e.g., Dhp 381).

Grammar, Words and Letters

Considering the important place that the Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition gives to language, letters, and syllables, assigning them creative power in the genesis of the human being and universe, Crosby takes the generative grammar of Sanskrit as a basis of reflection. She notes the traditional grammars of Sanskrit and Pali teach that an "entire language can be generated from a set of roots and formulae" (p. 110). Taking Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (ca. 500 BCE) and the *Śivasūtra*s as references (pp. 111–120), Crosby emphasizes how generative grammar can make use of code letters that "just as in algebra, requires an act of substitution".[58] This is similar, according to her, to the mechanism that "underlies momentariness and change in *Abhidhamma*" (p. 120).

Crosby is indeed correct in pointing out that the manipulations of letters and syllables in Buddhist practices in Southeast Asia trace their origins back to the earliest Indian grammatical treatises. However, establishing a direct link between these two traditions requires a significant leap, considering the nearly two-millennia gap and the absence of evidence suggesting the circulation of works such as the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* in ancient Tai or Khmer realms. Ignoring historical and geographical data, the comparative method swiftly encounters its limitations and risks drawing overly broad connections between disparate elements. This applies, for example, to Crosby's statement that permutation and combination are found in "both generative grammar and the method of memorization applied to learning Vedic hymns", as well as in mathematics,

[57] See S I 192, It 101, J III 21; Faure 2015: 95; also Kamala 2007.

[58] In fact, the connection between basic algebraic structures or computational models and Panini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is well established (see, for example, Subbanna & Varakhedi 2010, and Kompella 2018).

medicine, *Abhidhamma* and, eventually, the Tai–Khmer tradition of meditation (pp. 113f).

In reality, there might be no need to delve as far back as ancient India, the Angkorian period, or the "pre-Sinhalization" era, as Bizot did (1976: 27; 2000: 525–527). Despite Myanmar being relatively overlooked by scholars investigating the origins of the so-called *kammatthan* tradition, it stands as the focal point to which most paths lead. Since approximately the 11th or 12th century, when direct contacts with Sri Lanka occurred, Mon–Burmese cities of Bagan (Pagan), Thaton, Bago (Pegu), and Mottama (Martaban) were important centers of Pali scholarship. In particular, a significant number of scholarly works dealing with grammatical and philological matters were written in these locations, inspired by Pali and Sanskrit grammars (Bode 1909: 36; and Ruiz-Falqués 2017: 1, 4). It so happens that the *Kaccāyanavyākaraṇa* or Kaccāyana's grammar (Kacc) and its exegesis are evidently sources for meditation texts circulating in Thailand and Laos. In particular, the *Saddavimala* includes a narrative that can be found only once in the whole Pali corpus, and that is in the *Kaccāyanasuttaniddessa* (Kacc-nidd), a commentary on Kacc ascribed to the Burmese scholar Chapaṭa (12th c.).[59] Even though, to this day, the traditional Tai–Khmer form of meditation has not been attested in Myanmar yet, a number of its specific features bear the mark of the Burmese medieval corpus. Abbreviation or syllable-reduction of title or notions, numerical sequencing of syllables and their reordering according to different schemes, palindromes, riddles, and so forth, are at the core of several Burmese treatises such as the *Saddabindu* (Sadd-b), the *Paramatthabindu*, and the *Vidaddhamukhamaṇḍana*, all written in Pali *circa* the 13th century.[60] Pali texts composed or used in 15th–16th century Lan Na such as the *Saddabinduvinicchaya* (Sadd-v), and the *Vajirasāratthasaṅgaha* (Vss) and its *ṭīkā* (Vss-ṭ), have evidently been inspired by these Burmese models (Skilling 2014: 360–361; Schnake 2018: 98). Cyphering techniques and linguistic manipulations taught in these texts are borrowed from the Sanskrit literary genre known as *citra*, to which tantrism gives an esoteric dimension (Schnake 2018: 140–141). In this connection, epigraphy attests that various Sanskrit *śāstra*s and tantras circulated among Mon–Burmese Buddhist communities in the 15th century;[61] some traces can even be found in Lao legal texts.[62] Some of these texts have been localized into Pali and must have played a key role in the regional diffusion of these techniques.[63]

[59] See Bizot & Lagirarde 1996: 67–72. Curiously, these authors only briefly mention this Burmese connection, and prefer to focus on the Mūlasārvastivādin corpus, where this narrative also exists, albeit in different forms and languages (Sanskrit and Tibetan).

[60] On the *Saddabindu* and its sub-commentary, see Lottermoser 1987.

[61] I am thinking in particular of an inscription dated 1442 CE found in Bagan (Bode 1909: 101–109) listing nearly 300 texts given to a temple, some of which can be traced to Mahayanist or tantric trends. See also Ray 2002: 41–46.

[62] This is the case of the *Rājasavaṇī*, partially studied by Louis Finot (1917: 84–85).

[63] *Mānavadharmaśāstram* and *Amarakośa* are examples of Sanskrit texts that have been localized into Pali—i.e., *Manusāradhammasaṭṭham*, *Amarakosa*(*-vinicchaya*)—during the medieval period in Myanmar.

Also connected to medieval Burmese Buddhism is the interplay between performative use of letters, grammar, and the psycho-physiological notions of the *Abhidhamma* found in the *Saddavimala*, for example the correlation established between linguistic categories defined in Kacc with internal and external "phenomena" (P., *dhamma*). A number of Pali Mon–Burmese texts analogously fuse Pali and Sanskrit grammar with theories contained in the *Abhidhamma*. In particular this holds regarding phonetics and sound articulation, for instance, by recognizing the word (P., *sadda*) as both meaningful sound and material phenomenon (P., *rūpadhamma*) (Ruiz-Falqués 2017: 36–39, 45–46). In Burmese texts of this period, *Abhidhamma* teachings are also mixed with methods of "coding" letters, such as the *kaṭapāyadi* system of ancient India (Schnake 2018: 290). Finally, Burmese tradition attributes a mystical role to letters and syllables, for example by equating groups of consonants to days of the week, planets, cardinal directions, and great disciples of the buddhas (Maung Htin Aung 1959: 10–18; Robinne 1998: 97–99). A number of medieval Mon texts belonging to this tradition have been identified in Myanmar, in particular the *Ānisaṁsa Kamma*[*ṭ*]*ṭhān* and the *Lokasamutti*, which are related to the Thai–Lao *Bualaphantha* (Lagirarde 1998: 51f). Moreover, death rituals described in these texts are practiced in Burmese Buddhist communities to this day (Halliday 1922: 28–35; Lagirarde 1998: 51–52).

The evident influence of Mon–Burmese Buddhism on the Tai–Khmer tradition does not negate the possibility of other influences, nor does it diminish the potential for local Buddhist scholars and practitioners to introduce significant innovations. In retracing the origins of this tradition, one might locate its source along the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) Valley and trace the path of reformers from Mottama, spreading to Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Lan Na, and eventually reaching Laos in the early-to-mid second millennium. Cambodia likely represents a later stage of this transmission, given that Khmer texts associated with this meditation tradition bear the imprint of subsequent Siamese influence, evident in lexical borrowings, explicit translations, and mentions of translations from Thai [64]

Recent History and Epistemological Reflections

The systematic comparative approach used by Kate Crosby leads her to take unexpected paths, some of which can be regarded as fascinating but off-topic. This is the case with her consideration of medical modernization during the colonial period, in particular her long sections dedicated to smallpox prevention and vaccination campaigns in French Indochina (pp. 162–168). Here one may find a bit far-fetched Crosby's

[64] This is the case for the *Phloew preah thamma langka* ("*The Path* [*leading*] *to the Teaching of Lanka*"), the meditation manual studied and translated by Bizot (1992: 222). As for lexical borrowings, the Khmer title for the "*Seven Books of the Abhidhamma*" (អភិធម្ម ៧ គម្ពីរ, *Aphithoam 7 kompi*) is an illustrative example, as it is phrased with the Thai numeral *chet* (เจ็ด), "seven", instead of the Khmer term ប្រាំពីរ *prampil*. In addition, formulae used in Cambodia by the *yogāvacara* for "inviting" (P., *ārādhanā*) the *pīti* and other holy entities are of Thai origin (Bernon 2000: 231). Trent Walker (2018: 403) also mentions a Khmer "poem on *kammatthana*", which explicitly acknowledges that it was translated (in 1713) from a Tai language original.

comparisons between vaccination and the making of protective amulets or *yantra*s, with the latter requiring "the implantation of a smaller dose of the dangerous enemy (or the power of the enemy), [for ex.] a smaller 'dose' of a lead bullet, both against and through whom the device offers protection" (p. 164). The intrusion of Western medicine among local populations of these colonial dominions is in itself a subject of great interest, which Crosby approaches in much detail.

On the one hand, it is true that the coming of Western medicine unavoidably caused traditional healers to fall into disfavor—not only their treatments but also related conceptions of existence and worldviews—including masters of meditation (pp. 145–147). On the other hand, supporters of modernization targeted traditional means of healing as a whole, not meditation practice *per se*, let alone a given kind of meditation. Thai, Lao and Khmer *bhikkhu*s traditionally practiced medicine because they were capable of writing and reading medical treatises. Just as with Christian monasteries in medieval Europe, before the modern system of schooling the *wat* was, in this part of Southeast Asia, the only place where men could receive an education. The banning of traditional medicine correlates to European-inspired processes of specialization and secularization. To European eyes, monks had to confine themselves to religious activities in the narrow sense of the term, while other fields such as medicine and astrology were the responsibility of dedicated institutions and professionals (Kourilsky 2008: 116).

Moreover, it is well established that the intrusion of European views in the late 19th century considerably altered the way tradition became viewed by local populations, in particular among the ruling elite. In this regard, the examination of the ways in which modernity broadly impacted vernacular forms of Buddhism is perhaps the most elaborated, as well as the more innovative, part of *Esoteric Theravada*. Crosby shows that a number of meditation related practices and notions started to be seen as different when compared with "mainstream Theravada" and therefore became problematic only relatively recently. While Bizot and his followers tend to consider that two Buddhist traditions had coexisted for centuries in Tai and Khmer cultural areas (Bizot 1976: 27f; Bizot & Gabaude 1997: 1619), Crosby convincingly asserts that the ancient form of Tai–Khmer *kammatthan* "was the dominant practice [of meditation] established and promoted by royalty and by the supreme patriarchs of the Buddhist Saṅgha in the countries that would become Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, and Thailand" (pp. 173f). The author had stated this in her earlier book (2013: 14), which was more clearly directed towards the cause of the "suppression" of traditional meditation, as suggested by its title. What was said above regarding whether the question of orthodoxy also concerns meditation practices supports this hypothesis.

Crosby's main argument is based on the historical sequence during which Thai or Siamese Buddhism exerted significant influence in Sri Lanka, by the royal house of Ayutthaya, responding to a request of the Kandy court, sending three important missions of monks in the mid-18th century (p. 174). These missions first brought about the

establishment of a new ordination lineage in Sri Lanka, the Syāmanikāya, since no viable lineage existed anymore on the island, a situation that threatened the survival of the Sinhalese Saṅgha. Although these events are well-known (e.g., Jayatilaka 1916: 143–150; Malalgoda 1976; Blackburn 2001), Crosby's approach is innovative since it highlights the role these missions had on meditation practice in Sri Lanka. In this way, Crosby brings new considerations on the place the *kammatthan* tradition had in local Buddhist communities. That monks who belonged to the religious elite of Ayutthaya introduced this method of meditation in Sri Lanka shows not only that the *kammatthan* was regarded as the conventional meditation system in Siam at the time, but also that the Sinhalese Saṅgha did not regard it as deviating from their orthodoxy. On the contrary, in 1782 CE, the Sinhalese king promulgated a "disciplinary edict" (*katikāvata*) which made it compulsory for all Sinhalese monks to practice meditation by conforming to the teaching given by the Siamese monks.[65] One may add that these Siamese missions brought to the island canonical and post-canonical texts of the Mahāvihāra tradition,[66] suggesting that both Pali scriptures and traditional *kammatthan* practice did not belong to different religious schools or trends, but were, at the time, both parts of a single whole. Although the sources the author relies on must be treated with caution, Crosby suggests that the situation was not much different in Laos, where the tradition could have been known and supported by the highest-ranking monks of Vientiane as early as the 16th century (pp. 74, 85, 191). This hypothesis is entirely credible.[67]

The same can be assumed for the Lan Na kingdom, which, unfortunately, *Esoteric Theravada* does not talk about, despite its importance in the history of regional Buddhism. In contrast to Bizot's assumptions (1976: 27; 2000: 526), a number of hints indicate that certain characteristic traits of the "old" tradition were conveyed through "reformist Sinhalese" trends in 14th–15th centuries, which arguably came from lower Myanmar rather than directly from Sri Lanka (Kourilsky 2021: 114). Indeed, the aforementioned works of Vss, Vss-ṭ, and Sadd-v, which focus on distinctive features such as the apotropaic use of syllables and encrypting methods of words, were precisely written in the 15th–16th centuries by scholarly monks affiliated to the reformist "Sīhaḷagaṇa" of Wat Pa Daeng, who opposed the Wat Suan Dok lineage previously established in Chiang Mai.[68] High-ranking Lao monks who are believed to have practiced the ancient form of meditation also resided in monasteries affiliated to the Pa Daeng lineage (Chotipanno 2538: [x]; Mettanando 1999: 8, 28). Bizot is certainly right in saying that one or several "Sinhalese" trends gradually

[65] This is highlighted by Bernon 2000: 458.

[66] For a list of books sent to Sri Lanka in 1756, see Supaphan 1988.

[67] In her 2013 study, Crosby assumed that only in Myanmar was the "old *kammatthan*" not "the dominant meditation tradition among the Sangha hierarchies" (p. 132). She is less assertive in *Esoteric Theravada*. Indeed, and as we have shown above, this tradition probably has some roots in the Ayeyarwady Valley.

[68] On this narrative, see Cœdès 1925: 31–33.

imposed themselves on the Buddhist communities of mainland Southeast Asia from the 11th century onwards, competing with the older schools. But contrary to his claims, most distinctive features of the so-called *kammatthan* tradition likely result from the development of the former, rather than are remainders from the latter.

Crosby argues that the way traditional Tai–Khmer meditation was regarded did not change during the following periods in the history of Siam. There is evidence that King Taksin (r. 1767–1782), who re-established the capital in Thonburi after the Burmese sack of Ayutthaya in 1767, was familiar with this method and himself commissioned related manuscripts (pp. 178f).[69] Even the first kings of the Chakri dynasty, Crosby demonstrates, did not act against the "old *kammatthan*", although their "engagement [...] with global modernity would have later significant impact on the shape of meditation promoted as part of future reforms of Buddhism" (p. 179). She also recalls—although not always acknowledging existing sources on this topic[70]—the important role played by a meditation master from Ayutthaya known as Suk Kai Thuean (สุกไก่เถื่อน), lit. "Suk, the wild cock", from the reigns of Rama I (1782–1809) to that of King Mongkut (Rama IV, 1851–1868), when he was appointed head of meditation instruction (Th., พระญาณสังวรเถร, Phra Nyanasangwon Thera; P., Ñāṇasaṅvarathera) and Supreme Patriarch (สมเด็จพระสังฆราช, Somdet Phra Sankharat; P., *mahāsaṅgharāja*). He was also the preceptor and meditation instructor to Rama III (r. 1824–1851) and Rama IV before they acceded to the throne. During his long career, Suk Kai Thuean mainly stayed at Wat Phlap (วัดพลับ), known today as Wat Ratchasittharam (วัดราชสิทธาราม) in Bangkok. This is one of the few monasteries left in Thailand where the "old" method is still taught and which holds an important collection of related manuscripts, some of which may come from the Ayutthaya period (pp. 85, 98, 148, 178–182).[71] King Mongkut was apparently the first monarch to have explicitly rejected the traditional meditation system for the benefits of the new Burmese Vipassanā method, allegedly more rooted in canonical scriptures (pp. 182f). His views, however—realization of this is another outcome of Crosby's study—were not unanimously shared. One of his sons, Prince Wiwitthawanpritcha (พระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ กรมหมื่นวิวิธวรรณปรีชา; 1860–1932), published a book on meditation that included *kammatthan* elements. Even the members and supporters of the reformist Thammayut (Th., ธรรมยุติกนิกาย; P., *Dhammayuttikanikāya*), founded by Prince Mongkut before his reign and highly promoted after he acceded to the throne, did not systematically stand against the traditional practices; some of them, such as Somdet Sa Phussathewo (สา ปุสฺสเทโว; 1812–1899) and venerable Ubali (Chan Sirisantho, see note 28, *supra*) (pp. 184, 189), even undertook to copy and publish texts

[69] This was already assumed by Bernon (2000: 426) who relies on the Siamese chronicles according to which King Taksin practiced meditation beginning with the invocation of the five *pītis*. For a more recent study, see Potprecha 2022.

[70] For example, Taylor 1992: 116; Mettanando 1999: 15; also Bernon 2000: 441–452.

[71] See also Bernon 2000: 426, 441; and Ong 2014: 2.

related to this method. Crosby also identifies some common elements between the forest Thammayut meditation practice and that of the tradition, such as the iterative recitation of the syllables BU DDHO and the visualization of a sphere of light (p. 264, n. 40).

Similarly in Laos, Crosby shows that the "old *kammatthan*" method was considered the ordinary meditation practice in the Lao Saṅgha as late as 1974 (p. 97), that is, to the eve of the Communist Revolution. In conclusion, all of these elements indicate that what is nowadays referred to as "the old method" was neither exactly considered old nor a distinctive form of meditation. As Crosby puts it, "this practice was just *kammaṭṭhāna*, 'meditation'" (p. 23) and that was it. This is further corroborated by vernacular related texts, which systematically refer to meditation as *samathavipassanākammaṭṭhāna*. The fact that no other method of meditation is attested in premodern Southeast Asia supports this hypothesis.

Primary Sources

Written primary sources naturally provide the most consistent information for those who aim to study the nature or the history of the Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition of meditation. Accordingly, Chapter 3 of *Esoteric Theravada* provides an overview of related corpora of texts originating from Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka.

Therein, Crosby first identifies two main genres of *kammatthan* texts, "exoteric and esoteric narratives" and "practice manuals". This division is important, although both "genres" can be present in one and the same text, as is the case, for instance, with Tai–Lao บัวระพันธะ *Pavarabandha* (*Bualaphantha* according to northern Thai and Lao pronunciation) and สัททวิมละ *Saddavimala* (Bizot & Lagirarde 1996). One example of narrative Crosby gives is the story of a princess named Citta, which is actually a Sinhalese adaptation of the aforementioned allegory of the "Fig tree with five branches", formerly recorded in Cambodia by Bizot (1976) and in northern Thailand by Lagirarde (1994). Unfortunately, the account Crosby gives for this narrative is too terse to be fully coherent for readers unfamiliar with these allegorical figures. This brevity is surprising as she subjected the Sinhalese version, namely the *Maraṇañāṇasutta* ("*Discourse on the Understanding of Death*"), to a thorough study (Crosby, Skilton & Gunasena 2012). She then takes the *Nibbānasutta* as the second example of the "narrative" genre. This is an apocryphal *sutta* in Pali, probably of Tai origin.[72] In reality, its "narrative" nature only relates to its formal appearance as a *sutta*, beginning with *evaṁ me suttaṁ* ("Thus I have heard"). Its main content, however, is a depiction of the "City of Nibbāna", here used as a metaphor for delivering a variety of doctrinal items and practices of the Buddhist teaching. In fact, a number of texts from Thailand, Cambodia and Laos equate the "city of Nibbāna" with the meditator's own body, establishing a relationship of equivalence between bodily elements and the constituent parts of the city (Walker 2018: 531–537).

More illustrative of this "genre" would perhaps have been the "*Discourse*

[72] This text has been studied and translated by Hallisey 1993.

of Mahākāla" (*Mahākālasutta*) included in the Tai–Lao *Bualaphantha*, an apocryphal *sutta* that relates the story of a *thera* who comes to a cemetery to practice meditation on what is foul (P., *asubha*). There, the venerable sees a young woman's funeral and gives instruction to King Pasenadi on the performance of death rituals (Lagirarde 1998). The *Saddavimala*, another text from Laos and Lan Na, also includes a narrative about a meditating monk repeatedly uttering the sentence "the herons eat the fish", which is the prelude to the teaching of salvation through grammar, which forms the heart of the text (Bizot & Lagirarde 1996: 222f).

The second genre identified by Crosby is "practice manuals", basic sets of instructions for meditation masters. She correctly describes these as "technical and minimalist rather than evocative" (p. 71). She mentions different kinds of practice manuals which can take different forms, from concise to long, written in Pali or in vernacular, in verse or in prose. Crosby gives as an example the Sinhalese *Amatākaravaṇṇanā* ("*Account of the Mine of Immortality*"), composed in Pali, which is a record of 18th-century Siamese teachings. The author offers an in-depth study of this text (pp. 45–62), including an interesting comparison between listed topics of meditation contained therein and those found in Vism.[73] However, surprisingly, Crosby does not make any mention of the Cambodian ផ្លូវព្រះធម្ម លង្កា *Phloew preah thammă langka* ("*The Path* [*leading*] *to the Teaching of Lanka*"), previously studied and translated by Bizot (1992). This important text records the different somatic signs the *yogāvacara* experiences across different initiatory stages. The failure to mention this text is surprising since she already summarized it in her aforementioned "bibliographic essay" of Bizot's work (2000: 156–160). Even more perplexing is the exclusion of the "*Manual for Interpreting Signs*" (Kh., ក្បួនបកនិមិត្ត, *Kbuon bok nimit*). This text has been extensively examined and comprehensively translated into French by Bernon in his monumental doctoral dissertation (2000, 2 vols., 828 p.), a work of which Crosby evidently has knowledge, as it is referenced elsewhere in *Esoteric Theravada*.

Although a number of texts that can be labeled *kammatthan* belong to one of these two "genres", many other works could hardly be classified in either of them. Many texts are of a hybrid or composite nature and cannot be categorized solely as "manuals" or "narratives", despite their inclusion of didactic components, cosmologies, mystico-biological descriptions, mythical elements, or even short stories. We also have to keep in mind that, overall, our knowledge of vernacular Buddhist literature of the Tai and Khmer worlds is too limited to draw clear-cut classifications. In particular, a huge number of vernacular meditation treatises are waiting to be studied or, even, discovered. This is yet another reason to pay particular attention to the Thai, Lao, and Khmer texts already accessible through Bizot's and his close collaborators' analyses or translations in French. Unfortunately, Crosby refers sparingly to this extensive corpus. Only the Khmer *Mūlakammaṭṭhāna* and the

[73] This parallel between both texts is already found in Crosby 2013: 48f.

Tai–Lao *Saddavimala* are alluded to a couple of times, while *The Path* [*leading*] *to the Teaching of Lanka*, the *Ratanamala*, the *Bualaphantha*, and the *Dhammatrai*, to name just a few,[74] are not mentioned in the general index. This is all the more surprising since this scarcity of information is not due to the author's lack of knowledge of this rich corpus originally published in French. Equally surprising is the absence of reference to Donald Swearer's study and translation of a vernacular *Abhiddhamma* text of Lan Na that is clearly related to this tradition (see note 46, *supra*). *Esoteric Theravada* is also totally silent on Pali works originating from Myanmar and Lan Na that have evidently constituted textual sources for later *kammatthan* texts written in vernaculars. Besides the aforementioned Vss, Vss-ṭ, Sadd-b, Sadd-v, and so forth, mention should also be made of the *Jinapañjaragāthā* ("*Verses of the Cage of Victorious One*"), a protective *paritta*, probably composed in northern Thailand in the 15th–16th century, which links buddhas of the past—or the great disciples—with cardinal directions, bodily components, and letters of the Pali alphabet (Bernon 2000: 339; Woodward 2020: 110–111; Revire 2022: 238–244).[75]

In fact, Crosby does not rely on any primary sources from Southeast Asia at all, but only refers to secondary sources written in English or French.[76] The Sinhalese corpus is only lightly examined. Beside the *Vidarśanapota* already studied by T.W. Rhys Davids, only two other Sinhalese texts related to the *kammatthan* tradition are referred to in *Esoteric Theravada*, the *Amatākaravaṇṇanā* and the *Maraṇañāṇa-sutta*.[77] Yet many other titles exist in Sri Lanka that would also be worthy of study or at least mention. A number of these texts are listed in the Hugh Nevill collection (cited in Bernon 2000: 240) such as the the *Vimuktisaṅgrahanamvūvidarśanabhāvanāsaṅgrahaya*, and so on.

Looking at these manuscripts is important for a historical perspective. In this regard, Crosby relies on a couple of Thai and Lao publications that suggest the existence of copies dating back to the 17th century, for Ayutthaya, and even as far back as the 16th century for Laos (pp. 97, 102; see also Phibul 2019: 6). Even though these records must be considered, they must not always be taken for granted, especially as we are accustomed to a certain level of fantasy for dating in Southeast Asian scholarship.[78] The most reliable method would be to scrutinize manuscript collections of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, some of which are nowadays easily accessible via digital databases.[79] Unfortunately,

[74] Walker (2018: 15–16, 110f, 490f) also provides analysis of several Khmer texts related to traditional *kammatthan*.

[75] The text is also found in modern Sri Lanka as an expanded *pirit* or *parittta* (Jackson 1994). For a recent edition and translation, see Kieffer-Pülz 2018: 233–239.

[76] Some significant works are surprisingly not mentioned by Crosby, however, such as Cousins 1997.

[77] Another Sinhalese text, entitled *Vākkapprakaraṇa*, is also referred to. However, this text is "a litany [...] to be used in conjunction with the *Amatākaravaṇṇaṇā*" (p. 55) and thus apparently not a *kammatthan* text.

[78] In particular, the mention of 1501 CE as the date given for a Lao manuscript (pp. 97, 100) is questionable. So far, the oldest Lao manuscript—a fragment of the *Vinaya* in Pali—is known to date to 1520 CE. Only a couple of copies, among over 12,000 recorded in the DLLM, date from the 16th century.

[79] Beside the aforementioned DLLM and DLNTM databases, many digital libraries of manuscripts have been made accessible by Thai institutions or universities such as Chiang Mai University (https://library.cmu.ac.th/digital_collection/digitalheritage/), Chiang Mai

very few *kammatthan* manuscripts bear a date and, when a date does appear, few go back earlier than the 19th century. The oldest copy available so far—a fragmentary Lao version of ພະທັມສາມໄຕ *Pha tham sam tai* (Kh., *Dhammatrai*)—is dated 1077 of the Little Era, i.e., 1715 CE,[80] predating the Siamese missions to Lanka by several decades; it thus gives us a new *terminus post quem* for this tradition.

Furthermore, the epigraphic corpus of Thailand attests to the spread, not of this meditation tradition itself, but of some of its features in preceding centuries. In this connection, one short section of *Esoteric Theravada* is dedicated to inscriptions (pp. 74f). First mentioned is an inscription from Phitsanulok (upper-central Thailand), dated 1549 CE, which includes the *Dhammakāyagāthā*. These Pali verses, which are found in several related manuscript texts, equates doctrinal elements—related to supramundane knowledge and virtues—to parts of the buddha's physical attributes or monastic cloth (Cham 2504; Cœdès 1956; Bizot 1992: 293–300; Woramat 2021: 79f; Skilton & Phibul 2022). Crosby gives a brief account of this inscription, but without explaining the notion of *dhammakāya*, which renders the connection with the *kammatthan* meditation technique unclear. Mention is made of other stone inscriptions from Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, but no details are given regarding their content, except the vague statement that "they contain Pali formulae of the qualities of the Buddha and the contents of *Abhidhamma*, condensed down to representative syllables" (p. 74). For the sake of completeness, one must add to these examples the epigraphic corpus of the Lan Na kingdom, which includes not only heart-syllables but also *yantra*s dating from the 15th–16th centuries. While these inscriptions do not represent "direct evidence of [old] *kammaṭṭhāna*", the characteristic combinations of syllables or "heart-formulae" they contain, for example, NA MO BU DDHĀ YA, MA A U, NA MA BA DA, ITI PI SO, I SVĀ SU,[81] SAṂ VI DHĀ PU KA YA PA, etc.,[82] make them more than a sign "of the attitude to language as a potent force" (p. 74). Interestingly, a number of these inscriptions are written on buddha footprints (P., *buddhapāda*), an iconographic habit that is of Sinhalese origin, but which probably arrived in Sukhothai from Bagan (Lorrillard 2000: 48–53). This constitutes an additional argument in favor of a hypothetical connection of the Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition of meditation with Myanmar.

Rajabhat University (http://www.culture.cmru.ac.th/manuscript_database), Mahasarakham University (www.bl.msu.ac.th/2554/bailan.htm), Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (www.sac.or.th/databases/manuscripts/), etc. In Cambodia, the *Fonds pour l'édition des manuscrits du Cambodge* (EFEO) has inventoried and microfilmed hundreds of manuscripts (http://khmermanuscripts.efeo.fr/). More recently, the Buddhist Digital Resource Center has included a significant number of Khmer manuscripts in their collection as well (http://library.bdrc.io/).

[80] Previously available online at the Digital Repository of Lao Manuscripts, PLMP Code: 01012910002_73.

[81] The first syllables of the praise to the Buddha (*Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṁ* [...]), the Dhamma (*Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo* [...]), and the Saṅgha (*Suppaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho* [...]).

[82] On these formulae, see Lorrillard 2000: 50–52; Skilling 2012: 4–7, and Skilling 2018: 162f; also Revire & Schnake 2023.

Secondary Sources

On multiple occasions, I have emphasized the significance and enduring impact of earlier French scholarship in the region, particularly Bizot's groundbreaking research on the Tai–Khmer tradition of meditation. His work is also of crucial importance as it opened access to the study of texts hitherto unknown to scholars which were still encountered frequently in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge regime.

Following Bizot's lead, Bernon was able to observe complete initiation cycles in Cambodia and Thailand more recently, and which he could then compare to vernacular textual sources. Unfortunately, there are few practitioners left of the *kammatthan* meditation technique and only a small number of temples in Thailand and Cambodia have kept this tradition alive, sometimes not without adaptation. In this vein, Crosby was likewise able to make visual observations at two temples where this kind of meditation is still practiced, namely at Wat Damrei Sar (វត្តដំរីស) in Kandal province, Cambodia, and at Wat Ratchasittharam (วัดราชสิทธาราม) in Thonburi (Bangkok), Thailand. Some of her endnotes also suggest she conducted a number of interviews with practitioner masters (pp. 90, 99–100, 221, 226). However, in *Esoteric Theravada*, she does not give an extensive description of the meditation cycle or technique practiced in these monasteries (pp. 54f). It is frustrating that an entire volume dedicated to a given method of meditation gives so little information about it. For this reason, the aforementioned dissertation by Olivier de Bernon (2000), regretfully still unpublished, remains the fullest account to this day of the initiation of the *yogāvacara* transmitted in Cambodia in the late 20th century. In addition, Bernon gave a complete description of the teachings delivered at Wat Ratchasittharam of Thonburi (2000: 426), which he was among the first to identify as the place where the memory and teaching of Suk Kai Thuean has been maintained (see also Mettanando 1999). In this connection, Bernon highlighted differences with the Khmer method such as the notion of parents' legacies (Kh., គុណ, *kun*) which is absent from the Ratchasittharam instructions. It is surprising that *Esoteric Theravada* does not appropriately acknowledge its debts to this work.[83]

On a broader scale, *Esoteric Theravada* falls short in acknowledging the contributions of EFEO scholars, despite extensively relying on their previous research. While Crosby does make a general reference to Bizot's work, it is worth noting that he is inaccurately labeled as an "archaeologist" on p. 96. Moreover, she frequently appropriates his work and discoveries without due credit. Among many cases, we can mention Crosby's identification of the preeminent role assigned to the first five topics of meditation, namely the *pīti*s or "joys" as a distinctive feature of the Tai–Khmer meditation technique, which she presents as her new finding (pp. 30–31). Yet this identification was repeatedly emphasized by Bizot (1992: 47–48) and later by Bernon (2000: 246, 539f), who, moreover, clearly distinguished between the *pīti*s in the *kammatthan* tradition, considered as

[83] However, Crosby refers to a later English article by her colleagues Skilton & Phibul 2014, which merely replicates, albeit in less details, Bernon's thesis.

entities to be invoked (P., *ārādhanā*) and visualized in precise parts of the body, from those in the Sinhalese Mahāvihāra teachings which are merely seen as processes or states. The same can be said for the numerical symbolism Crosby gives (p. 33) equating the five *pīti*s, the five candles offered to the *yogāvacara*'s master, the five primordial syllables NA MO BU DDHĀ YA, the five elements, the five aggregates of individual personality, the five colors or "lights", etc. (Bernon 2000: 270). The continuous repetition of distinctive rhythmic formulae or *gāthā*s, such as A RA HAṂ, as a breathing exercise, in order for the *yogāvacara* to cease any "active thought" (P., *citta*), is presented by Crosby as a first-hand discovery (pp. 54, 243, n. 1), although it had already been described a great many times in Bizot's (e.g., 1992: 228) and Bernon's (e.g., 2000: 496) earlier works.

Comparisons between the topics of meditation in the Southeast Asian tradition and those taught in the Sinhalese Vism have also been undertaken previously by Bernon (2000: 461f). Even though Crosby does bring some new genuine findings of her own, it would have been fair to mention these as well. In the first instance, she attributes the understandings of cosmogenesis as giving a generative role to the three syllables MA A U, from which the universe arises, to a recent publication from Kitchai Urkasame (p. 32), while it was first recorded almost fifty years earlier by Bizot in *Le figuier à cinq branches* (1976: 132) and repeated in his subsequent publications, albeit only written in French (e.g., Bizot 1989: 21; Bizot & von Hinüber 1994: 39). Admittedly, Crosby makes this reference later in the book (p. 128, endnote), but in the meantime does not attribute the recognition to him, as she should, of these syllables as "an inversion of the components of the Sanskrit syllable OṀ, to which similar cosmogonic potency is attributed in Hinduism" (p 32.). Another example concerns various "somatic signs" or *nimitta*s the disciple must experience during successive meditation sessions, from simple tremors to the vision of the dismemberment of the body itself. These *nimitta*s have been enumerated and described at great length by Bizot (1992: 51–56) and Bernon (2000: 507f). Yet again, Crosby chose to only report the more recent work of Phibul Choompolpaisal (2019) who, she writes, has "provided a detailed survey of the varied types of *nimitta*" (p. 56). Further, Crosby's long section on the impact of printing on the *kammatthan* tradition (pp. 88–92), although interesting, makes no mention of Bizot's earlier reflections on this issue, especially on the related abandonment of traditional scripts such as Khom or Tham and their mystical function in modern Cambodia and Thailand (Bizot 1992: 17–21; Bizot & Bizot 2001: 149–153; also Kourilsky 2005: 45–49). Finally, the identification of the aforementioned story of the meditating monk in the *Saddavimala* with the Burmese Kacc-nidd is wrongly ascribed by Crosby to Aleix Ruiz-Falqués (p. 134, n. 47), while it was already pointed out many years earlier—and in English—by Ole Pind in Bizot and Lagirarde's study (1996: 67f).

Crosby's lack of recognition of this extensive, foundational scholarship is unexpected given that she has, in the past, acknowledged the understandings

of the Tai–Khmer Buddhist tradition she owes to Bizot and his colleagues. Moreover, she has even contributed to making them more accessible via English summaries and overviews (e.g., Crosby 2000). Admittedly, the original writings of Bizot are not always easy to grasp, even for a native speaker. In this regard, more recent studies written in English, on which Crosby preferably relies, are helpful. However, some of them must be studied with caution. This is especially the case for those produced by Thai scholars linked with the Thammakai movement based originally in a temple ground at Wat Phra Dhammakaya in Pathum Thani, north of Bangkok. This Thai sect teaches a method of meditation, called *witcha thammakai*, which claims to be in line with the "old *kammatthan*" tradition. As it happens, members of Wat Phra Dhammakaya invest much energy and resources in highlighting the alleged connection between its own meditation system and the supposed ancient *kammatthan* tradition. While there is some truth to this assertion, it is undeniable that this connection is often exaggerated and, to some extent, constructed for the purpose of legitimation.[84]

It should also be mentioned that a significant part of *Esoteric Theravada* traces the history of the Dhammakaya temple and examines the roots of its meditation lineage. As Crosby rightly recalls, Thammakai officially takes as a basis the *witcha thammakai* method developed earlier by Luang Pu Sot, the former abbot of Wat Paknam Phasicharoen (pp. 96–99). *Witcha thammakai*, is a modernized and simplified form of the traditional practice taught earlier by Suk Kai Thuean at Wat Ratchasittharam. Luang Pu Sot's method became gradually widely known in Thailand and beyond after World War II and even reached some Western Buddhist circles who participated in its promotion (pp. 230–232). *Witcha thammakai* also met with critiques from the mainstream (Mahanikai) Thai Saṅgha, as did another modern method, the *ānāpānasati*, taught in the Thammayut forest lineage of Achan Man Phuritthatto (มั่น ภูริทตฺโต; 1870–1949) (p. 229). However, a number of Luang Pu Sot's students were able to transmit his method to several temples, which then inspired the Thammakai movement.[85] While it is indeed interesting to highlight that the traditional *kammatthan* meditation practice has found its way into modern trends of Buddhism in Thailand, *Esoteric Theravada* does not expose new findings in this matter. The Thammakai movement and its meditation method have been the subject of numerous studies in recent decades (Bowers 1996; Mackenzie 2007; Newell 2008), and have generated

[84] An illustrative example of this phenomenon is found in the work of Mettanando [Mano Laohavanich] (1999), a former senior monk at Wat Phra Dhammakaya, who later disrobed and subsequently emerged as a staunch critic (2012). In addition, Phramaha Niras Ruangsan (2015) strongly relativizes the influence of the "old *kammatthan*" as taught by Suk Kai Thuean on Sot Candasaro's method.

[85] There are actually several temples claiming lineage from the original teachings of Luang Pu Sot. The primary contenders, engaged in a rivalry, are Wat Phra Dhammakaya (วัดพระธรรมกาย) located in Pathum Thani (north of Bangkok), and Wat Luang Pho Sot Thammakayaram (วัดหลวงพ่อสดธรรมกายาราม) situated in Ratchaburi province. Notably, in *Esoteric Theravada*, Crosby appears to exclusively reference the former, which exercises control over the Dhammakaya Foundation, acknowleged and thanked by the author (p. x) for their financial support.

well-informed dedicated Wikipedia webpages.[86] Comparative studies of the *witcha thammakai* method of meditation with the traditional *kammatthan* have also recently emerged (e.g., Niras 2015; Potprecha 2019: 103f).

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, in *Esoteric Theravada* Crosby leans toward a historical rather than an anthropological or philological approach. The author expresses an intent to present a holistic view of the nature of the traditional meditation system and to explain how change happens and its relation to other technologies of transformation (p. 2). While the latter ambition appears to be achieved, the former is not entirely successful. Crosby's primary interest lies in how the so-called "*borān kammaṭṭhān*" (a misnomer, as discussed) was and still is perceived, and how this perception evolved over the centuries. The author might have been better served by openly focusing on this issue, rather than attempting to provide an overview of this tradition throughout the centuries in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka.

The decline of influence of the traditional form of Buddhism in Cambodia and Thailand was already the subject of Crosby's earlier book (2013). While *Esoteric Theravada* adds little more to that earlier study, it still makes a significant contribution to this subject. Bizot previously outlined historical and sociological reasons that led to the discrediting of traditional Buddhist conceptions in French colonial Cambodia in his introduction to *Le figuier à cinq branches* (1976). Crosby broadens the perspective geographically, including Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. She also reflects on broader aspects of modernization impacting worldviews and conceptions. These changes affected religious practices, such as the emergence of Western medicine, the rise of the Burmese Vipassanā method, and the rivalry between various Buddhist *nikāya*s (pp. 223f). However, some topics loosely related to the book's subject, like Buddhist reforms in 19th–20th century British Burma and Sri Lanka, are overdeveloped and not directly related to meditation (pp. 203–210).

Crosby's major breakthrough lies in arguing that the description of the traditional Tai–Khmer meditation as "non-orthodox" or "non-Theravadin" results more from a modern perception of Buddhism than from an actual peculiarity in terms of conception and practice. She provides compelling arguments, such as the similarity between the terminology related to meditation topics in the *yogāvacara* method and the *Abhidhamma*, and the historical evidence of religious elites practicing the *kammatthan* method. Crosby also highlights how *kammatthan* teachings have found their way into modern Buddhism and experienced a revival among certain practitioners, especially in Thailand. While she does not directly question the notion of orthodoxy, her arguments support the idea that this notion is not relevant for addressing meditation matters.

[86] See for example: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wat_Phra_Dhammakaya, and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhammakaya_tradition (accessed 8 October 2022).

In summary, readers' evaluation of *Esoteric Theravada* may depend on their expectations. Those wanting a descriptive in-depth overview of the Tai–Khmer tradition of meditation might be disappointed. The method is lightly described, and vernacular sources are infrequently quoted, making it challenging for uninformed readers to grasp its essence. Additionally, some hypotheses about its origins are stimulating, while others are less convincing. The book lacks consideration for regional geography and religious history before the late 18th century, and some relevant sources are not explored.

Informed readers with access to French-language scholarship may find little additional information compared to Bizot's or Bernon's earlier work. They might also be surprised by the important omissions and lack of proper attribution. However, the book's real value perhaps lies in providing information for Thai and international scholars who cannot read French at an academic level. When considered for what it is—an exploration of how Buddhist studies and scholars have come to regard a given meditation tradition through the prism of modernity—*Esoteric Theravada* offers new and fresh perspectives. While it may not unveil all the mysteries of the Tai–Khmer tradition, it provides valuable information on its late history, original interpretations, and challenging hypotheses, offering new grounds and avenues for reflection. Progress has been made, but there is still a long way to go.

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Abbreviations

Abhidh-s	*Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*
Abhidh-av-ṭ	*Abhidhammāvatāraabhinavaṭīkā*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
Kacc	*Kaccāyanavyākaraṇa*
Kacc-nidd	*Kaccāyanasuttaniddessa*
Nidd-a	*Saddhammapajjotikā* (*Mahāniddesa-aṭṭhakathā*)
Sacc	*Saccasaṅkhepa*
Sadd-b	*Saddabindu*
Sadd-v	*Saddabinduvinicchaya*
Spk	*Sāratthappakāsinī* (*Saṁyuttanikāya-aṭṭhakathā*)
Vibh-a	*Sammohavinodanī* (*Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā*)
Vism	*Visuddhimagga*
Vss	*Vajirasārathasaṅgaha*
Vss-ṭ	*Vajirasārathasaṅgaha-ṭīkā*

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The Great Disciple Mahākassapa and his *Parinibbāna*

Javier Schnake[1]

Abstract—The 80 great disciples (*asīti mahāsāvaka*s) are a conceptual category found in Pali commentarial literature dating from the 5th to the 10th century. Various forms of evidence, including archeology, epigraphy, and iconography, demonstrate the enduring popularity of these characters within mainland Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions. This popularity spans from the end of the 1st millennium to the present. The focus of this work lies in the Pali texts, which have been largely overlooked in comparison to the well-preserved accounts in vernacular languages. The study partially aims to address this gap by presenting a critical edition and new translation of a Pali text centered around the *parinibbāna* (final demise) of one of the most esteemed disciples, Mahākassapa.

Keywords: 80 Great Disciples (*Asīti Mahāsāvaka*s); Mahākassapa; Pali Commentaries; *Parinibbāna*; Southeast Asian Buddhism

Introducing the Great Disciples

The *asīti mahāsāvaka*s, commonly known as the "80 great disciples" or "hearers", represent a conceptual category within Pali Buddhist studies that has received limited attention. Notably, François Lagirarde (2000, 2001, 2006) is the sole scholar to have extensively explored this field, primarily focusing on the Southeast Asian context, particularly the Thai vernacular Buddhist tradition. While Lagirarde sheds some light on this subject, information about these great disciples, sourced from Pali literature, is scattered across various other published works, including Toshiichi Endo's (1997), which explores the evolution of some key concepts such as *bodhi*, *bodhisatta*, *pāramī*, etc., in commentarial literature. Additionally, the bilingual *Pāramīdīpanī* (ed. Pesala 2015), originally composed by the eminent Burmese monk Ledi Sayadaw, must be referenced. The latter work consistently mentions the great disciples in discussions presented in the form of questions and answers, specifically focusing on enlightenment and the attributes necessary for embracing a bodhisatta's career.

[1] École Pratiques des Hautes Études, Paris. Email: javier.schnake@ephe.psl.eu.

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The popularity of the great disciples has achieved considerable success within Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions, making distinctive contributions to regional Buddhist narratives and literature. This popularity has played a crucial role in fostering a strong and enduring local religious history (Skilling 2009: 57–59). The lives and final moments of the 80 great disciples became a significant literary genre, preserved in vernacular languages. Although absent in Sri Lanka and central Myanmar, these texts persist today in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and the Shan State (Lagirarde 2000: 58; 2001: 304).

Molded tablets found in U Thong[2] (late 1st millennium) and Saraphi, Chiang Mai province (12th–13th c.), as well as footprints of buddhas during the Sukhothai period demonstrate the lasting impact of the great disciples in ancient Thailand (Bauer 1991: 61–63; Lorrillard 2000: 41–45, 53–55; Skilling 2013: 77–79). References to them continue in later Burmese epigraphy, as seen in an Ava inscription from 1778 CE recording the enshrining of 80 statuettes (Taw Sein Ko 1899: 170). Another Burmese tradition details 40 disciples sitting to the right of the historical Buddha and 40 to his left (Tin Lwin & Tin Oo 1996: xiv–xv). The Rattanakosin (Bangkok) period in Thailand (1782–today) witnesses continued interest, marked by new inscriptions during the installation of monumental group of statues in various monasteries in Bangkok (e.g., Wat Suthat and Wat Phichai Yat). Official recognition of these great disciples is evident in the *Anubuddhapavatti* (ed. Vajirañaṇavarorasa 1974), composed by Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa (1859–1921), alongside publications like *Brah asītimahāsāvakanibbāna* and *Brah sāvakanibbāna* (ed. Anonymous 1972), focusing on the final moments of these great disciples (Lagirarde 2000: 61; 2001: 304, 314).

*Mahāsāvaka*s or great disciples are absent from early Buddhist scriptures and the Mahāyana literature, suggesting their specificity to the late Theriya school (known as Theravāda today). Their origins trace back to Pali commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*s),[3] notably those collected and composed by Buddhaghosa (fl. 5th CE) and later by Dhammapāla (fl. between the 6th and 10th c.),[4] who succinctly defined their characteristics.

Buddhaghosa refers several times to these *mahāsāvaka*s without defining in a coherent and articulated whole their nature and specificities. He mentions few names,[5] while their definitive number—

[2] The inscriptions found on the back of seven tablets give the names of "foremost disciples" (*etadagga*) which are also present in the list of *mahāsāvaka*s (see thereafter).

[3] Later literature makes sporadic references to these great disciples, but they do not take center stage in narratives and lack significant conceptual development. See, for instance, in the *Mahāvaṁsa* (Mhv XXX 80) and its "Extended" version (Ext Mhv XXX 218c), the *Thūpavaṁsa* (Thūp 233, 29), the *Chakesadhātuvaṁsa* (Cha-k 10), the *Rasavāhinī* (Ras 78, 21), the *Asītimahāsāvakavaṇṇanāgāthā* mentioned in the *Gandhavaṁsa* (Gv 66, 5–6), etc.

[4] While not strictly a commentary, I include here Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* for convenience, as it serves to synthesize the entire conceptual framework of the Theriya tradition. The dates concerning Dhammapāla are still subject to discussions; see Gornall & Ruiz-Falqués (2019) for a recent synthesis.

[5] For instance, "'Where is the Teacher? Where is the Thera Sāriputta? Where is the Thera Moggallāna? Where is the Thera Bhaddiya? Where is the Thera

eighty (80)—appears several times[6] and seems normal and already integrated into these different literary developments. Their important status is testified by their repeated mention in sequences including prestigious characters;[7] by the specific marks (*lakkhaṇa*s) they hold;[8] by their faculty to recollect past lives among six kinds of people, as well as being considered as peculiar *sāvaka*s, alongside *aggasāvaka*s ("chief disciples") and *pakaṭisāvaka*s ("ordinary disciples").[9] This threefold distinction can probably be understood from a conceptual framework in which the "bodhisattva or bodhisatta ideal"[10] has been elaborated. Notably, distinct perspectives on the terms *bodhi* and *bodhisatta*, marking crucial stages in the evolution of the bodhisatta's doctrine, signify that disciples (*sāvaka*s) can also aspire to attain enlightenment (Endo 1997: 283–284).[11] Buddhaghosa's classification of *sāvaka bodhi* ("enlightenment of disciples"), *paccekabodhi* ("enlightenment of pacceka [buddhas]"), and *sammāsambodhi*/*abhisambodhi* ("highest/perfect enlightenment"), along with Dhammapāla's later differentiation between *mahābodhisatta* ("great-bodhisatta [i.e., the Buddha]"), *paccekabodhisatta* ("pacceka [buddha]-bodhisatta"), and *sāvakabodhisatta* ("disciples-bodhisatta"), reveals a more intricate nature of the bodhisatta. It is no longer merely an appellation for the previous existences of any buddha.

The late *Paramatthadīpanī* (Dhammapāla's commentary on the part concerning the *Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā*) brings some elements clarifying the nature and identity of this peculiar group of disciples, in addition to some Buddhaghosa's views.

First, we have the names of these *mahāsāvaka*s:

> Venerable, among them, the 80 great disciples by names are Aññakoṇḍaññā, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, Assaji, Nālaka, Yasa, Vimala, Subāhu, Puṇṇaji, [10] Gavampati, Uruvelakassapa, Nadīkassapa, Gayākassapa, Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa, Mahākaccāyana, Mahākoṭṭhika, Mahākappina, [20] Mahācunda, Anuruddha, Kaṅkhārevata, Ānanda, Nandaka, Bhagu, Nanda, Kimila, Bhaddiya,

Anuruddha? Where is the Thera Ānanda? Where is the Thera Bhagu? Where is the Thera Kimbila?' So saying, they went about looking at the places where sat the 80 chief disciples" (Dhp-a I 138, 19–23).

[6] The 80 great disciples (*asīti māhasāvaka*s) are mentioned, for instance, at Vism 98, 26 and Vism 411, 14 and 24; Sv II 420, 4; Sv II 429, 24–25; Sv III 792, 17; Dha-a II 94, 11; Dha-a II 97, 14; Dha-a II 174, 11–12; Pp III 357, 21; Mp I 127, 13–14; Mp II 126, 5 and 11; Mp II 262, 1–2; Mp II 65, 23; Pj II 51, 9; Pj II 511, 23.

[7] For instance: "For in this place, buddhas, paccekabuddhas, the chief disciples, the 80 great disciples, the different wheel-turning monarch possessing great powers, the *khattiya*s, the brahmans, the householders with immense wealth arise" (Sv II 429, 24–25). See also, "Sāriputta, Mahāmoggalāna, as well as the 80 great disciples penetrated the supramundane Dhamma through energy" (Sv III 792, 16–18 and Mp II 65, 23–24).

[8] "[...] On account of that, for them these distinctions are to be known: the buddhas are endowed with these marks; the paccekabuddhas with these [other marks], the two chief disciples, the 80 great disciples, the buddha's mothers, the buddha's fathers, the buddha's attendants, the buddha's female attendant, the wheel-turning monarch are [endowed with other marks]" (Mp II 261, 30–262, 3).

[9] "There are six kinds of people who recollect these past lives. They are: other sectarians, ordinary disciples, great disciples, chief disciples, Paccekabuddhas, and Buddhas" (Vism 411, 8–10; trans. Ñāṇamoli 1956: 405).

[10] On this point, see Samuels 1997.

[11] On the evolution of these complex doctrinal aspects, see Endo 1997: 228–238.

> Rāhula, [30] Sīvali, Upāli, Dabba, Upasena, Khadiravaniyarevata, Puṇṇa Mantāṇiputta, Puṇṇa Sunāparantaka, Soṇa Kuṭikaṇṇa, Soṇa Koḷivīsa, [40] Rādha, Subhūti, Aṅgulimāla, Vakkali, Kāḷudāyī, Mahā-udāyī, Pilindavaccha, Sobhita, Kumārakassapa, Raṭṭhapāla, [50] Vaṅgīsa, Sabhiya, Sela, Upavāna, Meghiya, Sāgata, Nāgita, Lakuṇḍakabhaddiya, Piṇḍolabhāradvāja, Mahāpanthaka, [60] Cūḷapanthaka, Bākula, Kuṇḍadhāna, Dārucīriya, Yasoja, Ajita, Tissametteyya, Puṇṇaka, Mettagū, Dhotaka, [70] Upasiva, Nanda, Hemaka, Todeyya, Kappa, Jatukaṇṇi, Bhadrāvudha, Udaya, Posāla, Mogharājā, Piṅgiya [80] (Tha-a III 205, 27–206, 6).

The composition of this list is similar in the South and Southeast Asian recensions of the *Paramatthadīpanī*, although the spelling of some names sometimes varies according to the edition.[12] Interestingly, among these 80 disciples found in the commentaries, 16 are not mentioned in the earlier Pali Canon (Rhys Davids 1913: xxxvi).[13] Additionally, this set of *mahāsāvaka*s must be distinguished from the 74 "foremost disciples" (*etadagga*)[14] listed in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (A I 23, 16–26, 28), which comprises only 43 of these "great disciples" (ed. Pesala 2015: 86). Furthermore, I should mention that the number of great disciples is, strictly speaking, not 80, but 78. The two chief disciples (*aggasāvaka*s), Sāriputta and Moggallāna, due to the excellence of their personal qualities, are already encompassed within the larger category, despite their substantial distinctions from the other great disciples.[15] To summarize, the construction of this list of 80 disciples prompts two observations: (1) certain names within the list were entirely unknown before its compilation and will continue to linger in obscurity thereafter, and (2), this compilation fails to identify any distinctive conceptual developments or narratives centered around these illustrious figures.

Second, the main Dhammapāla's contribution to the *mahāsāvakā* concept distinguished these higher disciples through the quality of their resolution (*abhinīhāra*). The passage in question notes:

> Why are these Theras called "great disciples" (*mahāsāvakā*)? Because of the greatness of their resolution (*abhinīhārassa*). Surely in this way, the two chief disciples (*aggasāvakā*) are

[12] For instance, the Syamaraṭṭha (Thai) edition gives Aññasikoṇḍaññho for Aññakoṇḍaññho, Nālako for Nāḷako, Puṇṇa Sunāparanta for Puṇṇa Sunāparantaka, and Koḷivisa for Koḷivīsa, Lakuṇḍakabhaddiyo for Lakuṇṭakabhaddiyo, Bākulo for Bakkulo, Mettagū for Mettagu, Posālo for Posalo (Tha-a II (Sy): 871, 1–15); similarly, the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana (Burmese) edition proposes Aññasikoṇḍaññho for Aññakoṇḍaññho, Nālako for Nāḷako (Tha-a (ChS) 541, 20–542, 11). Additionally, these editions also include various variants presented in the footnotes.

[13] These are Bhaddiya, Assaji, Nālaka, Puṇṇaji, Tissa Metteyya, Puṇṇaka, Mettagu, Dhotaka, Upasiva, Hemaka, Todeyya, Jatukaṇṇi, Bhadrāvudha, Udaya, Posāla, and Piṅgiya.

[14] Which are the most distinguished ones in a particular field, i.e., 41 among monks (*bhikkhu*s), 13 among nuns (*bhikkhunī*s), 10 among laymen, 10 among laywomen.

[15] See Tha-a III 207, 22–31 and also the *Aggasāvakavatthu* at Dhp-a I 83–114.

included among these great disciples. They are then called "great disciples" (*mahāsāvakā*) because they obtained the highest knowledge regarding perfections for the disciples; they have the highest knowledge of the highest Dhamma among disciples; they stay in the highest place among disciples, because they conform with their great resolutions.

And their resolution is superior to that of the ordinary disciples (*pakatisāvakehi*). For, in the time of the Blessed One Padumuttara, they made their aspiration (*paṇidhānā*). Therefore, their mastering and development of analytic knowledge in the attainment of direct knowledge is superior. All the arahants surely accomplished the purification of virtues and so on, their minds established in the four establishments of mindfulness, they developed the seven factors of enlightenment as ought to be, they destroyed the defilements without any remainder [following] the succession of the paths, [then] they establish in the highest fruit.

Likewise, as they are liberated by faith, they have obtained right view, they are liberated by both ways, and are liberated by wisdom, they have accomplished distinction in previous mental development through the desired distinction, then by the greatness of the resolution, the greatness of the former connection, having accomplished virtues superior to others, in that lineage, great disciples (*mahāsāvakā*) are venerable disciples (*mahantāsāvakā*) through their resolution, their virtues and so on (Tha-a III 206, 7–22).

This passage also highlights the name of Buddha Padumuttara who met each great disciple during their previous lives. Padumuttara was the tenth buddha of the past given by the *Buddhavaṁsa* (Bv XI 12), said to have lived 100,000 eons ago. This past buddha had a central role in the career of the great disciples since he gave each of them the prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) that they will one day become enlightened beings. This precondition for all candidates to enlightenment was made possible beforehand by the acquisition of certain factors or things (*dhamma*)[16] such as resolute will (*chandatā*) and performing acts of devotion (*adhikāra*) for the great disciples. It is also the starting point of the long period during which the latter candidates acquire their perfections.[17] Finally, the prediction must be imperatively coupled with a higher resolution (*abhinīhāra*), as illustrated by the case of the Thera Adhimutta who met this buddha and received his prediction, without however becoming a *mahāsāvaka* (DPPN, s.v. Adhimutta).

[16] As explained at Tha-a I 11, 21–12, 11, there are eight factors (*dhamma*) expected for the buddhas, five for the paccekabuddhas, and two for the chief disciples and great disciples. See ed. Pesala 2015: 22ff for further details.

[17] "For those [wishing] the enlightenment of great disciples (*mahāsāvakabodhi*), it is 100,000 eons, just like the parents of a buddha, the attendant, and the son" (Tha-a I 11, 19–21).

In summary, *mahāsāvaka*s appears to be seamlessly integrated into Pali commentaries. Their existence, however, surely predates the compilation of the *aṭṭhakathā*s, though the extent of their preexistence remains unclear. The lack of detailed character development of the *mahāsāvaka*s suggests that the emphasis lies more in the concept itself and their large number rather than the specific identity of each disciple. While pinpointing the reasons for the popularity of these great disciples in mainland Southeast Asia is challenging, it is likely that these revered figures symbolized the potential for embracing the bodhisatta's path, attaining enlightenment, and subsequently becoming advocates of the bodhisatta ideal for all.

The *Parinibbāna* of Mahākassapa

The surge in popularity of vernacular texts detailing the lives of the great disciples is evident in the region. Lagirarde translated two notable examples from Thai to English (2000, 2006). However, this scholarly discourse continues to overlook important Pali texts. My study endeavors to fill this gap by presenting a Pali text intricately linked to this literary tradition, specifically delving into the concluding chapter on the life of the revered Thera Mahākassapa, whose widespread acclaim in the broader Buddhist community is indisputable (Silk 2003).

Critical Edition and Translation

Pali texts related to these 80 disciples are found in Thai and Cambodian libraries, collected in anthologies such as the *Pāḷi Sāvākanibbāna* (MS EFEO PALI 64)[18] or available as individual works, e.g., in the *Mahākassapatheranibbāna* (cited in Lagirarde 2006: 82–83). A comprehensive exploration of these Pali manuscripts provides a more precise understanding of their contents and assesses their similarities and differences. For example, a detailed analysis of the *Pāḷi Sāvākanibbāna* reveals that it contains few stories of disciples listed in the *Paramatthadīpanī* (see above). Furthermore, not all the narratives are dedicated to a *mahāsāvaka*.[19] Moreover, most sections consist of compilations of literary materials extracted from canonical, commentarial (*aṭṭhakathā*), and subcommentarial (*ṭīkā*) literature, chosen for their depiction of the distinguished qualities and final moments of a specific disciple.

The *parinibbāna* of Mahākassapa stands as an exception. As an original composition, conspicuously absent from almost all Western sources listing Pali works,[20] it lacks a specific date and is attributed to an unidentified author. The text does not have a specific title and the names associated with this manuscript in collections such as *Mahākassapatheranibbāna*, etc., are likely derived from the concluding sentence,

[18] The manuscript contains 6 bundles and 174 folios. It is located at the EFEO library in Paris.

[19] Only 13 individuals are granted a dedicated section here, and it is not limited to men alone; this group also encompasses several women: Sāriputta, Cunda, Moggallāna, Bakkula, Bāhiya, Kundala, Mahābaggha, Buddhapitā, Mahāpajāpatī, Sānusāmaṇera, Dabbamallaputta, Gotamī, Nabbamallaputta.

[20] Louis Finot stands among the few Westerners who have discussed this text and referenced a manuscript housing it within a Lao monastery (1917: 66, 190, no. 354).

simply stating, "This story about the *parinibbāna* of the Thera Mahākassapa is finished" (*ayaṁ Mahākassapattherassa parinibbānakathā niṭṭhitā*).

The Pali text presented here is a revised version of an *editio princeps* prepared over 15 years ago by Jacqueline Filliozat and the late Peter Masefield (2007), accessible at the EFEO library in Paris, but which remained unfinished and unpublished. It is based on the following manuscripts,[21] all written in Khom script and presumably originating from central Thailand:

(1) MS A included in a collection of different great disciples' *nibbāna*s, BnF PALI 298, bundle no. 3/folios *ga* to *gai*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

(2) MS B included in the *Sampiṇḍita-mahānidāna*, BnF PALI 624, bundle no. 15/ folios *ve* to *su*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

(3) MS C included in the *Pāḷi Sāvakanibbāna*, EFEO PALI 64, bundle no. 2/folios *gā* to *gaṁ*, EFEO library, Paris.

MS A served as the base text for reconstructing the narrative and folios have been inserted accordingly, with other variants found in MS B and C juxtaposed in the footnotes. These three copies exhibit a substantial number of variants and scribal peculiarities, illustrating the challenges inherent in stabilizing the text across multiple transmissions.[22] The presentation of the text in a readable and comprehensible form was rendered difficult by these variations. While the overall progression of the text is similar in the three versions, certain passages required reconstruction or deduction from manuscript readings and borrowed literary sources.

In their unpublished work, Filliozat & Masefield included an extensive critical apparatus detailing all errors and variants in a somewhat raw manner. I have opted here to condense and organize this information, retaining only data deemed useful for the reader. Although some words may have spelling gaps, they can still provide valuable insight. Spelling discrepancies, pronunciation variations, vowel length differences, and shifts in consonants were addressed. Additionally, I have reorganized the text and footnotes, occasionally selecting variants from the two other manuscripts B and C over proposed words, arranging compounds, and incorporating textual references when possible.

I made efforts to adhere closely to the meaning and syntax of the text. However, I thought some adjustments were necessary to enhance the ease of reading and prevent monotony. For instance, I reorganized the additions of absolutive forms, shortened sentences for readability, and alleviated systematic repetition of words, especially verbs indicating actions that just occurred (e.g., "having said", "having thought", etc.), as well as coordinating conjunctions (*tadā*, *atha*, *pana*, etc.).

[21] The photographs of each manuscript can be found as supplementary material in the **Online Appendices** at: https://doi.org/10.69486/112.1.2024.7b.

[22] For a summary of these commonly found idiosyncrasies in so-called "Indochinese Pali", see Masefield 2008.

Synopsis

The narrative of Mahākassapa's *parinibbāna* starts with an episode not directly linked to his final lifetime but to his gathering and enshrining of the historical Buddha's relics—an episode mostly associated with the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (Commentary on the *Dīghanikāya* by Buddhaghosa)—thus ensuring the enduring presence of Buddha Gotama. Subsequently, Mahākassapa's awareness of his remaining life forces prompts him to choose the three Kukkuṭasampātā mountains as the site for his final *nibbāna*. This announcement unsettles both laypeople and monks, but their distress is alleviated by Mahākassapa's Dhamma sermon. This sermon mirrors the emotional shock experienced by King Ajātasattu, who is personally informed by Mahākassapa about the place and time of his *parinibbāna*. The arrival by air of the Thera at his funeral site is depicted in an extraordinary manner reminiscent of Buddha Gotama. Mahākassapa, after making two predictions—the arrival of the future Buddha Metteyya and the mountains closing in on him upon King Ajātasattu's arrival—enters meditation and attains *parinibbāna*.

Comparing this Pali text with the Thai version of Mahākassapa's *parinibbāna* found in the *Brah sāvaka-nibbāna* (Anonymous 1972) and translated by Lagirarde (2006: 93–105), reveals points of convergence. Both versions share the same narrative progression, except that the Thai rendition does not include the introductory segment borrowed from the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*. Notably, Pali keywords punctuate the Thai text, aligning with words present in the Pali version, suggesting that the latter was composed first and may have influenced the Thai narrative.

Additionally, Lagirarde (2006: 88–90) identified texts from northern Buddhist traditions that exhibit remarkable similarities with the Thai version but are absent in ancient Pali sources, such as the arrival of the future Buddha Metteyya and Mahākassapa blazing in the palm of the hand of the Blessed One.[23] This observation is also applicable to the Pali version presented here. A late Pali text, the *Vaṁsamālinī*, composed during the 15th–16th century in the Lan Na kingdom (present-day northern Thailand), narrates the final moments of Mahākassapa in a concise and versified form (Vaṁsam 4, 61–107). Currently, there is no evidence establishing the relationship connecting these two Pali texts, nor to guess which one was composed first, but it is noteworthy that the last moments of Mahākassapa presented below is an expanded version of the relevant section in the *Vaṁsamālinī*.

Pali Edition
[cf. Online Appendices]

> [1] <ga> vandāmi sirasā pāde buddho loke ca uttamo pavakkhāmi paraṁ puññaṁ taṁ nisāmetha sādhu vo.

[§1] amhākaṁ sammāsambuddho loke udapādi. lokahitaṁ sāvetvā nirindhano viya aggikkhandho anupādisesāya

[23] For the Mahākāśyapa's connection with Maitreya in Mahāyāna Buddhism, see Silk 2003 and Huard 2020.

nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyi. [24]parinibbute bhagavati lokanāthe ath' āyasmā Mahākassapo pañcasatamattehi Sattapaṇṇaṁ guhādvāre dhammavinayasaṅgītiṁ katvā tasmiṁ yeva Rājagahe Veḷuvanamahāvihāre[25] bhikkhusaṁghena vihāsi. tadā Ajātasatturājā[26] Mahākassapattheraṁ tathāgataṁ viya maññamāno theraṁ sabhikkhusaṁghaṁ[27] catūhi paccayehi sakkaccam eva upaṭṭhapesi. ekadā[28] kira samaye āyasmā Mahākassapo dhātūnaṁ antarāyaṁ disvā cintesi "sace[29] kho panāhaṁ dhātunidhānaṁ na karissāmi. na cirass' eva[30] dhātuyo antaradhāyissanti. handāhaṁ bhagavato dhātunidhānaṁ karissāmi. dhātūsu pana thitāsu buddhā[31] thitā nāma hontī" ti[32] cintetvā ca pana[33] thero[34] Ajātasatturājānaṁ upasaṅkamitvā "mahārāja ekaṁ[35] dhātunidhānaṁ kātuṁ vaṭṭatī" ti āha.

rājā[36] "sādhu bhante" ti therassa vacanaṁ sirasā sampaṭicchitvā "nidhānakamman tāva[37] bhante mama[38] hotu. sesadhātuyo pana kathaṁ āharissāmī"[39] ti āha.[40]"na kho mahārāja dhātu-āharaṇaṁ tuyhaṁ[41] bhāro. amhākam eva bhāro" ti. "sādhu bhante tumhe dhātuyo āharatha ahaṁ nidhānaṁ karissāmī" ti. Mahākassapatthero[42] tesaṁ tesaṁ rājakulānaṁ paricaraṇamattam[43] eva ṭhapetvā sesadhātuyo āhari. Rāmagāme pana[44] dhātuyo nāgā parigaṇhiṁsu. tāsaṁ[45] antarāyo natthi "anāgate Laṅkādīpe Mahāvihāre Mahācetiyaṅgamhi[46] nidahissantī" ti tasmā thero tāsaṁ na āharithā.[47] sesehi sattahi nagarehi dhātuyo āharitvā Rājagahassa pācīnadisābhāge ṭhatvā[48] "imasmiṁ ṭhāne yo pāsāṇo atthi so antaradhāyatu,[49] paṁsuṁ visuddhā hotu, udakaṁ mā uṭṭhahatū" ti adhiṭṭhāsi.

[§2] atha rājā taṁ ṭhānaṁ manusse khaṇāpetvā tato uddhatapaṁsunā iṭṭhakā kāretvā asītimahāsāvakānaṁ cetiyāni kāreti.[50] "idha rājā kiṁ kāretī" ti pucchantānaṁ pi. mahāsāvakānaṁ cetiyānī" ti vadanti.[51] na koci dhātunidhānabhāvaṁ jā<gā>nāti.

asītihatthampamāne gambhīre tasmiṁ[52] padese jāte asītimahāsāvakānaṁ cetiyāni kārāpetvā[53] heṭṭhā lohasaṇṭha-

[24] B starts here with *tato paraṁ mahākassapattheraṁ parinibbānaṁ vaṇṇayissāma* instead of *parinibbute bhagavati lokanāthe.*

[25] A *Veḷuvanamahāvihāre āyasmā Mahākassapatthero.*

[26] B *sa aggarājā.*

[27] A not mentioned (n.m.).

[28] B *ekasmiṁ.*

[29] B *ce.*

[30] B *cirass'eva* is *cirassa va.*

[31] B n.m.

[32] A, C *hontī ti* is *honti.*

[33] B *ca pana* is n.m.

[34] From here until §4 the text refers with slight modifications to Sv II 611, 5–613, 11 and Thūp 181, 3–183, 4.

[35] B *evaṁ.*

[36] A n.m.

[37] A *ca.* B *va.*

[38] B *mama bhāro.*

[39] B, C *āharāmī.*

[40] B *n.m.*

[41] B *tumha.*

[42] B *Mahākassapatthero atha.*

[43] B *paricaraṇaṁ mattam.*

[44] B n.m.

[45] A *tesaṁ.*

[46] B *mahācetiyamhi.*

[47] B *tāsaṁ na āharithā* is *tāni nāhariṁsu.*

[48] A *thapetvā*

[49] A *antaradhātu ti paṁsu viya visuddhā hotu.*

[50] A *asīti mahāsāvakānaṁ cetiyāni kāreti* is n.m.

[51] B n.m.

[52] B *imasmiṁ.*

[53] B *asītimahāsāvakānaṁ cetiyāni kārāpetvā* is n.m.

raṁ saṇṭharāpetvā tattha Thūpārāme cetiyagharappamāṇaṁ[54] tambalohamayaṁ gehaṁ kārāpetvā aṭṭha aṭṭha haricandanāmaye[55] karaṇḍe ca thūpe ca kārāpesi.

ath' assa bhagavato dhātuyo haricandanakaraṇḍe pakkhipitvā taṁ haricandanakaraṇḍaṁ aññasmiṁ haricandanakaraṇḍe pakkhipi. taṁ pi aññasmin ti evaṁ aṭṭha haricandanakaraṇḍe ekato katvā eten' ev'[56] upāyena te aṭṭha haricandanakaraṇḍe aṭṭhasu[57] haricandanathūpesu pakkhipi. [58]aṭṭha haricandanathūpe aṭṭha ca haricandanakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha lohitacandanakaraṇḍe aṭṭhasu[59] lohitacandanathūpesu [pakkhipi]. [aṭṭha lohitacandanathūpe] aṭṭhasu dantakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. [aṭṭha dantakaraṇḍe] aṭṭhasu dantathūpesu pakkhipi. [aṭṭha dantathūpe aṭṭhasu sabbaratanakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi.] aṭṭha sabbaratana karaṇḍe aṭṭhasu sabbaratanathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha sabbaratanathūpe aṭṭhasu suvaṇṇakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi.

aṭṭha suvaṇṇakaraṇḍe aṭṭhasu suvaṇṇathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha suvaṇṇathūpe aṭṭhasu rajatakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha rajatakaraṇḍe aṭṭhasu rajatathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha rajatathūpe aṭṭhasu maṇikaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha maṇikaraṇḍe [aṭṭhasu] maṇithūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha maṇithūpe aṭṭhasu lohitaṅkakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha lohitaṅkakaraṇḍe aṭṭha lohitaṅkathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha lohitaṅkathūpe aṭṭhasu masāragallakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi.

aṭṭha masāragallakaraṇḍe aṭṭhasu masāragallathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha masāragallathūpe aṭṭhasu phalikamayakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha phalikamayakaraṇḍe aṭṭhasu phalikamayathūpesu pakkhipi. sabbuparimaphaḷikamayacetiyaṁ Thūpārāmacetiyappāmaṇaṁ[60] hoti. upari[61] sabbaratanamayaṁ gehaṁ kāresi. tassa[62] upari suvaṇṇamayaṁ gehaṁ. tassa upari rajatamayaṁ gehaṁ tassa upari tambalohamayaṁ gehaṁ kāresi.[63] tattha[64] sabbaratanamayabālukaṁ okiritvā jalajathalajapupphasahassāni[65] vippakiritvā.[66]aḍḍhacchaṭṭhāni jāṭakasatāni asītimahāthere ca[67] Suddhodanamahārājañ ca[68] Mahāmāyādeviñ ca satta sahajāte thāpeti[69] sabbāni tāni suvaṇṇamayāneva[70] kāretvā pañcasate pañcasate suvaṇṇarajatamaye puṇṇaghaṭe thapesi. pañcasate suvaṇṇadīpe[71] pañcasate rajataḍīpe[72] kāretvā sugandhatelaṁ paripūretvā[73] tesu dukūlavaṭṭiyo thapesi.

[54] A *thūpārāmacetiyappamāṇaṁ*.

[55] B *haricandanādimaye*.

[56] A n.m.

[57] B *aṭṭha*.

[58] The passage that follows is incomplete in A until *sabbuparimaphaḷikamayacetiyaṁ*: *aṭṭhasu haricandanathūpesu. aṭṭha lohitacandanakaraṇḍe aṭṭhasu lohitacandanathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu dantakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu dantathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu sabbaratanakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu suvaṇṇakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha suvaṇṇakaraṇḍe aṭṭhasu suvaṇṇathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha rajatakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu rajatathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu maṇikaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu lohitaṅgakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha lohitaṅgathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu masāragallakaraṇḍesu pakkhipi. aṭṭha masāragallathūpesu pakkhipi. aṭṭhasu phalikakaraṇḍe pakkhipi.*

[59] B *aṭṭha*.

[60] B *thūpārāme cetiyappāmaṇaṁ*.

[61] B *tattha upari*.

[62] B *tattha upari*.

[63] B *kāretvā*.

[64] B n.m.

[65] B *jalajalapupphānaṁ sahassāni*.

[66] B *kiritvā*.

[67] A n.m.

[68] B *suddhodhanamahārājānañ ca*.

[69] A, B *ṭhāti*.

[70] A *suvaṇṇamayāni evam akāsi*.

[71] A *suvaṇṇadīpake*.

[72] A *pañcasate rajaṭadīpe* is n.m.

[73] B *sugandhatelaṁ paripūretvā* is *sugandhatelassa pūretvā*.

[§3] athāyasmā Mahākassapo "mālā mā milāyantu, gandhā mā hāyantu, dīpā mā vijjhāyantū"[74] ti adhiṭṭhāsi. suvaṇṇapatte akkharāni likkhāpesi "anāgate Piyadāso nāma kumāro chattaṁ ussāpetvā Asoko nāma[75] dhammarājā bhavissati. so imā[76] dhātuyo vitthārikā kari<gi>ssatī" ti[77].

atha rājā Ajātasattu[78] r-attano[79] adhikāraṁ disvā pītibharitahadayo ativaḍḍhamānasaddho[80] sabbapasādhanehi[81] pūjetvā pañcapatiṭṭhitena vanditvā uṭṭhahitvā ādito paṭṭhāya dvāraṁ pidahitvā nikkhami.[82] so tambalohadvāraṁ pidahitvā aviñjanarajjuyaṁ kuñcika-muddikaṁ bandhi.[83] tatth' eva[84] mahantaṁ maṇikkhandhaṁ upari ṭhapesi.[85] "anāgate daḷiddarājā imaṁ maṇiṁ gahetvā dhātunaṁ sakkāraṁ karontū" ti akkharaṁ chindāpesi.[86]

atha Sakko devarājā dhāturakkha-ṇatthaṁ[87] Vissukammaṁ āmantetvā "tāta Ajātasattunā dhātunidhānaṁ kataṁ, tattha ārakkhaṁ paṭṭhapehī" ti pahiṇi. so āgantvā vāḷasaṁghāṭa-yantaṁ[88] yojesi. kaṭṭharūpakāni tasmiṁ dhātu gabbhe phalikavaṇṇakhagge[89] gahetvā vātasadisena vegena anupariyāyantaṁ[90] yojetvā ekāya āniyā bandhitvā sakaṭṭhānam eva gato[91] samantato giñjakāvasathākārena[92] silāparikkhepaṁ katvā tassa[93] upari ekāya silāya pidahitvā paṁsuṁ pakkhipitvā bhūmisamaṁ katvā[94] tassa upari pāsānamayaṁ thūpaṁ paṭiṭṭhāpesi.

[§4] evaṁ niṭṭhite dhātunidhāne [95]āyasmā Mahākassapo tasmiṁ yeva Veḷuvanārāme viharanto kālaṁ vītināmesi. evaṁ[96] gate kāle thero ekasmiṁ rattibhāgasamaye[97] phalasamā-pattito vuṭṭhāya attano āyusaṁkhāraṁ[98] olokesi "ahaṁ kho dāni vīsavassasata-kāyuko kittako me āyusaṁkhāro[99] pavattissatī" ti vicārento[100] attano āyusaṁkhārassa parikkhīṇabhāvaṁ ñātvā "kadā nu kho parinibbāyissāmī" ti. "ajj' eva pabhātāya rattisamaye[101] parinib-bāyissāmī" ti. "tasmiṁ[102] kattha parinibbāyissāmī" ti[103] yeva Rājagaha-

[74] B *dīpā mā vijjhāyantū* is n.m.

[75] A n.m.

[76] A n.m.

[77] A *ti va suvaṇṇapattaṁ ca thapesi.*

[78] B n.m.

[79] B *attano.*

[80] A *ativaḍhamānasaddhā.* B *abhivaḍhamānasaddho.*

[81] B *°ppasādhanehi.*

[82] A *nikkhamitvā.*

[83] B *bandhitvā.*

[84] B *tato va.*

[85] B *vikaritvā.*

[86] A, C *likkhāpetvā thapesi.*

[87] B *dhātuparirakkhaṇatthaṁ.*

[88] A, B read *balaṁ saṁghāṭayantaṁ*. It should probably refer to *vāḷasaṁghāṭayantaṁ* as in the Sv II and Thūp editions. Emend.

[89] B *phalikavaṇṇe khagge.*

[90] B *anupariyāyanti yantaṁ.*

[91] B *sakaṭṭhānam eva gato* is n.m.

[92] A *bhittivasathāgārena.*

[93] B n.m.

[94] A *paṁsuṁ pakkhipitvā bhūmisamaṁ katvā* is *paṁsu okiritvā bhūmiyaṁ sammaṁ katvā.*

[95] C starts here.

[96] C inserts just before *appamādena satthu sāsane paṭipajjathā ti ovadati.*

[97] C *rattibhāge samaye.*

[98] A *āyusaṁkhāraṁ olokesi ahaṁ kho dāni vissavassasatikāyuko kittako me āyusaṁkhārā pavattisatī ti vicārento* is n.m.

[99] A, B *āyusaṁkhārā.*

[100] C *vicāresi.*

[101] B, C *ca rattiyā.*

[102] C n.m.

[103] A *tasmiṁ kattha parinibbāyissāmī ti* is *tasmiṁ.* B *kattha parinibbāyissāmī ti.*

nagare[104] parivattake bhūmipadese[105] olokento "Kukkuṭasampātānaṁ[106] tiṇṇaṁ pabbatānaṁ antare parinibbāyissāmī" ti. so[107] evaṁ cintetvā pabhātāya[108] rattiyā sarīrapatijagganaṁ[109] katvā bhikkhusaṁghaṁ sannipātetvā etad avoca "āvuso tumhe appamādena satthu sāsanaṁ paṭipajjatha, appamādena sampādethā.[110] ahaṁ hi āvuso parikkhīṇāyusaṁkhāro,[111] ajj' eva sāyaṇhasamaye Kukkuṭasampātānaṁ[112] tiṇṇaṁ pabbatānaṁ antare parinibbāyissāmī" ti.

atha ye puthujjanabhikkhū therassa parinibbānaṁ[113] sutvā[114] attānaṁ saṇṭhāretuṁ asakkontā paridevimsu "aho anāthā vata mayaṁ bhavissāma.[115] satthā parinibbuto pi samāno[116] ayyassa dharamāne dharamānam[117] iva satthāraṁ maññāma[118] etarahi pana[119] ayyo pari<gī>nibbāyissati. ko nu kho amhākaṁ ovādānusāsanaṁ dadeyyā" ti. khiṇāsavānaṁ pana[120] dhammasaṁvego udapādi. yathā āha[121]:

[2] "aniccā vata saṁkhārā
uppādava yadhammino
uppajjitvā nirujjhanti
tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho"[122] ti.[123]
[D II 373, 8–9; S I 158, 31–32; Th 1168; etc.]

thero bhikkhusaṁghaṁ aniccatādipatisaṁyutāya[124] dhammakathāya[125] samassāsetvā āha:[126]

[3] "aniccā sabbasaṁkhārā
sabbabuddhehi desitā
[c]sāyam eke na dissanti
[d]pāto diṭṭhā bahū janā
[e]pāto n-eke na dissanti
[f]sāyaṁ diṭṭhā bahū janā.
[[cdef]Ja IV 127, 5–6*; Ja VI 28, 4–5*]

[4] ajj' eva kiccaṁ ātappaṁ
ko jaññā maraṇaṁ suve
na hi no saṁgaran tena
mahāsenena maccunā.
[Ja VI 28, 6–7*]

[5] mā bāḷhaṁ paridevatha
esā lokassa dhammatā
aniccā [sabba]saṁkhārā
sabbabuddhehi desitā"
ti.[127]

[104] C *rājagahe*.

[105] B, C *°ppadese*.

[106] Manuscripts read *°sampāta* and *°sapāta*. I maintain *°sampāta* (PED = "falling together, concurrence, collision") whose meaning fits with the development of the text.

[107] C n.m.

[108] C *vibhātāya*.

[109] B, C *patijagganaṁ*.

[110] A *appamādena sampādethā* is n.m.

[111] A n.m.

[112] A n.m.

[113] C *parinibbānabhāvaṁ*.

[114] C *ñatvā*

[115] Phrase is B *anāthā vata mayaṁ*, C *anāthā va bhavissāma*.

[116] C *samāno pi*.

[117] B *dharamāne dharamānam* is *dhammānam*.

[118] C *maññamāno*.

[119] C n.m.

[120] C n.m.

[121] B *yathā āha... vupasamo sukho ti* is *aho aniccā saṁkhārā addhū(?)vā parināma dhammā ti*. C *yathā āha* is *bhikkhu āhaṁsu*.

[122] C adds *aho aniccā sabbasaṁkhārā āyunāparināma hoti*.

[123] C n.m.

[124] B n.m.

[125] B *dhammiyā kathāya*.

[126] A, B *samassāsetvā āha* is *samassāsetvā puna bhikkhusaṁghaṁ etad avoca*.

[127] Stanzas 3 to 5 are only found in C but I assume they were also present in A as they are introduced by *āha*.

[§5] "sace[128] pana[129] tumhe mama parinibbānaṁ passitukāmā Kukkuṭasampātapabbatabhūmibhāg[130] sannipatitvā passathā" ti vatvā[131] thero piṇḍapātasamaye[132] uṭṭhāy' āsanā dupaṭṭaṁ nivāsetvā vijjulatākārasadisaṁ[133] kāyabandhanaṁ bandhitvā tikkhatuṁ[134] pathavīkampanasamatthaṁ jinacīvaradattiyaṁ meghavaṇṇaṁ[135] nirantara-aggaphaladānapupphaphalatthirukkhaṁ paṁsukūlamahācīvaraṁ pārupitvā[136] vikasitaniluppalam iva bhamarapakkhavaṇṇaṁ pattavaraṁ[137] ādāya. damatho viya mahānāgo sīho viya[138] dhīragamano santindriyo[139] santamānaso yuggamattapekkhamāno sabbajitasiriyā[140] sobhamāno Rājagahaṁ piṇḍāya pāvisi.[141]

thero[142] sapadānapiṇḍāya vicaritvā[143] piṇḍapātapatikkanto bhattakiccam akāsi. tadā bhikkhusaṁgho pi[144] "bhattakiccaṁ katvā therassa parinibbānaṁ passissāmā" ti aññamaññaṁ āmantetvā sakkāram ādāya ito cito[145] nikkhamitvā sannipatiṁsu. aññe pi devamanussā therassa parinibbānaṁ sutvā gandhamālādīni pūjāsakkārāni[146] ādāya Kukkuṭasampāṭapabbatabhūmibhāge[147] sannipatiṁsu.

Mahākassapatthero pi bhattakicco hutvā [148]evaṁ samacintesi[149] Ajātasatturājā amhākaṁ bahūpaṇṇākāro[150] saṁghassa catupaccayadāyako[151] buddhasāsanaṁ paggahito anapaloketvā[152] [na] tāva parinibbāyissāmī" ti cintevā thero[153] uṭṭhāy'[154] āsanā sunivattho supāruto majjhantikasamaye Rājagahaṁ pāvisi. therassa pavisanakāle[155] Ajātasatturājā[156] sirigabbhaṁ pavisitvā seyyaṁ kappesi.[157] atha rājamaccā theraṁ pavisantaṁ disvā "ayyo[158] amhākaṁ raññho[159] upajjhāyo divase[160] āgato, kinnu[161] kho

[128] B *sabbe.*

[129] C n.m.

[130] B *kukuṭapabbaṭa°*. C *kukkuṭasampātabhūmibhāge*.

[131] A n.m.

[132] B, C *piṇḍapātasamaye sampatte*.

[133] B *vijjulatākāraṁ*.

[134] B *navakkhatuṁ.*

[135] *nirantaraṁ aggaphaladānapupphaphalatthirukkhaṁ paṁsukūlamahācīvaraṁ* is B *nirantarattaṁ laddānaṁ puthulagurukaṁ paṁsukūlamahācīvaraṁ*. C *nirantaraaggadānaṁ pajularakaṁ paṁsukulacivaraṁ*.

[136] *vikasitaniluppalam iva bhamarapakkhavaṇṇaṁ* is A *vikasitaniluppalapattabhamarapuñjāvaṇṇaṁ*. B *vitasitakomalalitasuvaṇṇakaṇḍalasubhākārehi bhumarapuñjavaṇṇa.*

[137] B *pattacivaraṁ*. C *pattaṁ.*

[138] *mahānāgo sīho viya* is A *dhammakā dhammiko mahānāgo viya*. B *maṇidhammacammito viya mahānāgo sīho.*
viya

[139] C n.m.

[140] C *pabbajitasiriyā*

[141] A, C *pavisitvā.*

[142] A, C n.m.

[143] B *sapadānapiṇḍāya vicaritvā* is *sapadānaṁ piṇḍāya caritvā.*

[144] B n.m.

[145] B *ito ca.*

[146] B *pūjāsakkārādīni*.

[147] C *Kukkuṭasapāṭapabbatassa*.

[148] A is *na tāva parinibbāyissāmī ti* from here until *cintetvā thero.*

[149] B *evaṁ samacintesi* is *cintetvā.*

[150] B *bahūpakāro.*

[151] B *paccayadāyako ratanattayamāmako.*

[152] B *gameva apaloketvā.*

[153] A *cintetvā thero* is n.m. B *tāva parinibbāyissāmī ti cintevā* is n.m.

[154] B *cintevā thero uṭṭhāy'*. C *thero uṭṭhāy'.*

[155] C *therassa pavisanakāle* is n.m.

[156] B *rājābhutto hutvā*. C *rājābhuttā hutvā*.

[157] B *kappeti*.

[158] A, C *ayaṁ*.

[159] C n.m.

[160] B *divādivasseva.* C *divādivase yeva*.

[161] C *kiṁ nu.*

kāraṇan" ti cintetvā[162] āsanā vuṭṭhāya[163] theraṁ paccugantvā vanditvā aṭṭhaṁsu.[164] thero amacce pucchi [165]"upāsakā kuhiṁ rājā" ti. "sayanam upagato bhante" ti vatvā te[166] therassa āgatakāraṇaṁ[167] pucchiṁsu "kena kāraṇena bhante āgatatthā"[168] ti. "āma upāsakā ahaṁ rājānaṁ āpucchitvā ajjeva sāyaṇhe[169] parinibbāyissāmī" ti. "kuhiṁ bhante[170] parinibbāyissathā"ti."Kukkuṭasampātapabbatānaṁ antare" ti.

[§6] etta<gu>kam eva vatvā nikkhamitvā[171] thero vihāre agamāsi.[172] sammajjaniṁgahetvā[173]samajjanādikaṁ karaṇīyaṁ vattaṁ katvā mahatā bhikkhusaṁghena parivuto yena Kukkuṭasampātapabbato tena pāyāsi. so tattha gantvā tatth' eva[174] parinibbānatthaṁ[175] tasmiṁ kāle[176] gagaṇatalaṁ abbhugantvā[177] sattatālamatte bhūmitale dissamānakāye ṭhatvā pathamaṁ dakkhīṇakāyato[178] aggijāle[179] vissajjesi. vāmakāyato jaladhārā[180] vissajjesi. puna[181] vāmakāyato[182] analaṁ[183] visajjesi.[184] puna dakkhiṇakāyato toyaṁ vissajjesi. ekadā[185] uparimakāyato udakaṁ[186] [187]heṭṭhimakāyato pāvakaṁ puna heṭṭhimakāyato vāri vissajjesi. uparimakāyato pāvakaṁ vissajjesi. [188]ekadā sakalasarīrato kaṇhavattanijalā vissajjesi. ekadā sakalasarīrato ambudhārā vissajjesi. [189]ekadā samuggaratansaṅkiṇṇaṁ vividhasamūhaṁ mahāsāgaraṁ[190] virājitaphalajalasāgararūpaṁ dassesi. ekadā supupphitajalitataruṇataruvirājitaṁ[191] Himavantapabbatarūpaṁ[192] dassesi. ekadā sabbajalaphullaṁ[193] pañcavaṇṇapadumasañchannaṁ salilatalaṁ[194] satta[195] mahāsararūpaṁ dassesi.[196] ekadā dvādasayojanaparimaṇḍalacatu-

[162] A, B n.m.

[163] B *athāsanā vuṭṭhā*. C *āsanā vuṭṭhāya* is n.m.

[164] A *aṭṭhasuṁ*. C n.m.

[165] C the text is n.m. from here until *pucchiṁsu*.

[166] B n.m.

[167] B *therassa āgatakāraṇaṁ* is *therass' āgamanakāraṇaṁ*.

[168] B *āgatā*.

[169] C *sāyaṇhasamaye*.

[170] C *bhante tumhe*.

[171] B *nikkhami*.

[172] B n.m.

[173] B n.m.

[174] B *so tattha gantvā tatth' eva parinibbānatthaṁ* is *so taṁ ṭhānaṁ patvā gato tatth' eva parinibbānadassanatthaṁ*.

[175] C *nibbānanatthaṁ*.

[176] B *tasmiṁ kale* is n.m.

[177] B *abbhugaccha*.

[178] B *dakkhīṇam kāyato*.

[179] B *aggījālā*.

[180] C *jaladhārāni*.

[181] B *tato*. C *puna tato*.

[182] A *bāmakāyato*.

[183] C *aggijalaṁ*.

[184] B n.m.

[185] B *tathā*.

[186] B *udakaṁ puna*.

[187] B is *puna heṭṭhimakāyato* from here until the end of the phrase.

[188] *ekadā sakalasarirato kaṇhavattanijālā visajjesi* is A *ekadā sakalasarīre aggijalaṁ visajjesi*. C *ekadā sakalasarirato kaṇha-aggijalaṁ vissajjesi*.

[189] *ekadā samutaratanasaṅkiṇaṁ vividhasamuho mahāsāgaro virājitaphalajalasāgararūpaṁ dassesi* is B *ekadā muddasamiraṇasamiraṇasamigagaraṅgaphe ṇālivirājitajalaṁ sāgararūpaṁ dassetvā dhammaṁ desesi*. C *ekadā samuddhāggataraṁ gate saṁkiṇṇaṁ vividhavicittasamuha oghataravirajitatalaṁ sāgararūpaṁ dassesi*.

[190] All the manuscripts read *vividhasamūho mahāsāgaro* in the nominative case. I assume that these compounds should be in the accusative case and amend them.

[191] B *supupphitaphalatataruṇataruvaravirājitaṁ*. C *supuppitaphussitatarukataruvirājita*.

[192] C *himavantaṁ pabbata°*.

[193] A *sabbapāri°*. B *sabbapāri°*. C *sabbajalaphulla*.

[194] C *salilatalamahāsāgararūpaṁ*.

[195] B n.m.

[196] B *dasseti*.

raṅgāya[197] senāya parivutaṁ[198] sattaratanasamannāgataṁ mahācakkavattirūpaṁ dassesi.[199] ekadā tigāvutappamāṇaṁ[200] nānābharaṇapatimaṇḍitaṁ Tāvatiṁsagaṇaparivāritaṁ[201] devarājarūpaṁ dassesi.[202] ekadā tiyojanattabhāvasamannāgataṁ[203]brahmagaṇaparivuttaṁ[204] Mahābrahmārūpaṁ[205] dassesi. evaṁ thero nānāvidha-iddhibalena pāṭihāraṁ[206] dassento[207] dhammaṁ desesi.[208]

[§7] ākāsato[209] otaritvā bhikkhusaṁghaṁ[210] āpucchitvā tiṇṇaṁ pabbatānaṁantarepavisitvā"etthevāhaṁ[211] parinibbāyissāmī" ti cintesi. ath' assa cintitasamanantaram eva[212] devasaṁghā sayanamañcaṁ aṭṭharisuṁ.[213] mañcassa samantato parivāretvā nīluppalakamalakumudapuṇḍarikabharite puṇṇaghaṭe patiṭṭhapesuṁ. mañcassa catūsu koṇea su[214] [215]cattāro dhūpakappalle cattāro padīpe ṭhapesuṁ. anekāni pūjāsakkārāni anagghacelavitāni[216] pupphaparāgādīni[217] karisuṁ.[218] thero pi[219] kho sayanamañcaṁ abhirūyhitvā[220] nisinno aṭṭhasamāpattī[221] samāpajji.[222] so samā<gū>pattito[223] vuṭṭhāya evaṁ[224] adhiṭṭhānaṁ[225] adhiṭṭhāsi. "yadā me āyusaṁkhāro ossaṭṭho,[226] ime tayo pabbatā aññamaññena[227] nikkujjitapatitākārā[228] gabbhasayanaṁ me[229] gaṇhantū" ti "imāni c' eva[230] pupphāni mā milāyantū" ti "ime[231] sabbe gandhadīpadhūpādayo mā nibbāyantū" ti.

yathā[232] ito[233] ca manussānaṁ vassasatato[234] āyu parihāyitvā[235] dasavassāyukāle antarakappe[236] bhavissati. antarakappe vivaṭṭe[237] manussā uddhaṁ āyunā vaḍḍhitvā asaṁkheyyāyukā[238] bhavissati.[239] tato tesu manussesu

[197] A *°caturaṅgaṇayā*. B, C *°parimaṇḍalaṁ caturaṅgiṇiyā*. Emend with *°parimaṇḍalacaturaṅgāya.*

[198] A *parivutto.*

[199] B *dasseti.*

[200] C *tigāvuttappamāṇābharaṇamaṇḍitaṁ.*

[201] C *tāvatiṁsabhavane devaccharaparivāritaṁ devarājarūpaṁ.*

[202] B *dasseti.*

[203] A *tiyojanabrahmavesaṁ*. C *tiyojanabrahmabhavana°*.

[204] B *brahmagaṇaparibyuha°*. C *brahmagaṇaparibyūhaṁ.*

[205] B *mahābrahmarūpaṁ*. C *brahmarūpaṁ.*

[206] A *iddhipāṭihāraṁ.*

[207] C *dassetvā.*

[208] B *desetvā*. C *desento.*

[209] B *ākāse thatvā ākāsato.*

[210] B *°saṅghañ ca.*

[211] A *etthañ cāhaṁ*. B *etthavāhaṁ.*

[212] C is *devasaṁghā sayanañ ca mañāpetvā mañcassa samantato parivāritaniluppalakamudapuṇḍarikapuṇṇaghaṭhe* from here until *puṇṇaghaṭe.*

[213] B *aṭṭhariṁsu.*

[214] C *kaṇṇesu pātvā*

[215] C the section from here until *thero pi kho* is n.m.

[216] A, C, *°celavitānaṁ.*

[217] A *pupphaparādini*. B *pupphamahādipāni.*

[218] B *pupphamahādipāni.*

[219] B n.m.

[220] C *āruyhitvā.*

[221] A *phala°*. C *samāpattiṁ.*

[222] C *samāpajjitvā.*

[223] B *phala°.*

[224] C n.m.

[225] B, C n.m.

[226] C *osattho.*

[227] C *aññamaññaṁ samāgantvā.*

[228] A, C *nikujjitapattākārā*. B *nikujjitapattā ākārā.*

[229] C *m-eva.*

[230] C *eva.*

[231] B *ime cattārādipā ca dhupā ca mā nibbāyantū ti.* C *ime sabbe gandhadīpadhūpādayo mā nibbāyantū ti* is *ime cattāro padipā ca mā nibbāyantu ime dhupā ca mā pahāyantū ti puna adhitthāsi.*

[232] A, C *yadā.*

[233] C n.m.

[234] B *vassānaṁ vassatato.*

[235] B *parihāritvā*. C *parihāyati.*

[236] B *°kappā.*

[237] B *atīte.*

[238] B *asaṁkheyyaṁ.*

[239] B *bhavissanti.*

parihāyitvā asītivassasahassāyukesu vattesu[240] yojanamattaṁ abhirūyhāya mahāpathaviyā tenāha porāṇā.[241] tadā[242] Ariyametteyyo buddho[243] loke uppajjissati so[244] dhammacakkaṁ pavattetvā[245] dvādasayojanāya[246] parisāya parivārito"[247] ti. imaṁ thānaṁ patvā sayam eva so bhagavā[248] mama sarīraṁ ukkhipitvā cakkalakkhaṇābhirañjitasurattamudutaluṇadakkhiṇahatthatale[249] patitthapetvā bhikkhusaṁghe[250] mama sarīraṁ dassesi[251] "passatha tumhe imaṁ theraṁ eso jeṭṭhabhātu-Gotamasammāsambuddhakāle[252] mahāsāvako Mahākassapo nāma terasadhutaṅgadharo. ayaṁ[253] paṁsukūliko paṁsukūlikassa ca[254] vaṇṇavādi. ayaṁ tecīvarako[255] tecīvarakassa[256] ca vaṇṇavādī.[257] ayaṁ sapadānacāriko sapadānaṁ cārikassa[258] vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ ekāsantiko[259] ekāsanikassa vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ pattapiṇḍiko pattapiṇḍikassa vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ khalupacchābhattiko khalupacchābhattikassa vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ araññiko araññikassa ca vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ rukkhamūlikassa vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ abbhokāsiko abbhokāsikassa vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ sosāniko sosānikassa vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ yathāsanthatiko yathāsanthatikassa vaṇṇavādī. ayaṁ nesajjiko nesajjikassa vaṇṇavādī. so pabbajitakālato patthāya yāva parinibbānato mañcapīthaṁ na pasāresi.[260]

atha dhutaṅgadharo[261] appiccho santuṭṭho āraddhavīriyo asaṁsaṭṭho kulena[262] vā gaṇena vā alaggamānaso[263] parisuddhajīvo. gagaṇatale puṇṇa-<ge> cando[264] viya buddhasāsane paññāto pākato[265] ahosi iti. bhagavā[266] Mahāpa-

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[240] B *jātesu*.

[241] B *tenāha porāṇā* is n.m. C *dasavassāyukāle* until here the manuscript reads *dasavassāyuko yeva manussānaṁ āvāho ca vivāho ca tesaṁ dvinnaṁ bhavissare añamañaṁ miggasañi sattānañ ca bhavassare tadā satṭhagarakappo sattānañ ca bhavissati hatthena gahitaṁ kiñci āvudhañ ca bhavissati te añamañaṁ vadhitvā na vinassanti ca mānussāniliyinavāye ca patvā gāvīsu ekikā te thapetvā vasesā ca vinassisanti ghāṭino sattāheva atikkante mettacittāya pāṇino pāṇāti?gāviratā kusalaṁ ācariṁ ste dasavīsatikānampitiṁsacattālissavassikā pañāsasatthikām pi sattati asitivassikā asītinavuttānam pi ayuvassasatāni va bhiyyo dhammaṁ carantesu honti dvevassasatāyukā bhiyyo dhammaṁ carentesu vassasataahassakā atirekaṁ carentesu koṭisatasahassakā bhiño dhammaṁ carentesu asaṁkheyyāyukā pa? puna sattāna?ānti jarāmaraṇamattano puna pi te pamajjhitvā na tesaṁ āyu ca pamāyati asṁkheyyāyukā sattakoṭisatasahassakā tato pi parihāyitvā asīti pa sahassakā tadā so jambūdipo ca sabbatthe vasamiddhiko yadā mahisamaṁ hoti bherisanaddakā viya akaṇḍakā agahaṇā.*

[242] B *tathā*.

[243] B *Ariyametteyyo buddho* is *Ariyametteyyo nāma sambuddho*. C n.m.

[244] A *uppajjissa*. B adds *ti so*.

[245] A inserts *manussānaṁ sadevakaṁ*.

[246] C *dvādasayojanaparisāya*.

[247] B, C *parivutto*.

[248] C *so bhagavā* is n.m.

[249] A, B *cakkalakkhaṇābhilañcite surattamudutaluṇadakkhiṇahatthatale*. C °*surattamudutaladakkhiṇahatthatale*.

[250] B °*saṁghamajjhe pade va manussānaṁ majjhe pa mama*.

[251] B *dassesati*. C *bhikkhusaṁghe mama sarīraṁ dassesi* is *bhikkhu saṁghamajjhe va dassessati*.

[252] A *mama jeṭṭhabhātā gotamasammāsambuddhakāle*. B *mama jjheṭṭhabhātuno Gotamasammāsambuddhassa kāle*. C *mama jheṭṭhakabhātaragotamakāle*.

[253] In the following development A gives systematically *ayaṁ*, B almost systematically, C gives always *sayaṁ*.

[254] C n.m.

[255] B *civariko*.

[256] B *cīvarakassa*. C *ticivarassa*.

[257] C *vaṇṇavādi sayaṁ piṇḍipātiko piṇḍipātikassa vaṇṇavādi*.

[258] C *sapadānaṁ cārikassa* is *sapadānacārikassa*.

[259] C *ekāsaniko*.

[260] B *pasāreti*.

[261] A, B *a-ukattha dhutaṅgadhāri*. C *dutaṁgadharādi*.

[262] A *kulesu vā gaṇesu*. B *kule vā gaṇesu vā*.

[263] C *alabbhamānaso*.

[264] B *paripuṇṇacando*.

[265] B n.m.

[266] A, B *so*.

thaviṁ[267] tanuṁ[268] katvā mayhaṁ guṇaṁ bahalaṁ[269] pakāsessati. Mahāsamuddaṁ uttānaṁ[270] katvā mayhaṁ guṇaṁ atigambhīraṁ pakāsessati. Sinerupabbatarājaṁ[271] nīcaṁ[272] katvā mayhaṁ[273] guṇaṁ uccataraṁ pakāsessati.

tasmiṁ khaṇe mama sarīrato aggijālā uṭṭhahitvā tathāgatassa karatale yeva mama sarīraṁ dahantī"[274] ti puna evaṁ[275] adiṭṭhāsi[276] "yadā[277] ca[278] Ajātasatturājā mama parinibbānaṁ[279] sutvā maṁ vanditukāmo imaṁ[280] ṭhānaṁ pāpuṇissati. tadā[281] ime tayo pabbatā apakkantu.[282] raññho pūjitāvasāne puna ime tayo pabbatā samāgacchantū" ti. evaṁ thero adhiṭṭhānaṁ adhiṭṭhāya[283] sayanamañce[284] nipajjitvā anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbāyi.

tasmiṁ khaṇe tayo[285] pabbatā therassa adhiṭṭhānubhāvena[286] samāgantvā nikujjitapattākārā hutvā ekaghanā[287] aṭṭhasuṁ.[288] atha sabbe te bhikkhusaṁghādevamanussā[289] ca pabbatapaṭicchāditaṁ[290] therassa sarīraṁ adisvā ekappahāren' eva ca[291] rodiṁsu.[292] bahibhāge pūjāsakkāraṁ akasuṁ. anekāni[293] acchariyāni[294] pātur ahesuṁ.[295]

[§8] tadā pana[296] rājamandire amaccā[297] tasmiṁ there parinibbānagate[298] mantayisuṁ[299] "sace rājā pabuddho therassa parinibbānabhāvaṁ sutvā therassa[300] daḷhasinehavasena balavasokasantāpena[301] cittahadayo[302] kālaṁ karissati. handa mayaṁ upāyena raññho jīvitaṁ rakkhissāmā" ti.

te evaṁ mantetvā[303] tāva devavejje āmantetvā taṁ pavuttiṁ vejjānaṁ[304] ācikkhipitvā[305] "kiṁ kātabban" ti pucchisuṁ. atha te[306] vejjā "tena hi osathappayogāni[307] sajjemā" ti āhasuṁ.[308]

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[267] C *Mahāpathavī.*

[268] B *pathavitanu.*

[269] B the text is n.m from here until *guṇaṁ atigambhīraṁ.*

[270] C *uttānakaṁ.*

[271] B *Sinerupabbatarājānaṁ*

[272] A, B, C *niccaṁ.* Emend with *nīcaṁ* which fits with the meaning of the text.

[273] B *mama.*

[274] A, B *dahantū.* C *dahantu.* Emend.

[275] B *evañ ca.*

[276] C *puna evaṁ adiṭṭhāsi* is n.m.

[277] B *yathā.*

[278] C n.m.

[279] C *parinibbānabavaṁ.*

[280] C *idaṁ.*

[281] B *tathā.*

[282] A add *ti.* B *apakkarontū ti.* C *upasaṁkamantu.*

[283] C *adhiṭṭhahitvā.*

[284] C *°mañcake.*

[285] B n.m.

[286] C *therassa adhiṭṭhānubhāvena is therassānubhāvena.*

[287] A, B *ekagaṇā.* C *ekaghatā.* Emended with *ekaghanā.*

[288] B, C *aṭṭhaṁsu.*

[289] B *°saṁghādayo deva°.* C *bhikkhū ca devamanussā.*

[290] C *°ditattā.*

[291] B, C n.m.

[292] B *rodiṁsu parideviṁsu.*

[293] B add. ca.

[294] A, B *acchiriyāni.* C *pāṭihāra-acchariyāni.*

[295] B *pāturahesun ti.*

[296] C n.m.

[297] B *amaccā gate.*

[298] B *there parinibbānagate* is *atha maccā.*

[299] C *mantayiṁsu.*

[300] C *there.*

[301] A *balavasokasantāpentā.*

[302] A *pitahadayo.* C *balavasokasantāpena cittahadayo* is *balavasoko sokaṁ sandhāretuṁ asakkonto santappitahadayo kālaṁ karissati.*

[303] A *cintetvā.* C *samacintevā.*

[304] C n.m.

[305] B *ācikkhiṁsu.* C *ācikkhitvā.*

[306] A n.m.

[307] A, C *osathapayogāni.*

[308] B, C *āhaṁsu.*

te[309] tāva-d-eva ekaṁ doṇiṁ[310] gahetvā uccharasassa[311] pūresuṁ. [312]ekaṁ doṇiṁ khīrassa pūresuṁ. ekaṁ doṇiṁ dadhimaṇḍassa pūresuṁ. ekaṁ doṇiṁ sappimaṇḍassa pūresuṁ. ekaṁ doṇiṁ gandhakalalassa pūresuṁ. [313]ekaṁ doṇiṁ mattikakalalassa pūresuṁ. ekaṁ doṇiṁ situdakassa pūresuṁ. [314]evaṁ sattadoṇiyo osathappayogānaṁ pūresuṁ. [315]aññāni[316] osathappayogāni sajjetvā raññho pavuddhakāle[317] āgamayamānā nisīdisuṁ.

atha rājā pabujjhitvā sayanato vuṭṭhāya gabbhato[318] nikkhamitvā mahātale[319] samussitasetachatte rājāpallaṅke[320] nisīdi. atha[321] amaccā [322]therassa gamanaṁ[323] raññho ārocayiṁsuṁ <gau> "deva tumhākaṁ uppajjhāyo Mahākassapathero idhāgato"[324] ti. "kena kāraṇenā"ti."tumhākaṁ āpucchanāyā"[325] ti.[326] "kuhiṁ gato so"[327] ti. "parinibbāyitukāmo[328] devā" ti. "kadā parinibbāyissatī[329] devā"[330] ti. "idāni sāyaṇhe devā" ti. taṁ[331] sutvā rājā therassa[332] daḷhasine-havassena[333] vissarittakhattiyamāno[334] attānaṁ upathambhetuṁ asakkonto balavasokasantāpena uṇhakāyo visaññi hutvā[335] nipatati. atha te vallabhāmaccādayo[336] rājānaṁ ukkhipitvā ucchurasadoṇiyaṁ nipajjāpesuṁ [337]puna[338] rājānaṁ ukkhipitvā khīradoṇiyaṁ nipajjāpesuṁ. rājā khirodakena patiladdhassāso[339] puna therassa gamanakāraṇaṁ[340] pucchi[341] tath' eva te[342] amaccā taṁ[343] kāraṇaṁ nivedesuṁ.[344] [345]eten' eva niyāmena sappimaṇḍadoṇiyaṁ nipajjāpesuṁ. tato gandhakalaladoṇiyaṁ[346] nipajjāpesuṁ.

atha rājāmaṇḍire devīsatasahassāni paridevamānā uraṁ pahārantā mahāparidevaṁ paridevantā rājamaṇḍiraṁ

[309] B n.m.

[310] A, B *ekaṁ doṇiṁ* is *ekadoṇiṁ.*

[311] B *madhurassa.*

[312] A the text is n.m. from here until *sappimaṇḍassa pūresuṁ*. B the text is *ekakhirassa ekaṁ dadhimandassa ekassappimaṇḍassa ekaṁ gandakalassa ekamatikalassa ekasitodakassa puresuṁ* from here until *situdakassa pūresuṁ*.

[313] C the phrase is n.m.

[314] *ekaṁ doṇiṁ osathappayogānaṁ pūresuṁ* is A *ekaṁ doṇiṁ osathappayogānaṁ pūresuṁ*. B *evaṁ sattadoṇiyo osathaṁ payogānaṁ puretvā.* C *evaṁ sattadoṇiyesu osathappayogāni pūresuṁ.*

[315] C the phrase is *amaccā raño pabuddhakākaṁ āgamayamanā nisidiṁsu.*

[316] B *aññāni pi.*

[317] B *pabuddhakālaṁ.*

[318] A *pāsādato*. C *gato.*

[319] A *mahāsayane*. C *mahātala°*.

[320] A n.m.

[321] B *atha te.*

[322] C the section is *tumhākaṁ āpucchanatthāya ther idha āgatato ti raño ārocesuṁ* from here until *kuhiṁ gato.*

[323] B *gatabhāvaṁ.*

[324] A, C *āgato.*

[325] B *āpucchanattā āgayā.*

[326] C *ti thero idha āgatā ti raño ārocesuṁ.*

[327] B the question is *kuhiṁ so gamissāmī.* C n.m.

[328] A *parinibbāyituṁ icchati.*

[329] A *parinibbāyituṁ icchati.*

[330] B, C n.m.

[331] B n.m.

[332] C *there.*

[333] C *daḷhasineha°*

[334] A *vissaritakhattiyapiti*. C *saritakkhalo yeva*.

[335] B n.m.

336 B *vallabhāmaccā.* C n.m.

[337] C the passage is n.m. from here until *sitodakadoṇiyaṁ nipajjāpesuṁ.*

[338] B *rājā ucchurasadoṇiyaṁ nipujji that' eva te amaccā.*

[339] A, C add. *hutvā.*

[340] A, B, C *gamaṇakāraṇaṁ.*

[341] A *pucchitvā.*

[342] A, C n.m.

[343] A, C n.m.

[344] A, C *nipajjāpesuṁ.*

[345] B here *rājā puna pi visañī hutvā khiradoṇiyaṁ nimujji amaccā rājānaṁ ukkhipitvā dadhidoṇiyaṁ nipajjhāpesuṁ.*

[346] B the text is n.m from here until *mattikākalaladoṇiyaṁ nipajjāpesuṁ.*

khobhayisuṁ. sakala-Rājagahanagare sabbe nagaravāsino manussā nagaramajjhe sannipatitvā rañño saddhiṁ paridevisuṁ. amaccā rājānaṁ ukkhipitvā gandhakalalato mattikākalaladoṇiyaṁ nipajjāpesuṁ tato sitodakadoṇiyaṁ nipajjāpesuṁ.

rājā[347] osathappayogavasena[348] puna[349] paṭiladdhassāso hutvā amacce[350] pucchi: "kuhiṁ bhonto me[351] upajjhāyo parinibbāyissatī"[352] ti. "Kukkuṭasampātapabbate devā" ti. tato[353] rājā sakala-Rājagahanagaraṁ[354] ugghosāpetvā[355] chattadhajjapaṭākabheri saṁkhapaṇavādīni vividhapūjūpakāraṇāni[356] ādaya caturaṅgaṇiyā senāya saddhiṁ nagarato nikkhamitvā Kukkuṭasampātapabbatatthānaṁ[357] gantvā[358] so[359] tayo pabbate ekaghaṇe disvā mahājanaṁ[360] pucchi "kuhiṁ bhonto me[361] upajjhāyassa sarīraṁ thitan"[362] ti. "imesaṁ tiṇṇaṁ[363] pabbatānam antare[364] devā" ti. rājā taṁ[365] sutvā cintesi[366] "kena nu kho upāyena me[367] upajjhāyassa[368] sarīraṁ pūjetuṁ sakkhissāmī"[369] ti vicāranto yeva sattadhābhijjamānahadayo viya sokena[370] ṭhāpetvā "saccakiriyaṁ[371] me upāyena atthī"[372] ti cintetvā[373] jāṇumaṇḍalaṁ[374] pathaviyaṁ patiṭṭhapetvā pañcaṅgapatitthitena[375] vanditvā añjaliṁ paggayha[376] sirasmiṁ <gai> patiṭṭhapetvā saccakiriyaṁ akāsi "bhonto[377] devatāyo[378] suṇantu me vacanaṁ. yadi saccaṁ upajjhāyo[379] me balasineho[380] atthi ime[381] tayo pabbatā apasakkantū"[382] ti.[383]

ath' assa[384] raññō ca adhiṭṭhānabalena[385] mahākassapattherassa[386] c' eva[387] adhiṭṭhānabalena[388] tayo pabbatā[389]

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[347] B *rājā sammā.*

[348] B *osathappayogaviriyena.* C *osathapayogena viriyena.*

[349] B, C n.m.

[350] B *amaccā.*

[351] B *maṁ.*

[352] B *parinibbātukāmo.* C *parinibbāyitukāmo.*

[353] C *tadā.*

[354] C *Rājagahe.*

[355] B *ghosāpetvā.*

[356] B *vidhapūjā upakaraṇāni.*

[357] B *kukkuṭasampātathānaṁ.* C *kukkuṭasampātapabbatam eva.*

[358] B *sampatto.* C *gato.*

[359] A n.m.

[360] C *mahājanānaṁ.*

[361] B, C *bhonto me* is *bhaṇe.*

[362] C *upajjhāyassa sarīraṁ thitan* is *upajjhāyo parinibbāyitukāmo.*

[363] C n.m.

[364] B *abbhantare.*

[365] B n.m.

[366] *rājā taṁ sutvā cintesi* is A *rājā taṁ sutvā.* B *rājā sutvā cintesi.* C *rājā cintesi.*

[367] B n.m. C *mama.*

[368] C *upajjhāyo.*

[369] A *pujjituṁ labhissāmī.*

[370] A *yeva sattadhābhijjamānahadayo viya sokena* is n.m. B *sattadhābhijjamānahadayo viya sokena* is *raño.*

[371] B *saccakiriyaṁ raño.*

[372] C the phrase is *saccakiriyaṁ me añño me upanissayo natthī.*

[373] C *cintetvā yena tayo pabbatā tena gantvā.*

[374] B *rājā yena pabbatā tena jāṇumaṇḍalaṁ.*

[375] A, B *pañcapatitthitena.*

[376] A n.m.

[377] A *bho.* B *bhontiyo.*

[378] A, C *devasaṁghāyo.*

[379] B *upajjhāyassa balavami ti me saddhā atthi.* C *upajjhāyassa balavami ti.*

[380] B n.m. C *sadā*

[381] A n.m.

[382] A *asakkontī.* B *amasakkarontū.* C *upasaṁkamantū.* I suggest *appasakontū* that fit with the meaning of the text.

[383] A *ti adhiṭṭhāsi.*

[384] B, C *indavajira°.*

[385] C *adhiṭṭhānubhāvena.*

[386] A *adhiṭṭhānabalena mahākassapattherassa* is *adhiṭṭhānamahākassapattherassa.*

[387] A *c' eva* is n.m.

[388] C *mahākassapattherassa c' eva adhiṭṭhānabalena* is n.m.

[389] A *tayo pabbatā* is *te pabbatā.*

indavajirabhinnā viya apasakkasuṁ.[390] atha mahājanakāyā[391] taṁ[392] acchiriyaṁ disvā[393] celukkhepaṁ[394] suvaṇṇarajaṭamaṇīmuttāhārāni anekasatasahassāni sādhukārāni pavattayisuṁ.[395] sabbe mahājanā pītibharitahadayā añjali paggayha "aho acchariyaṁ,[396] aho abhūtan" ti sādhukāraṁ pavattisuṁ.

[§9] atha rājā[397] sayanamañce[398] nipannaṁ devatāhi pūjitaṁ samānaṁ[399] therassa sarīraṁ disvā acchariyacittabhūtajāto[400] sañjatapītipāmojjo lambhitasīso vimhayasamānarūpo pavattanayanasalilo[401] rodamāno upasaṅkamitvā therassa pāde sīsaṁ[402] nipatitvā punappunaṁ vanditvā samussitachattadhajapaṭākacāmaragahitabandhitavicitavitānādidhūpagandhamālādīhi[403] suvaṇṇarajatapupphehi candanacuṇṇehi pujjetvā gandhatelapuṇṇaṁ suvaṇṇarajatakumbhasahassehi anekānaggharatanehi therassa sarīraṁ pūjesi. rājā tatth' eva ṭhāne sattāhaṁ mahāpūjaṁ akāsi. tathā sabbe devamanussā pi te sabbe sādhukāraṁ kīlaṁ kīlisuṁ.[404]

sattāhavasāne tayo[405] pabbatā puna[406] samāgantvā[407] ekaghaṇā ahesuṁ. [408]atha rājā saha mahājano[409] pabbatachannaṁ[410] therassa sarīraṁ[411] aṭṭhaṅgatasuriyamaṇḍalaṁ viya apassanto ativiya vilīnahadayo sañjātasoko paridevitvā nirāsako[412] ahosi. sabbe te mahājanā paridevisuṁ. mahākolāhalā ahesuṁ. atha rājā pūjaṁ katvā abhivādetvā khamāpetvā mahājanena saddhiṁ nagaraṁ pāvisi.[413]

therassa sarīraṁ yāvajjatanā pi tatth' eva atthi.[414] yāva Metteyyo sammāsambuddho[415] loke na uppajjati,

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[390] B *apasakkiṁsu*. C *upasaṁkamanti.*

[391] B *mahājanakāyo*.

[392] B *tam.*

[393] B *acchiriyabhūtajātā.*

[394] B *celukkhepaṅgalivipphāṭanādīni.*

[395] From *celukkhepaṁ* until here the text is C *celukkhevapituliyo pappotanādīni sādhukārasahassāni pavattayiṁsu.* A *celukkhepaṅgulivipphoṭanādīni sādhukārasatasahassāni vattayiṁsu rājā pi sayanamañce nipannaṁ devatāhi katapūjā sakārasammānaṁ therassa.*

[396] A, B, C *acchiriyaṁ*.

[397] C from *sabbe mahājanā* until here the text is n.m.

[398] C *mañcake*.

[399] C *pūjitaṁ samānaṁ* is *katapūjā sakkāramānaṁ*.

[400] B from *celukkhepaṁ suvaṇṇarajaṭamaṇīmuttāhārāni* until here the text is n.m. C *puna tayo pabbatā.*

[401] A, C *anapavatanayanasalilo*. B from *sañjatapītipāmojjo* until here the text is *acchaggitalisāsamuddaṇḍāyamāna tanu*ruddo *anupavatantitanayasaliladhārāparidasitavad anamaṇḍalo.*

[402] B n.m.

[403] A *samusitachattadhujjapaṭākacāmāragahitabandhita vicitavitānādinidhusugandhamālādhīhi*. B *samusitachattadhajjapaṭākadipadhupagandhahalādīhi*. C *samusitasattadhajjapaṭākadipadhupagandhahalādīhi*.

[404] B from *suvaṇṇarajatapupphehi candanacuṇṇehi* until here the text is *pūjehi rājā attho vacāne sattāhaṁ sādhu kilakili* from here until *kīlaṁ kīlisuṁ.*

[405] B *tayo puna*.

[406] B n.m.

[407] C from *sañjatapītipāmojjo lambhitasīso* until here the text is *acchariyapattajāto sañjātabalavasokakāyasambhitalomahaṁso dharayamānarūpo anuparivattaniggatanayanasaliladhārā paribyulhasitavacanaca rodamāno upasaṁkamitvā therassa pāde sirasā nipatitvā sattadhajjapaṭṭākadipadhupagandhamālādīhi pūjesi rājā ca tatth' eva ṭṭhāne sattāhaṁ sādhu kiḷaṁ kiḷisattāhāvasāne.*

[408] C the text is *pāvisi* is *atha rājā atthaṁ gamitaṁ sinerupavitthaṁ suriyaṁ vatherassasariraṁ disvā sañjātabalavasoko disvā abhivādetvā mahājanakehi saddhiṁ nagaraṁ pāvisi* from here until *nagaraṁ.*

[409] We would have expected *saha mahājanena* instead of *saha mahājano.*

[410] B *saha mahājano pabbatachannaṁ* is *rājā mahājanehi aṭṭhaṅgamitācalasikharappaviṭṭhasuriyaṁ viya therassa sariraṁ.*

[411] B *sarīraṁ adisvā.*

[412] A, B, C *nivāsako*.

[413] B from *aṭṭhaṅgatasuriyamaṇḍalaṁ viya* until here the text is *sañjātabalavasoko roditvā abhivādetvā mahājanakehi.*

[414] C phrase is *therassa sarīraṁ jjhāpessati*.

[415] B *ariyametteyyasammāsambuddho*.

na tāva vinassati na vikirīyati[416] na pūtibhāvam āpajjati.[417] anāgate Ariyametteyyo sammāsambuddho[418] loke [419]upajjamāno hatthatale therassa sarīrato aggijālā uṭṭhahitvā ghāyissati. Metteyyo sammāsambuddho pana tasmiṁ yeva thāne therassa dhātuthūpaṁ sabbalokehi pūjitaṁ kārāpessati.

ayaṁ Mahākassapattherassa parinibbānakathā niṭṭhitā.[420]

Pali Translation

> [1] I bow down with my head at [his] feet, the Buddha, the best in the world.
> I will relate what is meritorious, higher, do listen well!

[§1] Our Perfectly Enlightened One appeared in the world, spoke what is beneficial to the world, and attained the final *nibbāna*-element without residue, like a mass of fire without fuel. When the Blessed One, the leader of the world, attained final *nibbāna*, then the venerable Mahākassapa conducted the communal recitation of the doctrine and the discipline at the door of the Sattapaṇṇa cave with 500 [*bhikkhu*s = monks] and lived with the assembly at the Veḷuvana-mahāvihāra in Rājagaha.

At that time, King Ajātasattu attended respectfully with the four requisites the Thera [Elder] Mahākassapa with his assembly of *bhikkhu*s, considering him as the Tathāgata. At the same time, the Venerable Mahākassapa foresaw the danger to the relics [of the Buddha Gotama] and thought: "If I don't enshrine the relics, they will certainly disappear in a short time.[421] Well then, I will enshrine the relics of the Blessed One, and as long as the relics last, the buddhas will surely last". When the Thera had thought this, he came near King Ajātasattu and said: "Majesty, it is proper to make a single enshrining of the relics".

The King nodded with his head to the Thera's words saying: "Very well, Venerable!" He continued: "Venerable, let the [work] of enshrining be mine. But how will I bring back the other relics?" "Majesty, bringing the relics back is not your affair, it is our affair". "Very well, Venerable, bring these relics back! I will make the enshrining".

The Thera Mahākassapa left what was sufficient for the worship of the various ruling families and brought the rest of the relics. The Nāgas, however, took possession of the relics at Rāmagāma. There was no danger to them, therefore he did not bring them, [thinking]: "In the future, they will be enshrined in the Great *Cetiya* of the Mahāvihāra in Laṅkādīpa". He brought the relics from the other seven cities,

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[416] C *vikirayyati*.

[417] A from *na tāva vinassati* the phrase is *tāva therassa sarīraṁ na vissati na kiriyati na putibhāvam āpajjati.* C phrase is *yāva Metteyyo sammāsambuddho loke upajjissati na tāva vinassati na vikiriyati na putibhāvam āpajjati.*

[418] B, C *ariyametteyyasammāsambuddho*.

[419] From here until the end B is *uppajjitvā buddhassa hatthatale yeva sayaṁ therassa sariraṁ jhāyissati metteyyalokanāyako pana tasmiṁ yeva thāne therassa dhātūthūpaṁ lokapūjitaṁ kāressatī.* C *uppajjitvā attano hatthatale yeva sayaṁ therassa sariraṁ jjhāpessati metteyyalokanātho pana tasmiṁ yeva tthāne therassa dhātuthupaṁ lokehi pujitabbaṁ karissatī.*

[420] B phrase is *ti ayaṁ mahākassapattherassa parinibbānakathā niṭṭhitā.* C phrase is *ti ayaṁ mahākassapatherassa parinibbānakathā samattā.*

[421] Literally "these relics will certainly not disappear in a long time".

placed them in a region east of Rājagaha, and made a resolve: "Let the rock which is in this place disappear! Let the soil become clean! Let no water spring up!"

[§2] Then, the King had men dig this place, had bricks made of the soil, which was dug out from there, and built *cetiya*s for the 80 great disciples. Even for those questioning: "What is the king building here?" they replied: "*Cetiya*s for the 80 great disciples!" No one was aware of the presence of the enshrined relics.

When they made a place with a depth of 80 cubits, [the King] had *cetiya*s built for the 80 great disciples, got a layer of iron spread underneath, and had built upon it a house made of copper the size of the Cetiyaghara at the Thūpārāma. He had eight urns and eight *thūpa*s made of yellow sandalwood built. Then, he placed the relics of the Blessed One in a yellow sandalwood urn, placed that yellow sandalwood urn in another yellow sandalwood urn, and that in another. Thus, he placed eight yellow sandalwood urns together and, in the same manner, placed the eight yellow sandalwood urns inside eight yellow sandalwood *thūpa*s; he placed the eight yellow sandalwood *thūpa*s inside eight red sandalwood urns; the eight red sandalwood urns inside eight red sandalwood *thūpa*s; he placed [the eight red sandalwood *thūpa*s] inside eight ivory urns; he placed [the eight ivory urns] inside eight ivory *thūpa*s; he placed [the eight ivory *thūpa*s inside eight urns made of all sorts of jewels]; he placed the eight urns made of all sorts of jewels inside eight *thūpa*s of all sorts of jewels; he placed the eight *thūpa*s of all sorts of jewels inside eight golden urns; he placed the eight golden urns inside of eight golden *thūpa*s; he placed the eight golden *thūpa*s inside eight silver urns; he placed the eight silver urns inside eight silver *thūpa*s; he placed the eight silver *thūpa*s inside eight urns made of gems; he placed the eight urns made of gems inside [eight] *thūpa*s made of gems; he placed the eight *thūpa*s made of gems inside eight urns made of rubies; he placed the eight urns made of rubies inside eight *thūpa*s made of rubies; he placed the eight *thūpa*s made of rubies inside eight urns made of cat's-eyes stone; he placed the eight urns made of cat's-eyes stone inside eight *thūpa*s made of cat's-eyes stone; he placed the eight *thūpa*s made of cat's-eyes stone inside eight urns made of crystal; he placed the eight urns made of crystal inside eight *thūpa*s made of crystal.

The uppermost *cetiya* of crystal was the size of the Thūpārāma's *cetiya*. Over it, he had a house made of all sorts of jewels built. And over it had a golden house built; over it, he had a silver house built; over it, he had a copper house built. He had the dust of all sorts of jewels sprinkled there and thousands of land and water flowers scattered. He had the following fashioned out of gold: the 500 Jātakas, the 80 great elders, the great King Suddhodana, Mahāmayadevī, the seven of simultaneous births. He had 500 vessels full of gold and 500 full of silver placed there. He had 500 gold lamps and 500 silver lamps made, had them filled with perfumed oil, and had wicks of soft cloth placed in them.

[§3] Thereupon, the Venerable Mahākassapa made a resolve: "Let the garlands not wither! Let the perfumes

not dissipate! Let the lamps not be extinguished!", and had letters inscribed on a gold plate [saying]: "In the future, a young prince named Piyadāsa having raised the parasol will be a righteous King named Asoka. He will have these relics widely dispersed".

Then, King Ajātasattu saw his duty. His heart full of joy and his faith growing, he honored [the relics] with all the ornaments and saluted them with the fivefold prostration. He got up, closed the doors commencing with the first, and departed. Having closed the bronze door, he tied the seal keys on the cord to pull the latch. At the same place, he placed a large pile of gems above and had engraved: "In the future, let the indigent kings take these gems for the worship of the relics".

Then, Sakka, King of deities, addressed Vissukamma in order to protect the relics, [saying]: "My dear, Ajātasattu has made the enshrining of the relics. Do prepare protection for this place!" And he dispatched him.[422] He came and set up a device with an array of wild beasts. He brought inside the *thūpa* the wooden figures [bearing] swords of crystal color, set up [another] device winding round as fast as the wind, and fixed it with just one nail. He built a stone fence in the form of a brick house, covered it with a single rock on top, spread soil on it, did the same on the surface, and had a *thūpa* made of stone erected upon it.

[§4] When the enshrining of the relics was finished, the Venerable Mahākassapa spent time residing in the Veḷuvanārāma. So, as time passed, the Thera emerged during one night from the attainment of the fruit and considered his life force: "Being now 120 years old, for how long will my life force be?" Reflecting on it, he realized the decaying state of his life force and thought: "So, when will I attain final *nibbāna*? I will attain final *nibbāna* today when the night will dawn into day". He considered the places surrounding the Rājagaha city, and thought: "Where will I attain final *nibbāna*? I will attain final *nibbāna* in between the three Kukkuṭasampāta mountains". Having reflected in this way, he took care of his body when the night had dawned into day, gathered the assembly of *bhikkhu*s, and said this: "My friends! Follow diligently the teaching of the Master! Strive diligently! My friends, as my life force is decaying, today in the evening time I will attain final *nibbāna* in between the three Kukkuṭasampāta mountains".

Then, people and monks who heard about the *parinibbāna* of the Thera could not restrain themselves [from crying] and lamented: "Alas! We will be helpless! Although the Master [i.e., the Buddha Gotama] has already attained final *nibbāna*, we are convinced that in the life of the present Lord [i.e., Mahākassapa], the Master is living. But now, the Lord will attain final *nibbāna*! Who could give us advice and instructions?" And a religious sense of emergency arose for those whose taints were destroyed [i.e., the Arahants]. About this, he said:

> [2] Impermanent are formations indeed, their nature is to arise and vanish.

[422] For a description of this *vāḷasaṁghāṭayanta* ("a device with an arrayed of wild beasts"), see Woodward 2014: 20–22.

Having arisen, they cease: their
appeasement is blissful.

The Thera reassured the assembly of *bhikkhu*s with a speech on the Dhamma connected to the impermanence and so on, and said:

[3] All aggregates have been taught by
all the buddhas as being impermanent,
Many people do not realize in the
evening what they saw in the morning,
Many people do not realize in the
morning what they saw in the evening.

[4] Right now, diligence should be done,
who knows if death will come tomorrow?
There is no bargaining with Death
and its great armies.

[5] Do not lament too much!
This is the nature of the world,
[All] aggregates have been taught
by all the buddhas as being impermanent.

[§5] When he had said: "And if you wish to see my *parinibbāna*, get together at a place [located] on the Kukkuṭasampāta mountains to see it!", the Thera stood up from his seat at the time for collecting alms. He adjusted his two clothes joining them together, attached his girdle which had the appearance of lightning, wrapped in a great robe made of rags, cloud-colored and [which was] the robe given by the Conqueror,[423] [an offering that] was able to cause an earth-tremor instantly three times, a gift that is always the best fruit as flowers, fruits, and seeds are for the tree.[424] He took his excellent bowl which was the color of the wings of a bee, like a blue-lily in bloom. With self-control like the great Nāga, firm like the lion, the senses appeased, the mind appeased, seeing only the distance of a plough, and shining with the splendour of having all subdued, he entered for alms in Rājagaha. The Thera wandered for successive alms and took his meal once returned from collecting. At that time, the assembly of *bhikkhu*s addressed each other: "We will see the Thera's *parinibbāna* once he has taken his meal". They paid him homage, departed from there, and got together. Different men and gods heard also about the *parinibbāna* of the Thera, took perfumed garlands and so on, things for worship and homage, and got together at a place [located] on the Kukkuṭasampāṭa mountains.

When the Thera Mahākassapa had taken his meal, he thought in this way: "Our King Ajātasattu is a supporter of the Buddha [Gotama]'s dispensation, a giver of the four requisites and presents for the assembly. I will not attain final *nibbāna* without informing [him]". He stood up from his seat, well-dressed and well-covered, and entered Rājagaha at midday time. At the instant he entered, King Ajātasattu was penetrating his royal bedroom to prepare his bed. The royal ministers then saw the Thera entering and thought: "Our Lord who is the King's preceptor, arrived during the day. What can be the reason?" They stood up from their seats, went out to meet the Thera, saluted him, and waited. The Thera asked the ministers:

[423] It refers to an episode evoked at S II 221.

[424] The compound corresponding to this sequence remains difficult to understand and translate (*nirantara-aggaphaladānapupphaphalatthirukkhaṁ*).

"Laymen, where is the king?"
They said: "Venerable, he went to his bed", and asked about the reason for his coming:
"Venerable, for what reason did you come?"
"Laymen, well, I take leave of the King. Today, in the evening, I will attain final *nibbāna*".
"Venerable, where will you attain final *nibbāna*?"
"It will be in between the Kukkuṭasampāta mountains".

[§6] When he had said this, the Thera departed and returned to the *vihāra.* He grasped a broom, did his duties, swept, and so on. [Then], followed by a large group of *bhikkhu*s, he went toward the Kukkuṭasampāta mountains. He arrived at the place for his *parinibbāna* and at that moment he rose to the vault of the sky. His visible body stood on a ground surface the size of seven sugar palm-trees. He first emitted blazes of fire out of the right [side of his] body, he emitted a flow of water out of the left [side of his] body. Again, he emitted fire from the left [side of his] body and emitted, again, water from the right [side of his] body. At one time, he emitted water out of the upper part of his body, fire out of the lower part of his body, again, water from the lower part of his body. He emitted fire from the upper part of his body. At one time, he emitted blazes of fire out of his whole body. At one time, he emitted streams of water out of his whole body. At one time, he appeared having the shape of the ocean with the water that is his shining fruit,[425] the great sea [containing] a multitude of different caskets full of jewels. At one time, he appeared to have the shape of the Himavant mountain, brightening like a young tree with shining flowers. At one time, he appeared to have the shape of the seven great lakes, with the surface of the water covered with lotuses of five colors, all fully opened on the water. At one time, he appeared having the shape of the great wheel-turning [monarch], endowed with seven jewels, followed by a four-division army of twelve *yojana*s perimeter. At one time, he appeared having the shape of the King of devas, followed by the assembly of the Thirty-three [gods], ornamented with various decorations, the size of three *gāvuta*s. At one time, he appeared having the shape of the Great Brahma, followed by an assembly of Brahma [gods] possessing bodies of three *yojana*s. So, the Thera showed a miracle thanks to his many supernatural powers and expounded the Dhamma.

[§7] He descended from the sky, took leave of the assembly of *bhikkhu*s, entered in between the three mountains, and thought: "Here, I will attain final *nibbāna*". Immediately after his thought, the assembly of gods prepared a couch. Around it, they installed full pitchers filled with blue lotuses, white lotuses [i.e., *kumuda* and *puṇḍarika*], blue lotuses [*nīluppalakamala*]. In the four corners of the couch, they placed four potsherds with incense and four lamps. They made many homages and offerings of invaluable awnings, pollen, flowers, and so on. So, when the Thera climbed on his couch, he sat down, and entered upon the eight attainments. He arose from them and formulated a resolve in this way: "When my life force [will be] exhausted, three mountains [will] fall

[425] The translation is here conjectural.

down and fit into each other. May they contain my couch within it! And may these flowers never wither! May the perfume of all the lamps and incense never cease!"

Starting from now, the lifespan of men having dwindled from 100 years will be during the interim eon for a period of ten years. During a renewed interim eon, for men having increased their lifespan, it will be lifespans of uncountable [time]. Then, during the evolution lifespan having dwindled for men to 80,000 years [...].[426] For this was said by the elders:

> "At that time, when he had set in motion the wheel of the Dhamma, the Buddha Ariya-metteyya will arise in the world, surrounded by an assembly of 12 *yojana*s [perimeter]". Having reached this place, taken up my body, deposited it in the palm of his right hand tinted with the marks of the wheel, well dyed, soft, and tender, [this] Blessed One will show my body to the assembly of *bhikkhu*s [and will say]: "Look at this Thera, at the time of the Perfectly Enlightened One Gotama he was his elder brother, the great disciple named Mahākassapa, holder of the 13 ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*s). He wore discarded rags, spoke in praise of the wearing of discarded rags. He wore the three robes, spoke in praise of the three robes. He was not selective while going for alms-food, spoke in praise of not selecting while going for alms-food. He had one meal session, spoke in praise of having one meal session. He ate only from the bowl, spoke in praise of eating only from the bowl. He abstained from eating after the normal time, spoke in praise of abstaining from eating after the normal time. He lived in a forest, spoke in praise of the living in a forest. He spoke in praise of living at the foot of a tree. He lived outside, spoke in praise of living outside. He lived in a cemetery, spoke in praise of living in a cemetery. He accepted whatever seat, spoke in praise of accepting whatever seat. He slept seated, spoke in praise of sleeping seated. From the time he was ordained until his *parinibbāna* he did not stretch out on beds and chairs. Also, he is a holder

[426] This paragraph refers to Pali cosmology depicting the shape and evolution of the universe, where three kinds of *kappa*s are described: *antarakappa*s (interim eons), *asaṅkheyyakappa*s (uncountable eons) which are 20 *antarakappa*s, and *mahākappa*s (great eons) corresponding to four *asaṅkheyyakappa*s. Here is described the interim eon period when the age-limit of human beings rises from ten to an indefinite time and then falls to ten again. I assume that there are omissions in the transmission of information in all the manuscripts used, as the end of the paragraph (*yojanamattaṁ abhirūyhāya mahāpathaviyā*) remains unclear and does not allow a coherent meaning. The description given in the Thai text (Lagirarde 2006: 98–99) is much more detailed and gets closer to the description provided by Sv III 73, 3–376, 21. The manuscript C seems to describe the process at work, i.e., the dissolution of the universe before the arrival of Buddha Metteya, but remains too difficult to grasp.

> of the ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*s) with few longings, satisfied, with energy aroused, unattached to a family or a company, without a clinging mind, with a pure way of life. He was known and famous in the dispensation of the Buddha [Gotama] like the full moon in the celestial vault". The Blessed One [Metteyya] will make known my dense virtues, having rendered the Great Earth thin. Having rendered the Great Sea shallow, he will make known my very profound virtues. Having rendered the Sineru, King of mountains, low, he will make known my virtues which are higher. At this moment, blazes of fire [will] ignite from my body, and [will] burn it in the palm of the Tathāgata's hand.

And he made another resolve: "And when King Ajātasattu had heard about my *parinibbāna*, desirous to pay me homage, he will reach this place. At that time, may these three mountains step aside! At the end of the King's veneration, may these three mountains meet together again!"

So, when the Thera had made his resolve, he laid down on the bed and attained the final *nibbāna*-element without residue. At this moment, the three mountains met together by the power of the resolve of the Thera, fell down and fit into each other, and became one mass [of rock]. Then, all the assembly of *bhikkhu*s, gods, and men did not see [anymore] the body of the Thera which was concealed by the mountains and cried all at once. Outside [the mountain] they made homages and offerings and many wonders appeared.

[§8] At that time, in the King's palace, the ministers deliberated about when this Thera would come to final *nibbāna*: "If the King wakes up and hears about the Thera's *parinibbāna*, because of his strong affection for him, his mind and heart will be affected by strong sorrow and pain, and he will die! Well! We will preserve the King's life by some means!" When they had deliberated in this way, they consulted all the King's physicians, explained to them what was happening, and asked: "What should be done?" So, the physicians said: "For that, we should prepare a medicinal preparation". Instantly, they brought one basin and filled it with sugar-cane juice. They brought one basin and filled it with milk. They filled one basin with very clear curds. They filled one basin with very clear clarified butter. They filled one basin with perfume sesame oil. They filled one basin with residue of earth. They filled one basin with cold water. Thus, they filled seven basins with medicinal preparations. When the different medicinal preparations were prepared, they sat down waiting for the moment the King woke up.

When the King woke up, he arose from his bed, departed from the inner chamber, and sat down on the royal couch which was on a large flat roof [at the top of the palace] where was elevated a white umbrella. Then, ministers announced to the King about the coming of the Thera:

> "King, your preceptor, the Thera Mahākassapa, has come here".

"For what reason?"
"To take leave of you".
"Where did he go?"
"King, he wishes to attain final *nibbāna*".
"When will he wish to attain final *nibbāna*?"
"King, now, in the evening".

Listening to this, the King became unable to stay firm by himself because of his strong affection for the Thera, forgetting the dignity of a *khattiya* (warrior).[427] Tormented with great grief, he lost consciousness with the body warm and fell down. Then, the favorites, ministers and so on, held up the King and made him lie down in the basin with the sugar-cane juice. Again, they held up the King and made him lie down in the basin with milk. The King regained his breath with water and milk and asked again about the reason for the Thera's coming, so the ministers made him know about it. Continuing their method, they made him lie down in the basin with very clear clarified butter. From there, they made him lie down in the basin with the perfume of sesame oil.

Then, in the royal palace were 100,000 goddesses lamenting, hitting their chests, wailing with great lamentations, and disturbing the royal palace. In the entire city of Rājagaha, all inhabitants and men were assembled in the city-center and lamented with the King. The ministers held up the King and from the basin with the perfume of sesame oil they made him lie down in the residue of earth. Then, they made him lie down in cool water. The King recovered again his breath thanks to the action of the medicinal preparation, and asked his ministers:

"Venerables, where will my preceptor attain final *nibbāna*?"
"King, it will be in the Kukkuṭasampāta mountains".

When the King had proclaimed this in the entire city of Rājagaha, he took the umbrellas, the flags, the banners, the drums, the conchs, the cymbals, and so on, and various things to make devotional offerings, departed with his four-division army, and went to the place which was [located] in the Kukkuṭasampāta mountains. He saw the three mountains as one solid mass [of rock] and asked people:

"Venerable, where does the body of my preceptor lie?"
"King, he is in between these three mountains".

The King listened to this and thought: "By what means will it be possible for me to honor my preceptor's body?" Walking with sorrow as if his heart had broken into seven pieces, he stood and thought: "It is by means of a solemn declaration". He put his knee on the ground, paid homage with the fivefold prostration, held the salutation gesture (*añjali*), placed it [above] his head, and made a solemn declaration: "My friend, *devata*s, listen to my words! If my strong affection for my preceptor is true, may these three mountains go aside!"

Then, by the power of the King's resolve as well as by the power of the Thera Mahākassapa's resolve, the three mountains went aside as if they had

[427] This translation is conjectural.

been split by the thunderbolt weapon of Inda. People saw this wonder and made waving of garments [like] strings of pearls, gold, silver, and jewels, and several hundred thousand applauses. All the people held up the *añjali* with their heart full of joy, [shouting]: "How wonderful, how incredible!", and applauded.

[§9] Then, the King saw the Thera's body, which had been laid on a platform and was being honored by deities, and approached, his heart full of wonder and surprise, with joy and delight arising, the head bowing down, with a disappointed appearance, with tears in the eyes, and crying. He prostrated his head at the feet of the Thera, paid him repeated homages. He made offerings of garlands, of smelling incenses, with awnings and so on, raising umbrellas, flags, emblems, and whisks, collected and united, flowers of gold and silver, and sandalwood powder, and fully honored the Thera's body with perfumed oil, with 1,000 waterpots of gold and silver, with many priceless jewels. At this place, the King paid great homages for seven days. Likewise, all men and gods enjoyed and approved.

After seven days, the three mountains met again together and became one mass [of rock]. The King with the people, no longer seeing the body of the Thera [which] was concealed by the mountains as the disk of the setting sun, had his heart dissolved, had sorrow arising, he lamented, and had no appetite. All the people lamented; there was great tumult. So, the King made offerings, bowed down, asked his pardon, and entered the city with the people.

Till today, the body of the Thera is right there. As long as the Perfectly Enlightened One Metteyya has not appeared in the world, then, he does not disappear, he does not fall into pieces, he is not altered. In a future time, when Ariyametteyya the Perfectly Enlightened One appears in the world, blazes of fire [will] rise from the body of the Thera [standing] on the [Metteyya's] palm-hand and he will be consumed. And at this very place, Metteyya the Perfectly Enlightened One will also have offerings made by all the world at the *thūpa* where the Thera's relics are.

This story about the *parinibbāna* of the Thera Mahākassapa is finished.

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Abbreviations

CPC	Trenckner, Vilhelm et al. 1924–2011. *A Critical Pāli Dictionary, Vol. 1–3*. Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters.
DPPN	Malalasekera, Gunapala Piyasena. 1937–1938. *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names, Vol. 1 & 2*. London: John Murray.
EFEO	École française d'Extrême-Orient
n.m.	not mentioned
PED	Rhys Davids, T.W. & Stede, William. 1921–1925 (ed. 2004). *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*. Oxford: The Pali Text Society.

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Ext Mhv	Malalasekera, George P. 1937 (ed. 1988). *Extended Mahāvaṁsa*. Oxford: The Pali Text Society.
Gv	Minayeff, Ivan P. 1886. The Gandha-Vaṁsa. *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 2: 54–80.
Mhv	Geiger, Wilhelm. 1908. *The Mahāvaṁsa*. London: The Pali Text Society.
Ras	Gandhi, Sharda. 1988. *Rasavāhinī, A Stream of Sentiments (Being the Previous Birth Stories of the Buddha)*. Delhi: Parimal Publications.
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A Newly Unearthed Travelogue: Relation to Siam in 1685, by Jean Basset

Maëlle Pennéguès[1]

Abstract—This notice introduces a newly discovered travelogue by Jean Basset, detailing his 1685 journey to Siam as part of the French embassy led by Chevalier de Chaumont. Preserved in Lyon, the manuscript offers fresh insights into the young missionary's experiences, complementing existing accounts of 17th-century diplomatic relations. Basset's narrative, marked by factual detail and occasional personal reflections, sheds light on the challenges of maritime travel and diplomatic encounters. Furthermore, his portrayal of Siamese culture, particularly Buddhism, invites nuanced exploration. This rediscovery not only enriches our understanding of historical maritime voyages but also offers a raw, unfiltered glimpse into the experiences of a young missionary navigating foreign cultures.

Keywords: Diplomatic Relations; History of Siam (Thailand); Jean Basset; Missions étrangères de Paris (MEP); Travel Literature

A Newly Discovered Manuscript

In Lyon, France, a recent discovery has brought to light the meticulous account penned by Jean Basset (1661–1707) chronicling his journey to Siam (modern Thailand) in 1685. The 98-folio manuscript, titled *Relation de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable dans le voyage de Mr le chevalier de Chaumont, ambassadeur de sa majesté très chrétienne vers le roy de Siam, de France à Siam et des honneurs qu'on luy a faites à Siam*, is housed at the Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon (BML, MS 817; view separate reproduction and annotated edition in the **Online Appendices**) **[Figure 1]**.[2] This manuscript, a result of his participation in an embassy dispatched by King Louis XIV of France (r. 1643–1710), opens up a fresh perspective on the missionary activities of the Missions étrangères de Paris (MEP) in Siam.

The preserved diary from Lyon exclusively covers Basset's voyage to Siam, starting with his departure from Brest in early March 1685 and concluding with the embassy's culmination at Ayutthaya and Lopburi in December 1685. It is likely that Jean Basset entrusted the account to a fellow traveler returning to France, who, in turn, passed it on to Basset's superior. This diary might have been intended for Gabriel de la Roquette, Bishop of Autun (1666–1702), the primary recipient of Basset's letters, or for Louis Tronson, who oversaw the Saint-Sulpice seminary in Issy-les-Moulineaux (1676–1700), where Basset trained from 1677.

[1] Sorbonne Université, Paris.
Email: maelle.pennegues@etu.sorbonne-universite.fr.

[2] This study is derived from my Master's thesis (Pennéguès 2020). I extend my gratitude to Jérôme Sirdey, curator at the BML, for granting permission to publish the complete manuscript online. See: https://doi.org/10.69486/112.1.2024.8b.

https://doi.org/10.69486/112.1.2024.8a

The mystery remains regarding how this account found its way to Lyon. Gabriel de la Roquette's archives in the Côte d'Or departmental archives show no traces of Jean Basset or missions to Siam. The other letters from Basset are housed at the MEP headquarters.[3] The plausible hypothesis is that Gabriel de la Roquette initially received the diary, forwarding it to Jean Basset's family in Lyon. Alternatively, the account should logically have reached the MEP to aid in the training of future missionaries.

While Jean Basset's missionary endeavors in China are well-documented, thanks to the publication of his correspondence by François Barriquand and Joseph Ruellent (2012), his sojourn to Siam remains largely obscure, with minimal published sources, mostly from the 19th century, collected by Adrien Launay. Siam marked a pivotal step in the young missionary's spiritual and intellectual journey, serving as his first missionary post in Asia and the site of his ordination in January 1686 by Louis Laneau.[4] For MEP missionaries, Siam appeared to be a primary mission and training ground before venturing into China—a trajectory shared by other missionaries like Étienne Manuel, ordained concurrently with Jean Basset.

This previously unpublished diary offers fresh insights into the 1685 French embassy to Siam, absent from the extensively studied court accounts of Louis XIV, such as those by the Abbé de Choisy (1687) or the memoirs of Comte de Forbin published much later (1730). Various articles in the *Mercure galant* dedicated to the 1685 embassy provide an exclusive glimpse into the event.[5] Analyzing Basset's perspective alongside those who received royal orders sheds light on the differing interests within the embassy. Considering this as the inaugural voyage of a young man with a worldview distinct from experienced travelers like Chevalier de Chaumont (1640–1710), we acknowledge that Basset's outlook was shaped by both reading and personal experiences. This diary, focusing on the Siamese segment of Basset's journey, complements existing studies on his later life in China (Barriquand & Ruellent 2012), presenting an alternative viewpoint from a younger and less seasoned traveler. Furthermore, the diary contributes valuable insights for the study of diplomatic relations between France and Siam in the late 17th century, offering a grassroots perspective on the rumors surrounding this embassy.

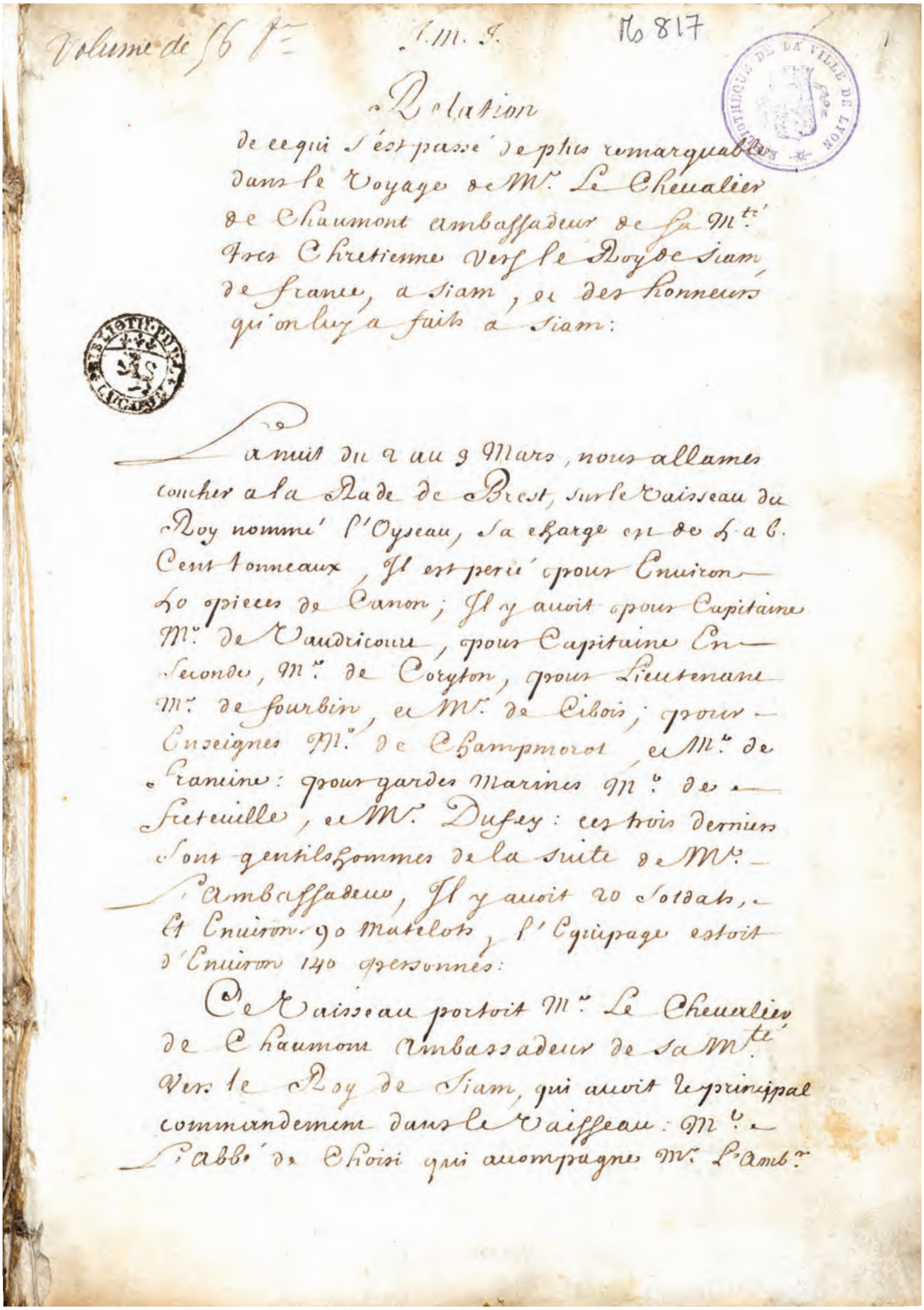
Early Years of Jean Basset

Details about the formative years of Jean Basset remain elusive, with sparse information available about the second son among at least five siblings. Born on 2 February 1661 in Lyon son of Claude Basset (1626–1688), lawyer at the parliament and secretary of the archbishopric of Lyon, and Lady Jeanne Terrasson (?–1710), the scant details come to light through his birth certificate (*baptême*) preserved at the

[3] 128 rue du bac, 75007 Paris. The online database may be consulted at: https://irfa.paris/.

[4] AMEP [Archive des Missions étrangères de Paris], vol. 859, Letter from M. Manuel to M. Baudon, Bangkok, 30 September 1686, folio 409.

[5] Issues for June 1686, July 1686, September 1686 (Part 2), November 1686 (Part 2), December 1686 (Part 2), and January 1687 (Part 2) are exclusively dedicated to this event. See: https://obvil.sorbonne-universite.fr/corpus/mercure-galant/.



Relation
de ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable dans le Voyage de Mr. Le Chevalier de Chaumont ambassadeur de Sa Mté. tres Chretienne vers le Roy de Siam, de France, a Siam, et des honneurs qu'on luy a faits a Siam:

La nuit du 2 au 3 Mars, nous allames coucher a la Rade de Brest, sur le Vaisseau du Roy nommé l'Oyseau, sa charge est de 4 a 6. Cent tonneaux, Il est percé pour Environ 40 pieces de Canon; Il y avoit pour Capitaine Mr. de Vaudricourt, pour Capitaine en Seconde, Mr. de Coryton, pour Lieutenant Mr. de Fourbin, et Mr. de Cibois; pour Enseignes Mr. de Champmorot et Mr. de Franine: pour gardes Marines Mr. de Fretteville, et Mr. Dufey: ces trois derniers sont gentilshommes de la suite de Mr. l'ambassadeur, Il y avoit 20 soldats, et Environ 90 matelots, l'Equipage estoit d'Environ 140 personnes:

Ce Vaisseau portoit Mr. Le Chevalier de Chaumont Ambassadeur de sa Mté. Vers le Roy de Siam, qui avoit le principal commandement dans le Vaisseau: Mr. l'abbé de Choisi qui accompagne Mr. l'ambr.

FIGURE 1: Incipit, MS 817, folio 1 © Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon

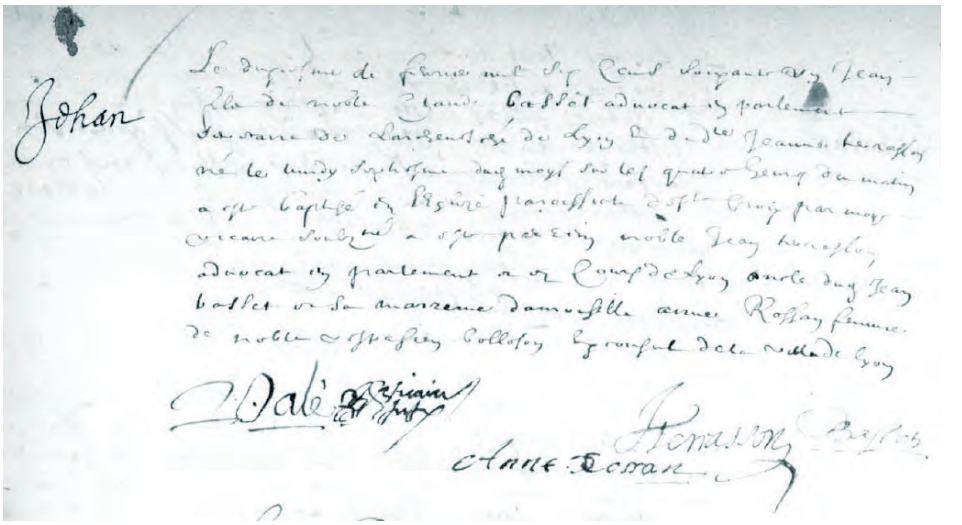


Figure 2: Birth Certificate of Jean Basset. Registres paroissiaux et d'États civils de Sainte Croix, 1659–1666, cote 1GG0399, folio 41, verso
© Archives municipales de Lyon

Lyon municipal archives.[6] His godfather was Jean Henasson, also a lawyer at the parliament of Lyon and the uncle of Jean Basset, while the godmother was demoiselle Anne Rossan, the wife of noble Vespasien de Bolozon, an alderman of the city of Lyon **[Figure 2]**.

His father, Claude Basset, held the esteemed position of alderman in Lyon, playing a pivotal role in organizing the city's justice system and police force. His influential standing translated into a substantial financial income, as shown by the notarized deed following his demise in 1688. Claude Basset's will, a testament to his financial affluence and civic commitment, outlined various bequests:

- 200 livres to the Récollets of the convent of Bellegrève in Lyon.
- 100 livres to the Grand-Collège of Jesuits.
- A life pension of 30 livres each to the RR. PP. Patouillet and Colonia.
- 100 pistoles to the archbishop of Lyon.
- 11,000 livres to Gabriel Basset, his eldest son, an esquire and advocate in Parliament.
- 8,000 livres or a life pension of 600 livres (at his choice) to Jean Basset, his second son, then on a missionary journey in Siam.
- 8,000 livres to Jean-Baptiste Basset, his third son.
- 4,000 livres to dame Marianne Basset, his eldest daughter, the wife of the noble Claude Duguet, an advocate at the Parliament and king's advocate at the Bailliage of Montbrison.
- 20,000 livres to Geneviève Basset, his youngest daughter.[7]

The early life of Jean Basset beyond this familial context is shrouded in obscurity. However, we do know that he pursued studies at Saint-Sulpice, a detail gleaned from letters he later sent from

[6] 1 Place des Archives, 69002 Lyon. The register may be consulted online at: https://www.fondsenligne.archives-lyon.fr/v2/ac69/visualiseur/etatcivil.html?id=690007187.

[7] Archives du Département du Rhône, cote 1E/82 Basset (Claude), lawyer at the parliament. See: https://archives.rhone.fr/media/9a92bdb3-2656-4985-8366-1b9a2a4cbf8b.pdf.

Siam and China. We will now delve into the defining characteristics of missionary travel accounts in the 17th century.

Defining Features

Travel writing inherently assumes an autobiographical tone, with the author recounting their exploits and encounters. In certain narratives, like Choisy's, individuals met along the journey are elevated to hero status, creating a captivating narrative, especially during perilous ocean crossings. Chaumont and Choisy lean heavily on storytelling, intertwining numerous details and anecdotes. In contrast, Basset remains reserved about himself, prompting readers to seek insights from alternative accounts, such as Choisy's, which sheds more light on the young missionaries than Basset's own narrative.

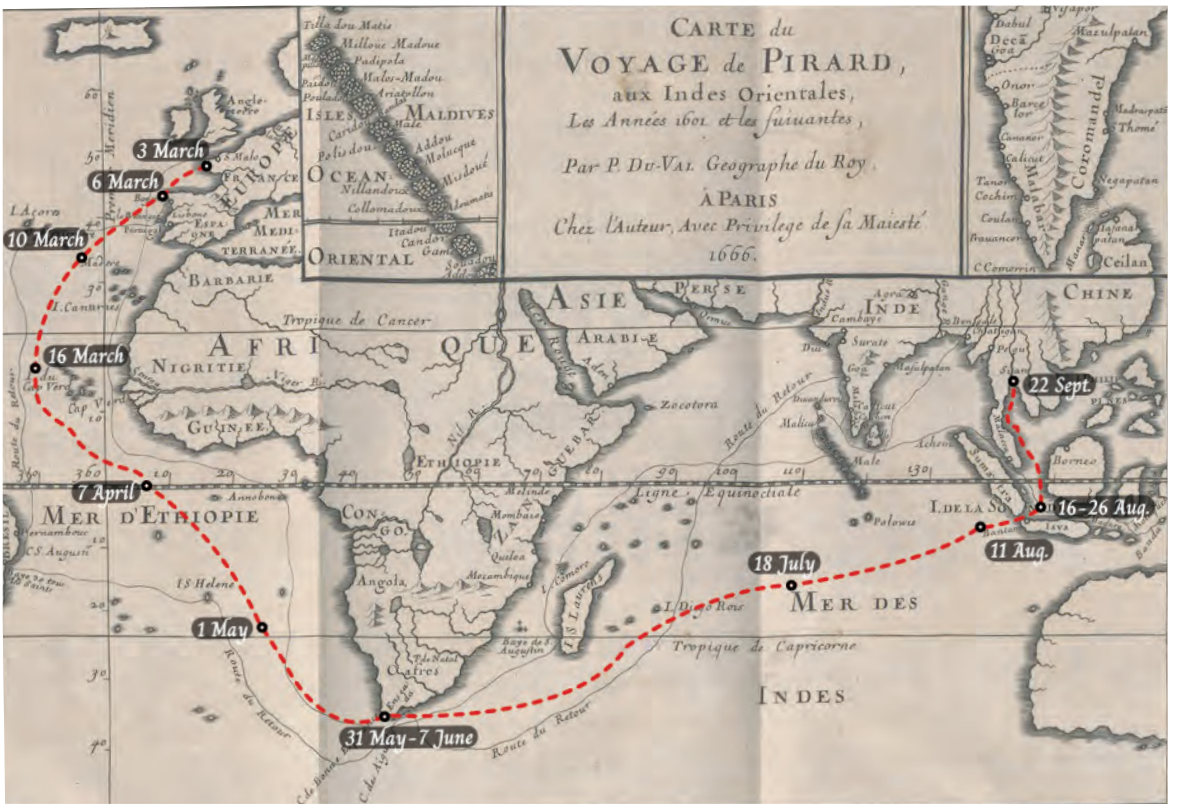
Overall, Basset's account maintains a predominantly factual narrative, diligently describing events as they unfold **[Table 1]**. Missionary narratives, including Basset's, prioritize facts, leaving little room for emotional expression, except during critical moments like the onset of illness among sailors (folios 29–30). Basset's narrative diverges from official records like Chaumont's but aligns with travel accounts from missionaries (Wolfzettel 1996). Notably, he consistently provides the embassy's location, facilitating the reconstruction of the journey's itinerary **[Map 1]**. This information was crucial for France given its lag in cartography compared to Iberian and Dutch counterparts.

Since the 16th century, Jesuits have been mandated to send reports to the Society of Jesus in Europe, with excerpts often published to garner support for missionary work. The Pope's instructions in *Propaganda Fide* in 1659 emphasized the need for missionaries to document local people, geography, and religion to aid their missions and those that followed (Pizzorusso 2011: 32). While not official accounts, these narratives adhered to a codified genre and served as educational tools within religious congregations. The genre's codification explains the detailed nature of missionary accounts like Jacques de Bourges' in 1666 (Smithies 1993), and Nicolas Gervaise's in 1688, the latter providing extensive insights into Siam's climate, political structure, and religion.

Basset's letter to Gabriel de la Roquette following the travel account (folios 1–7bis; **Online Appendices**) attests to his familiarity with travel reports before departure, likely drawing from the rich repository of missionary accounts at the MEP. In this context, Basset's account stands as a typical representation of missionary narratives of the time, systematically exploring various aspects of the voyage in chronological order.

Voyage to Siam

Jean Basset's involvement in the embassy was aboard two ships. The primary vessel, *L'Oyseau*, a relatively new ship constructed in 1671 (Dessert 1996: 308), carried the two ambassadors, Chaumont and Choisy, with Basset likely on board in a religious capacity. The second ship, *La Maligne*, slightly smaller, received less attention in Basset's account regarding accommodations and daily life. Despite limited information on where passengers



MAP 1: Itinerary of the 1685 embassy after Jean Basset, based on an earlier French map by Pierre Du Val, 1666 © Naphatsnan Revire

slept and details about food, Basset did describe fishing scenes and stops at locations like Cape Town and Batavia (modern Jakarta). Basset's daily entries during the crossing were infrequent, as he focused less on the journey and more on the embassy members.

In the 17th century, a ship represented a highly masculine, hierarchical micro-society mirroring the embassy's composition. Each member had a defined role, but personal records from officers and sailors were scarce. Naval officers left some sources, such as certificates, but few personal details were recorded. Basset mentioned a crew of around 140, including 90 sailors (folio 1; see **FIGURE 1**), with limited names provided **[TABLE 2]**. Captain de Vaudricourt and second-in-command Monsieur de Coryton were likely of noble origin. Conflicts with the Dutch in Bantam and on-board illnesses, including scurvy, added challenges to an otherwise happy voyage for Basset.

Scurvy was a pervasive issue during long sea voyages in the 16th and 17th centuries. Basset vividly described the sailors' lives, marked by illness and death (folio 30). While the Dutch had discovered the effectiveness of lemons against scurvy in 1598, Basset highlighted the insufficient quantities of these fruits picked up in Cape Town. His account underscored the sailors' suffering as a divine judgment.

Basset's narrative also shed light on diplomatic relations in 1685. While relations with the Dutch in Cape Town were friendly, the situation in Bantam (Java) turned tense, impacting the embassy's plans (folio 28). Despite

known challenges, the request to leave Bantam, especially with numerous sick sailors, posed a significant difficulty for the embassy members.

The Perspective of a Young Missionary

In Jean Basset's concise portrayal of Siam, we gain a glimpse into the Siamese culture of his time. Here, we delve into the intricacies of Buddhism, a pivotal consideration for French missionaries aspiring to convert the Siamese to Catholicism.

The missionaries' primary objective was to provide a comprehensive description of Buddhism, aiming to streamline the conversion process. Basset employs the term "Samanacodom" (derived from *sāmaṇera*, signifying the Recluse, and Gotama in Pali) to denote the historical Buddha, identifying three key aspects of the religion: (1) the creation of statues in homage to Samanacodom; (2) adherence to the Buddha's commandments; (3) sustaining a community of "priests", essentially monks called *talapoins* (folio 96).

Buddhism (the term had not even been coined yet), with its diverse characteristics and manifestations, may have contributed to some of the youthful traveler's misconceptions. Basset expresses profound awe at the numerous buddha statues, particularly marveling at their size and grandeur. Notably, he recounts encountering a colossal buddha standing at approximately 18 meters height (folio 78). It seems that he is talking about the giant buddha image of Ayutthaya, currently at Wat Phanan Choeng (วัดพนัญเชิง). Basset's focus lies predominantly on material attributes, such as the gold leaf adorning the statues, while neglecting the intricate hand gestures and poses of buddha images.

Invitation to Further Exploration

Jean Basset's recently discovered travelogue, nestled in Lyon's archives, unfolds as a captivating account interweaving personal narratives, cultural encounters, and the geopolitical landscape of the late 17th century. Beyond its role as a historical document, it serves as a portal into an era where maritime voyages teemed with both peril and promise.

The manuscript unveils a transformative period in Basset's life and the broader French missions in Asia. In contrast to the polished accounts of his contemporaries, Basset's narrative provides a raw, unfiltered look into the experiences of a young missionary navigating foreign cultures. This bottom-up perspective invites a nuanced exploration of individual experiences within grand diplomatic endeavors.

In conclusion, the rediscovery of Jean Basset's travel account is not merely a historical revelation but an invitation for scholarly exploration. The introduction to this newly discovered manuscript beckons historians and researchers to delve into Basset's experiences, the historical context, and the interplay of cultures during this enthralling journey. The manuscript stands as an echo from the past, inviting us to unravel its treasures and weave a richer tapestry around the remarkable journey of a young missionary to Siam in 1685.

Table 1: Key Events in 1685 according to Jean Basset

Date	Event
2 March	Arrival at Brest
3 March	Embassy departure
6 March	Ships reach Finistère point
10 March	Ships are at Madère
16 March	Ships enter the southern hemisphere
29 March	Description of tropical climate and local wildlife
7 April	Ceremony to welcome first-time crossers
26 April	Calm night, *L'Oyseau* loses sight of the frigate
1 May	Crossing the Tropic of Capricorn
30 May	Land in view
31 May	Arrival at Cape Bay
1 June	Chaumont requests officers to negotiate port stay at Cape [Town]
7 June	Departure from Cape [Town]
16 June	Storm puts the expedition in danger
7 July	Chaumont requests novena for favorable weather
8 July	Wind becomes favorable
18 July	Crossing the Tropic of Capricorn
4 August	Unidentified island in Java region in view
5 August	Java Island in view
9 August	Prince's Island in view
11 August	Between Java and Sumatra
12 August	Javanese bring food on board
15 August	Access to Bantam prohibited
18 August	Docking 5 miles from Batavia
19 August	Dutch general sends supplies. Sick sailors sent ashore
20 August	Basset describes religion in Batavia
24 August	Decimated Dutch ship arrives. Basset explains Batavia history
26 August	Departure for Siam with Dutch pilot
29 August	*L'Oyseau* arrives in Baka Bay (Phuket)
22 September	Arrival at Bangkok
23 September	Benigne Vachet announces French embassy's arrival
27 September	Forbin returns to ship with supplies
29 September	French chief of Siamese factory explains local history and traditions
30 September	French receive supplies from Constance Phaulkon
3 October	Frigate *La Maligne* arrives at Siam
8 October	Metellopolis's Bishop (Laneau) and de Lyonne meet embassy members Siamese boats ambassadors to land

Date	Event
9 October	Ambassadors dine with Governor of Bangkok. Description of welcome ceremony
12 October	Description of ambassador's houses
13 October	Constance Phaulkon summons representatives to welcome Louis XIV's embassy. Constance thanks Vachet for organizing ambassadors' arrival
14 October	Local missionaries and Siamese seminary members greet ambassadors
15 October	Ambassadors receive gifts from King of Siam
16–17 October	French prepare Louis XIV's gifts for King Narai of Siam
18 October	Audience of French ambassadors by King of Siam Long protocol description
19 October	Laneau, de Lionne, and Vachet translate Louis XIV's letters into Siamese in long ceremony
20 October	Chaumont visits seminary and sings prayers
22 October	Chaumont receives new precious gifts
23 October	Mr du Carpon arrives in Siam
26 October	Mr Charmot and another missionary arrive
30 October	Chaumont witnesses elephant fight. Description of Buddhist statue. Siamese cannons described. The exact origin of these cannons, which are also described by Choisy, is not known They were either European cannons or cannons built in Siam
3 November	Siamese student defends thesis in honor of Louis XIV
4 November	King Narai moves to city, triggering grand ceremony on river
15 November	Chaumont goes to Louvo (Lopburi)
19 November	Chaumont and Choisy, with Laneau and de Lionne, have private audience with the King
23 November	King Narai and French ambassadors present at elephant fight Narai offers saber to Captain de Vaudricourt
27 November	New audience with the King displeases French ambassadors
28 November	King Narai offers beautiful gifts to Choisy
2 December	14 people from Siam and Pegu (Bago) baptized in ambassador's chapel
Night of 10–11 December	Jesuit fathers observe lunar eclipse
12 December	Final reception of ambassadors by King Narai
14 December	Chaumont returns to ship. Choisy eats at seminary Description of brief history of Siam by Basset

Table 2: French Embassy Members to Siam in 1685 according to Jean Basset

Name	Age	Noble	Function	Official
Alexandre de Chaumont	45	Yes	Ambassador	Yes
François Timoléon de Choisy	41	Yes	Second	Yes
Billy	?	No	Maître d'hôtel	No
De Jully	?	Yes	Chaplain	No
D'Herbouville	?	No	Gentleman	No
De la Mare	?	Yes	Engineer	Yes
Jean Basset	23	No	*MEP	No
Joachim Bouvet	29	No	Jesuit	No
François du Chayla	38	Yes	Missionary	No
Jean de Fontenay	42	Yes	Jesuit	No
Jean-François Gerbillon	31	No	Jesuit	No
Louis le Comte	34	No	Jesuit	No
Étienne Manuel	23	No	*MEP	No
Guy Tachard	37	No	Jesuit	Yes
Bénigne Vachet	44	No	*MEP	No
Claude de Visdelou	29	Yes	Jesuit	No
Chevalier de Cibois	?	Yes	Officer	No
De Coriton	?	Yes	Officer	No
Claude de Forbin	39	Yes	Officer	Yes
Du Tarte	?	No	Officer	No

**MEP: Missions étrangères de Paris*

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D'une version à une autre du *Lilit Phra Lo* : audace et impuissance du traducteur

Émilie Testard[1]

Abstract—This literature notice reviews two recent English translations of the poem *Lilit Phra Lo*, offering non-Thai readers access to this significant piece of Siamese literature. Through an examination of the translations by Robert Bickner and Chris Baker & Pasuk Phongpaichit, the comparative analysis investigates their interpretations of the plot, vocabulary, and style. While both translations effectively convey the narrative, their distinct creative choices and approaches towards the text and its audience reveal intriguing strategies and perspectives.

Keywords: Comparative translation; *Lilit Phra Lo*; Metrics; Siamese literature; Poetry

Les traductions d'œuvres classiques siamoises en langues occidentales sont rares et d'un accès difficile ; le plus souvent ne donnant à lire que de brefs extraits traduits dans des publications scientifiques, travaux universitaires, anthologies et présentations de la littérature thaïe. En 2010, l'éditeur Silkworm publia *The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen* proposant enfin aux lecteurs non-initiés à la langue thaïe d'avoir accès par cette édition commerciale à une œuvre classique dans son intégralité en langue anglaise. Cette même maison d'édition renouvela l'expérience avec deux traductions du poème *Lilit Phra Lo* (ลิลิตพระลอ) proposées d'une part par Robert Bickner **[Figure 1]** et d'autre part par Chris Baker & Pasuk Phongpaichit en 2020, accompagnée de la traduction d'une autre œuvre poétique : le *Thawathosamat* (ทวาทศมาส) ou *Poème des douze mois* **[Figure 2]**.

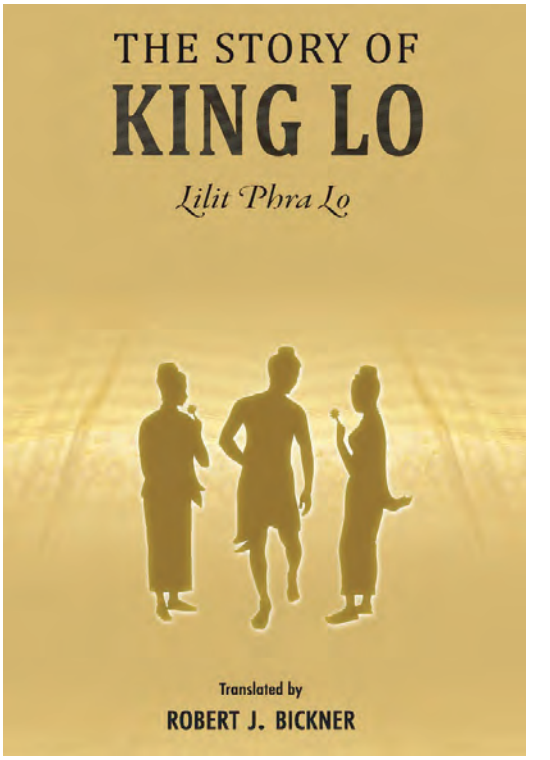

Figure 1 : Couverture de la traduction de Bickner © Silkworm Books

[1] INALCO, Paris. Email: emilie.testard@inalco.fr.

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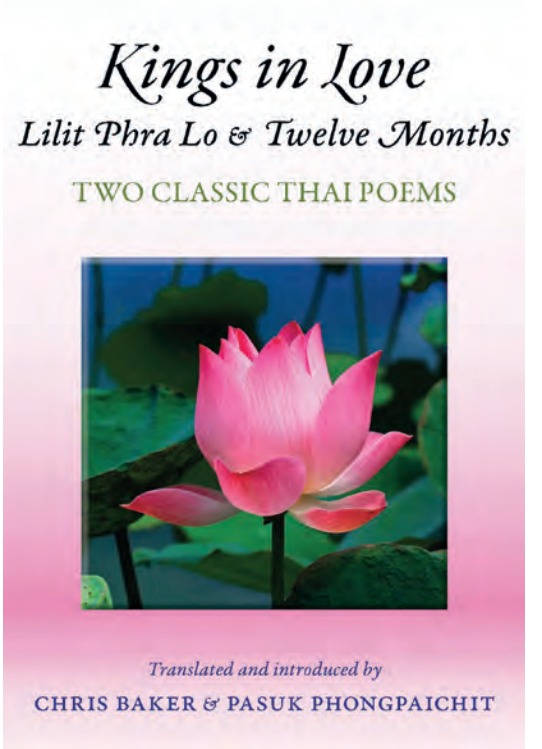

FIGURE 2 : Couverture de la traduction de Baker & Pasuk © Silkworm Books

Les deux traductions du *Lilit Phra Lo* permettent pour la première fois aux lecteurs anglophones d'apprécier cette œuvre majeure de la littérature classique siamoise[2], relatant en quelques six-cent soixante strophes (ou quelques 3 870 vers) la quête amoureuse et la fin tragique du roi Phra Lo et des princesses Phra Phuan et Phra Phaen. Nous tâcherons de mettre en valeur chacune de ces versions, les comparant l'une et l'autre mais aussi au regard du texte original et des extraits, épars, traduits dans d'autres publications en langues occidentales.

Bickner, professeur émérite à l'université de Wisconsin-Madison, spécialiste de la littérature classique thaïe et du Lilit Phra Lo est américain tandis que le couple Chris Baker, qui enseigna à l'université de Cambridge et Pasuk Phongpaichit, professeure à l'université de Chulalongkorn et surtout éduquée à Cambridge, sont tous les deux dans un anglais plus britannique. Les deux traductions en anglais de cette œuvre de la fin du XVe siècle, dont la version originale qui nous servira de référence est proposée en ligne par la bibliothèque Vajirayana[3], relatent fort bien les actions et concordent en tout

[2] La date et l'auteur de l'œuvre ne sont certains, mais il est possible que celle-ci ait été composée vers la fin du XVe ou au début du XVIe siècle, par un certain Phra Yaowarat. Voir Delouche 2000 et 2017.

[3] Voir : https://vajirayana.org/%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%AD.

point dans leur interprétation de l'intrigue, chacune mettant l'accent sur certains aspects du vocabulaire, du style, de l'atmosphère.

Chris Baker et Pasuk Phongpaichit ont donné une touche toute shakespearienne qui convient parfaitement à une adaptation du *Lilit Phra Lo* dans un imaginaire littéraire occidental. Pour relater de l'histoire d'amour tragique du héros, le roi Phra Lo, avec les princesses du royaume ennemi, histoire qui par bien des aspects peut évoquer *Romeo and Juliet*. Baker & Pasuk confient en introduction et dans de nombreuses notes de bas de page cette inspiration shakespearienne[4] : le couple de traducteur a choisi le vers libre et un vocabulaire désuet ayant une touche élisabéthaine tels que *befall* (strophe 1), *content/ment* (strophe 89), *draw*[5], *heavy*[6] (strophe 79), *mien*[7] (strophes 10 et 236), *morn*[8] (strophe 81) *o'er*[9], *oft-time* (strophe 2), *rapt*[10] (strophe 415), *retire*[11] (strophes 110 et 368), *tryst*[12], *wont*[13] (strophe 30), des préfixes *fore-*[14] (strophe 226), etc. Les rois sont nommés *Sire* et les héroïnes sont des *gentle lady* (strophes 11 et 570), mais le terme désuet de *wench* pour désigner les soubrettes apparaît également :

> Sometimes for lust a wench's a
> must when lacking else
> Not eating when you crave,
> how can you live? (strophe
> 246)

Les métaphores et traits d'esprits du texte original se prêtent aisément aux rythmes shakespeariens. Ainsi des vers sonnent familiers à l'oreille et permettent les traits d'esprits si caractéristiques des jeux de mots du dramaturge anglais :

> I ache without my fount of
> fortune fine
> who quicked my lust, aroused,
> enraptured me (strophe 54).
>
> Young folk who hear can only
> yearn, made mad (strophe 14).

Le *Lilit Phra Lo* comporte par bien des égards des aspects pouvant être comparés aux pièces du dramaturge anglais et certaines strophes résonnent comme des proverbes pleins de sagesse bouddhique. Ainsi dans la strophe 215 en *khlong*, nous avons :

สิ่งใดในโลกล้วน อนิจจัง
คงแต่บาปบุญยัง เที่ยงแท้
คือเงาติดตัวตรัง ตรึงแน่น อยู่นา
ตามแต่บุญบาปแล้ ก่อเกื้อรักษา ฯ

[4] Entre autres références : les sorcières de *Mac Beth* (1623) et l'expression « lack-love » inspirée du *Songe d'une nuit d'été* (1600).

[5] Dans le sens de faire venir (strophes 117, 144, 318, 331, 487, 492 et 599).

[6] Dans le sens de triste : « *their hardship's heavy as the sky* ».

[7] Dans le sens d'apparence, *mine*.

[8] Abréviation de *morning* : « *they had us hasten here since morn* ».

[9] Pour *over*, peut être aussi trouvé en strophe 251 : « *all kings whose power o'er land and sky is like the sun* [...] » et strophe 641 : « *your troops o'er spread the earth* [...] ».

[10] « *Rapt with joy* ».

[11] Dans le sens d'aller au lit ou de battre en retraite.

[12] Ou rendez-vous amoureux.

[13] Dans le sens d'accoutumé, habitué.

[14] Dans *fore-strap*.

Cette strophe est rendue différemment par trois auteurs comme suit :

Seni (1986 : 13)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 71–72)**	**Bickner (2020 : 94) [Phra Lo replied,]**
All sentient beings pass away What they've done to stay Hereafter Like Shadow, so do they Follow Good, Evil deeds forever Till time does end.	Impermanent are all things in this world. The only lasting ones are merit, sin, which stick to people tightly, shadow-like. From sin and merit made come succor, care.	All things of this earth are transitory. Only one's deeds, both the evil and the meritorious, are truly lasting. As a shadow follows the body, so do they cling to us. In accordance with our merit and evil we find succor and aid.

Voici la lecture inédite du regretté Gilles Delouche (cours de versification 1999) :

Toutes les choses	Sont impermanentes.
Les actions passées	Restent inscrites,
Comme une ombre	Dont on ne peut se défaire.
Mérites et péchés	Vous suivent éternellement.

D'autres vers plus métaphoriques rappellent les jeux de mots équivoques aux connotations grivoises. Ainsi dans la strophe 537 :

สะเทือนฟ้าฟื้นลั่น	สรวงสวรรค์
พื้นแผ่นดินแดยรร	หย่อนไส้
สาครคลื่นอึงอรร	ณพเฟื่อง ฟองนา
แลทั่วทิศไม้ไหล้	โยคเยื้องอัศจรรย์ ฯ

Delouche (1995 : 51)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 138)**	**Bickner (2020 : 155)**
La terre est ébranlée, et le grondement va jusqu'aux cieux, Le sol est agité comme s'il allait se briser. L'eau dans le bassin se hérisse de vagues violentes et bruyantes, Dans tous les sens le tronc d'arbre est mû de façon extraordinaire.	Loud thunder blasts the heavens, shakes the skies. Earth quakes, is almost wrecked; and bellies churn. At sea, the roaring waves are whipped to foam. What wonders here! Trees yaw and sway all ways.	The sound of thunder reverberated throughout the heavens. The earth was left limp and shrank back. Great waves stirred the sea, and the ocean turned to foam. And in every direction the trees swayed wondrously.

Et dans la strophe 539 :

ทินกรกรก่ายเกี้ยว	เมียงบัว
บัวบ่บานหุบกลัว	ภู่ย้ำ
ภุมรีภมรมัว	เมาซราบ บัวนา
ซอนนอกในกลีบกล้ำ	กลิ่นกลั้วเกสร ฯ

Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 139)	**Bickner (2020 : 155)**
A lotus, struck by sunny rays, stays closed, unblooming, wary of the bee, the bee that, lotus bathed and bleary drunk, probes pollen-perfumed petals out and in.	The sun rose above the trees, gazing down upon the lotus. The lotus would not open, fearing the repeated striking of the bee. The bee, intoxicated, pressed in upon the lotus, immersing itself within the petals, wallowing in their pollen.

Nous proposons pour l'occasion la strophe suivante :

Le Soleil de ses rayons caresse	Une fleur de lotus
Qui reste close et craintive	Quand, le bourdon persistant attaque.
Le bourdon la pénètre, la butine,	Ivre de nectar de nénuphar,
Enfouit dans les pétales,	Enduit de parfum de pollen.

Il est intéressant de constater que pour la dernière strophe, l'ordre d'apparition des mots, la structure des énoncés, le sens véhiculé dans chaque portion de vers et le souci de respecter les différentes versions en langue siamoise varient d'une traduction à une autre. Ainsi dans le premier vers de ce quatrain, nous avons le substantif /thina?kɔ:n/ (ทินกร) désignant le soleil qui apparaît dès les premières syllabes tandis que le lotus /bua/ (บัว) clos le vers. Bickner se montre généralement plus respectueux du déroulement de l'énoncé et méticuleux dans le choix des éléments syntaxiques le composant[15]. Au vers 3 de ce même quatrain par exemple, /maw/ (เมา), être ivre ou être soul, apparaît à la césure dans le texte original et Bickner veille à ce que sa traduction par *intoxicated* soit à une position comparable dans le vers traduit tandis que Baker & Pasuk le placent en toute fin de vers.

Il est par ailleurs troublant de comparer les différentes versions du dernier vers de ce quatrain. Dans la

[15] Il justifie par exemple l'emploi du mot *trees* au regard de nombreux manuscrits du *Lilit Phra Lo* dans la note 152. Voir Bickner 2020 : 212.

première portion du vers ซอนนอกใน กลีบกล้ำ où /sɔ:n/ (ซอน), fouiller, ramper, est suivi des directionnels /nɔ̂:k/ (นอก) et /nai/ (ใน), dedans dehors, est traduit par Baker & Pasuk par « *probes* [...] *out and in* » tandis que Bickner choisit de le traduire par « *immersing itself within* ». Delouche, quant à lui, choisit « se cachant parmi ». Cette première portion de vers se poursuit avec, à la quatrième syllabe, /klì:p/ (กลีบ : pétale), suivi du verbe /klâm/ (กล้ำ : combiner, joindre), verbe pouvant tout à la fois se rapporter au bourdon fouillant et aux pétales de lotus dans lesquelles il se baigne avec ivresse. Ce verbe qui du fait de sa position même résonne puissamment dans la strophe est relié à seconde portion de ce vers final. Sont-ce les pétales ou le bourdon qui sont joints, combinés au parfum + mêlé + pollen (กลิ่นกลั้วเกสร) ? Dans les sens multiples permis par la structure de la langue, Baker & Pasuk traduiront par le néologisme *pollen-perfumed* alors que Bickner n'évoque pas le parfum.

Les deux traductions en anglais du *Lilit Phra Lo* sont proposées sans la version originale en thaï. Toutefois, un riche appareil de note apparaît chez Bickner en fin d'ouvrage tandis que Baker & Pasuk qui se réfèrent à plusieurs reprises au travail de Bickner, proposent des notes en bas de page. Ces notes savantes permettent au lecteur intéressé d'avoir les références bibliographiques pour une étude plus approfondie. Bickner donne des noms aux différentes parties de l'œuvre comme « Invocation ; The story of King Lo, etc. ». Baker & Pasuk, quant à eux, optent pour une précision utile en donnant des titres aux passages en fonction de leurs thématiques faisant ainsi un résumé efficace des moments clefs de l'intrigue : « Invocation ; The two cities and their rulers ; Introducing Phra Lo ; The princesses fall in love, etc. ».

Le *Lilit Phra Lo* est rebaptisé *Story of King Lo* par Bickner tandis que Baker & Pasuk gardent le titre original. Les variantes orthographiques dans les transcriptions n'ont pas de conséquences majeures dans la compréhension du texte. La transcription différente des toponymes comme Si Ayodhaya ou Ayutthaya, ou encore les noms des divers protagonistes n'entament en rien la compréhension de l'histoire. Le héros Phra Lo, monarque de Suang, fils du feu roi Maensuan (Maen Suang) et de la reine Bunluea, a une épouse (Laksanawadi) et deux écuyers nommés Kaew/Kaeo et Khwan. Le roi Phra Lo part à la recherche des princesses du royaume ennemi de Song, où le roi Phichaiphitsanukon (Phichai Phitsanukon), fils du défunt roi Phimphisakhonrat/Phimphisakhon, a épousé Darawadi qui lui a donné deux filles, les princesses Phra Phuean et Phra Phaeng (Lady Phuean et Lady Phaeng). Celle-ci chargent leurs deux confidentes Ruen et Roy/Roi d'avoir recours à des moyens occultes pour assouvir leur amour interdit avec Phra Lo. La mort du roi Phimphisakhonrat/Phimphisakhon, tué par le père de Phra Lo lors d'une bataille, laisse une veuve (belle-mère du roi de Song), nommée *grandmother* chez Bickner et *dowager* chez Baker & Pasuk, aspirant à venger la mort de son mari. L'union interdite des princesses Phra Phuean et Phra Phaeng avec Phra Lo est facilité par l'intercession d'un magicien (*practitioner* chez Bickner) dont le nom diffère radicalement d'une traduction à une autre :

/pù: câw sà?mĭŋ phra:j/ (ปู่เจ้าสมิงพราย) chez Bickner est appelé « Old Lord Tiger Spirit » chez Baker & Pasuk. Les astrologues, sorciers, sorcières et magiciens jouent un rôle non négligeable dans l'intrigue et sont dans les deux traductions désignées comme tels mais certains mots sont spécifiques aux traducteurs. Ainsi Bickner fait apparaître à plusieurs reprises les mots (*spirit*) *practitioner*, ou encore *chief physician* qui produira charmes et antidotes sur Phra Lo. Tandis que Baker & Pasuk adoptent les termes de *adept*, *doctor* et plus particulièrement *doctor weird* en faisant encore référence à *Mac Beth*. Le mot *master* quant à lui n'est pas utilisé pour ceux ayant la maîtrise des arts occultes mais pour désigner un supérieur hiérarchique, et *magic* est présent en tant qu'adjectif mais jamais pour désigner un magicien. Enfin Bickner indique entre crochet le nom des personnages s'exprimant, information absente mais déduite par le contexte dans la version originale et suggérée chez Baker & Pasuk par des guillemets.

Au niveau de la forme, le *Lilit Phra Lo* est en premier lieu une œuvre appartenant au genre /lílít/ (ลิลิต) et ce genre poétique qui impose une forme impliquant une alternance de strophes composées en /râ:j/ (ร่าย) (ou prose rimée) et de strophes en /khlo:ŋ/ (โคลง), cette dernière se distinguant des autres formes poétiques classiques par des contraintes tonales à emplacements fixes. La mise en parallèle des strophes les plus connues de cette œuvre adaptée par Baker & Pasuk d'un côté et par Bickner de l'autre nous permettra d'apprécier au regard de l'œuvre originale, les tactiques adoptées de part et d'autre pour mener à bien leur mission, souvent qualifiée d'impossible (Delouche 2020). Les strophes extraites des traductions anglaises seront par ailleurs toujours présentées en miroir avec d'autres propositions de traduction du *Lilit Phra Lo*. Les contraintes formelles du genre /lílít/ ne sont pas absentes des traductions mais n'ont pu être appliquées dans leur intégralité dans la langue cible. Ainsi les auteurs indiquent des informations formelles telles que le numéro des strophes selon leur ordre d'apparition et adoptent une présentation qui permet d'apprécier qu'il s'agit d'une œuvre poétique et non d'une œuvre en prose. La convention siamoise veut que la forme soit précisée[16] à la manière d'une didascalie or les versions anglo-saxonnes font l'économie de cette information et si visuellement le nombre de vers dans chaque strophe est respecté et que la forme peut être déduite, les traductions en langues occidentales produites à ce jour sont systématiquement en vers libres.

La première strophe du *Lilit Phra Lo*, strophe conventionnelle de louange de la capitale victorieuse, composée en /râ:j/, ou prose rimée, répond aux contraintes métriques de cette forme poétique relativement libre. Les vers, dont le nombre de syllabes les composants sont variables, sont reliés entre eux par une rime entre la dernière syllabe d'un vers avec l'une des premières syllabes du vers suivant. Le nombre de vers composant une strophe est indéterminé. Le schéma ci-après n'est qu'un exemple pour illustrer cette forme.

000000	A000B
00B00C	0C000000D, etc.

[16] Par exemple : *rai* ou *khlong* de deux, trois ou quatre vers.

Les adaptations suivantes de la première strophe du *Lilit Phra Lo* nous permettent ainsi de faire quelques remarques quant à la forme initiale et son traitement.

> ศรีสิทธิฤทธิไชย ไกรกรุงอดุงเดชฟุ้งฟ้า หล้ารรัวกลัวมหิมารอา อานุภาพ ปราบทุกทิศ ฤทธิรุกราญ ผลาญพระนคร รอนลาวกาว ตาวตัดหัว ตัวกลิ้งกลาดดาษดวน ฝ่ายข้างยวนแพ้พ่าย ฝ่ายข้าง ลาวประไลย ฝ่ายข้างไทยไชเยศร์ คืนยังประเทศพิศาล สำราญ ราษฎร์สัมฤทธิ พิพิธราชสมบัติ พิพัฒนมงคล สรพสกลสิมา ประชากรเกษมสุข สนุกทั่วธรณี พระนครศรีอโยธยา มหาดิลกภพ นพรัตนราชธานีบุรีรมย อุดมยศโยคยิ่งหล้า ฟ้าฟื้นฟักบูรณ์ ฯ

Delouche (2001 : 14)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 17)**	**Bickner (2020 : 49)**
Glorieuse de tant de prospérités et d'énergie victorieuse, ville puissante dont la valeur emplit les cieux, le monde tremble et te craint grandement, il est effrayé par ta majesté ; tu as, par ta force conquérante, subjugué les quatre orients, détruisant les capitales, brisant les Lao de Vientiane que tu as décapités, écrasant et dispersant tes nombreux ennemis : les Thaï du nord ont été défaits, les Lao ont été vaincus et les Siamois ont remporté la victoire ! Tu es devenue un immense royaume, les peuples sont heureux de tes succès, les dons innombrables de tes monarques ont permis de mener à bien leurs desseins glorieux ; tu brilles universellement dans les limites de tes marches, tes habitants jouissent de leur bonheur,	May fortune, victory, power, success befall the city great whose peerless power spans the skies. The world does quake in awful dread and cower 'fore its might, which subjugates directions all, attacking forcefully, destroying cities great, dispatching Lao and Kao, heads lopped by sword and writhing bodies strewn around. The Yuan face defeat! The Lao are killed! The Thai, with victory won, return to their great land. The people celebrate success. The royal wealth is swelled by more auspicious properties in every region of the earth. The populace is joyful and content. The world entire exults! The city, Si Ayodhaya, the acme of the world,	Glorious! Triumphant! Supreme! Oh mighty city, towering on high, reaching the lofty firmaments! All the earth, awed by your grandeur, trembles in fear of your power, conquering all in every direction. Attacking, laying waste to royal capitals, you put to the sword the Lao Kao, severing their heads, scattering their corpses. You crush the Yuan, and the Lao you destroy, sending all fleeing before you. Victorious, the Thai return in glory to their vast territory, the populace exulting in the triumph and the great royal treasury growing in glory. Throughout the far-flung frontiers the subjects rejoice, and happiness fills the earth. Oh great royal city, Ayutthaya, ornament

Delouche (2001 : 14)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 17)**	**Bickner (2020 : 49)**
heureux dans ce monde. Ô Ayuthaya, capitale prospère, maîtresse du monde, riche et fertile, plus belle que les neuf joyaux, la plus glorieuse de l'Univers, comblée des bienfaits du ciel !	the nine-gem royal seat, abode of joy, utmost in rank across the earth, is perfect as the heavens made anew.	of all the world, nine-jeweled capital, city of splendor, standing above all, your merit overflows the sky!

Dans la strophe ci-dessus, Bickner et Delouche conservent la forme linéaire de la prose mais la rime permettant de relier chaque vers, ou proposition, n'est pas maintenue tandis que Baker & Pasuk optent pour la forme du vers libre en sautant de ligne à chaque portion d'énoncé. La mise en perspective de ces trois propositions de traductions soulève le dilemme quant aux caractéristiques de la langue source et des langues cibles. La langue thaïe est à tendance monosyllabique et cette tendance est particulièrement exploitée dans son expression poétique puisque les contraintes poétiques imposent le plus souvent un nombre fixe de syllabes ordonnées dans un ordre précis.

A cette première strophe en /râ:j/ succède une strophe en /khlo:ŋ/, et plus précisément en /khlo:ŋ sì: sù?phâ:p/ (โคลงสี่สุภาพ), une forme obéissant à trois types de contraintes : nombre de syllabes, rimes à emplacements fixes et contrainte tonale écrite à emplacement fixe. Le terme *suphap* qui est appliqué à la désignation de ce type de strophe, s'oppose aux /khlo:ŋ dân/ (โคลงดั้น), et les distinctions en deux familles de /khlo:ŋ/ reposent sur l'emplacement des tons imposés. Or les langues occidentales étant dépourvues de tons, cette contrainte tonale ne peut pas être appliquée dans les adaptations de cette forme dont le nom /khlo:ŋ/ est aussi un verbe signifiant « rouler, tanguer (pour un bateau) » en même temps que « rimer ». Le contraste tonal marqué par un signe diacritique devait originairement reposer sur une opposition dans la modulation tonale des syllabes comparable d'une certaine manière à une opposition perceptible de deux notes entraînant un rythme.

Les traducteurs cités ont tous gardé le nombre de vers pour les différents types de /khlo:ŋ/ (distique : /khlo:ŋ sɔ:ŋ/ (โคลงสอง) ; tercet : /khlo:ŋ săːm/ (โคลงสาม) ; quatrain : /khlo:ŋ sì:/ (โคลงสี่) ; quintil : /khlo:ŋ hâ/ (โคลงห้า). Mais dans la forme en quatrain /khlo:ŋ sì: sù?phâ:p/, la division en deux ou trois groupes inégaux de chaque vers n'est pas matérialisée. Delouche, Baker & Pasuk tout autant que Bickner transcrivent cette césure dans le vers parfois par la ponctuation, parfois par un groupe grammatical identifiable, mais la pause rythmique n'est pas systématique dans leurs traductions. Ni le nombre de syllabes (symbolisées par O) dans chaque vers, ni les contraintes de rimes (figurées par les lettres A et B dans le schéma ci-dessous), ni les contraintes

tonales (figurées par ^{1} et ^{2}) qui sont irréalisables aussi bien dans la langue de Molière que celle de Shakespeare n'ont pu être misent à l'œuvre de manière systématique par les traducteurs.

O O O O^1 O^2	O A (O O)
O O^1 O O A	O^1 B^2
O O O^1 O A	O O^1 (O O)
O O^1 O O B^2	O^1 O^2 O O

Ainsi dans une strophe /khlo:ŋ sì: sù?phâ:p/, quatrain composé de vers eux même divisés en deux groupes, le premier groupe est invariablement composé de cinq syllabes et le second peut compter deux ou, sur le dernier groupe du quatrain, quatre syllabes. Des ornements (mots enfilés, figurés entre parenthèses) conventionnels et facultatifs, de deux syllabes figurent dans les vers 1 et vers 3. Au regard du canevas métrique du /khlo:ŋ sì: sù?phâ:p/ ci-dessus, nous procédons maintenant à l'analyse de la strophe 2 du *Lilit Phra Lo* :

บุญเจ้าจอมโลกเลี้ยง	โลกา
ระเรื่อยเกษมสุขพูล	ใช่น้อย
แสนสนุกศรีอโยธยา	ฤๅร่ำ ถึงเลย
ทุกประเทศชมค้อยค้อย	กล่าวอ้างเยินยอฯ

Delouche (2001 : 14)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 18)**	**Bickner (2020 : 49)**
Les mérites du plus grand des princes du monde soutiennent l'univers, accroissant sans cesse et hautement la joie comme le bonheur. Le plaisir d'Ayuthaya est connu de tous et partout : toutes les nations la chantent et l'admirent, disant ses louanges.	By merit made the sovereign king sustains the world with lasting joy and happiness in large degree. The pleasures of Ayodhaya exceed what's told. All lands admire and oft-times sing its praise.	Your meritorious king enlivens all the world, Multiplying exhilaration and bliss. Oh joyous Ayutthaya, incomparable and beyond description, All nations admire you, singing your praises.

La langue anglaise, plus riche en monosyllabes que la langue française, a sur ce point un avantage certain pour respecter le nombre de syllabes imposées. Ce caractère monosyllabique fut plus largement exploité par Baker & Pasuk. Bickner quant à lui, opte régulièrement pour un vocabulaire anglais d'un registre supérieur et de ce fait souvent emprunté au latin et polysyllabique. Ainsi il préférera traduire dans la strophe 1, vers 2, vu plus haut le mot /fá:/ (ฟ้า) par *firmaments*[17] et non *skies* (cf. Baker & Pasuk) alors que feu Delouche a rendu le terme par « cieux ». Ceci marque le choix d'utilisation de synonymes plus soutenus[18], ou d'expressions exprimant la grandeur et la pompe du contexte (*multiplying exhilaration*). En outre, le siamois étant une

[17] Du latin *firmamentum*.

[18] « Grandeur » plutôt que *might* à la strophe 1 ou encore le choix du verbe *to determine* à *to think* pour le verbe d'action *khit* (คิด) dans la strophe 30, vers 4.

langue isolante, les mots ne changent pas de formes en fonction de leur genre, leur nombre, leur nature ou leur fonction dans l'énoncé tandis qu'en anglais et en français, le morphème subira des modifications signifiantes (*nine-jeweled*/*nine-gem* ; *meritorious*/*merit*[19]). Le choix d'un vocabulaire monosyllabique plus conforme à la typologie de la langue siamoise est particulièrement important pour les strophes en *khlong* qui peuvent compter deux, trois ou quatre vers, invariablement brefs, avec des portions de cinq syllabes pour les plus longues et de deux syllabes pour les plus courtes.

La strophe 30, en /khlo:ŋ sì: sù?phâ:p/, est à cet égard fameuse. Citée dès le XVIIe siècle dans la *Cindamani* (จินดามณี) comme « parole des anciens », elle nous donne à voir les écueils formels auxquels le traducteur est souvent confronté.

เสียงฦๅเสียงเล่าอ้าง	อันใด	พี่เอย
เสียงย่อมยอยศใคร	ทั่วหล้า	
สองเขือพี่หลับใหล	ลืมตื่น	ฦๅพี่
สองพี่คิดเองอ้า	อย่าได้ถามเผือ ฯ	

Delouche (2001 : 6)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 26)**	**Bickner (2020 : 55)**
Ô sœurs, quelle est cette rumeur partout répandue ? De qui chante-t-elle les louanges par toute la terre ? Seriez-vous endormies ? Auriez-vous oublié de vous éveiller, Ô sœurs ? Trouvez la réponse vous-mêmes et ne nous venez rien demander !	The news that's talked about is news of what? The news is praising who across the land? Were you asleep, not wont to wake, you two? Go think it yourselves.	[Phuean and Phaeng:] What are all these tales and rumors about? Who is everyone praising throughout the earth? Have you two slept so deeply that you've forgotten to awake? Determine for yourselves what is wrong—don't ask us.

Ma propre tentative de traduction de cette strophe en français donnerait :

De quoi parle cette rumeur,	Dites-nous ?	Ô sœurs !
De qui chante-t-elle la louange,	De par le monde ?	
Vous êtes-vous endormies ?	Oubliant de vous	Réveiller ?
Trouvez par vous-même,	Ne nous demandez rien.	

[19] Voir strophe 2.

Les éléments métriques du /khlo:ŋ/ n'ont pu être retranscrit dans les langues cibles et de ce fait la scansion des vers, à la manière thaïe, est rendue impossible, et voue de ce fait ces traductions à l'échec. Cette strophe 30 qui est considérée comme parfaite et est la plus régulièrement récitée, encore de nos jours, nous rappelle que la poésie siamoise n'est pas faite pour être lue à la lueur de la chandelle mais pour être chantée, ou tout du moins scandée selon des airs dits harmonieux : /tham nɔ:ŋ sà?nɔ̀?/ (ทำนองเสนาะ), ou cantilène, attachés à chaque genre et chaque forme. Ainsi la poésie siamoise est-elle faite pour être appréciée à l'oreille ainsi qu'il l'est clairement énoncé dans la strophe 3 :

รู้มลักสรพศาสตร์ถ้วน หญิงชาย
จักกล่าวกลอนพระลอ เลิศผู้
ไพเราะเรียบบรรยายเพราะยิ่ง เพราะนา
สมปี่ลู้เสียงลู้ ล่อเล้า โลมใจ

Delouche (2001 : 14)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 18)**	**Bickner (2020 : 49–50)**
Ses habitants, hommes et femmes, sont habiles en tous les arts. Je vais maintenant raconter, dans ce poème, phra Lo, le héros, en une histoire composée, la plus harmonieusement de toutes, douce au son de la flûte, et qui enchante le cœur.	On man and woman knowing all the arts, here's told in verse of excellent Phra Lo more sweetly than has e'er been told before, alike a flute that soothes and snares the heart.	Fully versed, oh men and women, I will regale you with the poem of Phra Lo, surpassing man, A euphonious narration of the utmost beauty. Fit for the lilting pipe and beguiling to the heart.

Pour notre part nous proposons l'adaptation suivante :

Pleins de sciences, Femmes et hommes,
Voici le récit de Phra Lo, L'incomparable.
Récit aux belles sonorités, Agréable et superbe,
Adapté pour être joué à la flûte Et pour séduire les cœurs.

De même, dans la strophe 4 :

สรวลเสียงขับอ่านอ้าน ใดปาน
ฟังเสนาะใดปูน เปรียบได้
เกลากลอนกล่าวกลการ กลกล่อมไจนา
ถวายบำเรอท้าวไท้ ธิราชผู้มีบุญ

Delouche (2001 : 15)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 18–19)**	**Bickner (2020 : 50)**
Tous les chants qu'on dit harmonieux, quels qu'ils soient, ne se peuvent comparer à ce poème. La composition de ces vers agréables, berçant le cœur qu'ils captivent, est destinée à sa Majesté, dont les mérites sont les plus grands.	The sound when sung, none can compare. Just hear its music—rivals none are known. This verse, well-buffed to lure and lull the heart, is offered to Your Majesty, king meritful and great.	Felicitous recitation, what could be its equal? Feel its rhythm—what could compare? A polished poem, told with artistry, soothes the heart. Oh royal meritorious one, to you I present my tale.

Strophe que nous avons adaptée ainsi :

Écoutez les sons	Inégalés,
Les rythmes harmonieux	Incomparables,
De ce poème poli avec art	Pour réjouir les cœurs,
Précieux présent offert	Au roi très méritant.

La poésie classique siamoise est appréciée comme la musique dans son exécution et sa performance. Toutefois, le plaisir auditif issu du rythme, des rimes, du contraste des tons, des récurrences de phénomènes sonores (assonances et allitérations) qui constituent ce qui est apprécié dans la composition en /khlo:ŋ/ peut-il être retranscrit pleinement dans les traductions ?

Le *Lilit Phra Lo* offre des strophes où les euphonies systématiques sont l'objet même de la composition. Ces passages où le poète met à l'œuvre toute sa virtuosité sont conventionnels et le plus souvent ce sont lors des passages de contemplation de la nature que les prouesses à la fois poétiques et musicales pousseront le langage ordinaire dans ce qu'il considère comme être sa plus haute expression. Les contraintes formelles exacerbées pourront par exemple imposer des correspondances de sons vocaliques, consonantiques, accrues ou mieux encore la répétition d'une seule ou même syllabe.

Dans la strophe 259, par exemple, la syllabe /ka/ (กา), pouvant signifier « corbeau, théière » et entrant également dans la composition de noms de plantes[20], est largement reprise et les sons vocaliques /a:/ et /a?/ reviennent comme en écho. De fait, on semble entendre les corbeaux coasser dans les cocotiers.

[20] /ka : fà:k/ (กาฝาก) est un terme générique utilisé pour des arbustes hémiparasites dont le *kafak mamuang* (กาฝากมะม่วง), sorte de gui de manguier (L. *dendrophthoe pentandra*). Il y a aussi le *tumka* (ตุ่มกา ; L. *strychnos nux-blanda*) ; l'arbre de Damoclès ou *kala pheka* (กาลา เพกา ; L. *oroxylum indicum*) ; ou encore l'arbre aux orchidées blanches ou arbre aux papillons dit *kalong* (กาหลง ; L. *bauhinia acuminata*).

กาจับกาฝากต้น	ตุมกา
กาลอดกาลากา	ร่อนร้อง
เพกาหมู่กามา	จับอยู่
กาม่ายมัดกาซ้อง	กิ่งก้านกาหลง

Testard (2004 : 369)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 85)**	**Bickner (2020 : 104)**
Corbeau des cocotiers, Coco, Cherche autre coco Copain Pour copuler Copieusement. Corbeau coquet Au coquelicot.	Crows grab cawvines that twine round cawnut trees. Crows swoop through cawrush, cawing loud. On cowpod trees, crows crowd to perch. Crows quit cawferns for cawflower boughs.	The ka alighted in the vines of the tumka tree. The ka passed through the kala tree. The ka soared, calling out. Flocks of ka came to alight on the pheka tree. The ka turned away from the matka tree, brushing the twigs and branches of the kalong tree.

Ces strophes où le poète s'évertue à montrer son talent, tel un orfèvre qui cisèle avec des mots une pièce musicale, sont un exercice auquel le traducteur de littérature classique siamoise ne pourra éviter de se confronter. L'adaptation de cette strophe que nous avons proposée personnellement ci-dessus s'éloigne du sens originel de la strophe pour se concentrer sur le jeu de répétitions de la syllabe /ko:/ au lieu de /ka:/ et cet extrait fut adapté afin d'exemplifier ce goût tout particulier pour la contrainte formelle dans l'esthétique poétique siamoise. Il en fut de même pour la strophe suivante 261 où la syllabe /liŋ/ (ลิง) revient huit fois pour parler de diverses variétés de singes et de plantes[21]. Les allitérations de /l/ et les assonances en /-iŋ/ (plus facilement réalisable avec l'anglais) donnent à cette strophe en « L » et en finales nasalisées un air de chanson.

ลางลิงลิงลอดไม้	ลางลิง
แลลูกลิงลงชีง	ลูกไม้
ลิงลมไล่ลมติง	ลิงโลดหนีนา
แลลูกลิงลางไหล้	ลอดเลี้ยวลางลิง

[21] Le *lang ling* (ลางลิง) désigne une espèce de liane (L. *bauhinia scandens*) communément appelée « échelle de singe ».

Testard (2004 : 228)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 86)**	**Bickner (2020 : 105)**
Petit ouistiti sautille De branche en branche. Ce ouistiti voit un fruit Et le mange. Ces jolis primates gigotent Sans répit. Gribouillis acrobatiques Des polissons ouistitis.	Some monkeys monkey round in monkey vines, and watch their young below who fight for fruit. Wind monkeys race the wind and leap away, and monkey kids chase, play and swing in monkey vines.	Monkeys swung through the "monkey's ladder" and watched the young monkeys climb down to pluck fruit. The "breeze monkey" chased the breezes, leaping about playfully. Young monkeys chased and jumped and cavorted in the "monkey's ladder".

Mais c'est la strophe 262, composée en /râ:j/, qui permet de voir les stratégies divergentes choisies par les traducteurs pour se confronter à ces écueils insurmontables. Le /râ:j/, rappelons-le, est une prose rimée, et dans l'œuvre originale il s'agit d'une énumération de noms de plantes.

หวดเหียงหาดแหนหัน จันทน์จวง
จันทน์แจงจิก ปริงปรงปริกปรู
ปราง คุยแคคางค้อเค็ด หมู่ไม้เพล็ด
ไม้พลอง หมู่ไม้ฟองไม้ไฟ ไม้ไผ่ไพ
ไม้โพ ไม้ตะโกตะกู ไม้ลำภูลำแพง
หมู่ไม้แดงไม้ดัน ไม้สมพันสารภี
ไม้นนทรีทรบูน คูนกำกูนกำยาน
ไม้พิมานขล้อขลาย ไม้กำจายกจับบก
ไม้กทกรกสักสน คณนามีหมู่ไม้
กล่าวแต่พอจำได้ กว่านั้นยังเหลือ
แลนา ฯ

/hùa:t hĭa:ŋ hà:t hĕ:n hăn
can cua:n can cɛ:ŋ cìk prìŋ
proŋ prìk pru: pra:ŋ khuj khɛ:
kha:ŋ khɔ́: khêt mù: máj phá?
lét máj phlɔ:ŋ mù: máj fɔ:ŋ
máj faj máj phàj phaj máj pho:
máj tà? ko: tà? ku: mù: máj
dɛ:ŋ máj dan máj sǒm phan
săːrá? phi: máj non si: thá? rá?
bu:n khu:n kam ku:n kam ja:n
máj phí? ma:n khlô: khla:j
máj kam ca:j cà?càp bòk
máj kà? tòk rók sàk sŏn khá?
ná? na: mi: mù: máj
klà:w tɛ̀: phɔ: cam dâj kwà: nán
ja ŋ lŭa lɛ: na:/

La transcription phonétique de cette strophe montre que chaque vers de ce /râ:j/ est une suite de vers construits chacun à partir d'une allitération : en /h/ aspirée pour le vers 1, en /c/ pour le vers 2, en /pr/ au vers 3, et ainsi de suite. Chaque vers est composé de noms de plantes ayant les sons consonantiques convenant à la contrainte. Or ces plantes ont un nom dans la nomenclature scientifique qui a sa part de poésie (et parfois d'un nom en anglais) mais donner ces noms ne peut pas rendre l'effet sonore de leurs noms en thaï juxtaposés. D'une autre manière, et c'est la stratégie que les traducteurs ont choisie, l'accumulation des syllabes pour reconstituer l'allitération de chaque vers ne peut guère rendre compte de

l'énumération de noms de plantes et des connaissances botaniques du poète. Pour illustrer cette contrainte, nous nous saisirons du premier vers de cette strophe :

> หวด[22] เหียง[23] หาด[24] แหน[25] หัน[26]
> /hùa:t hĭa:ŋ hà:t hɛ̌:n hăn/

Une traduction littérale de ce vers de cinq syllabes (les noms polysyllabiques ayant été tronqués) donnerait le résultat suivant :

> *Lepisanthes rubiginosa*, *Dipterocarpus obtusifolius*, *Artocarpus lakoocha*, *Azolla*, *Knema globularia.*

Face à cette difficulté insurmontable, les traducteurs ont l'un comme l'autre opté pour rester au plus près du son évoqué sans que le lecteur ne puisse deviner quelconques plantes dont les noms en thaï, préservés pour leur son, ne font pas sens pour le lecteur non-initié. Subséquemment ni la forme, ni le fond ne peuvent être révélés complètement dans les versions proposées.

Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 86–87)

huat hiang hat haen han
jak juang jan jaeng jik
pring prong prik pru prang
khui khae khang khae khet
tree groups *phlet phlong*
tree groups *fong fai*
tree groups *phai pho*
tako taku
lamphu lamphaeng
tree groups *daeng dan*
somphan saraphi
nontri trabun
khun kamkhun kamyan
phiman khlo khlai
kamjai krajap-bok
katok-rot sak son
So many types of trees.
Above are those recalled,
but there are many more.

Bickner (2020 : 105)

The *huat, hiang, hat, haen, han. The chanchuang, chanchaeng, chik. The pring, prong, prik, pru, prang*. The *khui, khe, khang, kho, khet*. The stands of *phlet* trees and *phlong* trees. The groves of *fong* trees and *fai* trees. The clusters of *phai* trees and *pho* trees. The *tako* trees and the *taku*. The *lamphu* trees and the *lampheng*. The stands of *daeng* trees and the *dan*. The *somphan* trees and the *saraphi*. The *nonsi* and the *tharabun*. The *khun, kamkun*, and *kamyan*. The *phiman* trees, the *khlaw*, and the *khlai*. The *kamchai* and *chambok*. The *kathokrok*, the *sak*, and the *son*. And all these trees are only those that come to mind. There were also many others.

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[22] มะหวด : /má? hùa:t/ désigne un arbuste (L. *Lepisanthes rubiginosa*).

[23] เหียง : /hĭa:ŋ/ désigne un grand arbre sempervirent (L. *Dipterocarpus obtusifolius*).

[24] มะหาด : /má? hà:t/ est une espèce d'arbre tropical à feuilles persistantes de la famille des Moraceae (L. *Artocarpus lakoocha*), aussi connu sous le nom de « fruit du singe ».

[25] แหน : /hɛ̌:n/ désigne un genre de fougères aquatiques (L. *Azolla*).

[26] หัน[ลัด] : /hăn [lát]/ désigne une espèce de plante de la famille des Myristicaceae (L. *Knema globularia*).

Les transcriptions dans une phonétique non standardisée, n'évoquant pas la chose signifiée au lecteur si ce n'est par la référence à un appareil de note rendant la lecture morcelée, ne permettent pas d'apprécier les vers. Le parti-pris du son proposé dans l'une comme l'autre des traductions ne peuvent que nous laisser dans une perplexité qui a, certes, sa part dans l'émotion esthétique, mais en tentant de rendre le plaisir musical-phonétique de cette strophe, les auteurs ont sans doute sacrifié le sens pourtant présent. Par défi, nous proposons ce /râj/ fantaisiste et encore plus infidèle que les précédentes adaptations, qui s'attache aux contraintes formelles tachant d'en restituer l'esprit et au thème de l'énumération botanique chère aux poètes siamois :

Ananas anacardiers
Kalopanax kolkwitzia
Bois d'hoya hamamélis
Massif de dragonier davinia
Claqueminier et cocotiers
Caramboles en farandole
Jujubier jasmin insolent
Bosquet de palmiers parasols
Teck et thuya torreya
Sapotillier des Sycomores
Phellodendron physodis
Toutes ces essences,
Pyracanthe propolis
Futaie de frangipaniers filaires
Latanier et lianes liquidambar
Niaouli et nopal opalin
Callistemon camphier
Au-delà de ma mémoire
Si nombreuses que nous ne pouvons toutes les nommer.

Pour conclure et finir sur une strophe qui résume les démarches si différentes de nos traducteurs audacieux, nous confronterons les propositions de la strophe 297 qui, placée à peu près au centre de l'œuvre, concentre en un quatrain une grande intensité tragique. Phra Lo demande ici un présage aux eaux de la rivière Kalong qui forme la frontière imaginaire entre les royaumes ennemis.

ครั้นวางพระโอษฐน้ำ เวียนวน อยู่นา
เห็นแก่ตาแดงกล เลือดย้อม
หฤไทยรทดทน ทุกข์ใหญ่ หลวงนา
ถนัดดั่งไม้ร้อยอ้อม เท่าท้าวทับทรวง ฯ

Cholada (2001 : 26)	**Baker & Pasuk (2020 : 94)**	**Bickner (2020 : 112)**
Upon his words, the stream whirls in a frenzy, red as if coloured with blood, before his eyes. His mind is full of suffering as if a hundred trees fall on his chest.	Upon his words the waters swirl around. His own eyes see them dyed blood-red. He trembles in his heart in great distress, as if a hundred arm-span tree fell 'cross his breast.	As soon as his words had passed his lips, the waters circled and then turned red, as though stained with blood. His heart was beset with a terrible suffering as though crushed beneath a tree trunk a hundred spans in girth.

Pour notre part, nous traduirions comme suit en français :

Ces mots prononcés, l'eau de la rivière Inversa son cours,
Et de ses yeux, il la vit de rouge Sang se teinter.
Son cœur fut alors pétri De souffrances et de douleurs
Comme si cent arbres S'abattaient sur son sein.

Bickner, dont les propositions sont généralement plus longues que celles des autres traducteurs anglophones, nous donne à lire des traductions qui semble plus méticuleuses. Dans la strophe ci-dessus par exemple, il n'omet pas d'évoquer les lèvres (พระโอษฐ ; *phra ot*) au vers 1. Baker & Pasuk se révèlent très ingénieux dans le second vers mais dans le troisième, Bickner, là encore, se montre plus soucieux de la structure syntaxique du siamois :

หฤไทยรทดทน	ทุกข์ใหญ่	หลวงนา
Cœur + endurer	souffrance + grand	grand + particule discursive

La concision et l'ingéniosité de la version très shakespearienne de Chris Baker et Pasuk Phongpaichit comme la précision et la fidélité de Robert Bickner apporteront non seulement aux futurs traducteurs du *Lilit Phra Lo* en particulier, et de la littérature classique siamoise en général, de précieuses et éclairantes alternatives mais surtout donnent à lire en anglais un de ses plus grand chef d'œuvre de la littérature thaïe.

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The "Consulting Detective" *Nithan Thong-in* by King Vajiravudh

Tony Waters[1]

Abstract—This short study explores detective stories by Crown Prince Vajiravudh, later King Rama VI, in early 20th-century Siam. Compiled in *Nithan Thong-in*, these tales provide insights into Siamese society, culture, and history. Despite multiple reprints, an English translation is currently unavailable. This notice introduces the cultural richness of Mr Thong-in's adventures, along with brief summaries of each story.

Keywords: Crown Prince Vajiravudh; Early 20th-century Bangkok; *Nithan Thong-in*; Siamese detective fiction; Thai Literature

Unraveling Mysteries in the Heart of Bangkok

This study provides a concise overview of the detective stories about Mr Thong-in authored by Crown Prince Vajiravudh (1881–1925) who wrote popular literature in early 20th-century Siam. In 1904–1905, he published the first Mr Thong-in detective stories—under the pen names "Nai Kaeo" and "Nai Khwan" (นายแก้ว นายขวัญ) in his Bangkok literary review, *Tawipannya* (ทวีปัญญา). He did this following his return from a nine-year sojourn in England which was capped with a world tour (1893–1903). Influenced by the "consulting detective and a sidekick" genre popularized by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's (1859–1930) characters Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson, Crown Prince Vajiravudh published a total of 15 detective tales of Mr Thong-in. He would go on to succeed his father as King Rama VI in 1910, and reign until 1925 **[Figure 1]**.

Figure 1: King Vajiravudh, *circa* 1920, author of *Nithan Thong-in*
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The volume titled *Nithan Thong-in* (นิทานทองอิน), first published in 1912, compiled 11 previously released stories. In 1921, a second edition surfaced,

[1] Leuphana Universität, Lüneburg.
Email: anthony.waters@leuphana.de.

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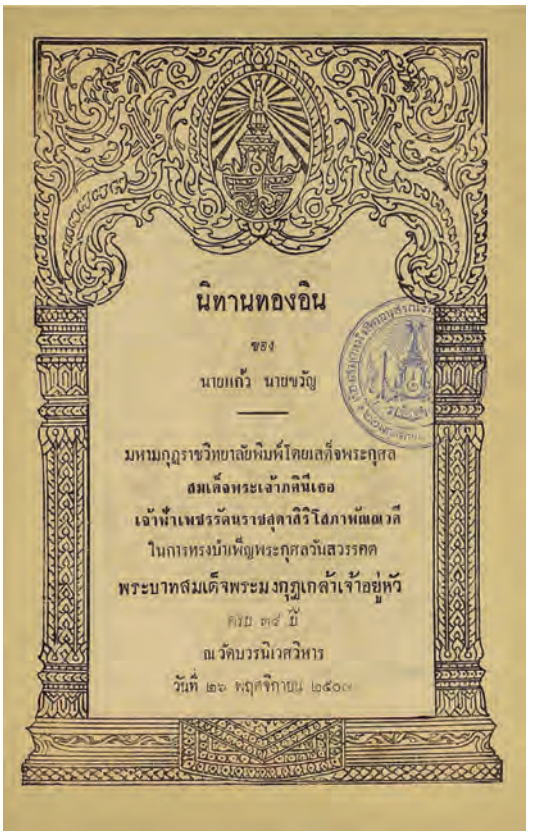
นิทานทองอิน

ของ

นายแก้ว นายขวัญ

มหามกุฎราชวิทยาลัยพิมพ์โดยเสด็จพระกุศล

สมเด็จพระเจ้าภคินีเธอ

เจ้าฟ้าเพชรรัตนราชสุดาสิริโสภาพัฒนวดี

ในการทรงบำเพ็ญพระกุศลวันสวรรคต

พระบาทสมเด็จพระมงกุฎเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว

ณ วัดบวรนิเวศวิหาร

Figure 2: 1964 Reprint of *Nithan Thong-in* on the occasion of the 39th anniversary of King Rama VI's demise © Mahamakut Buddhist University Press

encompassing 15 stories that were initially published individually in *Tawipannya*. Noteworthy is the presence of Mr Thong-in's companion, Mr Wat (พ่อวัด), a lawyer, who is the narrator of each story. Additionally, the 1921 edition features a quartet of stories that collectively form a short novella recounting Mr Thong-in's encounter with the rural bandit known as Mr Man Iron Hand (อ้ายมั่นมือเหล็ก). Despite minor variations in content between the two editions, the enduring character dynamics add a consistent thread to the narrative tapestry.

Nithan Thong-in has undergone multiple reprints, notably in 1964 to commemorate the 39th anniversary of King Rama VI's demise **[Figure 2]**. More recently, in the 2000s, reprints were again published in Thai (Vajiravudh 2549 and 2554). Rattanachai Luangwongngam (2549) who republished the 1921 edition, included both an introduction to the tales and endnotes to clarify terms and adjustments made to the stories. Rachel Harrison (2009), Thosaeng Chaochuti (2009), Samson Lim (2012), Panida Boonthavong (2557), and Thak Chaloemtiarana (2018), have all commented recently on the prominence of the *Nithan Thong-in* in early Thai detective fiction.

At present, a comprehensive English translation of Mr Thong-in's anthologized tales is still unavailable. This modest literary note endeavors to provide a concise overview of the 15 stories within the *Nithan Thong-in* collection, aiming to assist readers who may not be proficient in the Thai language.

Original Stories Republished by King Vajiravudh in 1912

1. "The Second Ghost of Phra Khanong" (นากพระโขนงที่สอง): The series begins with this ghost tale where retired Colonel Choti (พันโชติ) is haunted by disturbances believed to be caused by the spirit of his late wife, Mrs Nak (นางนาก). Local beliefs connect the apparitions to Nak's ghost, creating community unrest and making it unlikely that Colonel Choti can find a bride. Mr Thong-in steps in to investigate, challenging the dismissive stance of the *farang* Police Commissioner.[2] Mr Wat

[2] Bangkok's Police Commissioner at the time was Mr Eric St John Lawson (in office 1903 or 1904, until 1913). Lawson was the fourth Western police officer hired in Siam since 1862, when the office was created

played a spirit medium, helping Mr Thong-in to unveil an elaborate hoax orchestrated by Colonel Choti's son and a friend.[3] The resolution brings closure to the family and allows Colonel Choti to move forward with seeking a new bride.[4]

2. "Mr Suwan Suffers a Theft" (นายสุวรรณถูกขโมย): The narrative revolves around Mr Suwan, a jewelry store owner, facing a theft of 7,500-baht worth of jewels. The police hastily arrest Mr Kon (นายกร), Suwan's assistant. Mr Thong-in believes though Mr Kon is innocent. Investigating further, Mr Thong-in exposes Mr Suwan's severe gambling addiction, which led him to orchestrate the theft. The story delves into themes of deceit, addiction, and the consequences of one's actions.

3. "A State Secret" (ความลับแผ่นดิน): This tale takes readers into the high-stakes world of international diplomatic intrigue. A high-ranking official loses a crucial treaty draft, prompting the Permanent Secretary to suspect Mr Plian (นายเปลี่ยน). Mr Thong-in, known for his keen investigative skills, goes into disguises, creates a clever two-step subterfuge by staging a burglary, and then fakes arson. This is done with the assistance of both Mr Wat and the young leader of a street gang, Mr Chaem (นายแช่ม). The story unfolds as Mr Thong-in exposes the traitor, ensuring the safety of the Siamese kingdom.[5]

4. "Mr Sawat, Patricide" (นายสวัสดิ์ "ปิตุฆาต"): The police encounter a flood of counterfeit money in Bangkok. Meanwhile, Mr Wasat is facing charges for murdering his father with morphine. Mr Thong-in investigates, revealing a sinister plot, exploring themes of inheritance, family dynamics, and most importantly the counterfeiting ring. Mr Sawat's reputation is restored.

5. "The Horse Bungalow and His Medicine" (ยาม้าบังกะโล): A story based on the world of horse racing, with Chinese Yi's (จีนอี้) prized horse unexpectedly losing a race. Mr Thong-in is called by Chinese Yi to investigate the mysterious turn of events. He unravels a complex plot involving manipulation of race results and financial gain committed by Chinese Yi himself. The story highlights the intersection of business and crime. In the end Mr Thong-in discreetly manages the potential racing scandal.

6. "The Long Needle" (เข็มร้อยดอกไม้): Mr Thong-in is drawn into a mysterious death involving Mr Bunkhong (นายบุญคง), an important civil servant. The police are baffled, but Mr Thong-in's keen observation leads to the discovery of a long needle, the sort used to make flower garlands, stained with blood. Unraveling the intricate details, he exposes a plot

by King Mongkut (r. 1851–1868). See Lim 2016.

[3] Agatha Christie (1890–1976) would use a very similar trope in her novel *Peril at End House* (1932), where Hercule Poirot's sidekick Colonel Hastings was a medium at a *séance* that Poirot staged.

[4] The ghost Nak used by Prince/King Vajiravudh has been prominently featured in no less than 30 Thai films, with one notable example being *Pee Mak* (2013), considered among the most popular film in recent Thai movie history.

[5] This story evidently uses plot devices from two earlier Sherlock Holmes stories, respectively "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891) and "The Adventure of the Naval Treaty" (1893), which in turn are adaptations from Edgar Alan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" (1844).

involving a cruel husband, family tensions, discreet murder, and ultimately suicide. The story explores themes of domestic strife, revenge, European medicine, and the lengths people go to protect their secrets.

7. "Kamnan[6] Khong of Yokhi Village" (กำนันคงบ้านโยคี): This is the first story set outside Bangkok. The infamous bandit from Saraburi province named Mr Man Iron Hand terrorizes villages, leading the District Commissioner of Thap Kwang (ทับกวาง) to seek Mr Thong-in's expertise. The story explores the dynamics of power, fear, and magical beliefs. Mr Thong-in's strategic approach challenges Kamnan Khong's loyalty, leads to a gunfight in which one man is killed, and Kamnan Khong jailed. Thus, the stage is set for subsequent encounters between Mr Thong-in and the notorious bandit (see *infra,* stories #13–15).

8. "The Murderer of Bang Khun Phrom" (ผู้ร้ายฆ่าคนที่บางขุนพรหม): Reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), this narrative showcases Mr Thong-in's deductive skills and the influence of Western detective fiction on Thai literature.[7] Mr Thong-in is called in to investigate the murder of Mr Rot (นายรอด) who is in a locked room of a high tower with his throat slit. The story introduces a police theory implicating a sailing man and a child as suspects. Mr Thong-in's meticulous examination leads to a surprising revelation involving a murderous *orang-utan.*

9. "The Millionaire Mr Charun" (นายจรูญเศรษฐี): Mr Charun's fortune becomes a source of contention after he dies suddenly of poisoning. Under the law, who will inherit: the surviving brother, who is being tried for murder, or the new father-in-law? Mr Thong-in's investigation reveals the truth behind the schemes, exposing the machinations of the new father-in-law Mr Phun (นายพูน). Themes of inheritance, betrayal, and murder are explored. Mr Phun is found guilty by the court and sentenced to be executed.

10. "Raden Landai"[8] (ระเด่นลันได): A young bride seeks Mr Thong-in's help uncovering the mysterious activities of her husband, Mr Wong (นายวง). The narrative unfolds as Mr Thong-in, along with Mr Wat and their street-savvy ally, Mr Chaem, investigates Mr Wong's double life. The tale evidently draws inspiration from two Sherlock Holmes's stories, including both the fraudulent beggar character, and then has a romantic ending when Mr Wat marries the abandoned bride and finds true love.[9]

11. "The Hundred-*Chang* Necklace" (สร้อยคอร้อยชั่ง): Love, loss, dementia: Mr Thet's (นายเทศ) generosity leads to tragedy when his valuable necklace,

[6] *Kamnan* (กำนัน) is a local Thai official overseeing several villages, usually hired locally and, unlike higher officials, not sent from Bangkok.

[7] In Sherlock Holmes, the use of exotic creatures to kill is also found, for instance in "The Speckled Band" (1892), in which a snake is used, and less exotically a starving dog, in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches" (1892).

[8] *Raden Landai* is a reference to a classical Siamese tale from the early 19th century telling the story of two Malay, a beggar, and a cowkeeper who fight for the hand of a woman.

[9] These stories are respectively, "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1891), and "The Sign of Four" (1890), describing Dr Watson's marriage to a client of Sherlock Holmes, Mary Morstan.

costing 100 *chang*,[10] is stolen from his deceased wife's grave. Mr Thong-in's uncovers both the real necklace and a fake necklace in a complex web of events involving grave robbery and fraud. The story sadly ends as Mr Thet's declining mental state leads to his death under the care of Mr Wat who becomes his conservator.

Additional Stories Republished by King Vajiravudh in 1921

12. "Letter from Perak" (จดหมายจากเมืองเประ): Mr Thong-in is called in to foil a plot to purchase guns for rebels in British Malaya. This purchase would undermine the terms of the 1909 Thai–Malaya Treaty which formally established the border between Siam and British Malaya. As with any such treaty, there are concerns for national security, and Mr Thong-in is hired due to the trust the Siamese government has in his discretion.[11]

13. "Mr Man Iron Hand" (อ้ายมั่นมือเหล็ก): Following the events in "Kamnan Khong of Yokhi Village" (story #7), Mr Man Iron Hand of Saraburi sends a threatening letter to the District Commissioner, demanding compensation for the death of his follower and the release of the captured Kaman Khong. Mr Thong-in's attempt to negotiate leads to a confrontation in the distant forest. The story ends with the sounds of gunfire and the failure of Mr Thong-in to return. Two bodies are found, but both are not yet conclusively identified. Mr Wat must return alone to Bangkok without his dear friend, unsure of what has happened.

14. "A Close Call!" (หวุดหวิด): Upon returning to Bangkok, Mr Wat finds out that Mr Chaem, the street urchin who frequently assists Mr Thong-in, is facing accusations of theft. The story has a splendid courtroom scene where the skills of the lawyer hired by Mr Wat demonstrate Mr Chaem's innocence. Despite the successful result, both conclude that they miss Mr Thong-in very much.

15. "The District Commissioner of Thap Kwang" (นายอำเภอทับกวาง): This concluding tale revolves around the arrival of the District Commissioner of Thap Kwang following the mysterious disappearance of both Mr Thong-in and Mr Man Iron Hand. The Commissioner informs Mr Wat that two bodies were discovered—one is confirmed as Mr Man Iron Hand, while the other remains unidentified. The possibility exists that the second body is Mr Thong-in, yet confirmation is elusive, leaving room for hope that the clever and playful detective may have survived.

A Siamese Cultural Tapestry

The detective stories of Mr Thong-in are a testament to the intersection of Siamese culture, history, and literature, as written by the future King Rama VI. This detective fiction provides access to compelling explorations of Siamese society in the early 20th century, and its

[10] One *chang* (ชั่ง) was approximately the equivalent of 80 baht in the 1910s.

[11] See also the discussion in Rattanachai (2549: 358–360, n. 1) which points out the existence of two published versions of this narrative. The initial version unfolds within the backdrop of the Shan Rebellion of 1902, while the second, discussed here, emerged in the 1921 edition with the new narrative fabric of the potential rebellion among the Indians of Perak, Malaya. On the 1909 Treaty, see Paget & Devawongse 1909.

collision with the broader world brought to Bangkok by English, Chinese, Indians, and others. Mr Thong-in's adventures—whether unraveling supernatural hoaxes, exposing financial schemes, protecting the reputation of the Kingdom of Siam itself, or confronting bandits—offer readers a captivating journey through the complexities of early Bangkok and beyond.

As a literary work, the 15 tales of Mr Thong-in transcend the "detective and a side kick" genre because they are also a Thai cultural touchstone. The stories are an historical archive of early 20th-century elite Bangkok society fears, by a writer who would become monarch. King Vajiravudh's decision to republish and promote these stories reflected his on-going interest in developing Siamese literary traditions while embracing innovation. The enduring legacy of *Nithan Thong-in* speaks to their timeless appeal and their continued relevance for Siamese literature.

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A Misidentified Image of Bhṛkuṭī in the National Museum Bangkok

Sofia Sundström[1]

Abstract—This study delves into the misidentification of a seated female figure in meditation, displayed at the National Museum Bangkok, now identified as Bhṛkuṭī. The statuette, dating back to approximately 750–850 CE, showcases unique attributes, such as a distinctive *stūpa* on the deity's hair topknot. Analyzing its iconography, the notice traces the evolution of Bhṛkuṭī's representation from South to Southeast Asia, highlighting her diverse forms and roles in Buddhist art history. The study challenges established norms, proposing a potential import hypothesis, and emphasizes the intricate interplay of regional influences, artistic diversity, and the evolving roles of Buddhist female deities.

Keywords: Bhṛkuṭī; Buddhist Iconography; National Museum Bangkok; Southeast Asian Art

One of the numerous metal statuettes displayed in the National Museum Bangkok shows a seated female figure in meditation with six arms **[Figure 1]**. While information on this statue's original location is unknown, the image came from the Royal collection; it was presented by HM King Prajadhipok (Rama VII, r. 1925–1935) to the National Museum on 17 December 1926. This image has been previously published on several occasions and was first identified as a Tārā (Bowie & Griswold 1960: pl. 36). The statuette was later identified as Tārā or Cundā in an exhibition catalogue for the Gemeentemuseum (Kunstmuseum) in the Hague in 1963, with a possible date to the 9th century CE (Lohuizen-de Leeuw et al. 1963: 20, pl. 20). By 1980, the image was identified as the Buddhist deity Cundā, presumably because two of her hands display the *dhyanamudrā* or meditation gesture (Piriya 1980: 180; Subhadradis 1980: pl. 35). However, the bowl, one of Cundā's main attributes, is absent, and there are, in fact, more compelling arguments to propose a different identification.

Although the present image under discussion is a little worn, some of the attributes of the deity's hands can be tentatively identified as (1) a rosary, (2) a manuscript, (3) a jewel (*cintāmaṇi*). Seated in a cross-legged position on a double lotus seat resting on a square base, the lotus appears to lack the pearl–rimmed pod that commonly belong to such seats. This female figure wears a diadem with a front triangle and earrings. She is also adorned with a necklace, armbands, and bracelets. The large rounded–shaped mandorla at her back exhibits intermittent flames along the rim

[1] Leiden University (*Alumna*).
Email: l.s.sundstrom@umail.leidenuniv.nl.

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and is further decorated by a layer of gold, similar to the figure's lips. The style of the backpiece mandorla and seat is reminiscent to that seen in northeast India during the Pāla–Sena period from the 8th through the 12th century (Sundström 2020: I, 45–46). The deity's hair is assembled in a tall, ascetic hairstyle on the top of her head in a manner similar to that seen on stone carvings in the Ellora caves, in western India, and in some statues from northeast India produced during the Pāla–Sena period.

Perhaps one of the most significant iconographic features is the *stūpa* positioned at the front of the deity's hair topknot. The miniature *stūpa* appears to sit on three rings, braids in the hair ensemble. The *stūpa* has a broad round base, with another smaller rounded piece on top; it is completed with a pole or *chattra*.[2] The profile silhouette of the miniature *stūpa* is similar to that of a pear. This symbol is commonly associated with male images of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Nevertheless, some iconographic texts mention that the *stūpa* is also used in images of the Buddhist deity Bhṛkuṭī.[3] In her *Introduction à l'iconographie du tântrisme bouddhique*, de Mallmann notes Bhṛkuṭī's connection to Amitābha but based on *Sādhanamālā* number 15 describes the iconographic symbol of a *caitya* as part of the hair ensemble (de Mallmann 1975: 118).

The rounded mandorla or backpiece for this statuette is somewhat anomalous. A filled or solid backpiece with a smooth rim and intermittent flames is common in northeast Indian bronzes, but the additional pearl-rim seems absent as far as we can ascertain from the present state of the figure and from available photographs at our disposal (kindly shared by Nicolas Revire). Similar known examples with the missing pearl-rim are a few Avalokiteśvara statuettes from Indonesia as well as bronzes from Bangladesh and Odisha (Mitra 1978: fig. 112; Sundström 2020: II, pls 43, 51–52, 56).[4] The lotus seat is unusual in that the top is flat. More commonly, a pearl-rimmed pod or something similar covers the top of the seat. Additionally, the base of the statuette has feet, rare in Southeast Asia, but frequent in northeast Indian bronzes, leading to hypothesize that the statuette was an import from this region and not a local product from peninsular Thailand.

While Bhṛkuṭī may not be the most famous of the Buddhist deities, her first known appearance in a text may be in the *Āryamañjuśrī(ya)mūlakalpa* (1.50), in which her name is mentioned among a long list of "Wisdom Queens" (*vidyārājñi*s), including a certain Tārā.[5] Her role as one

[2] Subhadradis Diskul (1980: 34) noted the possibility of a *stūpa*, but was uncertain. Additionally, he dated the statuette to the 9th or 10th century CE.

[3] There are also *sādhanā*s that describe Bhṛkuṭī as including a miniature effigy of the Buddha Amitābha at the front of her hair topknot (Bhattacharyya 1958: 152). Conversely, Bhṛkuṭī is not the only Buddhist deity to have been depicted with a miniature *stūpa* in this location. Stone statues of Marici from Odisha show her with the same iconographic attribute. However, Marici can be easily identified with her three heads. Marici has also been depicted with a miniature buddha figure in front of the hair ensemble at the top of her head. See for example: https://id.smb.museum/object/796196/marici (accessed 8 November 2023).

[4] For an almost complete example showing a seated buddha with the rounded mandorla and intermittent flames on the rim, see: https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/huntington/show_detail.py?ObjectID=7367 (accessed 6 November 2023).

[5] See the translation from Tibetan here: https://read.84000.co/translation/toh543.html#translation (accessed 2 October 2023). This text

Figure 1: Six-armed Bhṛkuṭī seated in meditation, possibly imported from northeast India, approx. 750-850 CE, National Museum Bangkok, H.: 18 cm, copper alloy with partial gilding, inv. no. ศว ๓ (SV 3) © Nicolas Revire

of many female deities continues in other Buddhist texts such as the *Sarvatathāgatā-chintyadharmadhātumudrāpaṭala*, in which we find the first written iconographic information about Bhṛkuṭī. This text also describes a *mudrā* (lit. "seal" or ritual hand gesture) named after her (Ghosh 1980: 150).[6]

According to Mallar Ghosh, the oldest known appearance of Bhṛkuṭī in Indian art may be found at the main temple of Nalanda in stucco reliefs (Ghosh 1980: 154) dating back to the early 7th century. Unfortunately, the stucco is now missing the heads of all the accompanying figures of Avalokiteśvara. While it is likely that one female figure represented Bhṛkuṭī, the evidence is now lacking. We do find, however, surviving depictions of Bhṛkuṭī in the Ellora caves of Maharashtra. The earliest image there shows her with Mahāmāyūrī in the antechamber of Cave 6, dating back to the early 7th century as well (Malandra 1993: 92). In these representations, Bhṛkuṭī is depicted with two arms. An antelope skin rests sometimes on her left shoulder and arm, similar to depictions of the standing ascetic Avalokiteśvara found in the same cave complex of Ellora. She also possesses a tall ascetic hairstyle, in front of which a miniature *stūpa* is depicted, allowing us to clearly identify her (de Mallmann 1975: 118). Over time, Bhṛkuṭī became a fixed companion of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. For instance, in Cave 12 at Ellora, she is portrayed on the viewer's right hand side as part of a triad flanking Avalokiteśvara in the center together with a seated Tārā on the left hand side. The miniature *stūpa* at the front of her tall hairstyle is again clearly visible **[Figure 2]**. In this depiction, she holds the water vessel (*kamaṇḍalu*) as one of her attributes.

A transition from a two-armed to four-armed form of Bhṛkuṭī occurred in northeast India. Marie-Thérèse de Mallmann (1948: 166), in her monograph on Avalokiteśvara, included a table of Bhṛkuṭī's iconography in association with Avalokiteśvara. Her examples were for Bhṛkuṭī alongside Avalokiteśvara, not as a solitary figure. A common set of iconographic features for her form with four arms usually consists of a rosary in the upper right hand and the lower right hand displaying the *varadamudrā*. The upper left hand holds a three-pronged staff and the lower left hand a water vessel. A second variation would be that the two lower hands display the "salutation" hand gesture (*anjalimudrā*).[7]

The four-armed form of Bhṛkuṭī is the version predominately seen in Odisha. The majority of the Bhṛkuṭī images from eastern India are also found in connection with Avalokiteśvara stone statues. In images dated to the 8th century and onward, as well as the bronze statuettes from the Achutrajpur hoard, dated to the 10th century CE, Bhṛkuṭī is shown with four arms. The most common iconographic combination of attributes is a rosary in the upper right hand with the lower right hand in the "boon-receiving" gesture (*varadamudrā*). Her upper left hand holds a three-pronged staff and the lower left hand holds a water vessel. The miniature *stūpa* is consistently present at the front of her hair ensemble.

dates approximately to the 8th century CE; however, some parts may have been composed at an earlier date.

[6] Bhṛkuṭī is mentioned in the *Saṁnipātaparivarta, Maṇḍalavidhānaparivarta, Rājavyākaraṇaparivarta* and the *Hevajratantra* in different configurations of characters without iconographic information (Ghosh 1980: 149–150).

[7] For example, see Banerji 1933: no. 3860.

Figure 2: Triad with a seated Avalokiteśvara at center, flanked by seated Tārā (viewer's left) and Bhṛkuṭī (viewer's right), wall panel relief, Cave 12, Ellora, Maharashtra, India, approx. 700–730 CE © Nicolas Revire

However, the six-armed form of Bhṛkuṭī appears not to have originated from the Indian subcontinent. Although six-armed Bhṛkuṭī images are depicted in Tibet, the iconographic attributes for this form are weapons such as sword, club, or bow (Ghosh 1980: 171, 179). Alice Getty (1914: 110) described another six-armed Bhṛkuṭī as being the Blue Tārā, but that form would have three heads, rather than just one. This is certainly different from the six-armed statuette of Bhṛkuṭī at the National Museum Bangkok.

Bhṛkuṭī is not the only female deity from insular Southeast Asia who has been depicted with six arms. There are examples of other female figures with six arms from the region, but they have not yet been identified (Mechling 2020: II, fig. 6.82 and 6.189). The more common number of arms for these female deities, however, are two, four, or eight. A frequent iconographic attribute for the female deities with multiple arms is that the frontal right hand displays the *varadamudrā* and holds a jewel in the palm of the hand. We see this for a four-armed and eight-armed figures, also in the National Museum Bangkok, as well as in several others from Indonesia including the Buddhist deity in the Sambas hoard (Subhadradis 1980: pl. 36; Piriya 1980: pl. 50; Mechling 2020: II, fig. 5.88).

Stylistically the Bhṛkuṭī statuette located in the National Museum Bangkok has close ties with the art of northeast India. The statuette might once have been part of a triad featuring Avalokiteśvara at the center flanked by another Tārā as a

Figure 3: Triad with a standing Avalokiteśvara at center, flanked by seated Tārā (viewer's left) and Bhṛkuṭī (viewer's right), from Central Java, approx. 825–850 CE, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, H.: 19.2 cm, bronze with silver inlay, acc. no. 1987.142.22 © The Met

companion, although surviving images do not corroborate this hypothesis. If indeed this statuette under discussion was produced as a solitary image, it would be relatively unique. As we have seen, Bhṛkuṭī is typically depicted alongside other Buddhist figures, male and female. However, in Javanese art, a greater number of images depicting Bhṛkuṭī have survived. Some of these images remain integral components of a triad with Avalokiteśvara and a Tārā **[Figure 3]**, while others appear as stand-alone figures, though they might have originally been part of an ensemble.

One Javanese example of a stand-alone Bhṛkuṭī also shows the lips highlighted in gold **[Figure 4]**, which is fairly reminiscent of our statuette from the National Museum Bangkok. This two-armed form, originally found in Bumiayu district, Brebes regency, Central Java, wears an elaborate diadem. The miniature *stūpa* at the front of her hair topknot once again confirms identification as Bhṛkuṭī.

With open eyes and a gold-highlighted *ūrṇā* and lips, this Bhṛkuṭī is adorned with a necklace, earrings, armbands, and bracelets. A sash (*yajñopavīta*), crosses her body just below her natural waist, decorated with a line and dot pattern. Here, she sits in the half cross-legged position on a single lotus seat, unlike our specimen from the National Museum Bangkok. Additionally, she lacks a mandorla or

FIGURE 4: Seated, two-armed Bhṛkuṭī from Bumiayu, Brebes, Central Java, approx. 800–850 CE, Museum Nasional Indonesia, H.: 16 cm, bronze with gold inlay, inv. no. 6590 © Kern Digital Library, OD-13995

halo. Her lower garment is decorated with lines and dots, as is the sash, as well as a floral pattern. This particular statuette has been named a Tārā by both the Kern Digital Library and the Huntington Digital Library,[8] however, due to the presence of the miniature *stūpa* in front of her hair topknot, we feel quite confident to identify it more precisely as the Buddhist deity Bhṛkuṭī.

[8] See: http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:5153, and https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/huntington/show_detail.py?ObjectID=30126861 (accessed 10 October 2023). Additionally, the figure was identified as Tārā in exhibition catalogues (Fontein 1990: 192; Sedyawati 1997: 93).

The Javanese bronzes have been dated to approximately 775–850 CE. However, peninsular Thailand likely had a different development than Java in terms of local artistic language, even though there are similarities between the two areas. Piriya Krairiksh (2012: 252) hypothesized that the statuette was imported from Odisha and dated it to 800–850 CE, primarily based on its similarity with another statuette found at Achutrajpur. Mathilde Mechling (2020: I, 195) also noted that the backpiece was similar to those found in Odisha and Java. While there are indeed some obvious stylistic similarities with statuettes from Odisha, there are also stylistic links with other areas, such as Bangladesh as mentioned above.

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In conclusion, the examination of the seated figure statuette in the National Museum Bangkok reveals a fascinating evolution of Bhṛkuṭī's iconography from South to Southeast Asia. This transition spans multiple regions and time periods, reflecting the dynamic nature of Buddhist art.

Starting with the portrayal of Bhṛkuṭī with two arms and the distinctive presence of a miniature *stūpa* at the front of her hair topknot, we see her emergence in early texts and her role among the Vidyārājñis. As we progress through the centuries, she evolves, acquiring jewelry and four arms, frequently found alongside a certain Tārā, flanking the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

Unexpected aspects of the Bangkok statuette, including the atypical backpiece of the rounded-mandorla and a potential import hypothesis, challenge

our understanding of Bhṛkuṭī's regional and historical spread. Intriguingly, the flat top of the lotus seat deviates from the norm, where a pearl-rimmed pod typically covers it. This anomaly adds to the statuette's uniqueness. The number of arms for the deity may be a local development or influenced by external factors. All of these factors influence the dating of the piece to approximately 750–850 CE, a slightly broader date than given by Piriya Krairiksh. It is likely that the statuette was imported, either from the Bangladesh region or Odisha in northeast India.

Overall, the study of Bhṛkuṭī's iconography highlights the complex interplay of regional influences, evolving roles of Buddhist female deities, and artistic diversity across time and space. It underscores the significance of individual statues as pieces of a broader narrative in the rich tapestry of Buddhist art history.

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A Sino–Thai Blue-and-White Porcelain at UMMA

Yu-Yu Cheng[1] & Trent Walker[2]

Abstract—A blue-and-white porcelain lidded bottle housed at the University of Michigan Museum of Art stands as a significant representative from a collection of late 19th-century tea sets crafted in China for the Siamese court. This brief examination delves into crucial visual cues, such as the bottle's distinct ringed-neck shape, incorporation of typical Chinese auspicious motifs, depictions of Siamese coinage and royal monograms from the Rama V period in its decorative patterns, and the presence of a Chinese-language hallmark on its base. These visual elements and inscriptions collectively unveil insights into the bottle's purpose, origins, and its broader significance within the realm of Sino–Thai ceramics.

Keywords: Blue-and-white Porcelain; China; Jingdezhen; Rama V (Chulalongkorn) Period; Sino–Thai Ceramics

Introduction

The University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA) in Ann Arbor has an important blue-and-white porcelain lidded bottle. Standing 31.5 centimeters tall and reaching a maximum of 14 centimeters wide, the bottle is adorned with blue underglaze in a variety of patterns. The primary decoration, situated at the bottle's widest bulge, features pairs of painted disks in the shape of Siamese coins. For each pair, the left circle represents the obverse side of the coin, while the right side represents the reverse. The royal monogram of King Chulalongkorn or Rama V (r. 1868–1910) of Siam appears on the obverse side, and the denomination and date—equivalent to 1874 CE—appears on the reverse. The coins are framed by a bat design on top, a ribbon pattern around and beneath, and a meander motif on the sides, the lattermost motif being a stylized version of Rama V's initials. The relatively narrow neck of the bottle features additional patterns framed by three rings of identical size. The lid features a fourth ring around its bottom edge, mirroring the rings on the neck. The lid also includes miniaturized versions of the main patterns on the bottle **[Figure 1]**. What do these visual clues—shape, decoration, and inscriptions—tell us about the bottle's purpose, origins, and context within the wider world of Sino–Thai ceramics? In this short notice, we look at these three elements in turn to show that the UMMA object is a significant representative from a group of late 19th-century tea sets produced in China for the Siamese court.

[1] Corresponding author. University of Michigan–Ann Arbor. Email: yuyuc@umich.edu.
[2] University of Michigan–Ann Arbor.

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Figure 1: Blue-and-white lidded bottle, approx. 1888–1910, University of Michigan Museum of Art, H.: 31.5 cm, W.: 14 cm, porcelain with blue pigment under clear glaze, acc. no. 2005/1.461A&B © UMMA

Origins and Provenance

Before examining the visual clues in more detail, we first discuss the bottle's provenance, its likely place of production, and its connection to similar published objects. The bottle in question was originally part of the private collection of Ms Doris Duke (1912–1993). Duke was an American tobacco heiress, philanthropist, and enthusiast of Southeast Asian art. Duke purchased the bottle between the late 1950s and early 1970s through dealers in Bangkok as part of her plan to construct a Thai village in Hawai'i. She likely acquired the bottle through her friend Baron François Duhau de Bérenx (1932–2018), a Belgian aristocrat, decorator, and art dealer in Thailand who acted as a middleman in her purchase of Southeast Asian artifacts (Tingley 2003: 10–21). The piece was then likely moved to Duke Farms in New Jersey when the Thai village project in Hawai'i failed to come to fruition. After her death, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation donated many pieces of Duke's collection to various museums. In 2005, the Foundation donated this bottle to UMMA, where it has remained since. The bottle was recently on display in UMMA's small gallery of Southeast Asian art.

The distinctive blue underglaze of the bottle connects it to the famous Chinese kiln site of Jingdezhen (景德鎮) in Jiangxi province. The blue underglaze was the result of an advanced technical process that in the late 19th century was only available at Jingdezhen. The locally mined kaolinite (*gaolingtu*, 高嶺土) was first molded into different models and left to dry. The blue was probably made from a cobalt pigment as the key element painted directly on the unfired clay, which was then coated with transparent glaze. The final stage entailed placing the ware into a kiln and subjecting it to temperatures up to 1,300 degrees Celsius. Through high-temperature oxidation, the mixture of compounds with cobalt in the painted pattern reacted with the silicon in the glaze, resulting in a blue hue known as smalt in pigment mineralogy (Li 2015). These sophisticated processes led many clients outside of China to specifically request Jingdezhen wares for their recognized quality (Jörg 1982: 113). Exporters in harbor cities such as Canton (present-day Guangzhou, 廣州, in Guangdong province) often collaborated with kilns in Jingdezhen to fulfill these orders (*ibid.*: 123). The UMMA bottle would have entailed a similar mode of production in Jingdezhen and subsequent export to Siam. Siamese courtiers were closely involved in this process (see below).

With regards to similar objects that have been previously published, several blue-and-white lidded bottles of this period appear in museum and exhibition catalogues as well as on auction websites. For instance, there are two lidded bottles at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco (McGill & Pattaratorn 2010: 213–214, cat. nos. 138–139), which have the same shape but different decorative patterns and different examples of Rama V monograms **[Figures 2a–b]**.

Another bottle belongs to the Freer Gallery of Art collection within the National Museum of Asian Art in Washington, DC, which likewise has identical dimensions and form but not the same decorations as the UMMA

Figures 2a–b: Two Blue-and-White lidded bottles with monogram of Rama V, approx. 1888–1910, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, H.: 31.7 cm, porcelain with blue pigment under clear glaze, acc. no. 2006.27.99.a-b (a) and 2006.27.100.a-b (b) © AAM

bottle **[Figure 3]**. Like the UMMA object, these bottles came from the Doris Duke collection. Several more bottles have appeared at auction houses such as Christie's, where they have been misidentified as being for the Tibetan market, despite featuring the monogram of Rama V.[3] A very similar bottle to one of the Christie's sets is housed at the Jim Thompson House **[Figure 4]**. Presumably many more such objects still survive in private collections in Thailand and beyond. As far as we know, however, the UMMA specimen is the only lidded bottle with this particular decoration in a North American museum collection; as such the object warrants further scrutiny.

Unique Shape and Auspicious Motifs

The shape of the UMMA bottle and similar objects produced for the Siamese court is curious from the perspective of Chinese ceramics and typology. The UMMA website describes the object as a carafe. Since carafes usually lack a lid, here we follow the lead of the Asian Art Museum in describing this form as a

[3] See Christie's London, auction 9177, dated 16 August 2001, lot 498 [https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-2392350] and auction 9246, dated 8 November 2001, lot 268 [https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-3807729].

Figure 3: Blue-and-white lidded bottle, approx. 1888–1910, National Museum of Asian Art, H.: 31.4 cm, porcelain with blue pigment under clear glaze, acc. no. F2004.35a–b © NMAA

Figure 4: Blue-and-white lidded bottle, approx. 1888–1910, Jim Thompson House, H.: 30.5 cm, porcelain with blue pigment under clear glaze, inv. no. 0334 © JTH

lidded bottle (McGill & Pattaratorn 2010: cat. nos. 138–139). Yet the precise shape and dimensions of such lidded bottles are not, to the best of our knowledge, found in the history of Chinese ceramics produced for the domestic market. We are likewise not aware of a specific Chinese term to describe the bottle's exact form. For instance, it is not quite in the shape of a calabash gourd (Ch.: *hulu*, 葫蘆; Th.: *nam tao*, น้ำเต้า), long used in East and Southeast Asia for crafting water bottles. Porcelain wares with gourd-inspired forms were commonly produced as well. But the gourd-shaped ceramics produced in China for the Siamese market in the 18th and 19th centuries were typically vases (*chaekan nam tao*, แจกันน้ำเต้า). These wares feature a second bulge at the neck, just like a real gourd, and lack a lid. The UMMA object in question has only the main bulge in its lower half, with a slender, ringed neck, so is not best described as gourd-like in form.

In the Thai context, we argue that the closest term to describe the lidded bottle's shape would be *khontho* (คนโท), a term for a water bottle or ewer related to but distinct from Thai *khonthi* (คณฑี), Malay *kendi*, and by extension the Indic terms *kuṇḍī* (used rarely in Thai as

Figure 5: Detail of two types of borders, (1) exotic-cotton-leaf pattern seen at the top and bottom, (2) five-petaled flowers and leaves pattern seen in the middle (cf. Fig. 1) © UMMA

kunthi, กุณฑี) and *kuṇḍikā*. While only the *khontho* is close in shape to the UMMA object (the *kendi* and its relatives have an extra sprout emerging from the side), what all of these terms have in common is that they describe bottles crafted to hold cold water, whether for ritual or everyday use. For instance, a set of ceramic *khontho* with the royal monogram of King Rama X (r. 2016–present) were produced to hold sacred water from rivers from each of Thailand's provinces to be used in his coronation (Dusit 2562). The UMMA *khontho*, if we dare to adopt this term, was not necessarily produced for a ritual purpose. Other blue-and-white export wares for the Siamese court that share the same identifying patterns and marks are clearly tea sets (McGill & Pattaratorn 2010: 213, cat. no. 137), so the lidded bottle was presumably for carrying, storing, and pouring cold water in a tea-making context. The series of rings on the neck appear to be both a decorative and ergonomic feature, as they would aid in gripping the otherwise slippery bottle while pouring water.

What about the decorative patterns on the bottle? What do they tell us about the history of the object? Two distinct types of borders adorn the neck of the bottle. The first features the exotic-cotton-leaf pattern (*lai bai fai thet*, ลายใบฝ้ายเทศ; Robinson 1982: 218–303). This is a highly versatile floral pattern frequently observed in Siamese ceramics, characterized by its three-pointed leaves (Håbu & Rooney 2013: 41). A second motif of uncertain name is characterized by five-petaled flowers and leaves **[Figure 5]**. A third type of border appears at the bottom of the bottle, consisting of a golden fish and waterweed pattern. Beyond their decorative function, it is difficult to ascribe specific meanings to these borders and their placement on the bottle.

For the primary patterns on the bottle, however, including the coins surrounded by upside-down bats and flowing ribbons **[Figure 6]**, we assert that these were selected for their auspiciousness on the basis of Chinese wordplay. Auspicious symbols are an influential tradition within the Chinese context. Such a tradition stems from the fact that many Sinitic languages, including modern Mandarin, are abundant in homophones. Thus, the pronunciation of the word for "bat" (蝠, *fu*) is identical to "fortune" (福, *fu*) in Mandarin. Ribbons also represent good fortune in Chinese culture. The pronunciation of the term for a knot of ribbons, *hudiejie* (蝴蝶結), contains similar sounds to *fu* (福, "fortune") and *ji* (吉, "luck"). Ribbons, along with coins and other precious objects, appear in a traditional Chinese pattern known as *zabaowen* (雜寶紋), or the "miscellaneous treasures pattern", which has been

Figure 6: Detail of flying bat and flowing ribbons encircling two sides of a Siamese coin (cf. Fig. 1) © Nicolas Revire

popular in ceramics since the 12th–13th centuries (Song & Bian 2020: 88–94).

Thus the use of the bat and the ribbons on the bottle are informed by a Chinese aesthetic, witnessed in both artistic and ritual spheres, that incorporates objects selected for their auspicious homophones.

Auspicious Coin Pattern

On the UMMA lidded bottle, one additional specific miscellaneous treasures pattern is the use of the coin. The auspicious meaning of the word for coin—*qian* (錢) or *quan* (泉)—is similarly based on its homophonic association with *quan* (全), which means "complete". Indeed, the two sides of the same coin symbolize a complete whole and that good things must always come in pairs (Teng & Chen 2015). Though the arrangement and selection of the above patterns follows Chinese conventions, the depiction of coins themselves and the meander patterns that flank them are clearly Siamese.

The main coin used as a model was one *at* (อัฐ, from Pali *aṭṭha*, "eight") coin, valued at one eighth of a *fueang* (เฟื้อง). This particular coin was minted in mid- to late-19th century Siam (Ronachai 2012: 253–254, F505–F506) **[Figures 7a–b]**. The inscription on the reverse side of the coin confirms this dating: *at 8 an fueang* (อัฐ ๘ อันเฟื้อง), meaning "[one] *at*, 8 per *fueang*", followed below by the calendar year [CS: *cūḷasakarāja*] 1236, which fell between April 1874 and April 1875 CE. The inscription around the obverse side of the coin reads clockwise from left to right *krung sayam ratchakan thi 5* (กรุงสยามรัชกาลที่ ๕), meaning "The Kingdom of Siam, Fifth Reign", referring

Figures 7a–b: The obverse (a) and reverse (b) of an *at* coin dated 1236 CS (= 1874 CE), private collection, Bangkok © Ronachai Krisadaolarn

to King Rama V. In the middle of the obverse face, Rama V's royal monogram appears, with a crown on top and his initials below (*cho po ro*, จปร, abbreviated from his full title as มหาจุฬาลงกรณ์ ปรมราชาธิราช, *mahachulalongkornporomarachathirat*; P., *mahācuḷālaṅkaraṇaparamarājādhirāja*). These same *cho po ro* initials also appear in an extremely stylized form in the meander pattern to the right and left of each appearance of the primary bat-ribbon-coin pattern seen above **[Fig. 6]**.

Thai-language sources are not in agreement as to the name or meaning of the combined bat-ribbon-coin and royal monogram pattern. One possible name is simply *lai at* (ลายอัฐ, "*at*-coin pattern"), though this name does not appear in most published lists (Damrong 2460: 93–94; Pariwat 2539: 151). The meaning of the combined pattern is thus best explained by the Chinese trinity known as the *sanxing* (三星, "three stars"), which encompasses the terms (1) *fu* (福, "fortune") for the bat and ribbons, as explained above; (2) *lu* (祿, "prosperity", "salary for a government official") for the coin; and (3) *shou* (壽, "longevity") for the meander pattern of the *cho po ro* monogram.[4] This interpretation requires that we understand the particular shape of the monogram as an imitation of the character *shou*. While the shapes are not an exact match, other stylizations of *shou*—based on Chinese aesthetics rather than Thai letters—are found interspersed with bat motifs, symbolizing *fu*, in Qing-period ceramics from Jingdezhen (Chen 2017).

Why was this particular coin chosen for the pattern? Here we assume that Chinese wordplay once again guided this design. The monetary value of an *at* was relatively low. For the period in question, an *at* was a copper piece with a value equivalent to 22 times its weight in silver (Bangkok Times 1996: 31–33).

[4] See the "Guide to Jor Por Ror Porcelain" created by River City, Bangkok, and available online: https://www.rcbauctions.com/a-guide-to-jor-por-ror-porcelain/ (dated 1 February 2022).

When converted to modern metrics, one *at* weighs 0.23313 grams. Multiplying this by 22, a single *at* is equivalent to 5.129 grams of silver or 0.0005 English pounds during the relevant historical period. Why would one depict such a modest coin on this fine porcelain bottle bearing the king's initials? We argue that the *at* coin, which features the Siamese numeral for eight—long considered lucky in China—on its reverse face, was chosen for its auspicious value. In many Chinese dialects—including Mandarin and Cantonese, though less so in Teochew—the number eight, *ba* (八), sounds similar to *fa* (發), which bears the meaning of prosperity and wealth. The notion of *fa* here is quite close to *lu* in the *sanxing* trinity, as discussed above.

Despite the use of a Siamese coin model, the craftspeople involved in the production of the porcelain bottle in Jingdezhen were clearly Chinese. Indeed, the Siamese language inscriptions found on the two faces of the coin motif are not well executed, likely reflecting the work of a Chinese craftsperson who was not literate in Siamese script. The selection of the coin, drawn from the miscellaneous treasures pattern, along with the bat and ribbon, reflect a Chinese sensibility for what designs are most appropriate for elegant blue-and-white ceramics to convey a sense of fortune and prosperity. When coupled with Rama V's monogram in Siamese script, crafted in imitation of the Chinese character for longevity, the combined pattern reads as a Siamese twist on the traditional *fu-lu-shou* trinity.

Chinese Hallmark

A final inscription appears at the base of the lidded bottle **[Figure 8]**. This four-character Chinese hallmark corresponds to the name of a trademark used by Thai–Chinese aristocrats who had obtained royal permission to import porcelain production from China to Siam during this era. However, this phrase also makes logical sense within a Chinese context. The characters read top to bottom and right to left as *jin tang fa ji* (錦 堂 發 記, lit. "Grand Hall Wealth Company").

The origin of the idea of *jin tang*, grand hall, lies in the name of a hall that the esteemed prime minister of Northern Song, Han Qi (韓琦, 1008–1075), built in his hometown, Xiangzhou 相州 (present-day Anyang 安陽, in Henan province). Han named his hall Zhou Jin Tang (晝錦堂, Daytime Grand Hall), with the literary citation coming from the *Xiangyu benji* 項羽本紀 section of Sima Qian's (司馬遷, 145–86 BCE) massive historical work, the *Shiji* 史記, in which he quotes: "not bringing home wealth and rank one earned is just like wearing embroidered clothes at nighttime; who would even know?"(富貴不歸故鄉如繡衣夜行誰知之者; Sima 1878: 9; Zhang 1936: 127–128; our translation). The idea of returning to one's hometown with glory from afar has long been celebrated in Chinese thought. Since *jin tang fa ji* refers to a company run by a Siamese aristocrat of Chinese descent, the name *jin tang* is likely in reference to these ideas.

Figure 8: The Jin Tang Fa Ji hallmark found at the base of the lidded bottle, University of Michigan Museum of Art (cf. Fig. 1) © UMMA

The history of this company in Siam requires further explanation. After King Mongkut or Rama IV (r. 1851–1868) stopped sending tribute missions to China in 1853, Chinese porcelain orders were no longer managed by the Siamese state trading monopoly. Instead, they were primarily overseen by merchants of Chinese descent based in Bangkok, who acted on behalf of the King. Phraya Boribun Kosakon (พระยาบริบูรณ์โกษากร; also known as Li Fazhou, 李發洲, son of Phraya Choduek Ratchasetthi (พระยาโชฎึกราชเศรษฐี; Li Fu 李福), was one of the leading Chinese merchants in Bangkok, who changed the name of the family company from Jin Tang Fu Ji (錦堂福記; Teochew pronunciation as rendered into Thai script: *kim tueng hok ki*, กิมตึ๋งฮกกี่), to Jin Tang Fa Ji (*kim tueng huat ki*, กิมตึ๋งฮวดกี่; Sng & Pimpraphai 2015: 208). King Rama V assigned him the responsibility of ordering the blue-and-white tea sets with the King's monogram from China. Prince Prawit Chumsai, nickname Tong (หม่อมเจ้าประวิช ชุมสาย, ต๋ง), designed up to twelve different kinds of *cho po ro* monograms, including the ones seen on the UMMA bottle (Pariwat 2539: 150–151). Subsequently, the Siamese courtier and master artisan Phraya Wisawakam Sinlapa Prasit (พระยาวิศวกรรมศิลปประสิทธิ์) was sent to Jingdezhen around 1888 to oversee the fabrication of porcelain tea sets with similar decorations to those of the UMMA bottle (Sanur 2529: 11–13).

The original sets of the *cho po ro* porcelain are identifiable by a different mark, known as a *po* seal (ตราโป), which includes the fabrication year of 1250 CS (= 1888 CE), marked at the base of each ware **[e.g., Figure 9]**. These sets were so admired in late 19th-century Bangkok that Phraya Boribun Kosakon secretly placed another order with the same patterns, which bears the Jin Tang Fa Ji hallmark. The date of this order is uncertain, but most likely took place between 1888 and King Rama V's passing in 1910. This action displeased the King, and the second batch of the *cho po ro* wares inscribed with Jin Tang Fa Ji was confiscated and stored at the Tax Office warehouse until the middle of the 20th century (Pimpraphai 2014). The UMMA lidded bottle, along with its sister objects worldwide, likely come from this once-confiscated batch of tea sets. Like other similar pieces in these sets, the UMMA bottle would have originally come with a saucer, now unfortunately lost.

Figure 9: A saucer base from the original tea set with the royal "*po* seal" (ตราโป), dated to 1888, private collection in Thailand © Bhujjong 2015: 177

Sino–Thai Fusion

Crafted in Jingdezhen as an exquisite piece of export porcelain for consumption by the Siamese elite, this ware exemplifies a masterful blend of Thai and Chinese design elements. While the bottle's shape exhibits a distinct Siamese influence, the inscriptions at the base and primary decorative patterns unequivocally reveal the involvement of Chinese craftsmen in its production and embellishment, a process guided by a Siamese official. These skilled artisans seamlessly integrated familiar Chinese motifs such as the bat, golden fish, and miscellaneous treasures with royal Siamese symbols such as a coin with King Rama V's monogram. The UMMA object is thus an important witness for how exported blue-and-white ceramics from Jingdezhen in the late 19th century integrated Chinese and Siamese influences.

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A Malay Queen's Siamese Silver Bowl at the V&A

Naomi Wang[1]

Abstract—This notice examines a nielloware silver bowl at the V&A Museum, originally from southern Thailand. Using Jawi inscriptions, the notice unravels the bowl's significance as a royal Malay heirloom. The bowl's intricate scenes depict Hindu–Buddhist mythical creatures and celestial beings. The royal seal found on the base is attributed to Queen Tengku Ambung Fatimah (r. 1883–?). Another Jawi inscription traces a lineage, identifying two other royal women, Engku Besar and Engku Lebar as previous owners. The bowl was eventually dispersed from the Riau–Lingga court, likely after the sultanate was dissolved in 1911, before reaching Singapore and London. This artifact serves as a symbol of lineage, power, and transnational movement in a 19th-century maritime court.

Keywords: Jawi Inscriptions; Maritime Court; Riau–Lingga Sultanate; Silver Nielloware; Tengku Ambung Fatimah; Transnational Exchange

Figure 1: Bowl, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Riau–Lingga Sultanate, 19th century, Victoria & Albert Museum, H.: 12, W.: 25.5 cm, inv. no. IS.360-1950 © V&A Museum

[1] Asian Civilisations Museum & Peranakan Museum, Singapore. Email: naomi_wang@nhb.gov.sg.

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Figure 2: Detail of a praying celestial in leaf-shaped cartouche and flanked by *garuḍas* © V&A Museum

On permanent display in the Southeast Asia section of the Victoria & Albert (V&A) Museum in London is a sizable Siamese nielloware inlaid silver bowl adorned with depictions of mythical animals and celestial beings from Hindu and Buddhist mythology **[Figure 1]**. However, the bowl's distinctive status as a family heirloom is unveiled through two Jawi (یواج) script inscriptions discovered on its underside, a topic we will delve into shortly.

Upon close examination, the bowl's remarkable journey unfolds, passing through the lineage of three royal Malay women from the Riau–Lingga Sultanate (Jawi: کسلطانن نڬيلوايرن, Kesultanan Riau–Lingga; 1824–1911). As we explore further details, the bowl emerges not only as a transnational artifact, illustrating the dynamic interplay of commercial and ideological exchanges that characterized maritime polities such as the Riau–Lingga court.

Contrary to a perception of a uniform court style, such cherished objects exemplify a hybrid material culture, underscoring the esteemed status attributed to imported goods in a complex network of cultural interactions.

Siamese Nielloware: Prestige Objects

The term niello derives from the Latin word *nigellus*, an indication of something "black" or "dark", and a reference to an inlaid alloy made from copper, lead, silver, and sulphur (Choo 1984: 21;

Bromberg 2019: 50). In the case of the bowl described here, the inlay is on a silver base. Siamese nielloware is historically produced in Nakhon Si Thammarat on the east coast of the Thai–Malay Peninsula. As observed by Paul Bromberg (2019: 44), the first known literary reference to nielloware is found in the royal laws from the reign of King Boromtrailokkanat (1448–1488) of Siam which states that "the nobleman of a certain high rank with 10,000 *rai* of land at his disposal was entitled to govern a city and to demonstrate his exalted position by owning a nielloware pedestal and tray".

From the date of this decree, the ownership and use of nielloware records a long history of noble association in Siam. This knowledge was well understood by the three royal Malay women of the Riau–Lingga court who, in succession, claimed ownership of this bowl as we shall see further below.

Mythical Animals and Celestial Beings

The V&A bowl consists of two alternating scenes. One, a *theppanom* (เทพนม), a celestial being in worshipful posture, flanked on each side by a *khrut* (ครุฑ) or *garuḍas*, identified by human bodies with heads and talons of a bird; it is also enveloped by a leaf-shaped cartouche known as *lai phum* (ลายพุ่ม) **[Figure 2]**. Two, Lord Viṣṇu, clearly recognizable by the discus or *cakra* in one of his hands. Viṣṇu stands atop his Garuḍa's mount and is further surrounded by four *theppanom*s **[Figure 3]**.

Beyond serving as an allegory for mythical creatures and celestial beings from Hindu and Buddhist mythology, the Siamese monarch's commissioning of *theppanom*s, for example in temple murals, goes beyond allowing celestial beings to partake in religious activities. According to Alexandra Green, this practice is pivotal in enabling the Siamese royalty to fulfill its crucial role as the "patron and protector of Buddhism" (2013: 138), establishing a connection between the divine and their rule.

The Garuḍa, representing Siamese royalty with each monarch a reincarnation of Viṣṇu, becomes a potent symbol. The aftermath of the Burmese sacking of Ayutthaya in 1767 prompted the Siamese monarchy to intensify the commissioning of Buddhist images, seeking to reclaim their status as divine rulers through Buddhism. The incorporation of royal symbolism in a prestigious object such as this silver nielloware bowl further underscores its significance in this narrative.

A Royal Seal and Inscription from the Riau–Lingga Sultanate

In 2008, Annabel Teh Gallop from the British Library, at the behest of the late John Clarke, then curator of Himalayan and Southeast Asian Art at the V&A Museum, transcribed and translated the Jawi script and ownership seals on seven silver objects, attributing their royal provenance to Malay Queen Tengku Ambung Fatimah (r. 1883–?).[2] Included in the V&A group of seven inscribed ves-

[2] This pioneering epigraphic study first appeared in Gallop's unpublished paper, "Malay Silverware with Jawi Inscriptions", presented at the international conference on Southeast Asian art organized by the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology, in Kraków, on 29 September–1 October 2011, and subsequently at the "Malay Silver Study Day" held at the V&A Museum on 1 November 2013.

Figure 3: Detail of Lord Viṣṇu mounting Garuḍa and flanked by four praying celestials © V&A Museum

sels was this nielloware bowl, containing both a royal seal and an inscription on its base **[Figure 4]**.[3]

First, a rectangular seal with chamfered corners was stamped on the underside of the bowl. It contains an inscription which reads in Jawi script *Tengku Ambung yang punya*, that is, "Tengku Ambung owns this" (Gallop 2019: 43, 336) **[Figure 5]**.

Tengku Ambung Fatimah was a Malay princess, and eventually regnant queen, from the Riau–Lingga Sultanate.

Gallop (2019: 10) observed that the inclusion of *tengku* in the title elements serves as an indication of royal lineage descent in Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Indeed, Tengku Ambung Fatimah's royal status is affirmed by her unique position as the only child of Sultan Mahmud Muzaffar Syah (r. 1841–1857). Further affirming her lineage, her mother and queen consort, Raja Maimunah, was the granddaughter of Sultan Husain of Singapore (Matheson 1972). The use of the title *tengku* thus serves as concrete proof of her descent from the prestigious Malay line.

Tengku Ambung's great uncle, Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah II (r. 1857–1883) succeeded to the throne from her father and died on 17 September 1883 without a male heir (Andaya 2003: 90). Bugis-Malay elites of the Riau–Lingga court chose Tengku Ambung Fatimah over three male contenders, "T[engku] Said, T Husin and T. Mahmud" (Hijjas

[3] For a fresh study of this group of inscribed silverware, see Wang 2022.

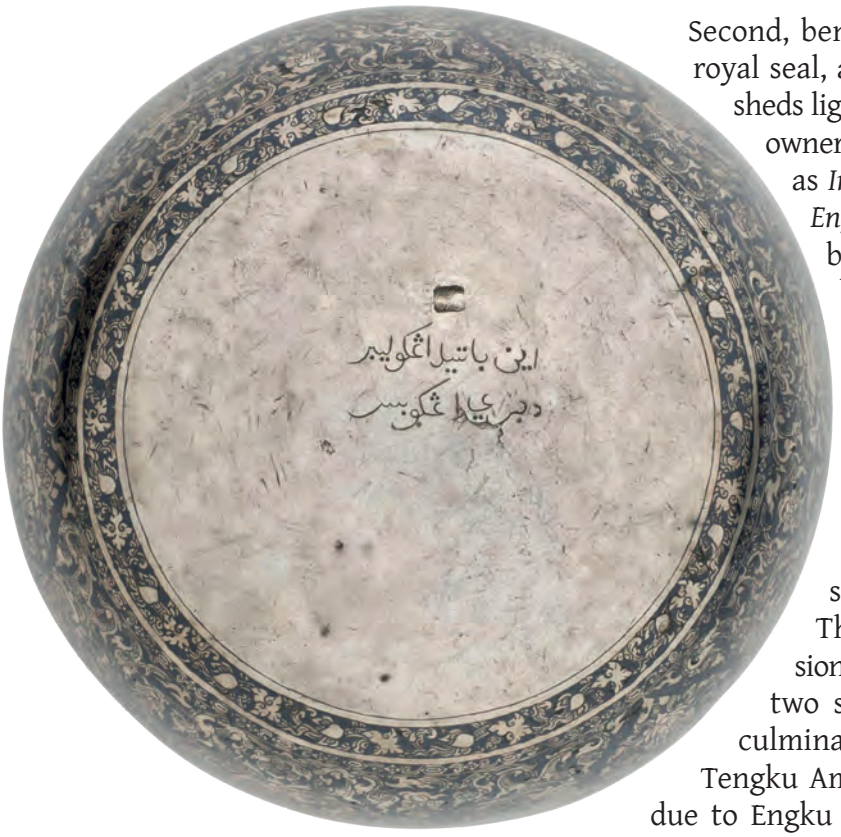


Figure 4: The royal seal and Jawi inscription on the underside of the nielloware bowl © V&A Museum

2011: 25), making her the first female to break the male monopoly of Malay rulership in about two centuries (Wee 1985: 214).

In the Malay world, the use of seals to indicate ownership of objects is largely absent, making Tengku Ambung's seal unusual and likely an innovation by its owner.

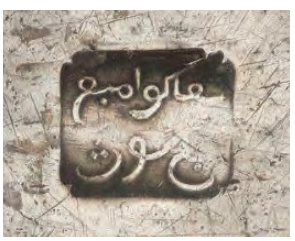


Figure 5: Detail of Tengku Ambung's royal seal © V&A Museum

Second, beneath Tengku Ambung's royal seal, another Jawi inscription sheds light on the bowl's previous owners. The engraving reads as *Ini batil Engku Lebar diberi Engku Besar*, "This is the bowl of Engku Lebar, given by Engku Besar" (Gallop 2019: 336) **[Figure 6]**.

According to the inscription, the first known female owner of the bowl was Engku Besar Raja Siti who gifted it to her cousin and sister-in-law, Engku Lebar. The subsequent transmission of this heirloom through two subsequent generations, culminating in its possession by Tengku Ambung Fatimah, is likely due to Engku Lebar's grandson, none other than Raja Muhammad Yusuf. He held the esteemed position of the 10th Yang Dipertuan Muda or Viceroy of Riau from 1858 to 1899 and was also Tengku Ambung's husband (Gallop 2011: 2).[4]

Far from being classed as domestic artifacts, royal heirlooms carry profound symbolism in the realm of ritual and ceremonial practices. "[I]n Southeast Asia, the notion of genealogy applies as much to objects as to persons" (Bennett 2005: 50). Objects passed through generations become tangible symbols of lineage, infused with supernatural power. As a personal possession of a head of state, this bowl serves as a

[4] Gallop identified these royal women from the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (تحفة النفيس; "The Precious Gift"), a historical chronicle of Malay and Bugis kings from the Riau–Lingga Sultanate, written around 1866 by Bugis scholar, Raja Ali Haji bin Raja Ahmad (fl. 1809–1873). See also Matheson & Andaya 1982.

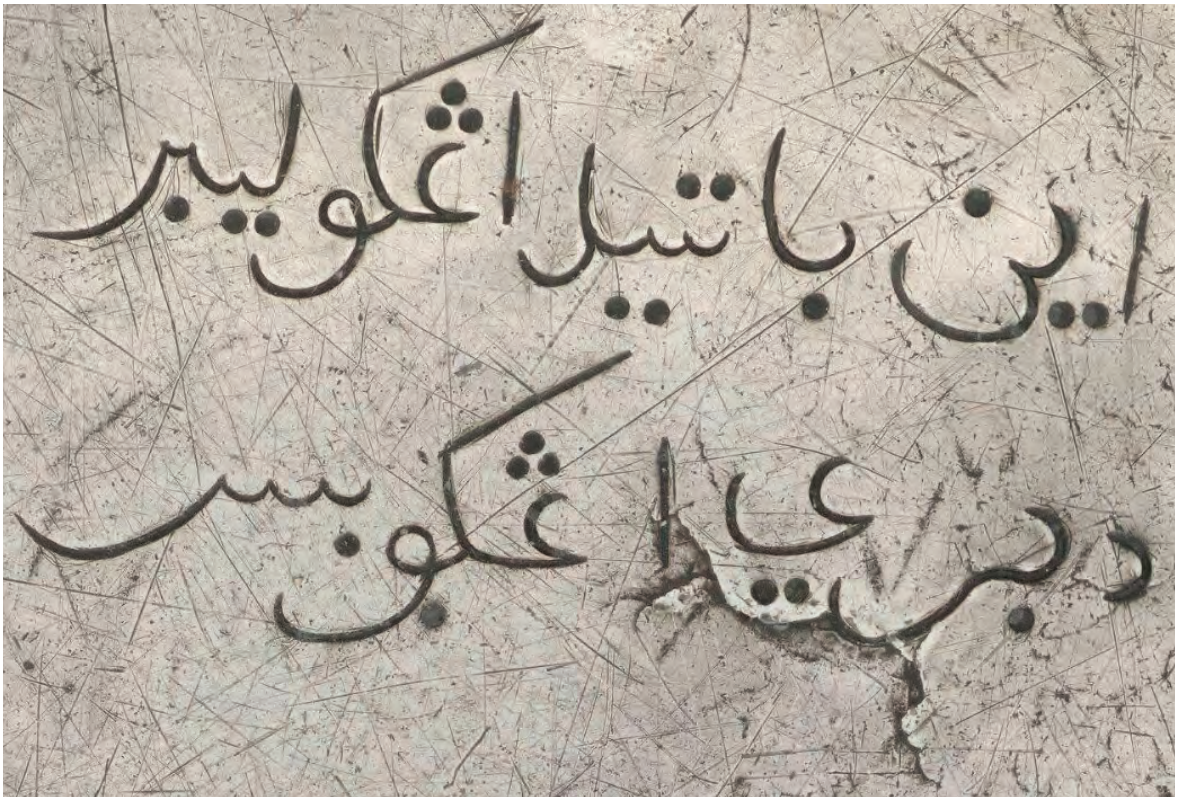


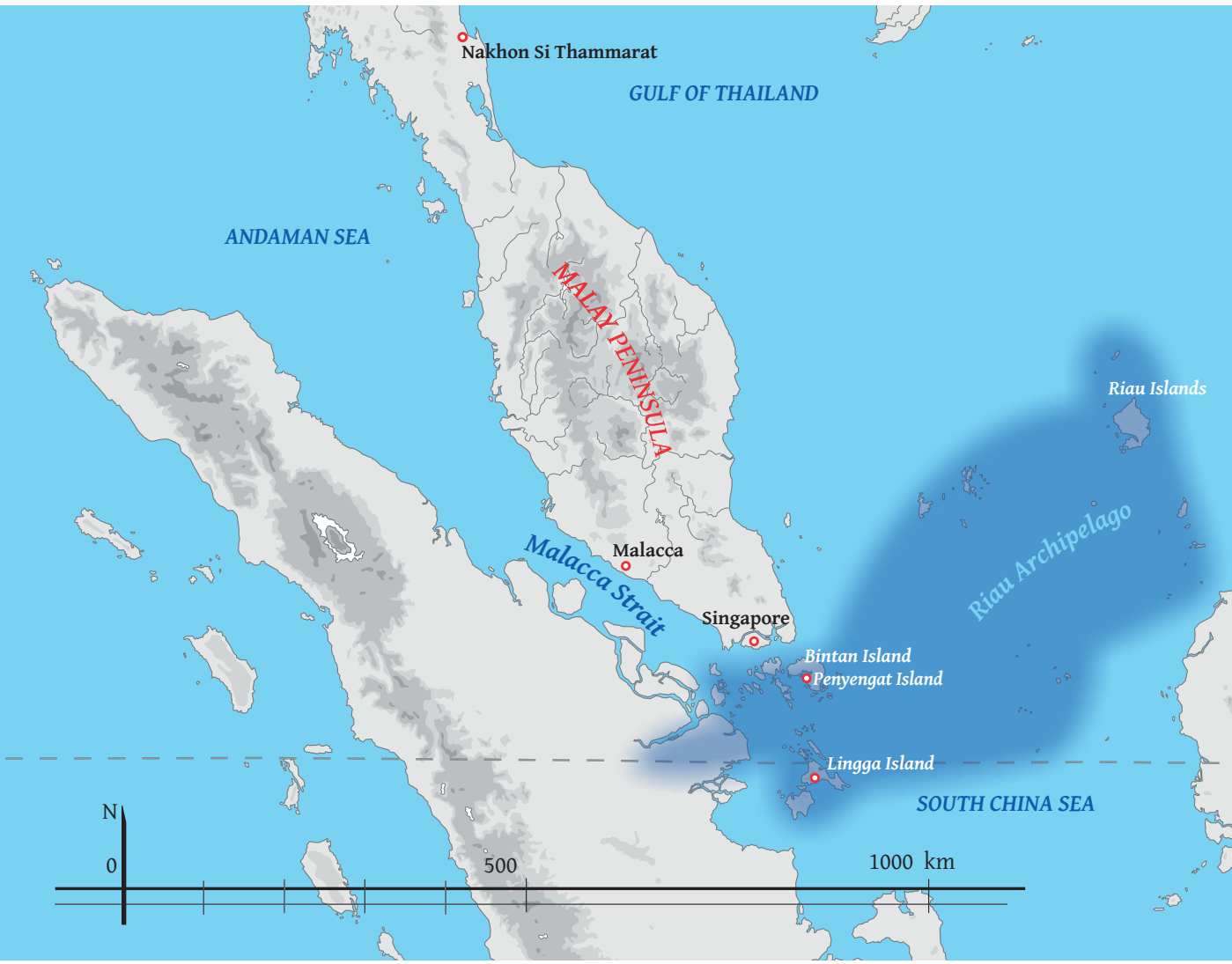
Figure 6: Detail of Jawi inscription identifying Engku Besar and Engku Lebar as previous owners of the bowl © V&A Museum

powerful emblem, publicly expressing Tengku Ambung's authority and her unmistakable claim over territories and resources under her rule.

Object in Movement: From Nakhon Si Thammarat to Riau–Lingga

Two plausible scenarios shed light on the potential journey of this bowl from its place of origin in Nakhon Si Thammarat to the court of the Riau–Lingga Sultanate situated in the South China Sea. Within the dual governance structure of the kingdom, Lingga Island served as the seat of the Malay royal court, while Penyengat Island, located off Bintan Island, fell under the jurisdiction of the Bugis viceroys **[Map 1]**. The *Tuhfat al-Nafis* recalls an account attributed to around 1778, presenting a glimpse into the material world of the Riau–Lingga Sultanate:

> The decorations on the palaces of the Yang Dipertuan Besar and the Yang Dipertuan Muda were of gold and silver, even down to the chains of the lamps. Most of the trays and salvers were made from China and the betel boxes and decanters for rosewater, made in Manila, were also of gold and



Map 1: The territories of the Riau–Lingga Sultanate in dark blue, consisting of many islands in the South China Sea and enclaves in eastern Sumatra
© Naphatsnan Revire

silver and embossed and studded with polished diamonds. Most of the plates, bowls, coffee, and teacups had been made in China (Matheson & Andaya 1982: 160).

The emphasis on prestige goods imported from "China" and "Manila" reflects the maritime court's consumption of foreign goods, no doubt a reflection of the seafaring environment brought on by intensive trade and the migration of peoples. Indeed, the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* describes shipping vessels from Arabia, Bengal, China, Java, Siam, and Sulawesi so numerous in quantity that they were "crammed like sardines" on numerous occasions in the Riau River (Matheson & Andaya 1982: 90, 117, 126, 161).

In addition to trade, the potential route for the movement of this Siamese bowl could have been through royal diplomacy. The *Tuhfat al-Nafis* contains accounts that affirm the close relations between the Malay and Siamese courts. An example is found in the year 1856 when Tengku Ambung's aunt, Tengku Safiah, known in Thai as Chao Chom Tonku Subia (เจ้าจอมตนกูสุเบีย), became a part of King Mongkut's (r. 1851–1868) harem of foreign consorts. This arrangement was made in exchange for the Siamese king's protection over Tengku Ambung's father, Sultan Mahmud, who faced a decline in favor with the Dutch (Matheson & Andaya 1982: 306, 410).

Dispersal of Courtly Possessions: From Riau–Lingga to London

According to the V&A Museum's records, the Siamese bowl was gifted to the museum in 1950 by Richard James Wilkinson (1867–1941), a British colonial administrator and Deputy Governor of the Straits Settlement between 1911 and 1916. In 1911, Tengku Ambung's son, Sultan Abdul Rahman II, was deposed by the Dutch, resulting in the displacement of Riau–Lingga royal members as they sought exile in Singapore (Gallop 2019: 303). During this period Wilkinson amassed a collection acquired in Singapore and the Federated Malay States which he first loaned to the Indian Section of the V&A Museum on 23 June 1919. On 26 October 1950, an additional 209 objects were bequeathed to the V&A after the passing of Mrs Edith Sinclair Wilkinson, his widow.[5]

Tengku Ambung's bowl thus represents one of many royal heirlooms dispersed from the Riau–Lingga court after its dissolution in 1911. The dispersal of royal material over an extended period and undertaken by multiple parties is given further credence by an annual report excerpt from the Raffles Library and Museum in Singapore, attributing a substantial volume of silver acquisitions from Riau–Lingga:

> The purchases include several valuable acquisitions, especially in silver ware, native rulers of some of the neighbouring islands in the Dutch possession bringing in consequence of political changes, such ware for sale to Singapore. There were a fine Table Service, of solid silver, consisting of 24 pieces, from Rhio; a Chutam sirih box, inlaid with gold, and a gold brooch and several smaller items of silver from the same locality (Annual report 1912).

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The Jawi seal and inscription found on this Siamese silver nielloware bowl bear the indelible marks of three royal Malay women from the Riau–Lingga court, offering valuable insight into female rulership and expressions of power.

[5] These are inventoried as IS.250 to 451-1950 and IS. 1 to 7-1952. For example, a silver betel box with a cover (IS.268&A-1950), featuring a similar Jawi inscription within a rectangular seal stamped on the base, serves as a distinctive marker of Tengku Ambung's possession. See: https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O429231/betel-box-and-unknown/.

This object symbolises gift-giving and inheritance as an expression of legitimacy through lineage. As a Siamese–Buddhist object in an Islamic court, the bowl reflects a syncretic and cosmopolitan environment where objects of different faiths and cultures not only circulated within the court but also were accorded high status. On no less than two occasions, this nielloware bowl was significant enough to be gifted as a symbol of personal patrimony. Whether obtained through trade or royal diplomacy, the possession of this object by a Malay queen provides us with a glimpse into the transnational material world of the Riau–Lingga court and the active incorporation of hybrid objects as part of royal culture in the 19th century.

Acknowledgments

This paper is extracted from my Master's thesis (Wang 2022) under supervision of Professor Anna Contadini to whom I express my gratitude, as well as Datuk Dr Annabel Teh Gallop at the British Library for her pioneering epigraphic work on Malay seals and inscriptions, Sau Fong Chan and Revati Mann from the V&A for facilitating the photography of this bowl, and Darryl Lim at the ACM for providing excerpts from the Raffles Library and Museum's annual reports.

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Burma to Myanmar: A Recent Exhibition at the British Museum, London (2 November 2023–11 February 2024)

Figure 1: View of the exhibition © The British Museum

Since its 1962 military coup, Myanmar has become a country focused on itself. This isolation connected with the "Burmese path to socialism" and seemingly endless civil wars. Yet, historically, isolation has not been the norm for this landscape as, culturally and artistically, Myanmar's many peoples engaged with the world around them from early times.

The exhibition, *Burma to Myanmar*, held recently at the British Museum in London from 2 November 2023 to 11 February 2024 **[Figure 1]**, and accompanying book of the same title,[1] both produced in conjunction with scholars and communities from Myanmar, explore the region's history through the lens of cross-cultural encounters and their material impacts. However, the project sought to do so without privileging the Burman Buddhist majority; both the book and exhibition were experiments in

[1] Edited by Alexandra Green and published by the British Museum Press, 2023. For product details, see: https://www.britishmuseumshoponline.org/burma-to-myanmar.html.

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presenting Myanmar's histories in a balanced way. The region is historically diverse, home to different kingdoms, empires, principalities, chiefdoms, and kinship networks that, until independence from British colonial control in 1948, had never been a single political entity. In both the exhibition and book the histories of the five main areas—Arakan (Rakhine), Shan States, the highlands, central Myanmar, and lower Myanmar—were assessed separately. It was particularly appropriate to launch this study in 2023 to mark the 75th anniversary of Myanmar's independence from British colonial control. Although Myanmar was an important colony for the British, it is little known in the United Kingdom today, with news focusing on conflict, poverty, and former State Counsellor and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi (b. 1945). To counterbalance these emphases and lack of general knowledge, both the exhibition and book begin with a panoply of objects to demonstrate Myanmar's many sources of wealth.

Rich natural resources, such as teak, jade, gems, ivory, rice, cotton, silver and gold, and an excellent location connecting trade routes via land and sea along the northern curve of the Bay of Bengal and between China, India, and Thailand made the polities of Myanmar wealthy. Kingdoms, principalities, and kinship networks based in the Shan States, lower Myanmar, Arakan, the highland regions, and central Myanmar traded, taxed, fought, and collaborated over the resources and strategic locations that facilitated the movement of this wealth. Since Southeast Asia has historically been underpopulated, such resources included people; the forced relocation of people was a common phenomenon during warfare and raids, enhancing cultural exchange, though at significant human cost. In this notice, I focus upon connections with present-day Thailand.

The kingdom of Ayutthaya in what is today central Thailand (Siam) was sacked by the central Burmese army in the 1560s and 1760s. Lan Na (now northern Thailand) was colonized by the Toungoo and Konbaung dynasties of central Myanmar for over 200 years from the late 1500s until the end of the 1700s. Even after that, military incursions by central Burmese armies into Lan Na took place in the early 1800s. Warfare at the time was not about claiming territory, but about forcing other polities to pay tribute and removing people back to the conqueror's land. This forcible movement of people was particularly important in cultural transfers and is visible in Burmese art. Siamese theatrical troupes were relocated to central Myanmar in 1767 and resettled in their original profession, in this case performing for the Konbaung court, where they became extremely popular. Their fame rapidly spread around the country, in part through itinerant troupes. Michael Symes (1761–1809), who worked for the East India Company, recorded that "the best actors were natives of Siam [central Thailand]" in his publication recording an embassy from the Governor General of India to King Bodawpaya's court in 1795 (Symes 1995 [1800]: 176–177). Siamese performers were also incorporated into displays of state power and demonstrations of the extent of Burmese conquests, as visible in numerous *parabaik* (ပုရပိုက်; folding-book) manuscripts

Figure 2: Crowned buddha image, central Myanmar or the Shan States, approx. 1800–1880, British Museum, H.: 82.50 cm, W.: 30 cm, wood, glass, gold and lacquer, inv. no. 1919,0717.1, purchased in 1919 from Rev. William Kidd, who was a Presbyterian pastor in Rangoon in 1881–1887 © The British Museum

showing court processions. In such images, Siamese troupes are dressed for performance, including with masks on top of their heads (the usual placement) and sometimes almost completely hidden under lion costumes.[2]

Additionally, adaptations from Siamese theatrical costumes became part of formal Konbaung court dress. New elements included the cloud collar, epaulette-like additions to jackets modelled on the Siamese *kranok* pattern (ลายกระหนก) or flame motif, and elaborate swag elements worn at the front of an outfit. Siamese embroiderers and other skilled craftspeople were incorporated into court workshops to facilitate these additions. Since clothing at the central Burmese court was governed by sumptuary laws, the use of such additions was carefully regulated. People coming to present tribute were also required to wear outfits with similar elements. This new style of court dress also began to appear in other media, such as the representations of kings, deities, and high-ranking figures in wall paintings of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as well as on crowned buddha images (referencing the close connection between kingship and Buddhism that emerged during the Bagan period of the 11th to 13th centuries). A lacquer image in the British Museum's permanent collection **[Figure 2]**, acquired by the Reverend William Kidd in the 1880s while he was pastor of the Presbyterian church in Yangon (Rangoon, 1881–1887), displays the new style clearly. Instead of a pronged crown with extensive ribbons flaring to each side, smooth robes, and necklaces hanging in a loop, the buddha wears a Siamese-style crown with a broad base surmounted by a *stūpa*-like form with a tapering finial. Flanges, pointed above the ears, curve upwards in a flame shape, and the buddha's robes are embellished with wing-like projections at the knees, cuffs, elbows, and shoulders; all of these features come from Siamese models. Silver-wrapped

[2] See for example the Bodleian Library Burmese MS 7: https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/38fdf59a-4f37-4a37-95e8-54915403d625/.

Figure 3: *Shwe-chi-doe* (*kalaga*) illustrating scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, possibly Mandalay, approx. 1900–1930, British Museum, H.: 53.5 cm, L.: 290 cm, cotton, flannel and sequins, inv. no. 1999,1103,0.2, donated in 1999 by Henry Ginsburg, former curator of the Thai, Lao and Cambodian collections at the British Library © The British Museum

buddha images produced for less-wealthy people did not necessarily show such features but were often embellished around the base with Siamese motifs seen on lacquer and textiles, as well as paintings.

At the Ayutthaya court, theatrical performances of the 18th century focussed on the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic, an Indian tale that arrived in Southeast Asia many centuries earlier and was adapted to suit a wide variety of local contexts. While the narrative was known in Myanmar prior to 1767, it blossomed after the popularization of the Siamese theatre and was replicated in many formats. Itinerant troupes travelled around the region performing the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It was illustrated on *shwe-chi-doe* (ရွှေချည်ထိုး; lit. "gold and silver thread"), also known as *kalaga* (ကန့်လန့်ကာ; lit. "curtain") textile hangings. Scenes of the epic appeared on silver items and lacquerware, and other objects. The length of the epic meant that only select scenes could be portrayed, but on textile hangings a greater variety could be shown as they often came in sets displaying events over several pieces. Two parts of a set are in the British Museum collection; they illustrate some of the exploits of the white monkey Hanuman, present the activities of demons including those of Rāvaṇa (Dathagiri), and show Prince Rama demonstrating his martial prowess, holding court, and fighting a demon **[Figure 3]**.

Yet, Ayutthaya was not the only source of inspiration for the varied art forms of Myanmar. The colonization of Lan Na for over 200 years saw the incorporation of new motifs and narratives into art in central Myanmar. For instance, an important motif seen in both regions is a dense floral patterning, called *zinme* (ဇင်းမယ်), the

Figure 4: Betel box with the *zinme* design, Chiang Mai, Lan Na (northern Thailand), ca. 1890s, British Museum, H.: 19.4 cm, diam.: 23.2 cm, bamboo and lacquer, inv. no. 1998,0723.153, donated by Ralph H. Isaacs and Ruth Isaacs in 1993, acquired by exchange at Mata Hari, Tanglin Centre, Singapore, in Feb. 1992 © The British Museum

Burmese name for Chiang Mai. It is found on lacquer objects and was also replicated on textiles in a layout that resembles Indian trade textiles (*patola*) and Siamese textiles. In the British Museum, a black betel box displays the zinme pattern in red and, although this example was probably produced in northern Thailand, strong links between central Myanmar and Lan Na are apparent in the shape and size of the box, as well as the coloring, pattern, and the incised production method **[Figure 4]**. Connections between central Myanmar and northern Thailand were intensified when the British established lacquer schools in Myanmar and encouraged the exploration of new patterns, including those from northern Thailand, during colonial times.

Cultural transfers also occurred when numerous people were forcibly relocated from Lan Na to central Myanmar. This is particularly seen in Burmese wall paintings that have incorporated events from the life of the historical Buddha Gotama found in a text called the *Paṭhamasambodhi* in Pali (ปฐมสมโพธิ or *pathomsomphot* in Thai), which is not found in central Myanmar. The most prevalent scene was the representation of the eve of Buddha Gotama's enlightenment when he called the earth goddess to witness his good deeds and she wrung all the water that he had poured on the ground to mark his good deeds in previous lives out of her hair. As a marker of merit, the image of the earth goddess squeezing her long hair became a common representation in narrative scenes, but also at the entrances to temples where she indicated the meritoriousness of the donors. She was further integrated with a pillar that symbolized the spread of Buddhism. Originating in India around the 3rd century BCE, the practice of raising pillars among Buddhists in central Myanmar developed later into an ornamented column called a *tagundaing* (တံခွန်တိုင်). These pillars were constructed on a large-scale in temple compounds as well as reproduced in miniature

for use inside temples. In some instances, the earth goddess was represented on the base, emphasizing the centrality of the Buddha Gotama's enlightenment, but also marking the good deeds of donors to the religion. The example at the British Museum is studded with glass mosaics that became a major element of religious art from the mid-19th century **[Figure 5]**.

Yet, the kingdoms based in central Myanmar were not the only ones that interacted with those in present-day Thailand. Bago (Pegu) in lower Myanmar was attacked by Ayutthaya in the late 16th century and had trade connections with Lan Na. One of the examples of such links in the exhibition is a crocodile-shaped zither. Associated now with Mon peoples, who call it the *kyam* (ကျုံ), the form is also found in other parts of Southeast Asia, but the crocodile-shaped string instrument is primarily found in lower Myanmar, central Thailand, and Cambodia. While in Thailand and Cambodia the instruments are both called "crocodile" (known as *chakhe*, derived from *chorakhe* จระเข้, and *krapeu* กระเพี, respectively), they are highly stylized; only in lower Myanmar do these zithers have clearly zoomorphic appearances. The crocodile-form zither was used in musical ensembles, and it was popularly collected, as seen in museums around the UK. A painted example was gifted as part of an ensemble to Queen Victoria

Figure 5: *Tagundaing* (standard), approx. 1800–1899, British Museum, H.: 185.8 cm, wood, lacquer, glass and gold, inv. no. 1915,1020.1, bequeathed in 1915 by Mary Sale © The British Museum

Figure 6: Zither in the form of a crocodile, probably central Myanmar, approx. 1860s–1890s, British Museum, H.: 15.5 cm, W.: 25.5 cm (widest point), L.: 106 cm, wood, lacquer, glass, metal, animal gut, inv. no. As1901,0605.29, donated to the museum in 1901 by the Indian Section, Paris Exhibition 1900 Committee © The British Museum

by the residents of "Margai" (probably Mergui [Myeik]) upon her Golden Jubilee celebration in 1887. The British museum's zither, which arrived after display at the Paris World Exposition in 1900, is gilded and inlaid with glass **[Figure 6]**.

The British colonized Burma in three phases over the 19th century. Colonization caused radical cultural, religious, social, political, and artistic changes, which are revealed through new art forms, designs, technologies, and materials. The advent of the colonial period and expanding industrialized trade networks brought synthetic dyes, which were enthusiastically adopted by local craftspeople. The rapid expansion of synthetic dyes across the highlands indicates that such places, although considered remote today, were once closely connected with global trade, a situation facilitated by markets that rotated around villages and towns. A series of six Karen textiles produced over the course of the 19th century were tested for synthetic dyes and fibres by the British Museum's Scientific Research Department. One tunic, probably made by a Pwo Karen woman between the late 1880s to the beginning of the 20th century, combines natural dyes, such as indigo blue, and synthetic ones, including diamond green B and chrome yellow. The piece displays circular embroidery that became a feature of tunics produced by Karens in Thailand in the 20th

FIGURE 7: Tunic (*hse*), Myanmar or northern Thailand, approx. 1880s–1920, British Museum, L.: 75 cm, W.: 84 cm, cotton, coix seeds, inv. no. As1966,01.481, purchased from the Church Missionary Society in 1966 © The British Museum

century, indicating interactions among Karen peoples across modern borders **[Figure 7]**.

The imposition of different forms of rule over varying parts of the region by the British, coupled with the British categorization of peoples, led to a solidification of ethnic boundaries and territories that had not previously existed; these ideas helped set the stage for 20th century conflicts. World War II and the Japanese occupation hastened the end of colonial rule, but left the region devastated.

In 1948 came independence. After a brief democratic and international period, the military stepped in, putting the country on the "Burmese path to socialism". This entailed severe isolation to prevent foreign meddling. Lack of exposure to the outside world and extreme repression have affected the country at all levels, including the artistic. Yet, at the same time, many

of Myanmar's prominent personages have loomed large on the international stage. From General Aung San (1915–1947), who negotiated independence from the British, to UN secretary-general U Thant (in office 1961–1971), who negotiated with US President Kennedy (in office 1961–1963) and Soviet Leader Nikita Khrushchev (in office 1953–1964) to resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, to Aung San Suu Kyi. Ethnic divisions and repression remain extreme, but, in the 21st century, social media has enabled a much greater engagement by Myanmar's many peoples with the world around them.

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Alexandra Green
The British Museum, London
agreen@britishmuseum.org

The Metaverse for *Mali Bucha: Dance Offering*, a Hybrid Stage Performance in Singapore (13–15 October 2023)

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players".
Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 1623 (Act 2, Scene 7)

Figure 1: Promotional poster for the *Mali Bucha: Dance Offering*
© The Esplanade Co Ltd

The world of performing arts is constantly evolving, embracing innovative technologies and pushing the boundaries of the possible. In the realm of dance and theater, choreographers and artists explore new ways to engage audiences, creating immersive and participatory experiences. *Mali Bucha: Dance Offering*, a hybrid stage performance that combined dance, virtual reality (VR), and the *ram kae bon* (รำแก้บน) ritual dance was one such recent performance premiered at the Esplanade Theater Studio in Singapore on 13–15 October 2023 **[Figure 1]**.[1] In this production notice, we delve into the behind-the-scene world of *Mali Bucha* and the role of the author, as the computer graphics (CG) supervisor and visual effects (VFX) director, in creating the "metaverse" that was an integral part of the show.

Ram kae bon is an ancient votive dance that has been performed at shrines and temples across Thailand and mainland

[1] The official information is listed on the theater website: https://www.esplanade.com/whats-on/festivals-and-series/series/dans-focus/events/mali-bucha-dance-offering (accessed 31 Dec. 2023).

https://doi.org/10.69486/112.1.2024.15

Figure 2: The *Mali Bucha* metaverse created in OpenBrush
© Gomesh Karnchanapayap

Southeast Asia for centuries. Even today, this traditional dance continues to grace certain Thai shrines, such as the renowned Erawan Shrine in Bangkok.[2] Devotees engage traditional performers, compensating them to dance before the shrine, believing that this act will lead to the fulfillment of their prayers. The dance therefore serves as a tool for negotiation between humans and higher beings, a means to make wishes come true. The central concept is the belief that a skilled dancer—a messenger—enhances the likelihood of wish fulfillment. Thus, individual humans can communicate with higher beings, convey their desires, and express gratitude, all through the medium of dance. The title for the performance, *mali bucha* (มาลีบูชา), literally translated as "paying respect by offering flowers", reflects the importance of garlands (usually jasmine) used in these rituals.

Mali Bucha: Dance Offering is an immersive, modern, participatory iteration of *ram kae bon*, bringing elements of the physical and digital worlds together. In this iteration of the dance, audience members were invited to enter a digital shrine using VR technology **[Figure 2]**. The digital shrine represents a metaverse or virtual reality space, providing users with the ability to engage with a computer-generated environment and interact with other users. Duality is the central concept motivating *Mali Bucha*, weaving together various opposing elements such as economics

[2] Dr Paphutsorn Koong Wongratanapitak recently discussed the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on performers at the Erawan Shrine and how they have navigated through these challenges in their careers. For more details, see: https://seaartforum.nafa.edu.sg/archive/2021/dr-paphutsorn-koong-wongratanapitak (accessed 16 January 2024).

Figure 3: The author (standing) created the choreographer's headdress digitally using Open Brush © Gomesh Karnchanapayap

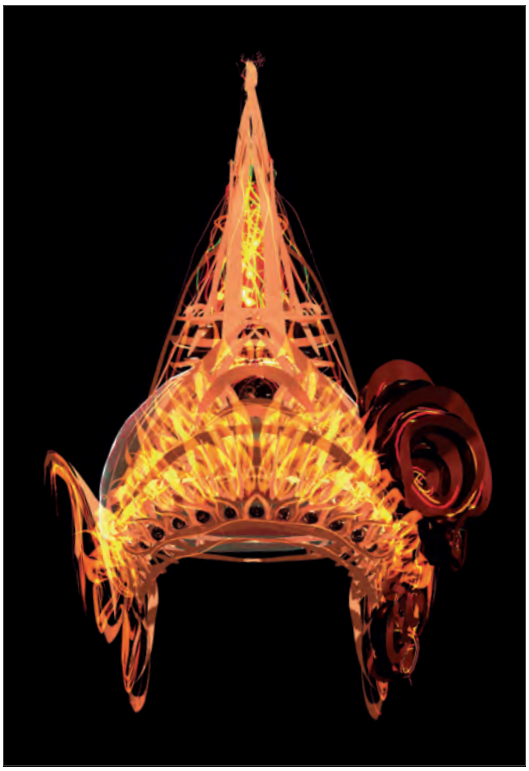


Figure 4: Virtual headdress created in OpenBrush © Gomesh Karnchanapayap

/ecology, image/sound, old/new, mundane/transcendent. The fusion of tradition and technology permeated the performance, hopefully leading to the creation of a unique and unforgettable audience experience.

In the creation of *Mali Bucha*, the author of this notice acted as CG supervisor and VFX director of the team of "virtualizers". The "virtualizers", as the word connotes, brought the digital metaverse to life, using computer-generated elements and immersive technologies to create the audience's experience. Upon entering the metaverse, participants can opt for one of four primary wishes: wealth, health, family, and freedom.

Once a wish is chosen and articulated, the avatar receives a virtual flower, allowing them to virtually stroll and place it in front of a large animal statue symbolizing each wish. A successfully placed wish manifests as a doll-size statue of the corresponding animal. Simultaneously, within the metaverse, the dancer has the option to select a specific dance sequence aligned with the chosen wish. For instance, if someone wishes for a happy family, the dancer will execute a monkey dance, conveying the message to the celestial realm.

The metaverse in *Mali Bucha* was designed and developed using OpenBrush, a virtual reality program that allows artists and creators to craft digital 3D elements. This enables artists to work in virtual space, shaping and sculpting their visions in ways analogous to traditional sculpting or painting **[Figures 3–4]**.

Figure 5: The rooster scene created in OpenBrush © Gomesh Karnchanapayap

Using OpenBrush, the author crafted the digital shrine and its surroundings, infusing them with the aesthetics and symbolism of the ancient ritual. Sacred animals used as votive sacrifices in the digital shrine are symbolic: the rooster symbolizes wealth **[Figure 5]**, the monkey represents family and consciousness, the zebra signifies health and safety **[Figure 6]**, and the crane stands for freedom. These symbols were carefully chosen to align with the core concepts of *ram kae bon* and the audience aspirations as described above. The metaverse thus became a canvas for these symbols to come to life. During the performance, the audience could connect with the symbolism on a personal level as they made wishes and offered flowers, imbuing these digital creatures with meaning and significance.

Once the 3D models were created in OpenBrush, they were exported and assembled in Unity **[Figure 7]**, a widely used game development platform ideal for creating interactive experiences. Unity allowed for the integration of these models into the VR experience, enabling the performer and audience to interact with and explore the digital shrine.

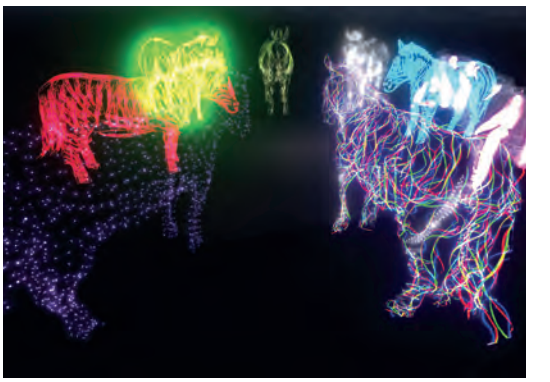


Figure 6: The zebra scene created in Open Brush © Gomesh Karnchanapayap

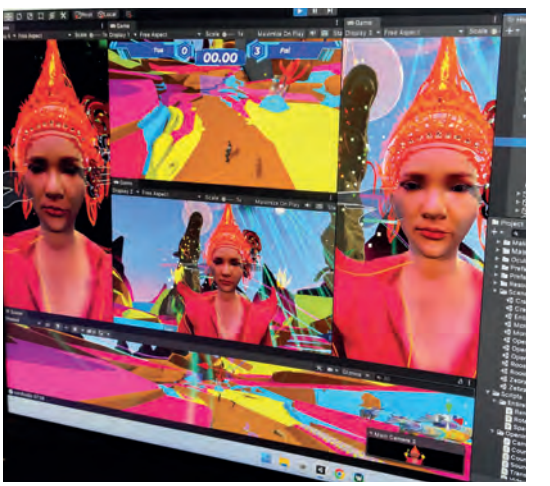


Figure 7: Digital elements were assembled in Unity © Gomesh Karnchanapayap

Figure 8: The choreographer, Kornkarn Rungsawang, leads a participant through the *Mali Bucha* metaverse © Gomesh Karnchanapayap

Figure 9: The choreographer, Kornkarn Rungsawang, performs the monkey dance in the *Mali Bucha* metaverse © Gomesh Karnchanapayap

The metaverse in *Mali Bucha* was not a passive digital backdrop, but an integral part of the performance. The audience were not mere spectators but active participants in the ritual. Using augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), they were transported into the digital shrine, where they could make wishes and offer flowers or animals, just as they would in a physical temple. To visually present the metaverse to the entire audience, the view from the VR headset was projected in parallel on the backdrop **[Figure 8]**.

Kornkarn Rungsawang, the main performer and interface between the material plane (the real-time audience) and the digital realm (the virtual shrine), played a crucial role in communicating the wishes and thanksgiving of the audience to higher beings through dance. Thus, using the power of technology an attempt was made at enhancing an ancient ritual, offering an innovative approach to reinventing tradition **[Figure 9]**.

The metaverse in *Mali Bucha* served multiple purposes in the performance. It acted as a bridge between the past and the present, offering a fresh perspective on ancient rituals and traditions. It also provided a platform for audience engagement and participation.

The metaverse is a testament to the power of technology in the arts. It demonstrates how digital tools can be used to create immersive and transformative experiences, blurring the lines between reality and the virtual realm. In *Mali Bucha*, the metaverse was not just a gimmick but also an integral part of the storytelling, enhancing the ritual performance and its significance.

Mali Bucha exemplified the effective utilization of modern technology within the realm of performing arts, demonstrating its cultural significance. It celebrated the rich regional tradition of votive dance and the deep-rooted beliefs in the power of dance to communicate with higher beings.

In a rapidly changing world, such performances might help preserve and propagate cultural heritage, making it accessible to new generations.

Moreover, *Mali Bucha* served as a bridge between cultures. It introduced a global audience to the beauty of ancient regional rituals and traditions from Southeast Asia while embracing the universality of human desires and aspirations. Within this context, the metaverse emerged as a tool for facilitating cultural exchange, fostering a collective experience among diverse audiences.

Additionally, *Mali Bucha* stood as evidence of the continuous evolution of the performing arts. The integration of technology, particularly the creation of immersive metaverse experiences, opens up new possibilities for storytelling and audience engagement. By blurring the lines between reality and the digital realm, this performance pioneered a new genre within stage productions.

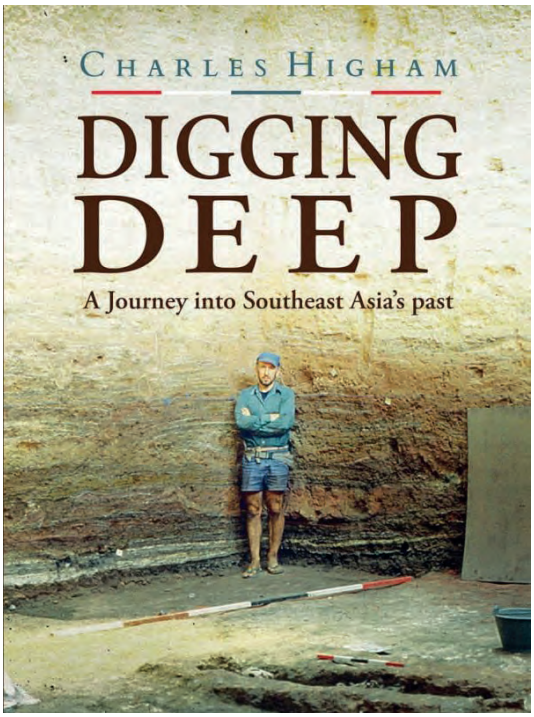
As technology continues to advance, we can expect to see more innovations in the realm of the performing arts. The metaverse offers a limitless canvas for creativity, where artists and creators can craft unique and transformative experiences. In essence, *Mali Bucha: Dance Offering* serves as a tangible illustration of the possibilities that arise when traditional art forms intersect with cutting-edge technology.

Production Credits

- *Concept, Choreography and Dance:* Kornkarn Rungsawang (Thailand)
- *VR/AR Design:* The virtualizers (Thailand)
- *CG Supervision/VFX Direction:* Gomesh Karnchanapayap (Thailand)
- *Technical Direction/Lead Program:* Siwat Suksri (Thailand)
- *3D Scanning/3D Animation/Rigging:* Piyanon Somboon (Thailand)
- *Assistant Technical Direction:* Wijittra Prasatkaew (Thailand)
- *Sound Design:* Zai Tang (UK/Singapore)
- *Lighting Design:* Asako Miura (Japan)
- *Dramaturg:* Tang Fu Kuen (Singapore/Norway)
- *Costume Design:* Manit Theppatimaporn & Kanapoot Viruttanachai (Thailand)
- *Production Stage Management:* Yap Seok Hui (Singapore)
- *Technical Direction:* ARTFACTORY (Singapore)
- *Production:* Sojirat Singholka (Thailand)
- *Residency supported by:* Kinosaki International Arts Center (Japan)

Gomesh Karnchanapayap
Silpakorn University, Bangkok
karnchanapayap_g@silpakorn.edu

Charles Higham, *Digging Deep: A Journey into Southeast Asia's Past*, Bangkok: River Books, 2022, 256 pages, ฿850, ISBN 978-6164510586 (Paperback)



Digging Deep, the autobiography of *emeritus* professor Charles Higham, begins with a recollection of his first childhood home in Wimbledon, UK. This anecdote—perhaps intentionally—foreshadows a career specializing in the investigation of Southeast Asia's prehistoric settlements. The fourteen chapters roughly cover two aspects of Charles' life, the first part (Chapters 1 to 5) recounts his personal growth, educational trajectory, and sporting prowess, while the second part (Chapters 6 to 14) describes his extensive archeological experiences in Southeast Asia. The publishers should be commended for the inclusion of the numerous color photographs of key figures, field sites and the author's own personal evolution. The sheer volume of images adds nuance to a text that is unmistakably written in Charles's voice. Self-confident, exacting, and with dashes of humor and bite, the author's 242-page record presents the life of a "Constant Archeologist" who worked near-ceaselessly in dozens of countries beginning in the 1960s. More broadly, it is an often entertaining and honest report about what it is like to do archeology and highlights how it is often exhausting, dirty, and uncomfortable work, traits that are overshadowed by the more "glamorous" aspects of archeology in the public eye.

The specificity of Higham's memoir points to the collection of detailed field notes that together frame his role in establishing the baselines of mainland Southeast Asian prehistory. For those unfamiliar with its regional archeology, the turbulent political history throughout most of the 20th century greatly restricted the amount of local and international fieldwork in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar. Due to Thailand's unique geopolitical position, Anglophone archeologists including Higham were able to work almost continuously during this period and greatly expanded regional understanding of its early settlement history. In contrast to his mentors and contemporaries such as Gorman, Solheim, Glover and others, Higham focussed on transforming his exhaustive field experiences and regional knowledge into a series of books, such as *Early Cultures of Mainland Southeast Asia* (2003), which today remain the primary texts for teachers, students, and lay scholars interested in the subject. *Digging Deep* is essential metadata for these books, providing insights into the events that lead to

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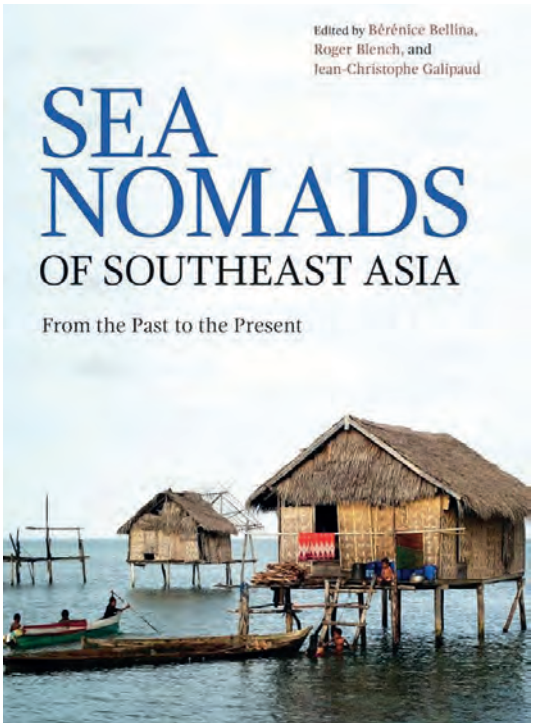
selection of each site, the efforts to record excavations, as well as the mid-20th century European intellectual milieu that would come to shape the archeologist and the questions he sought through decades of fieldwork in Southeast Asia.

Digging Deep also provides useful insights into his archeological style, namely the use of large excavations—indicated by the book's title—as well as the necessity for "chronometric hygiene" (p. 145) and publication. Higham is known for selecting sites that, until a recent excavation by the Franco-Myanmar project, produce the deepest records of occupation in mainland Southeast Asia. The vast numbers of burials and associated mortuary assemblages are on clear display throughout the book and form his primary bases for understanding how people lived, interacted, and died at each settlement. His unflinching dedication to chronological certainty is clearly stated throughout the book as well as a call to action that failure to produce full site reports is akin to looting. Both are lessons that any archeologist should heed to ensure solid foundations for future work. This idea of legacy is apparent in the numerous individuals who worked with him, including his irreplaceable Thai collaborators and numerous Western students and colleagues. While he ends the book writing "There remains, indeed, much more to do" (p. 242), he is clearly satisfied that this new generation of scholars is continuing to expand our understanding of this dynamic region.

Professor Higham's book provides behind the scenes access to the person we experience through his books, articles, and conference presentations. While autobiographies may not be to everyone's taste, they have, as with the need to produce full site reports, inherent value by providing details that shape the overall character and ethos of an archeologist. Regardless of any unanswered questions, notably his long search for connection to the origins of Angkor, the book is a testament to a life dedicated to Southeast Asian archeology. And for that, you cannot help but to thank Charles for his continuous efforts to dig deep.

Mitch Hendrickson
University of Illinois at Chicago
mjhend@uic.edu

Bérénice Bellina, Roger Blench & Jean-Christophe Galipaud, eds, *Sea Nomads of Southeast Asia: From the Past to the Present*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2021, 400 pages, $36 SGD, ISBN 978-9813251250 (Paperback)



Sea Nomads of Southeast Asia is a welcome addition to a growing body of publications concerned with Southeast Asia's seafaring population. In their introduction the editors inform us that the object of the volume is to explore the "*longue-durée* historical trajectory" of Southeast Asia's sea nomadic societies and "their role in regional historical developments" (p. 2). Sea Nomads thus focuses not only on contemporary sea nomadic societies, their origins and development, but also on "the prehistoric period before the emergence of the earliest trade-related polities" (*ibid.*). Hence, the book brings together the work not only of anthropologists, historians, and linguists, but also, to a degree that makes it unique, that of archeologists.

The editors tell us that this volume had its origin in a pair of conference panels: one at the 20th Indo-Pacific Prehistoric Archaeological Congress in Siem Reap (2014), the other at the 15th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists in Paris (2015). In the *Borneo Research Bulletin* (Vol. 52, 2021: 295–306), I have reviewed this book at greater length; here I focus mainly on the individual chapters that are likely to be of most direct interest to the readers of this journal.

Following the highly informative Introduction (pp. 1–27), the first three chapters focus on the prehistoric past. This "past" begins with the Pleistocene arrival of the first fully modern humans in island Southeast Asia and ends with the region's emergence as a major hub of East–West trade. Recent archeological research has established that early fishermen-foraging populations were present in the offshore islands of Southeast Asia by some 45,000 years ago, long before the introduction of agriculture and a Neolithic way of life.

In Chapter 2 (pp. 28–50), archeologists Sue O'Connor, Christian Reepmeyer, Mahirta, Michelle Langley, and Elena Piotto describe some aspects of these late Pleistocene fishermen-foragers, specifically those of Timor-Leste and the eastern Lesser Sunda Islands of Indonesia. The authors focus not on these groups generally, but on their shell-working technologies and on their use of shell in the manufacture of fishhooks, beads, pendants, and other ornaments. Tracing the distribution of these technologies over time and from island-to-island, they identify long-enduring networks of inter-island communication and exchange. The authors term these linkages "communities of practice": groups sharing similar patterns of manufacture and use. They note that archeologists formerly regarded shell-working and the use of shell fishhooks and other shell implements as a unique hallmark of later Malayo-Polynesian-speakers who began to spread south and westward throughout island Southeast Asia sometime around 4,000 BP. However, as these researchers show, not only were shell implements fashioned much earlier in eastern Indonesia, but these tools and the ways in which they were made also differ from those identified with early Malayo-Polynesian-speakers. Indeed, even the taxa of the shellfish used differ (p. 43).

In Chapter 3 (pp. 51–101), "Late Pleistocene to Mid-Holocene Maritime Exchange Networks in Island Southeast Asia", David Bulbeck presents a major *tour-de-force*, a systematic synthesis of nearly all available archeological evidence

regarding the existence of early exchange networks in maritime Southeast Asia. This evidence consists of material cultural traits, such as cave art, shell and bone tools, mortuary practices, pottery, and inter-island trafficking in obsidian, and takes in all of island Southeast Asia, including not only the Lesser Sundas, but also the Philippines, coastal Borneo, Sulawesi, and the Malukus. The Holocene transition that followed was marked by a further proliferation of these networks, now accompanied by rising sea levels. Bulbeck tells us (pp. 84–85) that these findings are in general agreement with recent genetic research thus pointing to substantial population dispersals during the terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene. These dispersals overlap and interconnect with interaction networks, but do not exactly coincide, suggesting to Bulbeck that rather than closed societies fleeing rising sea levels, as some have suggested, the communities engaged in this interaction were open communities receptive to external contacts, novel technologies, and to "social connections" that "assist outbreeding and periodic, small-scale transmigration" (p. 85). By the mid-Holocene, these networks not only expanded, but also consolidated. In addition, they now reached the coastline of mainland Southeast Asia, southeastern China and Taiwan, where Neolithic cultures were already well established. Bulbeck thus argues that, in addition to advances in sailing technology, the prior existence of these exchange networks contributed to the subsequent rapid dispersal of Malayo-Polynesian speakers from Taiwan throughout the whole of island Southeast Asia.

Concluding his chapter, Bulbeck notes that this dispersal was also the likely source of new maritime-dependent populations, including the ancestors of the present-day Sama-Bajau (p. 87). Supporting archeological evidence comes from a pottery-making site at Bukit Tengkorak on the eastern coast of Borneo. Here pottery shards include those of ceramic stoves similar to stoves still used by Sama-Bajau sea nomads (Sama Dilaut) who have long inhabited the region.

More directly relevant to the readers of this journal, Bérénice Bellina, Aude Favereau, and Laure Dussubieux examine in Chapter 4 (pp. 102–141) the role of "minorities", or "marginal" people, including sea nomads and other seafaring groups in the rise of early trading polities on the Isthmus of Kra, beginning in the 4th century BCE. The isthmus itself, a narrow stretch of the Malay Peninsula separating the Bay of Bengal from the Gulf of Thailand, acquired strategic economic significance with the rise of what the authors call the "maritime Silk Road". Signaling this rise was the appearance of ports-of-trade at river mouths and along the Peninsula coastline. The chapter describes in some detail the trade goods and other archeological material recovered not only from the sites of these ports-of-trade, but also from their much less studied "hinterlands". Over time, the growth of trade stimulated economic specialization, with local communities and newcomers to the region taking up complementary roles in an increasingly complex and interdependent economy. A few emerged as politically hegemonic groups, others assumed subordinate positions, or lived in relative autonomy in areas distant from centers of state power. Among these latter groups, specialized seafarers engaged in the

transport of goods, supplying trading centers with maritime commodities, and acting as intermediaries in trading relations between ports-of-trade and their hinterlands. The economic and political matrix in which these seafarers emerged appears to have been strikingly like that which, centuries later, gave rise further south to the Orang Laut, and further east to the Sama-Bajau.

The Isthmus of Kra, as a point for the overland transport of goods between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, flourished for a time, but a long decline began by the first centuries CE, with the rise of Malay trading states to the south, in Sumatra and the Straits of Melaka. Although no surviving sea nomadic communities appear to have been left behind, these developments nonetheless, the authors argue, "laid the foundation of", or, perhaps, more accurately, provided "a template for the historical sea nomads [...] further south", notably the Orang Suku Laut (p. 132).

All of the individual chapters that follow deal with contemporary sea nomadic societies and their historical development since the appearance of the first maritime trading states in Southeast Asia. Today, these societies are divided between three main groups, each culturally and linguistically distinct, with separate origins and largely independent histories: (1) the Moken and related Moklen of the offshore islands of southwest Myanmar and Thailand; (2) the Orang Laut, or Orang Suku Laut, of the Straits of Melaka, the east coast of Sumatra and the islands of the Riau-Lingga Archipelago of western Indonesia, plus a small offshoot group, the Urak Lawoi', living further north along the west coast of the Malay Peninsula; and (3) the diverse, but predominantly sea-oriented Sama-Bajau of the southern Philippines, east coast of Borneo, Sulawesi, and much of eastern Indonesia. The members of these three groups all speak Malayo-Polynesian languages, and so, in linguistic terms at least, are inheritors of the Malayo-Polynesian diaspora.

Anthropologist Cynthia Chou in Chapter 5 (pp. 142–156), "The Orang Suku Laut: Movements, Maps and Mapping", examines contemporary Orang Laut notions of place and territoriality. Chou tells us that, although they identify themselves as "sea people", the Orang Laut are not aimless wanderers lost in their surroundings, but rather, even while on the move, live within well-defined lanscapes comprised of islands, estuaries, and shoreline. As with the sea nomadic Sama-Bajau, the Orang Laut view the sea as "an inalienable gift from the ancestors" (p. 146). "Places represent pauses in movement" and different local groups speak of "possessing different networks of kin-based territories" (p. 148). "Places and territories are collectively owned" and, Chou tells us, "ownership" is constantly validated by stories of the past and shared knowledge kept alive by lived experiences in the present.

Chapter 6 (pp. 157–176) deals with the "linguist background" of sea nomadism, Chapter 7 (pp. 177–197) with a "genetic perspective" on Bajau origins in Indonesia, Chapter 8 (pp. 198–213) with ship construction and navigation, and Chapter 9 (pp. 214–235) with Sama-Bajau relations with the Makassarese Kingdom of Gowa-Talloq in eastern Indonesia.

In Chapter 10 "Nomads in the Interstices of History" (pp. 236–253), anthropologist Jacques Ivanoff describes

in general terms the strategies by which the semi-nomadic Moken have attempted over time to preserve their independence and the ritual integrity of their distinctive way of life. Their survival appears to have always been under threat. In precolonial times, the primary threat came from pirates and slave-raiders intruding from the neighboring Malay world into the Andaman Sea where the Moken then lived. Later, during the colonial era, the threat became a monetized world economy, and today, the threat is from tourism and a massive influx into their homeland of Burmese fishermen. Much of the Moken way of life may thus be read as a response to external threats, and today the group is responding with a resurgence of rituals during which scattered communities gather at ritual centers to re-engage with their collective past.

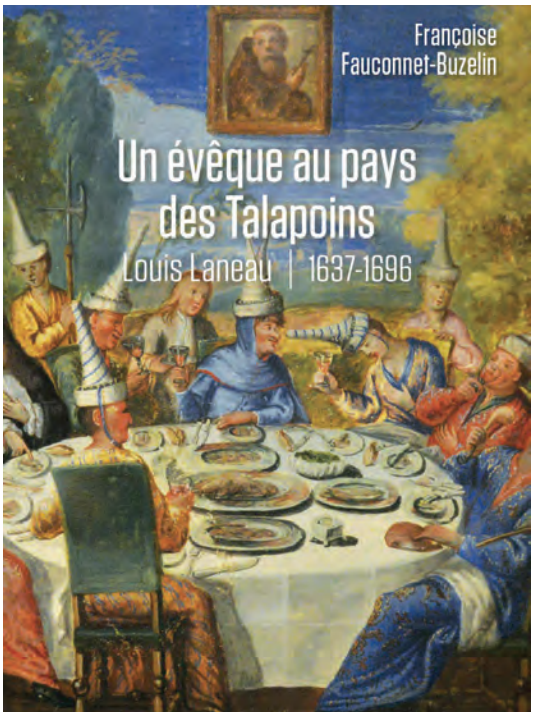
Chapter 11 fits somewhat uncomfortably with the rest of the book. Titled "Ethno-archaeological evidence of 'resilience' underlying the subsistence strategy of the maritime-adapted inhabitants of the Andaman Sea" (pp. 254–281), Ayesha Pamela Rogers and Richard Engelhardt apply "Resilience Theory" to the present-day situation of a population on Phuket Island that they refer to, using a vernacular Thai label, as the Chao Le (ชาวเล). This population is composed of Moken, Moklen, and Urak Lawoi. The situation this population faces is a familiar one in much of present-day maritime Southeast Asia, i.e., rapidly growing populations on small islands and coastal strands trying to eke out a living in over-exploited waters while at the same time competing with newcomers drawn to their island homes by a burgeoning tourism industry. In contrast to other chapters, this is primarily an essay in theory-building and methodology. The method the authors employ, an "ethno-archaeological approach", involves collecting ethnographic information about artifacts and practices that leave an imprint on the environment and thus survive the passage of time. This method, they argue, serves as a way of linking present-day Chao Le settlements to past archeological sites so as to reconstruct a regional history of past and present patterns of resilience. Regrettably, they say little about the results of this research.

The last three chapters (pp. 282–357) deal with maritime communities in Timor-Leste and with Sama-Bajau groups in eastern Indonesia.

To sum up, *Sea Nomads of Southeast Asia*, owing, perhaps, to its origin in conference presentations, is a somewhat uneven volume that never quite succeeds in bringing its often-disparate chapters together within a unifying perspective. It opens, however, with an excellent introduction and contains a number of valuable chapters that, nonetheless, provide much to challenge and inform serious students of maritime Southeast Asia.

Clifford Sather
University of Helsinki (*Emeritus*)
cliffordsather@hotmail.com

Françoise Fauconnet-Buzelin, *Un évêque au pays des talapoins : Louis Laneau, 1637–1696*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2021, 396 pages, €25,00, ISBN 978-2-204-13846-8 (Hardback)



Ce livre propose une biographie de l'évêque Louis Laneau (1637–1696), premier vicaire apostolique du Siam de 1674 jusqu'à sa mort[1]. L'auteure, Françoise Fauconnet-Buzelin, a déjà consacré d'importantes études aux premières décennies de présence et d'action de la Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris (MEP) en Asie. Mentionnons notamment son ouvrage sur Mgr Pierre Lambert de La Motte, premier vicaire apostolique pour la Cochinchine, dont l'apostolat se déroula principalement à Ayutthaya et qui exerça une influence considérable sur Laneau, son jeune confrère (Fauconnet-Buzelin 2006).

Le traitement chronologique et factuel de la présente biographie offre une synthèse des études accumulées depuis les travaux de E.W. Hutchinson (*Aventuriers au Siam au XVIIe siècle*, 1947) et surtout depuis les années 1985, avec le tricentenaire des relations officielles entre la France et le Siam et les premiers travaux de Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h. L'auteure exhume de nombreux documents d'archives de la Société des Missions Etrangères, tous dignes d'intérêt pour saisir comment les premiers missionnaires français tentaient de comprendre – ou non – et de s'intégrer aux sociétés d'Asie.

F. Fauconnet-Buzelin retrace donc les pérégrinations, obligations et activités de Louis Laneau depuis son engagement pour les missions d'Asie vers 1660 jusqu'à sa mort à Ayutthaya en 1696. Il fit partie de la première génération de missionnaires français accueillie au Siam, au terme d'un long voyage de la France, qu'il quitta en janvier 1662 avec un groupe de compagnons sous

[1] L'église catholique est organisée en paroisses, communautés territoriales elles-mêmes regroupées en diocèses dont le supérieur religieux est l'évêque. Une règle implicite est que les diocèses doivent être dirigés par des évêques issus du pays où ils exercent. Le but que se donnent les missionnaires français est donc de former des clergés autochtones qui pourront finalement diriger les communautés locales. En attendant, les communautés sont confiées à des évêques non-autochtones missionnés par le Pape et appelés vicaires apostoliques, terme qui montre que leur présence ne sera pas permanente. En réalité, ces vicaires apostoliques ont les pouvoirs et le titre (Monseigneur) des évêques mais, toujours pour signifier que leur mission est transitoire, ils reçoivent la charge d'un diocèse lui-même fictif (souvent un diocèse du lointain passé mais qui a été abandonné) : Lambert est ainsi évêque de Bérythe (Beyrouth), Laneau est évêque de Metellopolis (ville disparue de l'actuelle Turquie). Louis Laneau est donc à la fois vicaire apostolique pour le Siam et évêque de Metellopolis.

la direction de l'évêque François Pallu, pour atteindre Mergui en octobre 1663. L'auteure décrit avec précision comment ce jeune homme, plutôt effacé et d'une grande candeur mais travailleur et régulier, sut à la fois faire preuve d'une grande disponibilité face aux diverses tâches que la situation exigeait, et ne pas perdre de vue son propre objectif qui était de convertir les Siamois au catholicisme. Il se concilia ainsi la confiance et le soutien de l'évêque Lambert de la Motte jusqu'à la mort de celui-ci en 1679. Surtout, en 1673 à Ayutthaya, c'est Laneau que les évêques Lambert et Pallu choisirent pour être vicaire apostolique du Siam après que Rome décida d'ériger ce pays en vicariat apostolique.

De 1663 à 1679, Laneau partagea avec ses quelques confrères les joies et difficultés de l'installation. Le bon accueil du roi de Siam, Phra Narai (r. 1656–1688), incita les missionnaires français à de grands projets : faire d'Ayutthaya un centre de repli et de repos en même temps que de distribution des hommes et des ravitaillements pour les différentes missions (Cochinchine, Tonkin, Chine, Siam), créer à Ayutthaya un collège pour accueillir et former des élèves de ces missions. Laneau fut alors désigné pour la mission des Siamois et commença à apprendre la langue siamoise avant de s'intéresser à la religion du pays. Mais les difficultés surgirent vite et de manière inattendue puisque les communautés portugaises et leurs pères religieux refusèrent de reconnaître les évêques envoyés par Rome et non reconnus par le roi du Portugal. Au nom du *padroado* (Patronage) et en ayant parfois recours à l'Inquisition de Goa, ces religieux s'engagèrent dans une sévère résistance aux missionnaires nouveaux venus. Bientôt aussi, ces derniers durent faire face à un manque endémique d'hommes et de moyens, qui menaçait régulièrement la survie du collège. Devenu évêque et privé du soutien de Mgr Lambert après 1679, Laneau vit ses responsabilités augmenter, notamment à partir de 1684 lorsqu'il assuma la supervision générale des missions françaises en Asie. Les difficultés allèrent de pair.

Monseigneur Laneau se trouva ainsi confronté au déroulement inattendu des ambassades franco-siamoises (1685–1688) censées sceller l'amitié des rois Phra Narai et Louis XIV, mais qui s'achevèrent dans la confusion et le drame, en raison des jeux d'ambitions et d'ignorances. Emprisonné à Ayutthaya en 1688, avec quelques missionnaires et avec les élèves du collège, puis tenu en liberté surveillée, il fit l'objet en France d'une terrible entreprise de dénigrement de la part des pères jésuites qui espéraient obtenir la responsabilité des nouvelles missions françaises d'Asie à l'occasion des ambassades. Les mensonges distillés à l'époque contre les prêtres des MEP imprègnent encore très fortement les interprétations historiques de leur rôle en Asie. Quant à Laneau, à l'écart des passions versaillaises et romaines, il fut libéré et quasiment réhabilité par le nouveau roi du Siam, Phra Phetracha (r. 1688–1703), jusqu'à sa mort par épuisement en 1696. Il aura réussi à maintenir un vicariat apostolique au Siam et, malgré d'énormes tourments et efforts, à assurer le maintien d'un

collège général pour toutes les missions à Ayutthaya.

À la lecture du livre, on retient la disponibilité de Laneau : lorsqu'une responsabilité lui est confiée, il n'hésite pas à l'assumer. Surtout, il demeure indéfectiblement attaché à la mission que la « Providence », pense-t-il, lui a confiée : obtenir la conversion des Siamois. C'est ainsi qu'il se laisse entraîner, presque malgré lui, dans ce funeste jeu d'ambassades franco-siamoises qui se termine en catastrophe. Mais cela ne saurait occulter ses autres efforts : mission dans les campagnes, visites des malades ou des prisonniers. En cela, il s'affirma ouvertement disciple du jésuite italien Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656) en Inde, développant toute une réflexion sur la perfection des moines bouddhiques (les *talapoins* pour les Européens de l'époque) et sur la nécessité de s'en inspirer. Il fut ainsi l'un des premiers à tenter de comprendre le bouddhisme siamois et son institution, et le principal inspirateur d'ouvrages majeurs pour la connaissance du Siam de la fin du XVIIe siècle, notamment ceux de Guy Tachard, de Simon de La Loubère et, surtout, de Nicolas Gervaise. Lorsque Mgr Maigrot, le vicaire apostolique de Chine, interdit en 1693 la vénération des ancêtres et la participation au culte de Confucius, Mgr Laneau trouva la mesure dommageable et recommanda la prudence à ce propos.

Le défi de la non-conversion des Siamois ne manqua pas de susciter des interrogations chez celui qui s'était engagé dans leur évangélisation. C'est l'apport principal de l'ouvrage : il met en valeur le travail de réflexion, souvent teinté d'anxiété, de Laneau. Nous prenons donc connaissance de ses textes plus apologétiques – sous forme de *Dialogues* notamment –, ainsi que de ses exhortations apostoliques, et d'un ouvrage qui est une méditation sur le dessein divin pour les humains. Fauconnet-Buzelin insiste sur l'admiration que suscitent ces textes chez les théologiens d'aujourd'hui, mais on aurait aimé plus d'analyse et de confrontation aux pensées occidentales ou bouddhiques de son temps : car ces textes suscitèrent une certaine hostilité au XVIIIe siècle et même de nos jours de la part des Siamois.

Je terminerai par un léger reproche. Bien que l'auteure, en tant qu'historienne quasi officielle des MEP, évite de trop orienter la biographie de Mgr Laneau vers l'hagiographie, elle a tendance à rejeter toute critique de l'évêque. Le destin peu ordinaire de Laneau, son exceptionnelle charité, son refus de se mettre en avant et son refuge dans la Providence peuvent ainsi porter à une excuse trop facile des faiblesses et contradictions du personnage – que j'ai relevés pour ma part dans différents travaux[2].

En conclusion, cet ouvrage contribue à conforter une nouvelle lecture de l'histoire des missions catholiques en Asie, c'est-à-dire une lecture qui ne soit pas asservie aux seuls récits de quelques pères jésuites et de la plupart des universitaires occidentaux à leur suite. Les limites du livre résultent de son projet essentiellement

[2] L'intérêt suscité ces dernières années par la figure de Laneau ne se dément pas. Il a récemment donné lieu à un ouvrage de Simona Somsri Bunabunraksa (2018). On notera aussi, de Laurent Bissara, une étude plus centrée sur la spiritualité et la théologie de l'évêque (2020).

biographique et missionnaire : aussi la société siamoise n'y apparaît guère alors qu'elle est la première concernée.

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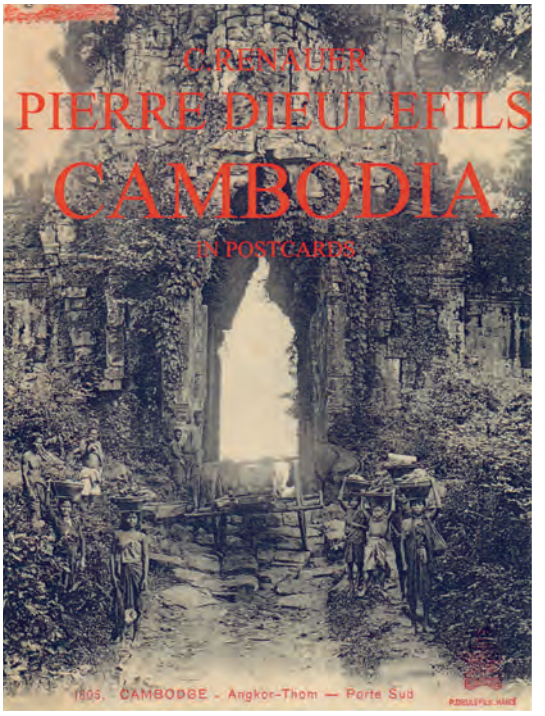
Alain Forest
Université Paris-Diderot (*Emeritus*)
alain.forest@sabouraud.net

Christof Renauer, *Pierre Dieulefils: Cambodia in Postcards*, Munich: White Elephant Books, 2022, 216 pages, 492 illustrations + maps, €35, ISBN 979-1039608343 (Paperback)



In addition to the lavish publication, *Indo-Chine pittoresque & monumentale. Ruines d'Angkor, Cambodge* (1909), French photographer Pierre Dieulefils (1862–1937) published picture postcards of Cambodia, some of which are very rare today. By their nature, these picture postcards are smaller and less elaborately produced than, for example, the full-page heliotypes in the monumental publication cited above. However, this slim volume is an extremely valuable resource. Unlike other compendia of Cambodian picture postcards, this book is not concerned with whether a serial number or caption was printed in red or black. Rather, it is based on an extraordinary amount of field research, placing each postcard in its precise location and providing comparative, contemporary photographs of the same site with the same view. Based on the previous work by Thierry Vincent (1997), Christof Renauer reproduces here for the first time all 232 of the picture postcards on Cambodia issued by Dieulefils, in their original size, two per page. While the great majority of these were collected by Renauer himself, a few cards were selected from the collection of Thailand-based publisher Diethard Ande.

Renauer, a stone mason by profession who worked over a year at Angkor, begins his volume with a biography of Pierre Dieulefils followed by a brief overview of the history of Cambodia

up to 1905. But the important contribution of this volume is that the view of each postcard is precisely located. Renauer maps where Dieulefils set up his tripod and the direction in which the camera faced so that the viewshed of each postcard becomes precisely evident. This, coupled with Renauer's contemporary photographs of each site from the same vantage point as the original postcard, make these postcards a unique reference to the Cambodia of that time as well as the present. Thus, the description and identification of individual buildings not only goes far beyond the titles given by Dieulefils, but also introduces us to old Phnom Penh with its main sights (e.g., French quarter, Wat Phnom, the Royal Palace & Silver Pagoda), as well as today's view. For instance, and quite importantly, the "then and now" juxtapositions of the "*Rian Reamkerti* frescoes" illustrating the Khmer *Rāmāyaṇa* are particularly thought-provoking, as large areas of these murals have disappeared.

The chapter "Angkor Wat—then and now" is also subject to the same extraordinary research and presentation, resulting in one of the volume's most informative contributions. Using a detailed ground plan of Angkor Wat, Dieulefils's viewpoints are shown and then contrasted with Renauer's photos and Dieulefils's picture postcards. The same process is done for Angkor Thom, the Bayon, the Baphuon, the Phimeanakas, the Elephant Terrace, the Victory Gate, as well as other monuments such as Ta Keo and Bakong.

Further chapters, illustrated with Dieulefils's picture postcards, deal with topics such as "Khmer Music", "Dance Apsaras", "Elephants", "King Sisowath", "Court and Courtesans", and the monuments from Siem Reap to Angkor, to mention just a few. A short chapter is dedicated to the history of the production of the picture postcard in Cambodia using the collotype process, along with their postal stamps, all of which are illustrated. As mentioned above, all these spectacular postcards are reproduced in their actual size, along with each printed French descriptive text and a translation into English and at times also a necessary correction to their identification.

Although limited to 103 numbered copies and despite occasional repetitions of text passages and evident misprints, the book should achieve widespread distribution. The detailed comparisons between Dieulefils's prints and Renauer's corresponding photographs alone make this limited edition highly worthwhile. The book deserves a place in all important Southeast Asian research libraries.

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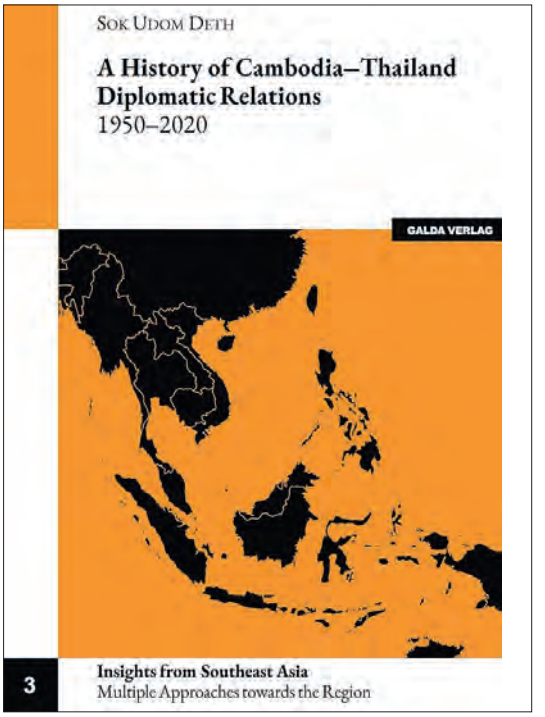
Joachim K. Bautze
Independent scholar
joachim@bautze.com

Sok Udom Deth, *A History of Cambodia–Thailand Diplomatic Relations: 1950–2020*, Glienicke: Galda Verlag, 2020, 231 pages, €73, ISBN 978-3962031299 (Paperback)



Sok Udom Deth is Associate Professor of International Relations and Rector of Paragon International University (formerly Zaman University) in Cambodia, as well as a member of the Board of Academic Advisors of Future Forum and a Senior Fellow at the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP). He has done a great service in providing a comprehensive analysis of Cambodian–Thai relations from the end of World War II to the present. The book endorses the view that Cambodian–Thai relations are tied to domestic issues. This is the approach pioneered by Charnvit Kasetsiri, Sothirak Pou, and Pavin Chachavalpongpun in their book, *Preah Vihear: A Guide to the Thai-Cambodian Conflict and Its Solutions* (2013).

The author's book convincingly demonstrates how domestic issues can stir "embedded nationalism" and "historical animosity" and turn relations between neighbors into conflicts. The narrative is gripping and moves at a fast pace. There is hardly a dull moment from beginning to end. As a Thai diplomat for nearly 40 years knowledgeable of the described events, I can testify to the veracity of most of the facts. Reviewing this volume is similar to revisiting old friends and acquaintances, many of whom have passed away.

In my experience from the Thai side, Thai–Cambodian relations were out of the control of people at headquarters. On both sides of the border, issues were generated by local people with power, influence, and interests. When they reach dangerous levels, these issues become political issues in the national capitals. Governments then get involved. The issues are considered at the highest levels and each Ministry of Foreign Affairs is instructed to deal with the problems and resolve them, in other words, to clean up the mess. This pattern repeated itself again and again.

Khao Phra Wihan or Preah Vihear was the exceptional issue. This surely is a valid case of "embedded nationalism" and "historical animosity", but it also responded easily enough to the domestic situation in either country at crucial moments, for the grievance of territorial loss in both countries cannot be denied. The issue was mishandled from the beginning on the Thai side for domestic reasons. In 1959, "Cambodia suggested two possible solutions to the Preah

Vihear problem: the joint administration of the temple by the two countries, or the submission of the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague. The proposal did not receive any concrete response from Thailand" (p. 27). It was a missed opportunity. When the Thai side raised the possibility of the first solution during the first Thaksin government (2001–2005), it was Cambodia's turn to be unresponsive. Since 1962, there has been another ruling in Cambodia's favor at the ICJ. The issue remains on the Thai–Cambodian agenda to this day.

The outlook for Thai–Cambodian relations is fair. Professor Deth's first two Appendices (pp. 195–205) provide useful reminders of work to be done: the survey and demarcation of land boundary, including the area of their overlapping maritime claims to the continental shelf. This should keep the two countries busy for years to come if their neighborly spirit is up to it. Appendix 4, Joint Communique, dated 18 June 2008 (pp. 207–208) on Preah Vihear shows another opportunity sadly missed; due to that lamentable fiasco, I was called upon to be Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand for 39 days from the end of July to the beginning of September 2008. It was too short a time to follow up on what I had been doing before with like-minded Cambodian colleagues and friends. This is how Professor Deth ends his very useful book on p. 191:

> Still, in the long run, enmity between the two countries can be further reduced if peace studies and objective history with a focus on regionalism become the norm in both countries, so that future politicians have no pretext to invoke nationalism to serve domestic interests.

That is what people of goodwill on both sides of the border have been doing and will continue to do in order to prevent manipulation and exploitation of "embedded nationalism" and "historical animosity".

Tej Bunnag
Thai Red Cross Society
tej@redcross.or.th

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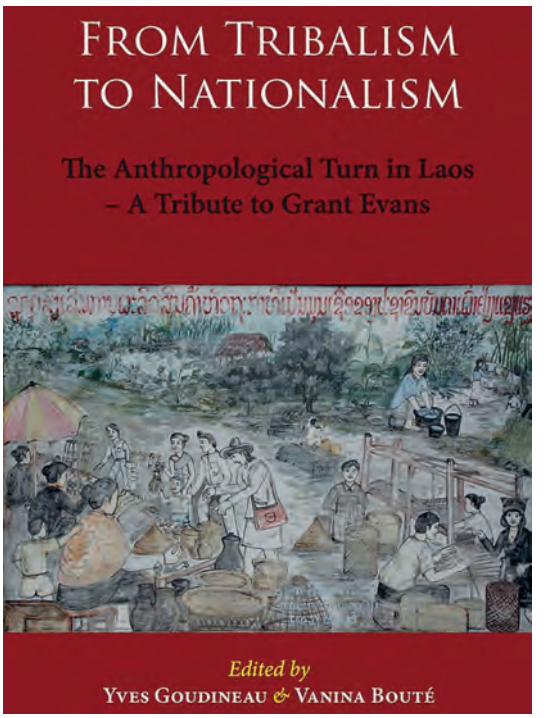

From Tribalism to Nationalism: The Anthropological Turn in Laos is the third volume dedicated to the memory of Grant Evans and impressive testimony to his reputation as a scholar (in particular his contribution to Lao studies), and as a generous colleague and friend.[1] This latest volume is edited by Yves Goudineau and Vanina Bouté, professors at the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) and École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) respectively. The volume comprises an Introduction by the editors and 12 chapters by linguists, anthropologists, and historians.

In the Introduction ("In the Field of Laos", pp. 1–24), Goudineau provides a useful history of early anthropological research in Laos from the work of Karl Izikowitz in the 1930s, Charles Archaimbault and George Condominas in the 1950s, Joel Halpern in the 1960s, and post-1975 research, including that of Grant Evans beginning in the 1980s and regarded as "the first to carry out real field studies" (p. 4). Goudineau endorses Evans' call for in-depth linguistic and cultural research based on extended periods of fieldwork, as does N.J. Enfield in the following brief Chapter 1 ("Language and Culture in Laos: An Agenda for Research", pp. 25–29). Goudineau also credits Evans with pioneering an "anthropological turn" in Lao studies, that is, a more theoretical and critical analysis of Lao society.

In his work, Evans' critical eye was focused on the Lao PDR construction of national identity through Buddhism and Laos as a multi-ethnic state. Evans (1998: 8) argued that the failure of agricultural collectives after 1980 and the utopian vision of creating a "new socialist man" forced the Lao PDR government to search for "new symbols of legitimation". Buddhism came to fill the void, given the historical close relationship between the Buddhist Saṅgha and the state. When the Pathet Lao assumed power in 1975, it did not suppress Buddhism but attempted to "reorganize Buddhism and to bend it to the will of the state" (Evans 1993: 14). According to Patrice Ladwig's later Chapter 4 in the volume under review ("The Genesis and Demarcation of the Religious Field: Monasteries, State Schools and the Secular Sphere in Lao Buddhism", pp. 82–102), one form of state control of Buddhism was to gradually separate religious and secular spheres of education by replacing monks as school teachers with secular teachers, so that Buddhist monks became responsible only for "religious" matters and Buddhism was restricted to a religious "field" (in Pierre Bourdieu's sense).

Boike Rehbein ("Sociolects, Differentiation, and the Integration of Lao", Chapter 2, pp. 30–48) also uses Bourdieu's concept of "field" with reference to the use of language in diverse social spheres or "social cultures" of the royal court, the village, the Buddhist monastery, the market, etc. One dimension of the public sphere is "Thai-ization", related to the media influence of Thai language, especially on the young urban middle class in Laos.

[1] The earlier volumes are Peter Cox & Boike Rehbein, guest editors, *Journal of Lao Studies* 3, 2016, "Special Issue: Devoted to the work of Grant Evans", and Paul T. Cohen & Olivier Évrard, guest editors, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 30(2), 2019, "Special Issue: Grant Evans and Tai Studies: Political Engagement and Intellectual Legacy".

Chapter 3 by the late Grant Evans ("Lao Peasant Studies: Theoretical Review and Perspectives for Anthropology", pp. 49–81), originally written in 2008, relates more to his formative work on the Lao peasantry in *Lao Peasants under Socialism*, 1990. It examines the nature of peasant society in general, and in Laos in particular.

Taking his cue from Alexander Chayanov's demographic model of social differentiation among the Russian peasantry in *Theory of Peasant Economy* (originally published in German in 1923), Evans argues that there are no real long-term inequalities within Lao rural villages. "This is because a key dynamic of the village economy is the domestic cycle of household groups, which means that over time there is a wave-like undulation of family fortunes" (p. 68). He claims that the main poverty differences are between villages, not within villages—a poverty induced by the government policy of resettlement of upland minorities in the lowlands. He was also aware of other changes that were beginning to undermine the natural economy of the Lao peasantry: various forms of commercial farming (including plantations), new forms of technology, road building, etc., prompting him to conclude somewhat wistfully that "we can probably say that Laos has begun its irreversible march towards the end of the peasantry" (p. 65).

However, most of the following contributions (Chapters 7–12) are concerned with issues of ethnicity and ethnic minorities, with an emphasis based on prolonged field research on the fluidity of ethnic identification. These studies provide critiques of the Lao PDR "obsession with classification" (p. 9), influenced by Chinese and Vietnamese precedents, and the essentialist attribution of fixed cultural traits to named ethnic groups. This critical approach is consistent with Evans' earlier study of the process of Tai-ization in relation to the interethnic relationship between the Black Tai and Sing Moon (Ksing Mul) of Huaphanh province (Evans 2000).

Yves Goudineau, in a wide-ranging analysis of the history and ethnic make-up of southern Laos ("The Anthropology of Southern Laos and the Origin of the Kantu Issue", Chapter 6, pp. 131–165) argues that the Kantu (Katu) people have an "emblematic status" in the imagination of the French and Lao of the incomplete "Lao-ization" of the region. The Kantu of the Upper Sekong were noted for their fierce independence, the authenticity of their customs and their large, well-fortified circular villages as well as their backwardness and danger. Notably, despite the devastation caused by the Lao Civil War (in which Kantu fought on the side of the Pathet Lao), Goudineau discovered during fieldwork in the 1990s that up-dated versions of the circular village model were rebuilt, which he claims were an "obvious and visible expression of an ideology that is in competition with—though progressively marginalised by—'Lao-isation'" (p. 165). This marginalization is reflected in the government resettlement of many Kantu villages to the plains and the consequent disappearance of the circular villages.

Village spatial conceptualization was also a significant cultural marker for the Brao ethnic group who inhabit areas further south in Champassak and Attapeu provinces and in northeast Cambodia. This is expounded by Ian

Baird in Chapter 7: "The Case of the Brao: Revisiting Physical Borders and Social Organisation in the Hinterland of Southern Laos and Northeastern Cambodia" (pp. 166–196). Here, Baird highlights the Brao spatial concept of *huntre* which refers to spatial taboos affecting the location of pathways, swidden fields, and physical borders between villages (and protection of communal land rights). However, Baird notes that his research in Pathoumphone district of Champassak province revealed that the concept of *huntre* was no longer relevant to most Brao, a change which he attributes to "Lao-ization". A more striking example of the fluidity of ethnic identification is that of the Brao of Ratanakiri province, in Cambodia, who, in response to Khmer Rouge labelling the Brao as "traitors", adopted the autonym of "Kreung" (p. 180).

The other studies in this volume of ethnic fluidity are from northern Laos, in the provinces of Luang Nam Tha, Houesai (Huay Xay), and Phongsaly. In their study of legends of the origin of Viang Phu Kha ("The Ruins, the 'Barbarians' and the Foreign Princess: Heritage, Orality, and Transethnic Imaginary in Northern Laos", Chapter 8, pp. 197–230), Olivier Évrard and Chiem-sisouraj Chanthapilith relate the legends that comprise a narrative shared by Tai Lue, Khmu, and Samtao derived from alternating phases of depopulation and repopulation. One popular and inclusive legend is that of a beautiful Lue princess who, according to one version, marries a Khmu chief. Another example of cultural sharing is that of the Khmu Khwaen sub-group whose propitiation of "outside" spirits invokes ancestor spirits who are identifiably of Tai Yuan origin. These protective spirits possess a Khmu medium, speak in Lao, and are said to come from Nan in northern Thailand.

Oliver Tappe also addresses the issue of shared culture through the concept of "mimetic appropriation" that characterizes interethnic relations in upland Laos. In "Huaphanh: Revolutionary Heritage and Social Transformation in the 'Birthplace of Lao PDR'", Chapter 11, (pp. 277–301), Tappe compares this process to "asymmetric assimilation", a concept which he attributes to Evans's analysis of interethnic contact between the Ksing Mul and Tai Dam. Mimetic appropriation is exemplified in the case of the Austroasiatic Phong of Huaphanh. The Phong converted to Buddhism in pre-colonial times. They have borrowed aspects of language, material culture, and "socio-political structures" from the Tai/Lao and increasingly call themselves "Lao Phong". However, Tappe argues that Phong cultural borrowings (such as Buddhism and silk weaving) have been "vernacularised" and that "their oral history suggests a creative process of cultural appropriation that aims to strengthen Phong identity" (p. 297).

Likewise, the Rmeet (Lamet) of northern Laos interpret lightning strikes as punishment from aggrieved ancestors, traditionally requiring buffalo sacrifice and demanding taboos for the affected householders. The Lao PDR government has long condemned buffalo sacrifice as superstitious and economically wasteful. According to Guido Sprenger ("The End of Rituals: A Dialogue between Theory and Ethnography in Laos", Chapter 9, pp. 231–255), the Rmeet since the 1970s have not completely abandoned the

lightening ritual but have modified it to comply with Socialist rhetoric (e.g., a pig is sacrificed instead of a buffalo). He concludes that "the impulse to abridge the ritual originated with the state, but the specific form of the abridging was created through the creativity of some Rmeet leaders" (p. 249).

Vanina Bouté (in "Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in Northern Laos", Chapter 10, pp. 256–276) is similarly concerned with ritual changes in response to Pathet Lao attacks on costly sacrifices to spirits, here in the case of the Phu Noi of Phongsaly province. She examines the modified roles of two ritual celebrants under religious reforms imposed by government authorities since the 1960s. The village medium (*chao cham*) conducted rituals for the guardian spirit of the community. She observes that the role of the *chao cham* has become strongly Buddhicized. The other main ritual officiant is the *maphê*, in charge of collective rituals related to agriculture and dangerous spirits that demand animal sacrifices. Bouté concludes that these non-Buddhist officiants have not completely disappeared, but their functions have been depleted and partly assumed by Buddhist monks and *achan* (former monks and lay leaders of the temple) in relation to misfortunes attributed to spirits.

Another contribution by Goudineau ("The Ongoing Invention of Multi-Ethnic Heritage in Laos", Chapter 12, pp. 302–327) concerns the creation of a multi-ethnic national culture which is firmly grounded in Lao majority culture and perpetuates the process of Lao-ization. He highlights the state promotion, since 2009, of "cultural villages" (*ban watthanatham*) as part of the discourse on multi-ethnicity. These selected villages are conscripted to reject irrational beliefs and promote "good customs" and display these in village festivals. The paradox is that the exhibition of ethnic diversity is taking place in the context of "accelerated standardisation" due to social and economic changes, in particular the regrouping of villages caused by government resettlement policies.

Finally, Vatthana Pholsena explores a rather different aspect of Lao-ization in the early establishment of revolutionary bases in southeast Laos ("The Early Years of the Lao Revolution [1945–1949]: Between History, Myth, and Experience", Chapter 5, pp. 103–130). Lao-ization in this context refers to the "mythologisation" in state-sponsored historiography (exemplified in the book *Pavat Khet Thai Lao* [*History of the Thai–Lao Border*], published by Cheuang Sombounkhan et al. in 2004) enhances the status of Lao revolutionary leaders and downplays the role of the Vietnamese.

A word of caution to conclude, most of the chapters presented in this volume in memory of Grant Evans were originally published more than ten years ago. The editorial rationale for this reproduction is the need to reach a wider readership, limited in the past by books or journals difficult to obtain, or publication in French (such as essays found in *Recherches nouvelles sur le Laos*, EFEO, 2008). As such, the editors, to their credit, have made accessible to Lao and foreign scholars a wealth of in-depth ethnographic research that demonstrates an anthropological turning point in Laos towards more critical analysis of social facts.

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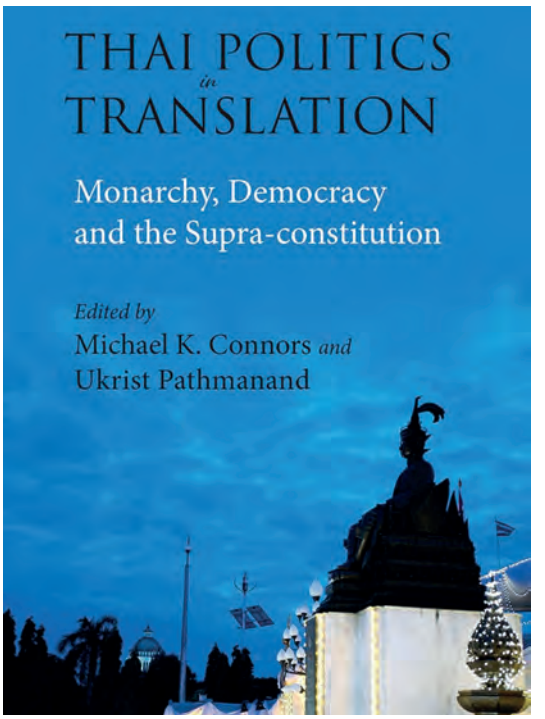
Paul T. Cohen
Macquarie University
paul.cohen@mq.edu.au

Michael K. Connors & Ukrist Pathmanand, eds, *Thai Politics in Translation: Monarchy, Democracy and the Supra Constitution*, Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2021, 256 pages, €45, ISBN 978-8776942854 (Paperback)



Thai Politics in Translation is particularly welcome for scholars interested in Thailand but who cannot read Thai. This may not be true for almost all historians of Thailand (except those specializing in 17th century Siam for which most sources are in European languages) and many anthropologists, who can read Thai. However, this is true for political scientists, some of whom do not specialize in a single country but prefer to compare political systems of a number of Southeast Asian countries.

The editors are two well-known academics interested in the Thai political landscape. Australian Michael Connors is Associate Professor at Monash University Malaysia. His interests in Thailand began around 1998–1999 when he was a visiting lecturer at Thammasat University in Bangkok. Connors is known for his numerous articles in academic journals and for his book, *Democracy and National Identity in Thailand* (2003). Specializing initially in international relations (degrees from Ramkhamhaeng and Chulalongkorn universities), Professor Ukrist Pathmanand is now a special researcher at the Institute of Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University. He is particularly well known for his volume, co-authored with Duncan McCargo, *The Thaksinization of Thailand* (2005).

The volume under review consists of an Introduction (pp. 1–17) and Chapter 1 (pp. 18–39) written by the two editors, then follow a collection of seven essays by Thai scholars, all published earlier in Thai between 1983 and 2016 as journal

articles, unpublished but widely available reports, book chapters, or short monographs.

While the subtitle of the book should be understood literally—democracy as framed by the Thai monarchy and the supra-Constitution, which means, indirectly, royal power—the Introduction precisely pinpoints the book's intention and scope. It deals specifically about the King Bhumibol era, particularly the last decades of his long reign, from the 1980s to the 2010s, when the King's power exceeded that of all other institutions. I will review each chapter sequentially.

Somchai Preechasilpakul's essay, "The Thai Supra-Constitution" (Chapter 2, pp. 40–63) was originally published in 2007 as a booklet for the Pridi Banomyong Institute. Following the award of Bachelors and Master of Law degrees from Thammasat University, Achan Somchai began his career as lecturer at Chiang Mai University. His chapter introduces the concept of supra-Constitution (อภิรัฐธรรมนูญ; *aphiratthathammanun*). He suggests that the Constitution is not the highest law in governing the Kingdom of Thailand since the phrase "Democracy with the King as Head of State", which is integral to that document, seems to place the King above it.

Chapter 3, "Political Discourse on Thai Democracy", by Nakharin Mektrairat (pp. 64–93) was initially published as a book chapter in 1990 and republished in 2003. Achan Nakharin received a Bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Political Science of Thammasat University, a Master's degree in history at Chulalongkorn University, and a PhD in international studies from Waseda University in Tokyo. He has been a lecturer at the Faculty of Political Science of Thammasat University, and a dean of the same Faculty from 2004 to 2009. In this chapter, he first presents the "traditionalist school of thought" proposed by kings Mongkut (r. 1850–1868), Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910), Vajiravudh (r. 1910–1925), and Prajadhipok (r. 1925–1935), and then developed by some princes and other members of the royalty (Prince Damrong, Prince Wan, MR Seni and MR Kukrit Pramoj, etc.), as well as some academics unrelated to royalty such as Chai-Anan Samudavanija and Kramol Thongthammachart. This "traditionalist school of thought" evolved into the "Thai-style democracy" theory, promoted as the non-participation of the people in the governing process. Achan Nakharin then presents Thai representatives of the "Western school of thought" on democracy, starting with Pridi Banomyong and Kularb Saipradit, followed by Seksan Prasertkul, Puey Ungpakorn, Saneh Chamarik, and Kasian Tejapira. He questions both of these approaches the same way: Is democracy a universal and immutable concept, or is it adaptable depending on the cultural context? And, when it is modified, is democracy still "power by the people" or just "power for the people"?

The late Kramol Thongthammachart first published his "National Ideology and the Development of the Thai Nation" (Chapter 4, pp. 94–106) in 1983 in a book distributed by The Office of the Prime Minister. Achan Kramol (1935–2017) received a Bachelor's degree in political science from Chulalongkorn University, and another degree in Law from Thammasat University, before obtaining a Master degree in government studies, and a PhD in government and foreign affairs in the US. Besides a

career at the Faculty of Political Science of Chulalongkorn University, he has had governmental functions, including a ministerial position from 1983 to 1986 and was appointed President of the Thai Constitutional Court from 2003 to 2005. Unsurprisingly, his national ideology can be subsumed as loyalty toward the three fundamental Thai institutions: the Nation, the Religion, and the Monarchy. Achan Kramol uses the expression *udomkan trai phak* (อุดมการณ์ไตรภักดิ์; "the ideology of the three loyalties"), forged by Professor Chai-Anan Samudavanija, as the foundation for his chapter.

"Thai-style Democracy: Concept and Meaning" by Chalermkiat Phiu-nuan (Chapter 5, pp. 107–142) was first published in 1992 in a book about the Thai Military. Achan Chalermkiat was a lecturer at the Department of Philosophy at Thammasat University. In this chapter, he wrote a well-balanced study on Thai military thought, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. The editors indicate that he had close connections with the democratic soldiers' clique, a group of young military officers influential during General Prem Tinsulanonda's Premiership (1980–1988).

Chapter 6, "Civilising the State: State, Civil Society and Politics in Thailand", by Pasuk Phongpaichit (pp. 143–164) is the only essay originally published in English, in 1999 in Amsterdam. Educated in Australia and the UK, Achan Pasuk is a well-known Thai academic, particularly for the many books her and her English husband, Dr Chris Baker, wrote or translated in English, on the history, politics, economy, and ancient literature of the Kingdom of Siam. Published before the "Thaksin phenomenon" that was to be followed later by two *coups d'État* and more than a decade of political power confiscated by the generals, this chapter is brilliant but relatively outdated; it corresponds to a very special period when many scholars thought the military would definitely stay out of politics.

Pramuan Rujanaseri's book, of which extracts are published here under the title "Royal Power" (Chapter 7, pp. 165–186), originally published in 2005, is probably the best known of the texts republished in this collection, but also the least scholarly written. Pramuan Rujanaseri is not an academic but a civil servant in the Thai Ministry of Interior and a politician. Elected as a Member of Parliament for the Thai Rak Thai Party, he held the post of Vice-Minister of Interior from 2002 to 2004. When first published, his book was a great event. The late King Bhumibol revealed that he read and appreciated it very much. Because the content of this monograph benefited the royalist side, Pramuan became viewed as a quasi-renegade of his Party.

"Historical Legacy and the Emergence of Judicialisation in the Thai State" by Saichon Sattayanurak (Chapter 8, pp. 187–216) was originally published in 2016 in *Warasan Nitti-sangkhomsat mahawitthayalai chiang mai* [วารสารนิติสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่; CMU Journal of Law and Social Science]. Achan Saichon, a lecturer at Chulalongkorn University and later at Chiang Mai University, is one of the most prolific and appreciated Thai historians of these last decades. She explains that the (Sino–Thai) middle class is more interested today in protection by the King than by any form of Western-style democracy.

She writes that this middle class and the judiciary share similar social and political values. That appears a little odd when we know the tradition of corruption among Thai judges (p. 191). In addition, it is peculiar to maintain that—under Thaksin's premiership (2001–2006)—uneducated villagers were bought and deceived by politicians when, in fact, that was an even more common practice before the political advent of Thaksin Shinawatra. Rather, we now know that poor villagers and town-dwellers simply voted for Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party because of his "populist" policies that effectively improved their daily lives.

For a better contextualization, the editors in notes or in the Introduction should have given additional and updated information about the contents of all of these chapters and extracts. For example, Achan Chai-Anan is undoubtedly the Thai academic most often mentioned in the volume. Therefore, some data on his political life should have been given to appreciate better his opinions. He was twice nominated as a senator (1992–1997) and selected as a judge at the Thai Constitutional Court (1998–2000). He was very close to Sondhi Limthongkul, the press mogul who contributed to destabilize the Kingdom, opening the way for the 2014 military *coup*. In October of the same year, Chai-Anan was one of 250 personalities selected by the military as members of the National Reform Assembly. He cannot be considered a completely neutral scholar, at least for this period.

Quite often, these essays see the middle class as a major actor during these last decades of Thai history. This pseudo concept of "middle class" looks scientific, but is never clearly defined. It was extensively used to describe the 1992 mobs against General Suchinda Kraprayun. These mobs were also popularly designated as *mop mue thue* (ม็อบมือถือ; mobile phone mobs), because eyewitnesses reported many protesters holding mobile phones, quite rare and expensive items some 30 years ago. Back in 1979 already, two young French philosophers wrote, "Nobody presents himself as *bourgeois*: the universal class became middle class" (Bruckner & Finkelkraut 1979: 200; my translation). However, in 2018, a Crédit Suisse report estimated the Thai "middle class" at only 3.7% of the population, that is, less than 2.6 million people (Anonymous 2018).[1]

Since they usually belong to this small (and elitist), urban Sino–Thai "middle class", many academics of the King Bhumibol era were suspicious about the broad concept of democracy since the poorly-educated, Thai lower-class (96% of the population according to the same Crédit Suisse report) usually voted for corrupt politicians, inevitably leading to a parliamentary dictatorship.

Overall, the quality of the translations from Thai into English seems acceptable for this collection of essays, but I did not systematically compare the original with their translation. I did find, however, some inaccuracies in the English text. I will just mention one in this review. While Sarit Thanarat and Thanom Kittikachorn are correctly given the grade of Field Marshall in the

[1] In contrast, a Thai advertising agency estimated the local middle class at 72% of the population in 2015, but it seems that only Bangkok had been considered in this survey (Anonymous 2015).

text and index, Phibun Songkhram is sometimes called General. In fact, Phibun was never a full general. On 1 April 1939, he received the grade of Major General (พลตรี; *phon tri*). Less than two years later, on 28 July 1941, after his success in the so-called Indochina War with colonial France, he was directly promoted to the highest grade of Field Marshal (จอมพล; *chomphon*).

Another difficulty with this publication is that several essays mention the same concepts or the same persons but with differing spelling or orthographies. A central concept is that of *anekkachonnikonsamosonsommot* (เอนกชนนิกรสโมสรสมมติ), also known as *aneknikonsamosonsommot* (เอนกนิกรสโมสรสมมติ), or *mahachonnikonsamosonsommut* (มหาชนนิกรสโมสรสมมุติ), meaning, approximatively, "accepted by an assembly of a large number of persons". This concept is supposed to validate the theory that, in ancient times, the population legitimately chose the King of Siam. The bibliography provided at the end exhibits several issues, suggesting that individuals not proficient in the Thai language assembled it. A few names have been arranged in the list according to their nobility title (e.g., หลวง; *luang*), royal title (e.g., กรมหมื่น; *krommin*), or directly as Prince, e.g., for Dhani Nivat. On the other hand, Sulak Sivaraksa always signs his books and articles as "S. Sivaraksa". Boonmee is also given as Bunmi (p. 232). Kularb Saipraidit usually wrote his first name in English Kularb instead of Kulab (p. 224). In Japanese, the family name should be given first, so it should be Murashima Eiji rather than Eiji Murashima (p. 220). European and Chinese authors are appropriately cited, as are Thai names (first name listed first), but some Thai family names differ from the owner's preference, for example, Arphaphirom, Arpornsuwan, and so on. Finally, it would have been helpful to clarify for the general readers that "Kromamun Bidayalah Brdihyakorn" is none other than Prince Dhani Nivat, and that Naradhip Bongsprabanh is simply known as Prince Wan in English.

There are also occasional errors in the Romanization of Thai words, such as *kabot* and not *khabot* for กบฏ (pp. 144, 240), according to the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (RTGS) of the Royal Society of Thailand. The name of the first "Prime Minister" in Thai modern history is usually given as *Phraya* Manopakon Nitthithada rather than Monopakorn Nithithada (pp. 197, 242). The editors and the translators seem to have chosen to freely adapt the official system (RTGS), possibly to facilitate the pronunciation by English-speaking readers, for example, using the letter "j" for จ instead of "ch", "ar" for -า instead of "a", "or" for -อ instead of "o", etc. They should have explained their choice in a technical note at the beginning or in the Introduction.

Despite a few nitpicking issues that may frustrate scholars, the collection of essays successfully accomplishes its overarching goals by introducing the writing tendencies of Thai political scientists over the last four decades to a broader audience, particularly non-Thai specialists. Although contributors frequently provide valuable insights into the reign of King Bhumibol (1946–2016), it is essential to recognize that this era is now a part of history. Therefore, future discussions should

pivot towards exploring the current reign of King Vajiralongkorn (2016–present) and delve into the contemporary positioning and roles of key actors such as the military, judiciary, middle class, intellectuals, and others.

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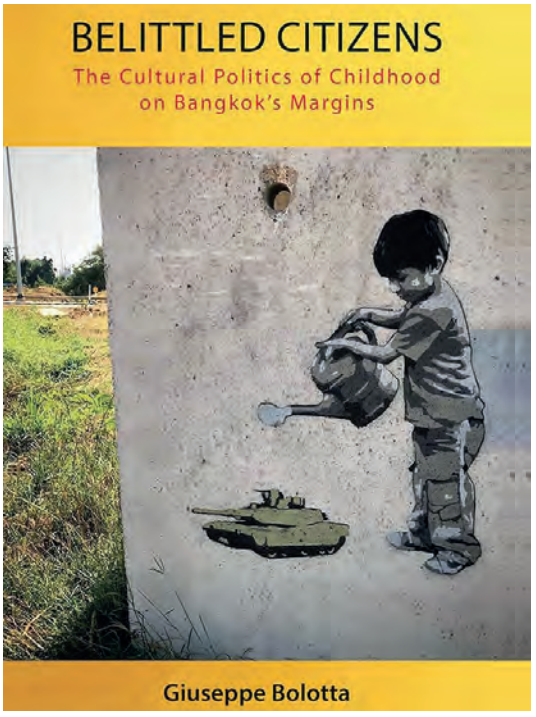
Jean Baffie
IRSEA CNRS–
Université de Provence (Retired)
jeanbaffie28@gmail.com

Giuseppe Bolotta, *Belittled Citizens: The Cultural Politics of Childhood on Bangkok's Margins*, Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2021, 252 pages, ฿850, ISBN 978-8776943011 (Paperback)



Giuseppe Bolotta, an Italian anthropologist with extensive fieldwork experience on Bangkok slum children, provides a critical exploration of Thai cultural politics and its impact on the formation of self in childhood. The book is a revised compilation of findings from his PhD fieldwork conducted between 2010 and 2015, complemented by an additional four years of ethnographic research during his postdoctoral fellowship at the National University of Singapore.

Comprising six chapters organized into two parts, the book addresses two key themes. Firstly, it delves into the institutional socialization and construction of the childhood experiences of slum children through various social spaces, including Thai schools, Catholic organizations, international NGOs, and Thai Buddhism. Bolotta terms these institutions collectively as "the cultural technologies of childhood" (p. 5), highlighting their role in shaping and perpetuating an unequal social

structure in Thailand. Secondly, the author explores how slum children develop their sense of self amid the influence of multiple social spaces and cultural contexts.

In the initial section of the book, Bolotta illuminates how the childhood and self-identity of slum children are shaped by both national and international perspectives. On the national scale, Thai school teachers perceive slum children as insufficiently Thai, undisciplined, and lacking in self-awareness and mindfulness. The correction for these perceived deficiencies involves continuous training by Theravada Buddhist monks, focusing on meditation and other Buddhist practices. The author underscores the significance placed on moral development, particularly in cultivating gratitude (ความกตัญญู; *khwam katanyu*) towards parents and benefactors.

Despite variations in the specifics of children's self-construction, both Thai schools and monasteries share a common orientation grounded in a hierarchical social structure, characterized by the concepts of "big people" (ผู้ใหญ่; *phu yai*) and "small people" (ผู้น้อย; *phu noi*). Public schools instill in slum children the recognition of themselves as "small people", inferior to figures such as the King, their parents, monks, and teachers who hold the position of "big people" (p. 23). This hierarchy dictates that "small people" must display respect, obedience, and gratitude to "big people" due to their younger age or lower social status. Similarly, the author's survey of two monasteries, Wat Saphansung (วัดสะพานสูง) and Wat Suan Kaeo (วัดสวนแก้ว) in Bangkok, reveals the socialization of poor children and some orphans within the same stratified social structure of "big people" and "small people", with the highest emphasis on children showing gratitude and reverence to adults, including the King, monks, and parents.

Remarkably, the process of children's socialization extends beyond traditional realms such as schooling and Buddhist activities, encompassing military activities as well. This occurs within the classroom, gradually instilled through discipline and the three pillars of Thai national ideology, namely Nation, Religion, and Monarchy. The public school, regarded as a national institution, the temple as a religious institution, and the King as a monarchical institution, collectively reinforce this ideology, particularly gaining momentum after the Siamese Revolution of 1932 and further solidified during the government of Phibul Songkhram (1938–1944, 1948–1957) and Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat (1959–1963). Sarit Thanarat amalgamated military governance with the reinstatement of the monarchy at the pinnacle of the new Thai social structure.

On the international front, Catholic missionary organizations and non-governmental organizations approach slum children from a standpoint of morality and humanitarianism. Parallel to Thai schools and temples, the Catholic missionary organization contributes to shaping the self-identity of slum children. While Catholicism has not extensively converted Thais to Christianity, its historical alignment with the monarchy has influenced the secular development of the Thai modern state across various domains like the school system, art, architecture, medicine, and printing techniques. The author

sheds light on two activist missionaries, Father Nicola, founder of the Saint Jacob's Center, and Sister Serafina, an Italian nurse and missionary of the House of the Little Ones. They reinterpret slum children distinctively from normative Catholicism, portraying them not as bearing negative *karma* or intrinsic sin, as defined by Thai Buddhism or Thai Catholicism, but rather as the marginalized "last" (the poor) within an unequal socio-economic structure. The structural sin of slum children, according to this perspective, should dissipate or find liberation through religious and humanitarian frameworks, epitomized by being viewed as "God's most beloved children" (p. 77).

Built on the same humanitarian ideology, Western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) perceive Thai slum children as innocent victims in need of protection from adverse environments like drug trafficking, illiteracy, and child labor. Consequently, vulnerable slum children transcend their status as mere victims, gaining inward symbolic capital as they strive and empower themselves for improved opportunities and well-being.

In the book's second segment, the author elucidates that the prevailing models of childhood and citizenship propagated by the four aforementioned social organizations fail to shape distinct self-identities for slum children. Notably, these children do not fully conform to the various selves constructed by diverse social agencies. Their expressions of identity range from compliant adherence to Thai cultural politics to reactions against their socially inferior positions, occasionally manifesting in deviant behaviors like breaking school rules or forming gangs. However, it is crucial to note that juvenile delinquency is not a universal characteristic of all slum children; some harbor aspirations of becoming Thai officials, akin to their non-slum counterparts. The notion of being "belittled citizens", as emphasized by the book's cover photo, underscores their diminished subject position determined by the three pillars of Thai social structure, further influenced by the military and additional factors from the international context.

In my perspective, Giuseppe Bolotta's book gains additional insight when considered alongside recent work by Sirima Thongsawang, Boike Rehbein, and Supang Chantavanich (2020). These scholars, employing Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, synthesize their fieldwork to elucidate the development of seven habitus types in Thailand, shaped by dual hierarchical social structures: the *sakdina* (ศักดินา) pre-Capitalist and the Capitalist. By engaging with Bolotta's research, readers can grasp the broader landscape of Thai social morphology that both structures and perpetuates the disparity between "big" and "small" people—a fundamental theme woven throughout this book.

In conclusion, Giuseppe Bolotta's insightful exploration of the intricate dynamics shaping the self-identities of Thai slum children presents a compelling narrative that transcends traditional perspectives. Through meticulous research and nuanced analysis, Bolotta unveils the complex interplay between nationalized and internationalized influences, shedding light on the multifaceted journey of these children in navigating societal expectations. The

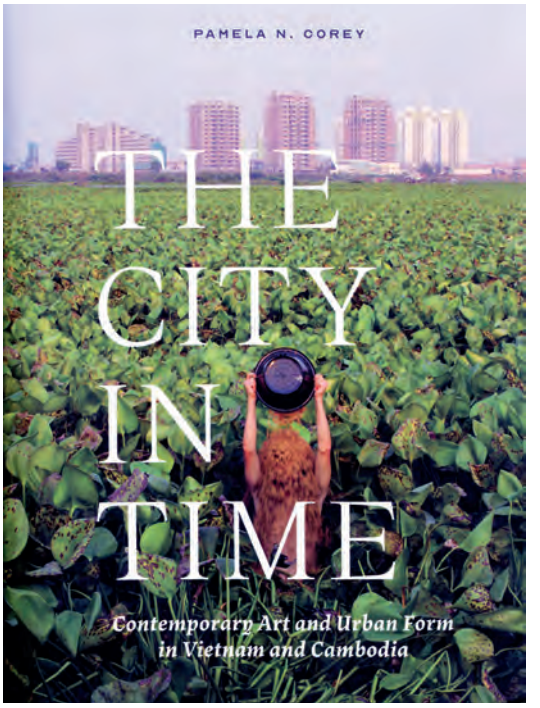
book not only challenges prevailing models of childhood and citizenship but also offers a poignant reflection on the resilience and agency demonstrated by slum children within an unequal socio-economic structure. Bolotta's work not only contributes to our understanding of Thai social morphology but also prompts broader discussions on the universal themes of identity, agency, and societal structures. In its entirety, this book stands as a noteworthy and thought-provoking addition to the scholarly discourse on childhood studies and socio-cultural dynamics.

Reference

• Sirima Thongsawang, Boike Rehbein & Supang Chantavanich. 2020. Inequality, Sociocultures and *Habitus* in Thailand. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 35(3): 493–524.

Thanida Boonwanno
Naresuan University
thanidab@nu.ac.th

Pamela N. Corey, *The City in Time: Contemporary Art and Urban Form in Vietnam and Cambodia*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021, 240 pages, US$65, ISBN 978-0295749235 (Hardback)



In *The City in Time*, Pamela Corey's approach embeds theoretical insights into empirical analyses rather than present these separately and then to reflexively position the works using a range of interpretations. She wishes to avoid the singular narratives of historic rupture (p. 4) and to examine "how these artists individually and collectively developed critical and influential practices derived through experiential material and affective relationships with urban form" (p. 11). She considers how urban form—by which she probably means "the reflexive form of the city"—served as a catalyst for contemporary art because, "The city shapes artistic practices while art simultaneously consolidates the city as image" (p. 8).

Clearly, Corey wishes, and by-and-large succeeds, in separating the forms deployed by contemporary artists from the traumatic and tragic gaps, which the recent history of these two countries produced. Some contemporary artists have intentionally excavated archival

materials which instantiate those gaps—such as Dinh Q. Lè's use of old wartime Vietnamese photographs seen at *documenta* 13 in 2012, or of Vandy Ratana's images of vestigial bomb craters now filled as ponds seen at *Asia-Pacific Triennale* 6 in 2009. They mark their works as habitual to a diasporic view of recent history subjects from which contemporary art should be allowed to escape. Corey wants to avoid this imposition of an external interpretation forced by the diasporic perceptions of the *émigré* communities who left Vietnam and Cambodia after the wars. Their demands are as anathema to Corey as those of international NGOs. Her view is that history or the diasporic identity (p. 11) are just perspectives from which the generation of contemporary art can be seen; more important are the reaction of artists to their local, urban environment which provides their formal and formative discourse, whether they directly survived or have indirect experience of the recent horrors. As Corey notes:

> [...] these art works, though topically rooted in the legacies of war, urban form and present-day experience of urban sites and spaces have been crucial to their [these artists'] development, whether in terms of shaping artistic method, medium, or as a dialogical means of counter expression (p. 11).
>
> The city forms a residue and urban legacy onto which collective memory and national aspiration are mapped (p. 16).

Whatever the viewer's differences in interpretive mapping, there is no doubt that Corey valuably describes many actual works, which become clear via her analyses. This is true with her interpretation of a work by Brian Doan *Thù Dûc* (2009), which figures a young woman wearing a T-shirt with the star from a Vietnamese flag.

> [The artist is quoted] "Ho Chi Minh is next to her, but communism is no longer in her". This entanglement of affects deployed through the use of symbol, materiality, and composition is a strategy historically shared—with varying degrees of subtlety—by artists across global contexts commenting on the post-socialist condition. Many of these works reproduce symbols as multivalent and spatiotemporally layered, imparting both a critical stance but also a sense of affective haunting due to feelings of generational belonging to the pre- and the post- of socialism as a historic era and an ideological project (p. 28).

Of course, here a serious problem arises. Many of the artists chosen, whether they return to Vietnam or Cambodia, actually lived a diasporic childhood usually in the USA and studied in American art schools. Thus, many works, using local realia or references for their subjects, are easily seen as examples of this or that art school direction or art world formal discourse in the USA. Without a very penetrating and historically extensive examination

of how art in Vietnam and Cambodia was produced and conceived before these artists' return and how it was integrated or refused integration after the transfer of their works to Phnom Penh or Ho Chi Minh City, we are looking at a top-down, vertical external transfer. This sits ill with the artistic autonomy premised for the artists' creativity after their return.

A slightly different problematic arises with Corey's later extremely persuasive interpretation of the fate of a painting on a building called the White Building. A large painting some ten meters high of a woman seamstress was painted on the side of the building. Corey provides us with a rich description of how the work was sited and painted by a visiting artist from California, but then whitewashed with a statement, paraphrased by an Anglophone journalist, as inappropriate since it was "unworthy of such amplified public view, in a manner that did not speak to Khmer artistic tradition" (p. 139). Earlier, Corey argued for a positive use of enhanced scale where:

> [...] national urban forms are established as rooted in a post-colonial, internationalist past, yet the encroaching diffusion of these "local" forms promised by neoliberal development is to be interrupted by individual and collective voices on the ground (p. 137).

> Scale thus enables an ordering of the world as "the global" increasingly presses on us, while leveraged as a potent term that unveils its application by hegemonic apparatuses to exercise relations of power. This seemingly top-down process nonetheless finds fuller reification through acts of social reproduction, consumption, and contestation. In this instance[,] the notion of jumping scales often focuses on collective activism as well as mediation and reproduction of scale through individual acts of agency, largely in the urban area (p. 138).

Corey usefully cites several recent texts which examine "scale" and the notion of "jumped scales" in her endnotes (nn. 5–12, p. 195), but could have helped the reader understand better if the context of development studies in which these terms arose had been explained. Other terms were appropriated from financial operations, such as "leverage", defined online as "the use of debt (borrowed funds) to amplify returns from an investment or project" (see: investopedia.com/terms/l/leverage.asp). This term could have been detailed rather than abruptly used as a technical descriptor. The reader would have been better prepared for their use if the author had more clearly and separately adumbrated them before their application to art creation, production, and reception. Their undefined embedding is a consequence of Coreys' approach.

In Chapter 2, Corey looks at art and the urban order and at artists' spatial interventions in Ho Chi Minh City. Many of the works "attempt to interpellate a historical consciousness constructed through and yet against the spectre of socialism" (p. 61). In an illuminating comparison, this chapter notes the

absence of "de-ideologisation" found in contemporary Chinese art after the Cultural Revolution (p. 62), and notes that there are less enactments of public performance in Vietnam as compared with China or Cambodia. For Corey the artist Tuan Andrew Nguyen's works for *Proposal for a Vietnamese Landscape* "are composed as though to be read, to be decoded through a semi-directed visual exploration of forms" (p. 71). Only at this point does Corey mention the French colonial art school and its successors because the legibility—for critical purposes—of propaganda art, like the manipulation of modern product images in commercial advertising, requires an image discourse known to both artist and public.

Public space becomes a transitory or intermittent reference in a kind of visual diary confronting the time of urban change with the actual conditions under which life is lived. The "disoriented sense of time deliberately directs the viewer towards the real circumstances in which such artistic statements are necessary and more penetrating questions need to be asked" (p. 82).

Space had to be re-constituted by the artist since Phnom Penh urban space was subject to a sense of prolonged crisis around the turn of the 21st century. In Chapter 3, in a mini summary of many parts of her book, Corey notes:

> [...] urban transformation increasingly rendered the hollowness of the social contract between citizen and state, [and] steered a number of artists toward a documentary orientation in their creative practices, multiplying the forms through which the desire to address and record the exigencies of the present could be realized (p. 97).

Artists need independence from the many forms of intervention or state interposition, which can affect their works. This can be provided by increasing use of photography and video. Artists could then be:

> [...] autonomous from the studio, from the curatorial or NGO didacticism, from the necessity of academic training, and [photography] as a medium [...] could evade quick judgements based on the dating of artistic styles invited by work in painting or sculpture (pp. 105–106).

Photography allows separation from the art object with its public space controls provided by the museum or the state cultural apparatus and entry into private space, which can constitute "an alternative route of protest for the artist" (p. 119). These views were expressed by the artist and photographer Vandy Rattana:

> [Corey quoting Vandy] "I have a conflict with the art object—I've opposed it for a long time, resisting this abstract work which doesn't talk. I have to admit I don't understand work I see in the big museum—they don't say anything about the world, the universe, life—it's too arrogant in a way. I'm looking to have a conversation in another way" (pp. 122–123).

Vandy Rattana did a public photographic portrait of the exceptionally rare survivor of the Tuol Sleng execution center in Phnom Penh, the painter and photographer Vann Nath, asking the viewer to interrogate the image, free of narrative grounding.

> Neither interested in the illumination of "truth" nor in the larger notion of documentary exposure, the artist instead hails the viewer to both question and share the experience of meaning making (p. 126).

Vandy Rattana composed his earlier images into a filmic trilogy Monologue, based on his photographic investigation of bomb crater ponds. Here the dilemmas of the artist are made clear by direct quotation.

> [Corey quoting Vandy] "When I encountered this landscape, it was too immediate for me; I became hopeless, a bit lost, because this graveyard has become a rice field again, of course, as it was. People cultivate rice on top of people's remains. This was the moment I started to write my poem, perhaps to console myself, to negotiate with such absurdity. It was also the moment I accepted the existence of this absurdity" (p. 131).

The last Chapter 4 examines "Jumping Scales" as a theoretical metaphor for the way, as mentioned earlier, the postcolonial landscape is performed in Phnom Penh. Corey is, in effect, arguing the interpenetration, that is the intermediality of photography and performance. To do so she mobilizes part of the extensive repertory of Euro-American media theory which argues for:

> "[a] temporary conjunction of text and context" in the precise combination of image, site, and object that ultimately overwhelms the space of encounter, whether on the street or in the gallery (p. 155).

Corey further argues in the context of Cambodia:

> [...] a similar effect was achieved through artworks—often constituted through a dialectical affinity between photography and performance—that positioned the author of the image within the pictorial field, typically constituted by identifiable spaces of the city, many of which are now transformed beyond recognition (p. 156).

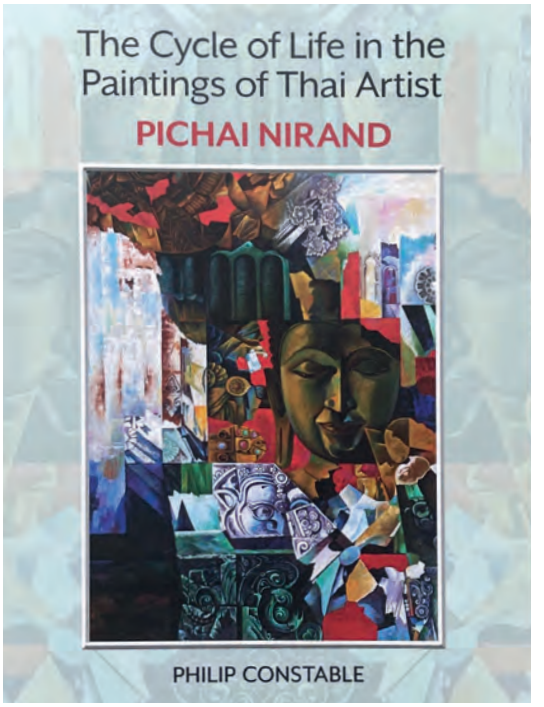
A hint at the basic intent behind this interpenetration follows:

> [...] repetitions of self-immersion, [...] documentation rather than liveness was the priority, with the series' efficacy located in the interdependency between two mediums. Here the notion that the art of photography is itself an irreproducible event parallels understandings of performance's ontological constitution as ephemerally inscribed through a conjunction of site, action, audience, and temporality that [...] removes it from the economy of reproduction (p. 158).

Whether this is feasible without the functioning of a certain type of inculcated audience remains to be ascertained. Perhaps Pamela Corey will elsewhere discuss the kinds of spectator and spectatorship which have developed in Cambodia (and Vietnam) to allow this art to function properly, free from the demands of reproduction, the spectators easily absorbed into the rhetoric of the developmental state.

John Clark
University of Sydney (*Emeritus*)
john.clark@sydney.edu.au

Philip Constable, *The Cycle of Life in the Paintings of Thai Artist Pichai Nirand*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2020, 166 pages, ฿750, ISBN 978-6162151552 (Paperback)



The Cycle of Life in the Paintings of Thai Artist Pichai Nirand is a monograph on the modern Thai artist Pichai Nirand (พิชัย นิรันต์; b. 1936). The volume, written and compiled by Philip Constable, senior lecturer in the history of South and Southeast Asia at the University of Central Lancashire in the United Kingdom, is a rare find. Pichai was a student of Silpa Bhirasri (ศิลป์ พีระศรี; born Corrado Feroci; 1892–1962), an Italian sculptor who migrated to Siam and founded Silpakorn University in 1943. Pichai earned multiple accolades, including medals from a highly esteemed National Exhibition, and was honored with the prestigious National Artist of Thailand award in 2003. However, he is hardly known outside Thailand. Constable's book is an excellent examination of artistic practice by a modern Thai artist by grounding Pichai within the context of Thai studies. In my view, the book sets out to achieve two primary objectives. Firstly, Constable endeavors to position Pichai as a prominent figure among the modern Thai masters of the 1960s–70s, skillfully harmonizing traditional elements with an international outlook. Secondly, the author strives to delineate Nirand's artistic approach from neotraditionalism, a burgeoning artistic movement in Thailand that held sway during the 1980s. Nonetheless, the volume would have greatly benefitted from engaging with the discourse on modernity in Western art as well as connecting with traditional art from which Pichai's work is derived.

Following the first objective, the author establishes two key traits in Pichai's artistic practice: "traditional spirit" and "afflux of intellectual and

artistic ideas". Silpa strongly believed that Thai artists should showcase their artistic excellence not through "traditional art" but by embracing "traditional spirit". This was achieved by disregarding the stylistic approach of Western modern art, focusing on the "abstract quality" that conveys the essence of Thai "traditional spirit" (p. 4). Thus, Silpa's teaching was designed to allow students to transcend the essence of Western modern art, often associated, in Thai eyes, with styles.

Constable applies the concept of "traditional spirit" to analyze Pichai's artistic journey, which started with surrealism in the 1960s and transitioned into abstract symbolism during the 1970s. This concept proves instrumental in elucidating the sustained essence in Pichai's artistic practice. It empowers viewers to delve deeply into the artwork, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of its essence without being confined to a formal analytical approach.

Constable argues that Pichai successfully manifests this traditional spirit through the utilization of Buddhist concepts and the subsequent application of their symbolism. Chapter 3, titled "A Geology of Knowledge: A Circle of Life", serves as a strong example of traditional spirit. Although Pichai's early works are not well-documented, *The Circle of Life* (1963; p. 24 fig. 5) is the only artwork from the 1960s in the book. The painting showcases the characteristics of Pichai's early works, applying the Buddhist world view of *saṁsāra*, depicted as a circle of fossilized remains that Pichai observed in a pond in Kanchanaburi province. The same chapter suggests that the artist revisited the fossil form intermittently throughout his life (pp. 23–33). In my personal view, this concept opens the door to examining Pichai's work from an environmental perspective, a theme that extends beyond the current book's scope.

The second prominent trait running throughout the book is the "afflux of intellectual and artistic ideas", a concept Constable borrowed from Silpa's writings. Constable asserts that this trait is more "international" when compared to "traditional spirit" (p. 11). The author makes an effort to position Pichai Nirand alongside his contemporaries, including Thawan Duchanee (ถวัลย์ ดัชนี; 1939–2014) and Pratuang Emjaroen (ประเทือง เอมเจริญ; 1935–2022), who played significant roles in the development of modern art during the 1970s. Pratuang, amidst the political turbulence of 1970s Thailand, skillfully blended surrealist style with a realist perspective, positioning artists as catalysts for socio-political transformation. His art resonated with themes of collectivism and the struggle against social injustice. Constable asserts on pp. 6–7 that Pichai shared a common aspiration with Pratuang, both being members of the Dhamma group (กลุ่มธรรม; est. 1970). The book faces the formidable task of demonstrating that Pichai's artistic expression is on par with Pratuang's in delivering poignant social commentary to society. This challenge is particularly daunting given that Buddhism, the overarching theme of Pichai's work, is already well-established and extensivelyexplored.

Pichai's figurative realism of the 1960s and early 1970s transitioned into a more ambivalent symbolic abstraction by the

decade's end. Chapter 4, titled "The Buddhapada: Lord Buddha's Footprint", delves into a significant shift in Pichai's artistic practice (pp. 34–44). The artworks, namely *Lord's Buddha Footprint*(*s*) (1979a, p. 35, fig. 12, and 1979b, p. 39, fig. 13), exemplify Pichai's retreat from the social realm to the supramundane.[1] However, this chapter falls short by omitting an iconographic analysis and failing to demonstrate the relationships between these symbols and the realm of "traditional art" from which they were borrowed. In essence, a more comprehensive understanding could be achieved by interpreting the artworks in association with knowledge of Thai art from pre-modern times. This approach would bridge pre-modern symbols with the modern, transforming them into a form of social commentary.

The second objective of the book is to defend Pichai's artistic practice against the emergence of neo-traditionalism in the 1980s, led by figures like Chalermchai Kositpipat (เฉลิมชัย โฆษิตพิพัฒน์; b. 1955) and Panya Vijinthanasarn (ปัญญา วิจินธนสาร; b. 1956). Constable argues that Pichai differs from "neo-conservative" artists because he employs tradition as spirit rather than simply adopting traditional stylistic forms (p. 13). The author highlights that "Pichai Nirand has offered both alternative stylistic expressions and continued to explore themes related to Thai urban commercialization, the transformation of Thai cultural values, Southeast Asian iconography, and the evolving nature of Thai national identity" (pp. 14–15). I find Constable's argument somewhat problematic, as it appears that, to him, Pichai's style remains a crucial element in artistic expression. Moreover, if neo-traditionalism stems from politician and statesman Prem Tinsulanonda's reintroduction of "Nation, Religion, and Monarchy" as the prevailing ideology of the era, it raises questions about whether this shift might have influenced Pichai's adoption of Buddhist symbolism during the same period. Constable, however, fails to provide convincing evidence that Pichai maintained his engagement with the socio-political struggles of society beyond the 1970s. Chapter 7, titled "The Buddhapada: Artistic Template for a Changing Society", discusses Pichai's involvement with the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's interpretation of the *Mahājanakajātaka* as a means of "restoring balance and order through following Buddhist moral virtues of perseverance, moderation, and sufficiency" during a time of rapid economic growth that eventually led to a massive economic collapse a few years later (pp. 73–76). To this reviewer's mind, Pichai's work in *The Story of Mahajanaka* (1995) stands out because he wholeheartedly embraced figuration, making his ideological stance evident

[1] We wish to bring to the attention of readers a recent controversy reported in Thai news. Pichai Nirand currently faces allegations of fraud. It is claimed that he borrowed an artwork showcased in the book, namely *Lord's Buddha Footprint* (1979b), which he had previously sold to a private collector. Subsequently, he is alleged to have sold the same artwork again, this time to the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (OCAC), Thai Ministry of Culture. The disputed artwork is now in the national collection. While this matter has not yet escalated to a court case, the private collector has lodged a complaint with the Committee on Corruption Prevention and Suppression. For further details, refer to: https://prachatai.com/journal/2023/12/107320 (accessed 7 January 2024).

despite benefitting to some extent from the burgeoning art market prior to the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

There is no doubt that Philip Constable successfully covers a wide range of works that Pichai Nirand developed throughout his life. While the book may not necessarily place Pichai among his peers, it does illustrate the challenges faced by Thai artists in navigating between traditionalism and internationalism. Artists may not adhere to Silpa Bhirasri's rejection of style as an essence as rigidly as previous scholarship has argued (pp. 4–6). In Pichai's case, surrealism may have been a shell, but it is a shell he meticulously maintains. It is unfortunate that he has shifted towards the traditional pole since the 1980s, relinquishing international tendencies in intellectual and artistic ideas to conform to the power of the state. The return to Buddhist symbolism thus requires knowledge of Buddhist philosophy to decode and Constable adeptly provides an exquisite reading of it. The challenge of Pichai's transition lies in remaining relevant internationally as the world becomes more global. How long can the "spirit" endure?

Vipash Purichanont
Silpakorn University
purichanont_v@su.ac.th

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