

Notes on the Lao influence on Northern Thai Buddhist Literature

29

Justin McDaniel

Introduction

In Southeast Asian Buddhist Studies Lao religious literature has generally been ignored in comparison to the literature of Northern Thailand. When referred to, much of Lao religious literature is seen as a derivative of Northern Thai literature. This view of Lao Buddhist literature as secondary and derivative reveals a tendency in Buddhist Studies to privilege Pali as superior to the vernacular. It also privileges the literature of the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. Finally, it fails to see the ways in which manuscripts traveled between these two regions before modern borders were established and modern education and administration systems eroded this intimately connected Buddhist episteme. In order to understand the history of development of Buddhist learning in the region we must examine the relationship between Lao and Northern Thai literature and recognize the way the former has influenced the latter. This will hopefully encourage future scholars to compare the texts they study in Chiang Mai, Phrae, Lampang, Nan, etc. to those of Luang Phrabang and Vientiane.

When Northern Thailand was Lao: A brief historiography

Prince Damrong composed the first Thai “official” history of the conflict between Laos and Thailand in 1926 (*Cotmai het rang rop khabot wiangcan*) concentrating on the Siamese burning of Vientiane in 1827. After Damrong’s history came other histories which separated the Lao people living in (present day) Northern and Northeastern Thailand and those in present day Laos. Charles Keyes writes that “Despite the fact that well over half the population of Siam, the boundaries of which were fixed during the colonial period, had previously been called ‘Lao’ by the Siamese, Prince Damrong literally wrote the Lao out of Thai history” (Keyes, 121). Prince Damrong himself wrote that “People in Bangkok have long called [the peoples of Northern Siam] Lao. Today, however, we know they are Thai, not

Lao” (Keyes, 122).¹ The Lao on the left side of Mekhong became Thai and according to Thai history texts they always had been “naturally” Thai. Keyes asserts that these official histories create “national narratives that are a product of modern nationalisms” (Keyes, 120). The present political borders are mapped onto the past and ethnicities and languages are subsumed under these nations erasing their shared histories. Lao and Thai become natural, eternal and, therefore, real divisions, even though there is little evidence that they existed in precisely this way historically.

Before this coercive and/or defensive ethnization, referring to the peoples that occupy modern day Northern Thailand and Laos as simple “Lao” had a long history. Ptolemy referred to the specific area of *Indiam extra Gangem* in which Laos (Upper Mekhong River) is located as “Daona” which, I believe, may be a phonetic corruption of Laonā or “Fields or Country of the Lao” (Ngaosrivathana and Breazeale, 2002: 98). The explorer Gerini (1909) associated Daona with the ten families of the “Ai Lao” referred to by the Chinese. By the 1560’s Europeans were indiscriminantly referring to the regions of Northern Thailand, Northern Laos, Xipsongpanna (Yunnan), and the Shan States as “Laos.” Barros (1563 [rp.1946]), Galvano (1563 [tr.1862]), Camões (1572 [tr.1950]), Martini (1655), Marini (1648 [1663, 1666, 1998]), de Rhodes (1651), Sanson (1669), van Wuystoff (1642, [rp.1986]), Hase (1744 [rp.1989]), Cortembert (1862) all used the name Lao or Laos in reference to the people and the region that covers both modern day Laos and Northern Thailand. The famous explorer Henri Mouhot, who died of malaria in Luang Phrabang in 1861 referred to that city as being in “Eastern Laos.” Chiang Mai and surrounding cities were referred to as “Western Laos” and the Shan States, Tai Leu region of Xipsongpanna was called “Burmese Laos.”²

The people, language and textual practices were so closely linked that observers from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century often referred to the Northern Thai as Lao. For example, the oft-quoted Daniel McGilvary (pub. 1912) when referring to Siamese relations with Chiang Mai and surrounding towns wrote that “the Siamese [central Thai] had never interfered with or assumed control of the internal affairs of the North Lao states”. His book, *A Half Century Among the Siamese and the Lao*, groups the Northern Thai with the Lao in Northern Thailand. In referring to the people (in what is today Northern Thailand), he writes “the substantial character of the Lao as a race will I have no doubt enable more to be

¹ Prince Damrong also wrote a book entitled *Thai rob pamā* (*The Thai battle the Burmese*) in which the Burmese played no role in Siamese/Thai culture, art, language, etc. The Burmese are simply reduced to enemies as the Lao are in his histories.

² Mayoury Ngaosrivathana, Phieupanh Ngaosrivathana and Meg O’Donovan offer a summary of European accounts of Laos before the twentieth century in two chapters of *Breaking New Ground in Lao History* (Ngaosrivathana and Breazeale, 2002): 95-238.

accomplished thro' native assistance than in many other lands."³ Lillian Johnson Curtis, a missionary in Chiang Mai, Lampang, Phrae, and Nan between 1895 and 1899 wrote a book entitled *The Lao of North Siam*. She continually observes the customs of the people of the cities and villages of Northern Thailand as distinctly Lao and not Siamese. For these missionaries, Northern Siam or Northern Thailand was Lao. Even as late as 1919, the Christian missionary Jessie MacKinnon Hartzell referred to the language of Nan and Phraeas "Lao," even though she referred to the region and the people as "Northern Siamese."⁴ Furthermore, she referred to two of her local contacts as Ai Sen and Pi Teing, which shows the mixing of Thai and Lao languages that persists until this day. *Ai* is older brother in Lao, *Pi* is older brother in Thai. These are both common ways to address men in Thailand and Laos respectively. The American Presbyterian missionary groups in Northern Thailand in the mid-to-late nineteenth century were called members of the "Laos Mission." The missionary newspaper printed and published at the first printing press in all of Northern Thailand at Payab (Christian) University in Chiang Mai was called "Laos News" as distinct from the reports of the "Siam Mission" in central Thailand. Mary Backus (1884) and Etienne Aymonier (1884-5) use the term Lao when referring to people living in present-day Northern Thailand. These missionary groups were actively supported and promoted by King Chulalongkorn of Bangkok with land grants in order to help spread the teaching of the Central Thai or Siamese language through missionary printing presses. The King saw the missionaries as a civilizing and nationalist influence. Still, the Northerners were not seen as Siamese or Thai. Hartzell speaks to the way Bangkokians would poke fun at her when she spoke Lao in Bangkok and referred to the Northern Thais (or Lao) as 'monkeys of the jungle' and efforts were made to write dictionaries for the North which incorporated and suppressed the Lao elements of the Northern language.

Borders and bridges between Laos and Northern Thailand

The Lao rubric was clearly employed by travelers and missionaries because of the obvious and explicit connections between the peoples of Laos (especially the north and central regions of present day Laos) and Northern Thailand in material culture, ethnicity, and language.⁵ Economically, mules, water buffalo, oxen, and men traveled along three major

³ See also Herbert Swanson, no date: 31-41. Further: Harmand (1997), Garnier (1996), Dang Nghiem Van, Chu Thai Son and Luu Heng (1993).

⁴ Some of these records were composed in 1902-1903.

⁵ Nikki Tannenbaum suggested to me that foreign missionaries, observers, etc. who observed the Shan in Burma and Northern Thailand referred to the entire region as "Shan." There are indeed a number of travelers who included the people living in Northern Thailand with the Shan. It seems that most of these observers were British and may have wanted to include Northern Thailand under the rubric Shan in order to justify colonization and/or trade rights. Of course, the British brought a number of Shan lumber workers into Northern Thailand in the mid-nineteenth century and many British travelers

trade routes. These routes still find some traffic, usually black market and often protected and frequented by opium/heroin traders. The present-day Chinese and Thai push to ease trade restrictions. The “economic quadrangle” will soon, undoubtedly, lead to increased legal and illegal trade. Before the borders were fixed and nominal restrictions were put in place in the 1890s these trade routes ran between the present-day Southern Chinese towns of Simao, Jinghong and then onto Kengtung (Burma) down to Fang (Northern Thailand), Chiang Mai, Mae Sariang (Northern Thailand) to the Burmese port town of Moulmein. The second went from Simao to Mengla (Yunnan), Chiang Khong, Chiang Rai, Phayao, Phrae, Chiang Mai (Northern Thailand) onto Moulmein. The third from Simao to Phongsali to Luang Phrabang (Laos), Nan, Phrae, Tak onto Moulmein. These areas were connected by trade in opium, tea, lacquerware, teak, musk, cotton, silk, tobacco, and dehydrated fruit and plied (mostly) by Chinese Muslims on horseback. They were bounded by Tai language like Shan, Khoen, Leu, Yuan, and Lao, which are mutually comprehensible on a basic level. Travel between Kengtung and Chiang Mai only took two weeks, versus two months between the latter and Ayutthya (Siam). Luang Phrabang, Nan, and Phrae were even closer because of the navigability of the Mekhong and its tributaries that covered most of the trip (McDaniel, 2003; Walker, 1999; Wheeler, 2002).

Another way of designating or establishing the borders between what is Lao, Northern Thai and Siam (Central Thailand) is by ethnicity.⁶ Over 50 percent of the population of Northern Thailand and Laos in the nineteenth century was of war-captives and often times people were simply moved from one city to another based on the fortunes of local armies.⁷ It is difficult to isolate ethnic groups or cultural influences in the region. There

associated the region with the immigrant Shan labor who were most associated with British economic operations. The most notable being perhaps Dr. David Richardson and Captain William Couperus McLoed who traveled in the region in the 1830s. They referred to the people in Northern Thailand as “Siamese Shan.” The designation was not common, but shows the different perspectives on the region. See Grabowsky and Turton (2003).

⁶ Grant Evans commenting on Edmund Leach’s famous study of Burmese ethnicity (1954) and Condominas’ (1990) work on how Siam isolated and inculturated the hilltribes and non-Tai ethnic groups of Northern Thailand, in “Tai-Ization: Ethnic Change in Northern Indo-China” (2000) notes that over half the population of present-day Laos and Northern Thailand in the nineteenth century was non-Lao speaking hilltribes or descendents of war-captives from Burma and Southern China. Evans both supports and questions Leach’s and later Turton’s (2000: 11-17) classical distinction between people from the hills and lowland wet-rice cultivators or the slaves/hilltribes (*khā/pā*) and the city (*muang*) and is an important work for understanding the history of anthropological work in northern Southeast Asia. Penth (1989) provides a much simpler and reliable summary of the designations of “meuang,” (country/sphere of political and economic influence) “chiang,” (royal city) and “wiang” (walled city) and their relationship in the region. See esp.: 11-13.

⁷ Grabowsky (1994) and Bowie (2000) among others show that the military and political history of mainland Southeast Asia can only be understood by understanding the problem of manpower. Due to the relatively low population in medieval Thailand kingdoms competed with each other for the control of a relatively small workforce. For a long time it has been known that the civilization of Angkor

is a difference between Tai as an ethnic and linguistic marker for speakers of the Tai language family (including Lao, Yuan, Thai, Ahom, Shan, Leu, Khoen and others) and “Thai” as the language and people of the nation-state of Thailand (Siam: pre-1939). After the establishment of the national education act and the solidification of the borders of Siam/Thailand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as Turton (2000) writes: “ ‘Thai’ has become an unquestioned and increasingly homogenous and homogenising term, an essential identity, even a ‘national’ trans-historical agency. It has become the name for citizens, or at least ‘nationals,’ of a nation-state in contra-distinction from citizens – regardless of ‘ethnicity’ – of other nation-states” (12). Whereas “Lao” people was a pre-1880’s distinction for those people living in present-day Northern Thailand, Northeastern Thailand and Laos, as Siam grew in power and became Thailand, “Thai” was used to incorporate people living in Northern and Northeastern Thailand (largely between the borders defined by the British-made borders of Burma and the French-made borders of Laos). The *monthon* system developed under King Mongkut and Chulalongkorn renamed those areas and included them as two *monthons* (regions), Payab and Isan respectively, within the nation of Thailand. Their independence ideologically, politically and linguistically ceased to exist in a century long campaign to erase regional differences and assert the difference between the Tai of Thailand and the Tai of Laos.⁸

declined because it could not economically support a workforce and its population began moving to other urban centers in the region. Taylor’s description of Nguyen Anh provides further evidence for the importance of manpower in mainland Southeast Asian wars. Nguyen Anh, a ruler in 18th century Southern Vietnam, had served as a vassal in King Rama I’s court in Bangkok, when he returned to Southern Vietnam, Taylor writes, he: “brought a new style of warfare among speakers of Vietnamese, a style of warfare that [he]...had learned while campaigning with Rama I against the Burmese. Warfare practiced by Vietnamese speakers had tended towards territorial goals, whether in acquisition or in defense, in contrast to control of manpower, as was more explicitly practiced among the Siamese. Rather than simply gaining territory to defend, Nguyen Anh attracted and governed an entourage of aspiring, competing individuals, all seeking to demonstrate their worthiness for advancement; in his “seasonal campaigns” of the early 1790’s, he accumulated men more effectively than he did territories, and one wonders if that was not then his immediate priority.” Taylor (1998): 967 and McDaniel (2002a).

⁸ Thongchai Winichakul’s *Siam Mapped* (1994) is important to consult for this period and for the history of border drawing between Thailand and Laos. His more recent article on the notion of “siwilai” (being civilized) in Siamese history is more useful more our purposes here. He shows that the Lao people were slowly transformed from Tai-brothers into uncivilized and un-Westernized “backward folk” who lived outside the cities of Siam “jao Bahn Nok” (2000: 536) by Siamese historians such as Prince Damrong Rajanuphab. Tanabe (2000: 325-328) asserts that Leu religion and cultural identity in present-day Nan province, Thailand was erased through a campaign of legal, political and economic policies sponsored by the Thai state in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. Evans (2002): 2-5 gives us the most succinct overview of the problem with the terms Tai, Thai and Lao.

Tai and Thai often overlap (phonetically and ideally) with Tai slowly being replaced by Thai as the central language of Thailand as the nation-state of the Tai world. Recent trends in the field of Southeast Asian studies display a growing sophistication in the use of these terms. For example, the Tai Studies Conference has begun to see papers delivered by and about Tai speakers outside of Thailand or about hill tribe (officially non-citizens) peoples living within the borders of Thailand, as well as an assertion that there are links between the Leu, Lao, Thai, Shan, etc. peoples on many different levels besides linguistics. This often is opposed to efforts by Lao scholars who make efforts to distinguish themselves from Thailand and Tai-ness. Furthermore, ethnicity is being seen as a process of ethnicization where various groups are recognized as agents who construct, adapt, classify and re-classify their self-ethnicity in relation to their interlocutors, citizenship, ritual actions, etc. (Keyes 2000: 19-21). Along side of this self-ethnicization is the considerable amount of research and writing about the ethnicization of the Tai in Northern and Northeastern Thailand in order to bring disparate Tai groups under the political and economic control of Thailand. For the most part, this ethnicization is depicted as a manipulating and coercive program designed by Thai royal and government intellectuals such as Prince Damrong, Jit Phumisak, King Chulalongkorn, King Mongkut, Bra Kittiwuddho and others in order to suppress the assumed secessionist and independent-minded aspirations of Tai and other peoples in Northern and Northeastern Thailand and to ensure their allegiance to the capitalist, Buddhist state of Thailand and make them distinct from the uncivilized people of Laos.⁹

The process of Siamese incorporation of Northern and Northeastern Thailand into Thailand has been well-documented by Thongchai, Chawalee Na Thalang, Constance Wilson, Krishna Jalernwong, Andrew Walker, Victor Lieberman, Mayoury and Phieuphanh Ngaosrivatana. Rehearsing this history is unnecessary here. Briefly the reader should be reminded that the borders between Laos and Northern Thailand were not fixed until 1893-1896 (with the loss of much of Nan and other areas resulting in a treaty with France. Telegraph (1888), road (1930), and rail (1919) connections between Bangkok and Chiang Mai came later. The incorporation of Northern Thailand into Siam and later Thailand led to a slow erosion of local scripts, curricula, ritual technologies, and independent

⁹ Thongchai (2000) and Keyes (2000): 27 discuss recent Thai efforts to display respect towards Laos through royal overtures. Gehan Wijeyewardene (1990) studies the often tenuous relationship between the terms Lao, Tai and Thai in modern intellectual debate in Bangkok. He provides a good summary of three important Thai works on the subject, although, (see chapter five of this thesis) he seems to have a limited understanding of the origin of the term *roi gaeo* (see p. 56). In the end, he sees this debate as “intractable.” The 1990 conference of Thai Studies held in Kunming provided a forum to discuss the Thai-Tai relationship and many papers dealt with this topic directly. See volumes 3 and 4 of the collected papers from the conference (1990), especially articles by Choocheun Katanyoo, Srisurang Poolthupya, Siwaporn Wattanarat, Paitoon Sinlarat, Wang Yizhi, Luo Meizhen, Pan Qixu, and Pe Viet Dang. See also Jit Bhumisak’s (1976): 1-14 and 236-302.

epistemological approaches to Buddhism. The Siamese certainly made great efforts to eliminate the teaching of local language and script, the use of local curricula. The French and later Lao Royal and Communist governments were equally proactive in defining Laos as non-Siamese and non-Northern Thai. However, despite these political and educational tools the intellectual connection that existed in the pre-modern period is easily discernable if investigation is fostered and encouraged.

Northern Thailand and Laos certainly considered themselves sovereign for long periods of time from Siam and Burma. These were separate states with their own linguistic, religious, intellectual, pedagogical, artistic and historiographic traditions, even though these regions overlapped ethnically and people living in certain towns simultaneously paid tribute to two competing overlords. Thongchai gives the example of Chiang Saen, which was at one time under the “overlordship” of Chiangmai, Kengtung, Luang Phrabang, and Siam. Many towns in modern-day Laos were once paying tribute to the Vietnamese, Siamese, Cambodians and Chinese bandits known as the Hō (Haw) in the nineteenth century (Thongchai, 1994: 34 and Evans, 2002 on the Haw). The royal authorities in Bangkok realized these historical divisions between the North, Laos and themselves and also recognized the possibilities of absorption or loss of control that came with traditional shifting and overlapping allegiances. Siam instituted numerous reforms, like those regarding language and education, in a gradual process. Thongchai writes of “displacing the traditional local autonomy, especially in the tributaries, by the modern mechanism of centralization. The tempo, tactics, problems, and solutions varied from place to place. But the final outcomes were the same: the control of revenue, taxes, budgets, education, the judicial system, and other administrative functions by Bangkok through the residency. The residents, most of whom were the king’s brothers or close associates, were sent to supervise local rulers or even to take charge of the governorship of each locality” (Thongchai, 102-103).

Siamese, French and British designs did not only lead to the end of Northern Thailand’s “independence,” the drawing of borders, and the rise of the modern nation of Thailand, but they also worked to create Laos as a discernable geo-political entity. Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn examine the relations between Vietnam, Siam and Laos between 1778 and 1828. Martin Stuart-Fox and Grant Evans relate the historical conflicts between Laos and Siam and the mutual invention/emergence of the Lao and Thai geo-bodies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For readers of Lao there are a number of Lao histories on the subject which summarize these relations published by the Kaxuang Talaeng Khao lae Wattanatam [Ministry of Information and Culture]. There is little need to add more than a summary here. However, I want to emphasize that despite the historical and political divisions that became acute with the Siamese burning of Vientiane in 1827, there are deep epistemological and hermeneutical links between Laos and Thailand in terms of Buddhist educational practices.

If it was not for French resistance most of modern-day Laos may also have been incorporated into Siam. After the reign of King Surinyawongsa in 1695 Lānxāng split into three kingdoms in Luang Phrabang, Vientiane and Champasak. None of these three had the power to resist Burmese, Vietnamese or Siamese exploitation. They retained a modicum of independence by paying tribute to these three competing regional super-powers. However, this “being a bride’s maid” to these three powers only lasted until Siam decided to rule the Lānxāng kingdoms more directly. In 1778, Champasak was overtaken by the army of the Siamese general Taksin. This same army soon sacked Vientiane and Luang Phrabang. The famous Emerald Buddha (Phra Kaeo), the most important Buddha image in Laos, was taken back to Bangkok and Lao families were forcibly relocated to Siam. A massive, but eventually failed, uprising by Chao Anuwong (the nominal king of Vientiane) in 1827 forced the Siamese government to formally station troops in Luang Phrabang, Vientiane and Champasak on a regular basis. The city of Vientiane was burned and looted and thousands of Lao people were relocated to what is now Northeastern Thailand (Isan). Siamese rule worked as a deterrent to the Vietnamese rulers in Hue whom had been making gestures towards taking over Laos. Siamese officials organized tax collection and administrative control in the areas of modern day Northeast Thailand and Laos and made Luang Prabang, Ubon Rachathani and Nong Khai regional centers and military bases like the system being instituted in Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. These aggressive moves alarmed the French who saw great economic advantages to ruling the Mekhong river valley directly. The French arranged for their own vice-consulate to be stationed in Luang Prabang in 1886. Under the recommendation of the French explorer and anti-Siamese activist, Auguste Pavie, the French military decided to pursue a more direct role in Laos. In 1893, they used the Siamese military build-up along the Mekhong and the Siamese expulsion of two French commercial agents in the region to demand Siamese withdrawal from all Lao areas east of the Mekhong. They bolstered up this claim by sending gunboats towards Bangkok effectively blockcading the city. Siam was forced to surrender much of its Lao vassal territory to France. However the theft of the Emerald Buddha and the loss of almost all Lao suzerainty west of the Mekhong divided the two countries for over a century. Many Lao people are still resentful of Siamese aggression and fear Siamese/Thai political, economic and cultural exploitation through trade, television, radio and military encroachment.

Traveling monks, traveling kings

Looking beyond the political and economic history of the region, and putting vague and shifting notions of ethnicity aside for now, I want to look directly at the material remains of religious epistemology and pedagogy – commentarial and homiletic manuscripts. We can see what was lost when the religious and educational exchange between the Lao and the Northern Thai was cut short by political machinations and treaties written at desks in faraway capitals.

Before the Burmese armies entered and conquered (relatively bloodlessly in three days) Chiang Mai in 1558 intellectual monks, artisans, and scribes seemed to have been moving to Luang Phrabang and others seem to be taken or moved to Burma Daniel Veidlinger has pointed out that the vast majority of manuscripts produced between 1440 and 1550 took place in three monasteries in Chiang Mai and one in Lamphun (Haripuñjaya) about 20 kilometers from Chiang Mai.¹⁰ These monasteries were intimately connected with the royal family of Chiang Mai and were run by the *araññavāsi* (forest lineage from Sri Lanka) – Wat Pā Daeng, Wat Phra Singh, Wat Mahābodhi, and Wat Phra Thāt Haripuñjaya. Moreover, three of the greatest writers of this era were connected with the *araññavāsi* monks and the royal family and lived in Chiang Mai. Phra Sirimaṅgala, Phra Ratanapañña, and Phra Nāṅakitti were Pali scholar monks who composed commentaries and sub-commentaries on Sutta, Paritta, Grammar, and Abhidhamma canonical and post-canonical texts. They lived and worked in Chiang Mai between 1470 and 1540. They worked under the direct and indirect patronage of the Chiang Mai royal house and their local lay supporters. They were descendent of the Sri Lankan lineage which came to Chiang Mai in 1369 under the aegis of the monk Sumana. That sect was most intimately connected with writing, Pali and the Chiang Mai royalty.

Therefore, the first lineage and the first monasteries to leave Chiang Mai when the Burmese attacked would have been these monks' students at these monasteries. However, these monks and these monasteries were not burned or attacked by the Burmese. In fact, the decline in Pali composition and production of Pali manuscripts seemed to be happening 20 years before the Burmese invasion. It seems that political in-fighting, a decline in the economy, and a decline in royal patronage before the Burmese arrived led to scholarly forest monks moving out of the region South, North (to Kengtung) and East to Laos. The Burmese were not solely to blame for the end of the golden age of Pali literature in Northern Thailand.

We may account for the initial drop in the production of Pali manuscripts to the decline in royal patronage in Chiang Mai and Lamphun in the 1530s and 1540s. The fact that seven different monarchs sat on the Chiang Mai throne between 1526 and 1558 also most likely contributed to the decline in consistent royal patronage. This shifting political situation combined with crippling taxation, heavy use of slave labor, and the raiding of public coffers by unscrupulous Chiang Mai royalty in the decades leading up to Burmese takeover may have driven many Chiang Mai monks south to Ayutthya, North to Kengtung, West to Ava, and East to Luang Phrabang.

¹⁰ Daniel Veidlinger kindly allowed me to examine the draft up his forthcoming book (University of Hawaii Press) on this subject. This early history has also been well documented in several local relic and monastery histories. See McDaniel 2002a for a summary of these chronicles.

The move to Laos may have been made easier because of the direct political connection between the royal houses of Chiang Mai and Luang Phrabang at this time. In the 1540s the Luang Phrabang King, Phothisarath, married the daughter of King Muang Kaeo of Chiang Mai and soon Phothisarath's son, the famous King Xetthathirat, sat on the throne of Chiang Mai. The *Tamnān Sip Ha Rāchawong* states that King Xetthathirat (or Phra Muang Ket in Northern Thai) patronized monks at Wat Pā Daeng (96). Perhaps these relationships led to some Northern Thai monks, artisans, scribes, etc. moving with King Xetthathirat to Luang Phrabang and later Vientiane when he abandoned the throne of Chiang Mai. *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*, *Phongsawadan Yonok*, and *Nidān Khun Borom* all state that people moved from Chiang Mai to Luang Phrabang in 1558 when the Burmese took over the city (Souneth, 1996: 255-260). However, there was an increase in manuscript activity before 1558 in Northern Laos. The intellectual contact between Chiang Mai and Luang Phrabang had been established long before the decline of the Chiang Mai royal house and the invasion of the Burmese. In fact, in 1523, the *Jinakālamālipakaraṇam* reports that the king of Chiang Mai offered the king of Luang Phrabang 60 volumes of Pali texts. Between 1527 and 1535 King Phothisarath, perhaps influenced by these texts and the monks that visited Luang Phrabang ordered (in two inscriptions in Luang Phrabang and Vientiane respectively) the increase in Pali scholarship among Lao monks. Phothisarath took the famous Phra Xaek Kham Buddha image from Chiang Mai to Luang Phrabang during his son's rule (Stuart-Fox, 1998: 75).¹¹ Other chronicles speak briefly to the way the Lao king patronized Northern Thai monasteries (Wyatt and Aroonrut 1998: 118-120). Generally, Phothisarath was a patron of Buddhist literature (Pali and vernacular). He attempted to "purify" the Sangha in Laos. He sponsored the building of images and monasteries in Northeastern Thailand and Laos (as well as supporting Northern Thai monasteries), and promoted the study of Pali along with his teacher – the Supreme Patriarch of Lanxang – Mahāsijanto. His son, Xetthathirat, had the first Pali inscription composed in Laos soon after that. This growth in the interest in Pali and in the production of manuscripts after the 1530s may be attributed to Chiang Mai literary influence and the patronage of Mahāsijanto and King Phothisarath.¹²

¹¹ For information on an inscription on That Luang in Vientiane which indicates the deep political relationship between Chiang Mai and Vientiane see Michel Lorrillard's "Les inscriptions du That Luang de Vientiane: données nouvelles sur l'histoire d'un *stūpa* lao," *BEFEO* 90-91 (2003-2004): 289-348 (esp. 303-305).

¹² Note: Phothisarath spent much time in Vientiane and Nakorn Phanom; however, his early patronage of Buddhist scholarship was at Wat Vixun in Luang Phrabang. For a summary of these chronicles and the reports of exchanges see McDaniel (2002a and 2003). Prior to the place and time to which this inscription is witness, King Bayinnaung (1563) was hearing reports that his vassal in Chiang Mai had been planning a revolt and the next year he replaced him with Lady Visuddhadevi. The two foremost scholars of Thai and Lao epigraphy, Prasert Na Nagara and A.B. Griswold, believed that Lady Visuddhadevi was the daughter of the Lao (Lānxāng) king, Jayajettha. His daughter, most commonly known by the name of Ciruprabha, had ruled Lanna from Chiang Mai in 1545 and then lost the throne to invading Shan armies. She was re-installed by her father's armies in 1551 until Bayinnaung took over in 1558. Bayinnaung was able to take over Chiang Mai and Lānnā because the Lao armies of

The production of Pali manuscripts increased after this period in Luang Phrabang. This may be partly attributed to many Chiang Mai monks who moved to Luang Phrabang and began working alongside Lao monks who were basking in the light of active royal support of religious scholarship. The rise in Chiang Mai religious and intellectual influence during this period probably led to the use of the Yuan script (“Akson Tham” or “Tua Tham” script in Lao) in Luang Phrabang.¹³ After the Burmese rose to power in Chiang Mai and surrounding Northern Thai cities off and on between the 1560s and 1790s these official Lao and Northern Thai political relationships were put on relative hiatus. The *Nan chronicle* mentions the Burmese Prince Tharawaddy (who was ruling Chiang Mai) traveled to Nan in 1581 and ordered the restoration of the famous Wat Cae Haeng (Wyatt, 1994: 65-66). It also mentions that he went to the kingdom of Lanxang (Laos) after that and when he returned to Nan he ordered more restorations. Since artisans and monks often traveled with royal entourages, perhaps Lao intellectuals were traveling back and forth with Prince Tharawaddy.¹⁴ In the 1730s the *Nidān Khun Borom* states that Lao royals were traveling

Ciruprabha and the Shan armies of Mekuti were in conflict between 1556 and 1558. Bayinnaung stopped the fighting and took over the war-torn kingdom. At first he propped up Mekuti as the vassal ruler of Lānnā and on suspicions of revolt he replaced him with Lady Visuddhadevi. If Bayinnaung had chosen Mekuti to be ruler because of his tenuous claims to Mangrai’s bloodline then he would have been the logical choice; however, when he fell out of favor, Lady Visuddhadevi may have been the possible second choice, if in fact she was actually Ciruprabha. Ciruprabha would have been a likely candidate for a vassal ruler since she had experience ruling the kingdom, was the daughter of a powerful Lao king and later ally. Moreover, it is likely that Lady Visuddhadevi was Ciruprabha, because there is no record of Visuddhadevi before her assuming of Mekuti’s throne and her name is neither Burmese, nor Shan, but it is a common Lao and Thai name. Therefore, it is likely Bayinnaung had made overtures to Jayajetta regarding joint rule or shared influence in Lānnā. This came at a time when Bayinnaung’s armies were attacking Ayudhya. For general background to this history see A.P. Buddhadatta’s edition of the *Jinakalamali* (1962): 125-26; See Coedès (1925) *BEFEO*, XXV, nos. 1-2; as well as the English translation of the Pali Text Society entitled: *The Sheaf of Garlands of the Epochs of the Conquerer* translated by N.A. Jayaywickrama (1968); Notton (1932) is also helpful as well as Wichienkeo, Arronrut and David Wyatt (1998). A.B. Griswold and Prasert Na Nagara, *Epigraphic and Historical Studies* (1992): 699-705. For historical background to these events see the *Chiang Mai Chronicle* (Wyatt 1999) and Wood (1933): 103-116. For a general introduction to epigraphy in Thailand and Laos see George Coedès (1924): 13-23. This edition also includes a French translation by Coedès. French readers see pp. 1-5.

¹³ See “On Some Siamese Inscriptions,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 34 (1865): 27-38. Further: the introduction to each chapter of Katannyu Chucheun (1987) for a summary of the history of various history of Thai scripts. For several examples of Lānnā inscriptions see Chalitanon (1984): 323. The origin of Yuan script and its regional specificity is probably due to the presence of Mon kingdoms in the region before the influx of the Thai people from the North and East in the thirteenth century.

¹⁴ Lao chronicles are replete with information documenting royal patronage of monasteries. For a recent example documenting royal support in the seventeenth century see the Ministry of Information and Culture’s abridged version of Lao chronicles: *Pawasāt Lao* (2000): 271-274. See also Deuangxai Luangpasi (1999), Deuangxai Luangpasi (2003), (Phra Mahā) Mani Rattanapathimakone and (Phra

between Luang Phrabang and Chiang Mai. Whole families were moved back and forth by these royals. The chronicle also reports that monks delivered messages between these families in Northern Thailand and Laos (Souneth, 1996: 301-302). Cao Ong Kham of Luang Phrabang actually ruled Chiang Mai between 1729 and 1759 with tacit approval of the Burmese authorities who were attempting to establish control over the region which had been in relative political flux from 1685 to 1729. When Cao Ong Kham entered Chiang Mai in 1729 he was actually an ordained monk and only took some administrative control of Chiang Mai after he disrobed (304). Cao Ong Kham was doing what many monks and nobles did during this period – freely traveling back and forth between the two regions sharing ideas, giving gifts, etc. Monks and traders still freely traveled between these two regions, especially Luang Phrabang and the areas of Nan and Phrae.

Despite these scattered reports, the records of official contact go relatively silent during the Burmese period of Northern Thailand. In 1830 the king of Chiang Mai gave manuscripts and Buddha images to monks from the city of Xieng Kaeng near Luang Nam Thā in (present day) Northwest Laos (Saengthaong Phohipuppha, 1997: 27-28). This seemed to be the beginning of a great movement of manuscripts back and forth between the two regions. In the early nineteenth century we learn about the direct movement of manuscripts from Laos to Northern Thailand. Phra Grū Pā Kañcana Mahāthera born in 1789 and traveled throughout the region in the nineteenth century collecting manuscripts and bringing them to his monastery. Epigraphic evidence shows that he worked to gain sponsors and collect manuscripts at the new library at Wat Phra Singh in Chiang Mai.¹⁵ Soon after this he moved to Phrae province and began a manuscript production and preservation program.

It was at Wat Sung Men in Phrae, on one of the major trading routes to Luang Phrabang, that he supervised what was perhaps the greatest manuscript production of pre-modern Southeast Asia. There is an inscription in Nan Province from 1833 which states that he came there to order the copies and collect manuscripts. Colophons and monastic records show that he traveled throughout Northern Thailand, as well as Luang Phrabang and Southwest Tak Province (where he died) on the Thai-Burmese border. Hundius notes that:

“large numbers of people, from ordinary villagers to members of the ruling Royalty in his own and in neighbouring countries, to join the meritorious endeavours [producing manuscripts]...the peak of the copying efforts lay in the 1830s. In 1835-36 no less than 242 palm-leaf manuscripts comprising 2,825 phuuk [fascicles] were copied in Luang Phrabang alone, for the better part

Rattanaphimpheuang (1999), Saengthong Photipuppha (1998), Bunroeng Buaisaengbasoet (1995), Tham Xayasithsena (1993), Bunroeng Buaisaengbasoet (1991).

¹⁵ This information is drawn from a local history by Luang Po Grū Gambhīrsān (no date) and conformed by Professors Balee Buddhakasa and Sommai Premchit at Chiang Mai University. See also an inscription from 1812 on the monastic library of Wat Phra Singh (*Prachum Chāreuk Lānnā* Vol. 3, 2541 [1998], 177). For specific information regarding Kañcana’s connection to Wat Phra Singh see: Jirasak Dejawongya, Woralan Bunyasurat, and Yuwanāt Woramit. 2539 [1996].

scholarly texts like (sub-) commentaries on canonical and post-canonical Pāli literature, Pāli Grammar, a great many of which are bilingual (Pāli/NT or Lao) versions, including numerous works of the indigenous learned tradition, for instance a complete Nissaya version of the Paññāsa-Jātaka. The charisma of Gruu Paa Kañcana was so extraordinary indeed that the manuscripts collected under his aegis have been so well preserved by successive generations that they have been able to survive to the present day in a well-kept condition. Comprising well over 15,000 phuuk this collection represents the largest one known to exist in a single place in Northern Thailand.” (Hundius, 1990: 34-35)

The records of Rev. Schmitt of the Mission Pavie state that the King of Luang Phrabang, along with the royal leader of Phrae and lay followers donated a large amount of silver, as well as gold needed for gilding the edges of the leaves to the project in 1836. Hundius offers the intriguing and certainly possible suggestion that there might have been a political reason behind Grū Pā Kañcana arranging a project to which both the royal leaders of Luang Phrabang and Phrae could contribute. He writes:

“References in the manuscripts suggest that he [Grū Pā Kañcana] will emerge as one of the most important rebuilders and preservers of Northern Thai culture and literary tradition since the expulsion of the Burmese. His influence may well have reached even further: It is tempting to speculate that there may have been a political dimension behind the efforts of restoring the Lan Na literary tradition, jointly undertaken by the Rulers of the Northern Thai principalities, and the King of Luang Prabang and one of his sons, the Cau Raajjawoñ, under the aegis of a highly revered Lan Na monk.” [sic] (Auguste Pavie, 1898: 357-363. cited in Ibid)

Hundius translated a colophon of a manuscript which adds weight to this speculation:

“[The] Pāli [text of] Dīpanī Mahāvessantara – First Bundle; comprising 11 phuuk. The venerable Forest-dwelling Mahaathera named Kañcana from Muuan ‘Braa [Phrae] as leading monastic supporter, and his followers, the Ruler of Müüañ ‘Brää and the “Cau Raajjawoñ [member of the Royal family and one of the three highest possible positions one could hold at this time in Laos and Northern Thailand] of Müüañ Hluuañ Bra Paañ [Luang Phrabang] as leading lay supporters, together with all the pious lay-men and lay-women [of both states] joined in the making [of this manuscript]. Made in Müüañ Hluuañ Bra Paañ [Luang Phrabang].”(Hundius, 109)

This manuscript was a new copy in Lao Tham script which was based on a 1517 Pāli text of Sirimaṅgala of Chiang Mai. Hundius emphasizes that the colophon information reveals that the son of the King of Luang Phrabang was

“the leader of the huge manuscript copying campaign...Since it is known from the inscription of Waḍ Wijuur...that the better part of the manuscripts copied for Gruu Paa Kañcana in Luang Phrabang in AD 1836 (177 out of a total of 242 bundles) were made through financial support from the ‘Cau Raajwoñ, it seems safe to assume that the >Most Exalted Son of His Majesty the King of “Laan “Jaañ ‘Rom Khaaw< mentioned in 4 [an earlier section of the colophon that

Hundius translates] and the (“Cau) Raajjawañ mentioned in (1) and (2) [two other sections of the ms. colophon] as well as in the inscription of Waḍ Wijuur are in fact one and the same person.” [sic] (110-114)¹⁶

He also notes that although Grū Pā Kañcana is famous in Phrae and among the small number of textual scholars who have taken advantage of this massive collection, he is virtually unknown in the annals of Thai history. Indeed, as a collector of amulets and stories of great monks of the past and present, I have never seen an amulet of this abbot who may be considered one of the greatest religious intellectuals in Southeast Asian history.¹⁷

Besides Kañcana, Grū Pā Wong initiated another period of Lao-Northern Thai literary cooperation in the 1930s. Akiko Iijima studied the manuscript collections in Nan province (Northern Thailand) and Xayabury Province (Laos) which reveal a great Buddhist intellectual exchange between Laos and Northern Thailand that continued into the 1980s. She shows that these collections hold both Lao and Northern Thai manuscripts that were composed or copied between 1750 and the 1984. Most are in either the vernacular Northern Thai or Lao (whose script and dialect are nearly identical) and two are in Pali. Akiko worked among the Yuan people of Xayabury who claimed that they were originally from Chiang Mai. The first evidence of manuscript exchange between Xayabury, Luang Phrabang, and cities in Northern Thailand is in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the fixing of the borders by the French in the 1890s and the Marxist government takeover in 1975 has eroded their contact with their Northern Thai ancestors. However, in terms of religion they continued to exchange manuscripts and monks continued to travel between the two regions. For example, in the 1930s the monk Khuba Wong supervised the building of Wat Ban Nakhun. Later, Akiko writes he “went to the Muang Nan area in Luang Phrabang Province to fabricate Buddhist images there. According to the villagers, this Khuba Wong had come from a certain Dokbuap Village in Nan Province.” Further investigations by Akiko revealed that Khuba Wong was “originally from Chiang Mai and had been ordained a monk after his wife’s death. He thereafter became the abbot of the temple in Ban Pa Laeo. Khuba Wong made Buddhist images in four temples nearby. When people from Xayabury passed by on their way to Nan, they saw him and invited him to come to their villages to do the same.” Khuba Wong taught the Yuan script to novices in Xayabury. He also is reported to have powerful protective tattoos and being charismatic. Akiko correctly notes (as is confirmed by much research by Bizot, Becchetti, and Swearer) that protective power was a valuable commodity in this region and directly connected to the production of Buddha images, tattoos, and even manuscripts. Monks like Khuba Wong would have been much sought after

¹⁶ See also Wyatt (2002): 71-77.

¹⁷ The monastery forged a set of small (6 inches tall, 4 inches wide) pewter and bronze alloy statues of this famous monk in 2001. They were sold out immediately to local patrons. They have not come on to the radar of the amulet and relic traders of Bangkok or Chiang Mai according to my research in the major amulet markets or in amulet trade magazines.

by many different villages if he was seen as an expert who could make protective texts and images. Another monk named Tu Nantha came from Luang Phrabang and wrote in Tham script. Khuba Wong and Tu Nantha traveled back and forth along side lay villagers that Akiko interviewed. These villagers, like Nan Nyana (Nan means “former monk or novice”) and Nan Si, carried manuscripts back and forth in the 1920s and 1930s. Another layman, Thao Saenwong, had a temple built in this area and made a monk named Phra Suphan the abbot. Phra Suphan brought manuscripts from Luang Phrabang to store in this temple. These manuscripts became mixed with others brought from other temples. Akiko writes:

“The circumstance by which these manuscripts were mixed up was probably related to the travelling nature by which they were circulated across the region by a variety of villagers and monks on the move. One should bear in mind that a significant characteristic of palm-leaf manuscripts in general is their portability. This one does not always have to connect the origin of manuscripts and the contents therein to the places where they finally are located. One must rather try to trace the history of the manuscripts’ journeys in conjunction with the human movement, whether it be a small company’s trip or large-scale migration.”¹⁸

A Lao and Northern Thai episteme

Besides this direct evidence outside of short chronicle reports on the movement of monks and scribes between Laos and Northern Thailand, especially before the nineteenth century, we certainly can see the evidence of literary influence by looking directly at the contents of the manuscripts.

Veidlinger writes:

“Some major changes took place after the two centuries of Burmese suzerainty. While only a few poorly executed [Pāli] manuscripts from this period are seen, by the time of the reconstruction King Kawila in the early 19th century, writing seems to have been much more accepted and used by all sectors of society. We see Anisong texts praising the merits of making manuscripts, we see the word *pūja* appear in the colophons, entreating the people to worship the manuscripts, and we see monks and kings working together to initiate very large manuscript-copying projects involving the production of hundreds of titles, many of which still survive. We also see the title markers accompanying some of these texts, suggesting that they were made in order to constitute an active and accessible part of the texts in circulation. The Burmese invasion and the subsequent loss of the carefully nurtured literate world of Lan Na must at the time have been viewed by those involved as a great calamity. But the course of history is never predictable, and we can now say that this was merely a setback, for while great Pāli texts were no longer composed in Lan Na, after the reconstruction, the written word played a much more central role in the display and storage of Pāi texts, and manuscripts finally

¹⁸ Akiko Iijima (2002): chapter seven.

reached the point of more general acceptance and even worship. One wonders whether the Golden Age scribes would be gladdened or dismayed to learn that today in the region old manuscripts are often burned and the ashes placed in amulets for good luck and protection.”¹⁹

Although I emphasize in a forthcoming article that the Burmese period should not be seen as solely one of loss, and “reconstruction” and “Golden Age” are misleading rubrics for describing the historical shifts in Northern Thai cultural and literary life, Veidlinger’s points are well-taken. What is important to note is that the rise in vernacular literature and the decline in Pali composition (although *nissaya*, *nāmasadda*, and *vohāra* manuscripts show a dynamic bi-lingual Pali-vernacular literary atmosphere at this time and under the Burmese) can be attributed in some ways to the influence of Lao scholars. The rise of the vernacular literature while Northern Thailand was under Burmese and Lao rule alternately between 1558 and the 1775 must have been influenced by the Burmese and Lao penchant for composing *nissaya* manuscripts in the vernacular and for the monks and patrons that traveled between the three regions. This was combined with the explosion of manuscript copying and writing in the 1830s – thanks to Kañcana and his Lao royal patrons (it is interesting to note that Kañcana went to Luang Phrabang after he had failed to gain support for a manuscript collection, composing, and copying project in Chiang Mai). Many of the manuscripts that he copied, distributed, and preserved were brought from Laos. Moreover, the vernacular tradition has been much more developed in Laos than in most regions of Southeast Asia. Unique and complex Lao vernacular love poems, adventure tales, didactic literature, chronicles, and Buddhist morality tales (based in part on *Jātakas*) were widely composed, taught, and read in Central and Northern Laos from the sixteenth century until the twentieth century. Today the performance, reading, and recitation of these vernacular stories are still common and notable features of Lao life. The vernacular which had been relatively undeveloped in Northern Thailand before the eighteenth century (outside of chronicles) grew with the influence of the Burmese *nissaya* genre and work of Grū Pa Kañcana.

Grū Pā Kañcana’s collection is not only the largest of its kind, but it is mostly comprising vernacular and bi-lingual genres (*nissayas*, *nāmasaddas*, *vohāras*, *anisong*, *xalong*, *pithi*, *horasat*, *parit*, *chādok nok nibāt*) that are also common in Laos. In fact, many of the manuscripts in Kañcana’s collection seem to be drawn directly from manuscripts in Laos. In a previous study I analyzed many of these manuscripts in detail (McDaniel, 2003). I compared passages from similar manuscripts in Luang Phrabang, Phrae, Chiang Mai, and Vientiane. I will not go into the philological and codicological details at this time. Here let me just note that not only do the titles of the texts (non-canonical *Jātaka*, ritual texts, *Abhidhamma* commentaries, grammatica, etc) overlap closely, but the contents of the texts are similar. For example, one of the most common manuscripts composed in Laos in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the *Dhammapada-Atthakathā*; however, we have

¹⁹ Veidlinger (2002): 274.

no evidence that this very long Pali text was copied as a complete text. Instead individual stories were chosen from this collection of 267 stories. The stories chosen are similar in both Laos and Northern Thailand. This overlap in the choice of individual sections of long Pali manuscripts is also seen in the *Paññāsa Jātaka* collections, *suttas*, and *parittas*. Moreover, most Lao manuscripts produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not Pali texts, but vernacular commentaries, glosses, and translations (McDaniel, 2004). Besides connections in the subjects of manuscripts, the orthography, rhetorical style, commentarial services, and physical features of the two traditions are intimately related so much so that these manuscripts can be seen as being the product of a relatively cohesive textual and educational community. This indicates that the “revival” of Northern Thailand’s literary tradition in the early to mid-nineteenth century, which is largely attributed to Kañcana, is directly connected to the Buddhist literary tradition that had been nurtured in Luang Phrabang in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The rise in vernacular genres, the importance of the cities of Nan and Phrae in literary production, and the explosion of writing in the 1830s that has occupied scholars of Northern Thailand for the last 50 years cannot be understood without understanding developments in Lao literary practices.

The future of Lao-Northern Thai literary and religious cross-border studies

At this point in the paper we must ask – so what? How does tracing these deep historical, economic, linguistic and cultural connections between Laos and Northern Thailand, so deep that Northern Thailand was seen as Lao by many, help us? Where does this information lead us?

First, as the evidence shows, using terms like “Laos” and “Northern Thailand” is dubious at best and arbitrary at worst. I am not attempting to reify these two regions as distinct nor do I assume that every writer in Northern Thailand thought a particular way or had the same literary skills or motivations. Moreover, Laos is a diverse place and the way literature was composed in Luang Phrabang is not the same as it was composed in Chamapasak, Savannakhet, Hua Phan, Ta Khaek, or Phongsali. There are also distinctions between vernacular romance literature and Buddhist literature (although there is certainly overlap and I would caution at establishing a false division between secular and religious literature in Laos) and subtle changes in script, orthography, and choice of texts depending on teacher, monastery, and time. However, these distinctions are not dependent on the geopolitical border and there is much to learn when texts that happen to sit in Lao monastic libraries and state archives are compared with texts that happen to sit in Northern Thai monasteries and archives. Often times it seems that monastic intellectuals and their patrons saw no border between the two regions and communicated freely despite subtle changes in dialect and script. These scholars and their audiences were in frequent contact; however, scholars who study this region nowadays are not. There has been almost no contact between

academics in Northern Thailand and Laos outside of Rujaya Abhakorn, Sommai Premchit, Harald Hundius, Louis Gabaude, Anatole Peltier, Michel Lorrillard and Francois Bizot. However, these scholars have rarely compared manuscripts on both sides of the modern-day border. Bizot and LGirarde working mostly on Lao and Cambodian manuscripts of the *Saddavimala* in 1996 used one Northern Thai manuscript for comparative purposes (Bizot and LaGirarde, 1996). Peltier regularly has collected manuscripts from Burma, Northern Thailand, and Laos. This comparison is surprisingly rare. However, most scholars who work on or in Northern Thailand have not compared material they use in their work to relevant material in Laos. Lao scholars do not generally research in Northern Thailand. Many scholars I work with at Chiang Mai University have never been to Laos to research and the same is true for Lao scholars at the National University of Laos and the National Library, except for the latter's director. Lao scholars complain of being barred from using the Thai National Library archives and manuscript collections and generally are unaware of new publications in Thailand in their subject areas. This is a common distrust that has been built since the Siamese invasion of Vientiane and the subsequent burning of the city and theft of manuscripts, Buddha images, etc. in 1827, and fostered by the anti-Communist drive of the Thai government in the 1960s and 70s. Much of this separation can be associated with political difficulties with research in Laos between 1973 and 1990 and bureaucratic problems with research today, but the problem continues. The persistent division of modern studies of religion, linguistics, history, etc. into either Northern Thai (or Thai) and Lao despite the undeniable links between the two places (especially before the twentieth century) has been a black mark on the field for too long. This may be beginning to change slowly. Balee Buddhakasa has stated a deep interest in studying Lao manuscripts and has consulted the catalogues I brought from the National Library of Laos. The close links between Laos and Northern Thailand from the sixteenth to nineteenth century in terms of art and architecture have been recently documented in Jirasak Dejawongya (2544 [2001]). The first chapter indicates the historical factors connecting the regions that allowed the artistic influences. This book marks a great advancement in academic Northern Thai and Lao relations because it includes Lao materials and contributions from Lao scholars and is written in both central Thai and Lao. The same study is needed for religious literature. Recently (2002) Jarūwan Chaonuan of Kasetsart University published a comprehensive study of Lao folktales (*Nidān puen meuang Lao*) which when compared to folktales in Northern Thai overlaps in title, content, and trope in many stories. These are small works, but hopefully they will be foundational for future studies. The journal *Tai Culture* 3.1 (1998) has dedicated an entire issue to the relationship between the Lao and the Yuan (Northern Thai), as well as the Leu and Khoen peoples of Yunnan, China and Eastern Burma. However, there is no serious study of literary influences or a comparative study of manuscripts. Sommai Premchit, Udom Roonruangsri, Paitun Dokbuagaeo, Donald Swearer, Daniel Veidlinger, and Rujaya Abhakorn the major scholars in manuscript studies in Northern Thailand have not utilized the Lao manuscripts on a regular basis if at all. Dara Kanlaya, Deuangdouane Bounyawong, Bualy Papapanh, Kongdeuane Nettavong, Onekaeo Sittivong, and Sali Kantasilo have not

actively read manuscripts presently kept in Northern Thailand. The first Lao Literary Heritage Conference (2004) brought together many of these scholars for the first time, but there have been no published comparative studies to date. These activities are certainly rare in the Thai academic world and could not have happened without resurgence in the interest of both independent academic work in Northern Thailand as separate from central Thai policies and Northern Thai history and language as distinct from the Thai nation-state centered in Bangkok.

These small cross border investigations are starting to produce fruit. For example, Michel Lorrillard has recently shown that the general assumption that early Lao Buddhism was influenced by the Khmer is largely wrong. Instead, he shows by looking at the manuscript, archaeological and epigraphical records in the border regions between Northern Thailand and Laos and putting these two sets of records kept at two separate archives into conversation a new picture emerges of the significant Mon, Shan, and Northern Thai influence on early Lao Buddhism. This discovery has rewritten the history of Buddhism in Laos.²⁰

I have explored the manuscript archives and the monastery archives on both sides of the border. Now we are seeing that the local canon of Northern Thai Buddhism was quite different from that of Siam. Only in the last 80 years have the Buddhist texts that define Buddhist ritual and educational lives been influenced from Siam. Before this period the local canons in Laos and Northern Thailand were nearly identical. I have recently been trying to define the local curricula of Buddhist monastic schools across the Lao-Northern Thai border and have found that certain ritual texts, certain *ānisaṃsas*, certain *Abhidhamma* texts, certain apocryphal *jātakas*, and certain grammatical texts are shared by both regions and are distinct from the curricula of Siam, Cambodia, and Burma. Moreover, the pedagogical methods and rhetorical styles evinced in this shared curriculum reveal a regional epistemological approach to Buddhist learning in general. We have much to learn from this Buddhist episteme that may be one of the few Buddhist educational, ethical, and literary traditions largely untouched by the colonial, post-colonial, reform, and modernist Buddhist interpretations prevalent in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Siam.

Putting these manuscript and inscriptional records into conversation also reveals that Laos had a significant influence on Northern Thai Buddhism; namely, the influence was not merely one way. Lao intellectuals are often depicted as a group that received Buddhism, but not an intellectual tradition that influenced Buddhist learning and practice outside of Laos. We often hear of monks and visiting Lao royals who took manuscripts from Northern

²⁰ Michel Lorrillard is completing a full study of inscriptions in Laos. He has given several talks on the subject between 2001 and the present. For a good introduction to his research see his "The Earliest Lao Buddhist Monasteries according to Philological and Epigraphic Sources." (2003): 187-198.

Thailand to Laos, but rarely do we hear of the many Lao monks who took their own works to Northern Thailand. Looking at individuals like Phra Kancana, Phra Abhai, Phra Suphan, Khuba Wong, etc. who lived in Phrae, Nan, Luang Pabang, Huai Xai, and Chiang Kaen and carried manuscripts from Laos to Northern Thailand and vice versa shows how Buddhist schools were intimately linked in this region. There are underlying epistemological links between Laos, the North and Siam which belie the linguistic, historical, political and social differences. These epistemological links that are often hidden in studies based on spatial and temporal frameworks. By focusing on the pedagogical methods, rhetorical style, educational material and homiletics of the region we will be able to draw connections between these disparate and often contentious peoples and places that are otherwise masked by the historical vicissitudes. There are reading cultures and textual/interpretative communities that have operated without borders and outside the view of kings and soldiers.

Works Cited

[Thank you to the librarians at Wat Ong Teu, Wat Xainyaphum, Chiang Mai University, the National Library of Laos, Harvard University, Cornell University, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Ohio University, Bibliothèque Nationale (France), and the University of California].

- Akiko Iijima. 2002, "The Nyuan in Xayabury and Cross-Border links to Nan." In *Contesting Visions of the Lao Past*. Edited by Christopher Goscha and Søren Ivarsson. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.
- Aymonier, Etienne. 1885. *Notes sur le Laos*. Saigon: Imprimerie coloniale.
- _____. 1895 and 1897. *Voyage dans le Laos*. Paris: Leroux.
- Backus, Mary. 1884. *Siam and Laos: as seen by our American missionaries*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian board of publication.
- Barros, João de. 1946. *Ásia de João de Barros. Dos feitos que os Portugueses fizeram no descobrimento e conquista dos mares e terras do Oriente. Terceira Década* [Asia, by João de Barros: The Deeds of the Portuguese in the Discovery and Conquest of the Seas and Lands of the East, Third Decade]. Reprinted from the 1563 edition and edited by Hernaní Cidade and Manuel Múrias. Lisboa: Agência Geral das Colónias.
- Bizot, François et François LaGirarde. 1996. *La Pureté par les mots*. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient.
- Bosaenggam Wongdālā, et al. 1987. *Wannagadi Lao*. Vientiane: Kaxuang Seuksā.
- Bowie, Katherine. 2000, "Ethnic heterogeneity and elephants in nineteenth-century Lanna statecraft." In *Civility and savagery: social identity in Tai States*. Ed. by Andrew Turton. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.
- Bunroeng Buasisaengbasoet. 1995. *Pawatsāt Silapa lae sathābatthayakamsin Lao*. Vientiane: [no publisher listed].

- _____. 1991. *Meuang Luang Phrabang*. Vientiane: Toyota Foundation.
- Camões, Luiz Vas de. 1950. *The Lusians of Luiz de Camões*. Translated from the 1572 Portuguese edition. Ed. by L. Bacon. New York: The Hispanic Society of America.
- Cortembert, E. and Léon de Rosny. 1862. *Tableau de la Cochinchine*. Paris: Armand Le Chevalier.
- Curtis, Lillian Johnson. 1903 (rpr. 1998). *The Laos of north Siam: seen through the eyes of a missionary*. Bangkok, Thailand: White Lotus.
- Damrong (Somdet Krom Phrayā Damrong Rāchānubhāp). 2514 [1971]. *Thai rop pamā* (chabab ruam lem). Bangkok: Rung Watana.
- Dang Nghiem Van, Chu Thai Son, Luu Heng. 1993. *Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam*. Hanoi: The Gioi Publishing House.
- Deuangxai Luangpasi. 1999. *Somdet Phra Jao Xayasetthāthirāt*. Vientiane: Sangon Likhasit.
- _____. 2003. *Jao Mahā Uparāt Bungong*. Vientiane: Sangon Likhasit.
- Evans, Grant. 1999, "What is Lao Culture and Society?" In *Laos: Culture and Society*. Ed. by Grant Evans. Chiang Mai: Silkworm.
- _____. 2000, "Tai-Ization: Ethnic Change in Northern Indo-China." In *Civility and savagery : social identity in Tai States*. Ed. by Andrew Turton. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.
- _____. 2002. *A Short History of Laos*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm.
- Galvano, Antonio. 1862. *The Discoveries of the World from their first original unto the Year of Our Lord 1555*. London: Hakluyt Society. In Portuguese from a 1563 original.
- Garnier, Francis. 1996 [composed between 1839-1873 and published as *Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine*]. *Further Travels in Laos and Yunnan*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- Gerini, G.E. 1909. *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia*. London: Royal Geographical Society.
- Grabowsky, Volker. 1994. "Forced resettlement campaigns in northern Thailand during the early Bangkok period," *Orient Extremus* 37.1: 45-107 [reprinted *Journal of the Siam Society* 87.1 (1999): 45-86].
- _____. 1997. "Origins of Lao and Khmer national identity: the legacy of the early nineteenth century." In Sri Kuhnt-Saptodewo, Volker Grabowsky, M. Großheim (eds.), *Nationalism and cultural revival in Southeast Asia: perspectives from the centre and the region*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 145-167.
- Grabowsky, Volker and Andrew Turton (eds.). 2003. *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship: The McLeod and Richardson Diplomatic Missions to Tai States in 1837*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm.
- Harmand, François-Jules. 1997 [composed between 1845-1921 and published as *Laos et les populations sauvages de l'Indochine*]. *Laos and the Hilltribes of Indochina*. Bangkok: White Lotus.

- Hartzell, Jessie MacKinnon. 2001 [composed in 1919]. *Mission to Siam*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Hase, Johann Mathias. 1744 (rpr. 1989), “Asia secundum legitimas [Map].” In *Maps from Ancient Times to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Leipzig: Acta Humaniora.
- Hundius, Harald. 1990, “Colophons from thirty Pāli manuscripts from Northern Thailand.” *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* XIV: 1-109.
- Jirasak Dejawongya. 2544 [2001]. *Kwahn sapān rawang lānnā lānxāng: Kān seuksā silapakam nai meuang chiang mai lae luang phrabang*. Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute.
- Jirasak Dejawongya, Woralan Bunyasurat, and Yuwanāt Woramit. 2539 [1996]. *Ho Trai Wat Phra Singh: Brawat laksana silapakam lae naeo thāng kān anurak*. Chiang Mai: SRI.
- Jit Bhumisak. (2540 [1976]). *Kwahn ben mā khong gam Siam, Thai, Lao, lae Khom lae laksana dāng sanggom khong cheu chon chāt chabab som pen perm term kho dae jing wā duai chon chāt Khom*. Bangkok: Khet Thai.
- Jarūwan Chaonuan. 2002. *Nidān peun meuang Lao*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.
- Kaxuang Thalaeng Khao lae Wattanatham [Ministry of Information and Culture – several appointed advisors, no author listed]. 2000. *Pawasāt Lao*. Vientiane: Kaxuang Thalaeng Khao lae Wattanatham.
- Leach, Edmund. 1954. *Political Systems of Highland Burma*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lorrillard, Michel. 2003. “The Earliest Lao Buddhist Monasteries according to Philological and Epigraphic Sources.” In *The Buddhist Monastery*. Paris: Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient: 187-198.
- (Phra Mahā) Mani Rattanapathimakone and (Phra) Rattanaphimpheuang. 1999. *Tamnān Phra Kaeo Morakot*. Vientiane: Sangon Likhasit.
- Marini, Giovanni Filippo de. 1663 [reports written between 1642 and 1648]. *Delle missioni de’Petri della Compagnia di Giesu mella provincia del Giappone e particolarmente de quella di Tumkino*. Roma: Nicolo Angelo Tinassi. See also French [Paris: Gervais Clouzier, 1666] and English [Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998] translations.
- Martini, Martino. 1655. *Novus Atlas Sinensis*. Amsterdam: Joan Bleau.
- McGilvary, Daniel. 1912. *A Half Century Among the Siamese and the Lao*. New York: Revell.
- McDaniel, Justin. 2004, “History of Lao Buddhism.” *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. New York: Macmillan Reference.
- _____. 2003. *Invoking the Source: Nissaya Manuscripts, Pedagogy and Sermon-making in Northern Thailand and Laos*. PhD Dissertation Harvard University.
- _____. 2002, “The Curricular Canon in Northern Thailand and Laos.” *Manusya: Journal of Thai Language and Literature Special Issue*: 20-59.

- _____. 2002a, "Transformative History: the *Nihon Ryoiki* and the *Jinakalamalipakaranam*." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 25.1: 151-207.
- _____. 2000, "Creative Engagement: the Sujavanna Wua Luang and its Contribution to Buddhist Literature." *Journal of the Siam Society* 88: 156-177.
- Mouhot, Henri. 1864 (rpr. 1989). *Travels in the Central Parts of Indochina (Siam), Cambodia, and Laos, during the years 1858, 1859 and 1860*. Ed. by C. Pym. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ngaosrivathana, Mayoury and Kennon Breazeale (eds.). 2002. *Breaking New Ground in Lao History*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Pavie, Auguste. 1898. *Recherches sur l'histoire de Cambodge, du Laos et du Siam. Mission Pavie en Indochine* [Études Diverse, expose des travaux de la Mission geographie et voyages, passage du Mekhong au Tonkin, 1887 et 1888, journal de marche, 1888-1889, evenements du Siam, 1891-1893] contenant la transcription et la traduction des inscriptions par M. Schmitt, 1879-1895. Vols. I-XI. Paris: E. Leroux, 1898-1919.
- Peltier, Anatole-Roger. 1988. *Le Roman Classique Lao*. Paris: EFEO.
- Penth, Hans. 1989, "On the History of Chiang Rai," *Journal of the Siam Society* 77.
- Penth, Hans, Panpen Kreuathai and Srilao Kesapromh. 2541 [1998]. *Chāreuk Phra Chao Kawila: 2334-2357*. Chiang Mai: Corpus of Lān Nā Inscriptions of the Social Research Institute.
- [No author]. 1969. *Phongsāwadān Meuang Luang Phrabang*. Vientiane.
- Raendchen, Oliver (ed.). June 1998. *Tai Culture: International review on Tai Cultural Studies* 3.1. Special Issue.
- Rhodes, Alexandre de. 1651. *Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum* [Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary]. Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis.
- Sanson, Nicolas. 1669 (rpr. 1989). "L'Asie" [Map of Asia]. In *Maps from Ancient Times to the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Leipzig: Acta Humaniora.
- Saengthong Photipuppha. 1998. *Pawat Meuang Xieng Kaeng*. Vientiane: Khong kån Potpat raksā nangseu bailān Lao.
- Savaeng Phinith. 1990. *Contribution à l'histoire du royaume de Luang Prabang*. Paris: EFEO.
- Shigeharu Tanabe and Charles Keyes (eds.). 2002. *Cultural crisis and social memory: modernity and identity in Thailand and Laos*. London : RoutledgeCurzon.
- Souneth Photisane. 1996. *The Nidān Khun Borom: Annotated Translation and Analysis*. PhD Dissertation. University of Queensland.
- Stuart-Fox, Martin. 1998. *The Lao Kingdom of Lān Xāng: Rise and Decline*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- Swanson, Herbert. no date. "Using Missionary Records for the Study of Northern Thai History: An Introduction and Appraisal." *Change in Northern Thailand and the Shan States (1886-1910)*. Seminar Papers, Department of History, Chiang Mai University.

- Tanabe, Shigeharu. 2000, "Autochthony and the Inthakhin cult of Chiang Mai." In *Civility and savagery: social identity in Tai States*. Ed. by Andrew Turton. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.
- Taylor, Keith. 1998, "Surface Orientations in Vietnam: Beyond Histories of Nation and Region." *Journal of Asian Studies* 57.4.
- Tham Xayasithsena. 1993. *Pawat Wat Inpeng Mahāvihān*. Bangkok: Mahāchulalongkornrajavidhyalaya Press.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 1994. *Siam Mapped: History of the Geo-body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- _____. 2000, "The Quest for "Siwilai": A Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Siam" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59.3: 528-549.
- Turton, Andrew (ed.). 2000. *Civility and savagery: social identity in Tai States*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.
- Veidlinger, Daniel. 2002. *Spreading the Dhamma: The Written Word and the Transmission of Pāli Texts in Pre-Modern Northern Thailand*. PhD Dissertation. University of Chicago.
- Wusthof, Gebard van. *Le Journal de voyage de G. van Wuysthoff et de ses assistants au Laos, 1641-1642* [The Journal of Gebard van Wusthof and His Assistants in Laos, 1641-1642]. Trans. by Claude Lejosne. Brussels: Editions Thanh-Long.
- Wyatt, David and Aroonrut Wichienkeo. 1998. *The Chiang Mai Chronicle*. Second Edition. Chiang Mai: Silkworm.
- Wyatt, David. 1994. *The Nan Chronicle*. Ithaca: Cornell Studies on Southeast Asia.
- _____. 2002. *Siam in Mind*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm.