

Article

Tai Manuscripts in the Dhamma Script Domain: Surveying, Preservation and Documentation, Part 3*

Volker Grabowsky | Hamburg

1.4 Southwestern China (Sipsòng Panna)

Compared to the five million Tai Yuan (Northern Thai) and some twenty million Lao speakers, of which four fifths live in Thailand, the Tai Lü are a small ethnic group whose areas of settlement are located in four nation-states: China, Myanmar (Burma), Laos and Thailand. It is only in China that the Tai Lü possess a recognised ‘homeland’, which lies in the Autonomous Prefecture of Sipsòng Panna (*Xishuang Banna Daizu zizhi zhou*). There are nearly 400,000 Tai Lü currently living in Sipsòng Panna, making up slightly more than one third of the total population in the prefecture. The Chinese authorities, however, do not recognise the Tai Lü as a separate ‘nationality’ (*minzu*) but include them, along with the Tai Nüa of Dehong Prefecture, the Tai Ya and several smaller Tai groups in southern Yunnan, in the officially recognised Dai *minzu*. This categorisation is not without pitfalls, as the Tai Nüa and Tai Lü, for example, do not speak mutually intelligible dialects, nor do they share a common ethnic identity. Their scripts—and manuscript cultures—are different as well. Only the Tai Lü use the Dhamma script, whereas the writing system of the Tai Nüa (*lik to ngòk* or ‘sprout letters’) is much closer to the script of the Burmese Shan.

There are probably as many as 200,000 Tai Lü in the eastern sections of the Burmese Shan State, especially in the Chiang Tung (Kengtung) region, where they are intermingled with 150,000 Tai Khün to whom they are linguistically closely related. Slightly less than 200,000 Tai Lü live in Northern Laos. Müang Sing (Luang Namtha Province) and Phong Saly (of which the northern section was part of Sipsòng Panna until 1895) are the areas with the highest concentration of Tai Lü. There are no reliable estimates concerning the Tai Lü population in Northern Thailand. Conservative estimates number them at close to 100,000 persons. This figure includes only the Tai Lü communities that have consciously preserved the language and traditions of their ancestors. Other estimates, which also include assimilated Tai Lü, whose fore-

fathers were once forcibly resettled to places such as Lamphun, Chiang Mai and Nan during the 19th century, are as high as half a million.¹

Along with their customs and traditions, the Tai Lü also brought manuscripts to their new settlements, as already mentioned in the section on Northern Thai manuscripts. A considerable number of manuscripts classified as Lao, kept in the archives of the British Library (London) and the *École française d’Extrême-Orient* (Paris), are actually written in the Tai Lü language and script, as the author realised during research conducted at these institutions in 2002 and 2003. A large number of Tai Lü manuscripts are kept in monastic libraries and private collections throughout Northern Laos. Based on the inventories of the Preservation of Lao Manuscripts Programme, it appears that a complete survey and documentation of Tai Lü texts in Laos will become feasible in the near future. Among the 8,349 manuscripts that are currently (October 2010) accessible at the Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts, there are 604 manuscripts written in Tham Lü, i.e. the Tai Lü variant of the Dhamma script. The largest number of Tai Lü manuscripts from Northern Laos are found in the provinces of Luang Namtha (bordering Sipsòng Panna) and Sainyabuli (bordering the Thai province of Nan). Whereas almost all Tai Lü manuscripts from Sainyabuli (221 of 227 manuscripts) are written on palm leaves, mulberry paper is the dominant writing support in Luang Namtha (135 of 198 manuscripts). A systematic survey and solid study of Tai Lü manuscript in various areas of Northern Laos should be the focus of future research. The same applies to a survey and study of Tai Lü manuscripts in Northern Thailand and the influence of the Tai Lü language, orthography and script on Northern Thai manuscripts.²

¹ As for a useful introduction to the historical development of Tai scripts in the Burmese Shan State, cf. Sai Kam Mong 2004. The author subsumes all ethnic Tai groups in the region (Shan proper or Tai Yai, Tai Lü, Tai Khün, etc.) under the generic term ‘Shan’.

² Hundius 1990, 25, fn. 28 makes the interesting observation that certain inconsistencies in writing and ‘the failure to distinguish between the diphthong /ua/ and its phonetically related monophthong /əə/ are of significantly higher frequency in manuscripts from areas with large numbers of people from Khün and Lü descent (...) than in those from districts with predominantly Tai Yuan population.’

* This article draws upon several published and unpublished papers by Harald Hundius. I am grateful to him for giving his kind permission to use this material. However, any shortcomings in the analysis are my own responsibility.

No systematic survey of Tai manuscripts has been carried out so far in Myanmar.³

A thriving manuscript culture came to an end in the Tai Lü heartland of Sipsòng Panna when the Chinese communists seized power in Yunnan in 1950 and abolished the far-reaching political and cultural autonomy that Sipsòng Panna and other minority regions had enjoyed for centuries. In 1953, the new rulers in Beijing established a part of the Simao Prefecture as an Autonomous Prefecture of the Dai nationality in Sipsòng Panna. To facilitate the learning of the Tai Lü language and script, particularly among non-Tai ethnic groups, including a growing number of Chinese immigrants, the Chinese authorities set up a commission of local scholars and bureaucrats to design a completely new Tai Lü alphabet that was officially introduced in 1955. The simplified alphabet abolished the Pāli consonants; banned the use of ligatures as well as of subscript and superscript marks which are a typical feature of the Dhamma script; ‘simplified’ the shape of the remaining consonant and vowel graphemes; and lined up consonants, vowels and tone markers into single lines. Since then, the younger generation has been educated exclusively in the new script, which is also used for the typesetting of vernacular books and newspapers, such as the *Xishuang Banna baozhi* (Sipsòng Panna Newspaper), founded in 1957.⁴ The script reform constituted a radical break with the past; those acquainted only with the new alphabet were unable to read texts written in the traditional Tai Lü Dhamma script, which was probably one of the goals of the simplification. Since monastic education declined and practically came to a halt during the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’ (1966–1976), very few Tai Lü in Sipsòng Panna are today still proficient in traditional literature.

During the decade-long persecution of local heritage, many Buddhist temples were destroyed and numerous valuable Tai Lü manuscripts were burned or lost. According to some informants, up to ninety per cent of Tai Lü manuscripts were destroyed during this period, which was a ‘dark age’ not only for the Tai Lü and other ethnic minorities in China, but also for the Han Chinese majority. It is worth mentioning that the destruction of Buddha images seems to have been carried out even more thoroughly. During his field studies in Sipsòng Panna in 2002 and 2005, the author was unable to find in reopened and renovated monasteries in the region even a single inscribed Buddha image older than twenty-five years.

Nevertheless, a number of old Tai Lü manuscripts have survived, in many cases due to courageous laypersons who managed to hide them from the eyes of the Red Guards and zealous party officials. Since the late 1970s, when China reopened her doors, a relatively scholarly atmosphere has gradually emerged, and the Tai Lü region, like other places in China, is now enjoying a cultural renaissance. Local authorities and researchers in Sipsòng Panna have begun to recollect and copy Tai Lü manuscripts, the largest collection of which is currently stored in the Cultural Bureau of the Political Council of the Prefecture of Sipsòng Panna in Jinghong. It should also be noted that after the opening of borders with Burma in the early 1990s, manuscripts from Tai Lü speaking ‘Shan’ areas in eastern Burma, notably from Chiang Tung, Moeng Yòng, and Moeng Luai, have entered the southern border districts of Sipsòng Panna.⁵ Moreover, during the last two decades, the Yunnan National Minorities Publishing House (*Yunnan minzu chubanshe*) has published a series of bilingual books containing Tai Nüa and Tai Lü literary and historical texts—written in Tai Nüa or, respectively, Old Tai Lü script—along with a Chinese translation.⁶

In 1998, the Japanese historian Kumiko Kato (University of Nagoya) and her Thai husband Isra Yanantan initiated the first survey of Tai Lü manuscripts in Sipsòng Panna in collaboration with Ai Kham, a local scholar in charge of the collection held at the Cultural Office, and Cao Maha Khanthawong (Dao Jinxiang), a retired official of aristocratic background and well-known expert on traditional Tai Lü literature. A questionnaire was prepared to document the characteristic features of the surveyed manuscripts (language, script, date, writing support, etc.). The survey took place in 1999 and 2000. Kato and Isra describe the technical procedure as follows:

Ai Kham selected the persons suitable to undertake the survey in the different localities. These persons took the questionnaires to survey the places where manuscripts were kept, putting down the [relevant] information in the questionnaires. Then the [data] were returned to Chiang Rung. The number of manuscripts documented in this way amounted to roughly 6,000 entries. After the completion of the survey the collected data were recorded in a register of interesting documents in monasteries as well as private collections.⁷

³ Apart from Anatole Peltier’s private collection of Tai Khün manuscripts from Chiang Tung (Kengtung), which also contains a number of texts of Tai Lü provenance.

⁴ Isra 2001, 461. See also Apiradee 2003, 7–10, so far the most in-depth study of Tai Lü script(s) and writing system(s).

⁵ Isra 2005, 191.

⁶ This series includes several versions of the Chronicle of Moeng Lü (Chinese: *Leshi*), discussed in detail in Liew, and Grabowsky 2004.

⁷ Kato, and Isra 2001, 150.

Table 1: Statistics of the survey of Tai Lü manuscripts in Sipsong Panna (Xishuang Banna) run by Kumiko Kato und Isra Yanatan (Balance: 2001)

place/ district	<i>mullberry paper</i> (volumes)	palm-leaf (bundles) (fascicles) ⁸	paper (other than <i>mullberry paper</i>)	no information available	total	
‘Cultural Office’	324	204	502	1	—	529
Chiang Rung/ Ceng Hung	2,531	216	608	36	1,046	3,829
Moeng La	98	51	344	1,247	72	1,468
Moeng Long	99	23	(?)	12	266	400
Moeng Hai	191	4	8	43	36	274
Moeng Ham	28	22	149	9	—	59
Total	3,271	520	>1,611	1,348	1,420	6,559

As Kato and Isra admit, the number of manuscripts surveyed and documented, as well as the reliability of the data collected in this way, depended very much on the interest of the person completing the survey. The incompleteness and unreliability of the data is indicated by the large number of manuscript descriptions lacking information on the writing support (one fifth of the total), provenance, or number of fascicles and folios. The catalogue that Kato and Isra published in 2001 indicates that their two-year project located a total of more than 6,500 manuscripts in monastic and private libraries.

Table 1 demonstrates that the bulk of extant manuscripts are written on mulberry paper and not on palm-leaf, as is also true of Tai Lü manuscripts found in Northern Laos (see section 1.3). The unusually large number of manuscripts in Moeng La written on modern paper, all kept in private libraries, may reflect the owners’ commitment to having had copies made of older manuscripts. While it is not uncommon to see manuscripts more than a century old in Laos and Northern Thailand, there are very few Tai Lü manuscripts in Sipsong Panna from the pre-Communist era, and the oldest dated document recorded in the above mentioned list is from *Cūlasakarāja* (CS, the so-called Little Era beginning in 638 AD) year 1249 (1887/88 AD).⁹

⁸ Terminology in the field of Dhamma manuscript studies is still in its infancy: An average palm-leaf fascicle (*phuk* ฝูก, sometimes rendered as ‘bundle’—the smallest codicological unit) comprises 6 to 12 folios for traditional religious manuscripts. The fascicles are traditionally held between wooden covers. Larger codicological units consist of a number of fascicles held together by a cloth wrapping. Such ‘bundles’ (*mat* มัด, sometimes rendered as ‘volumes’) may contain single texts or only sections of a single work, or even unrelated texts that were perhaps sponsored by the same donor. See the explanations in the DLLM glossary (<http://laomanuscripts.net/en/pages/glossary.html>).

⁹ This is an astrological text entitled *Pakkatiin* (ปักกิติน); a person named Phaya Phasaeng is mentioned as the author.

It is encouraging that between 2001 and 2003, the Yunnan Provincial Archives (Yunnan University) implemented a project to survey, catalogue and microfilm Tai Nüa manuscripts from the ‘Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture’. Of the 2,000 documents surveyed, almost 900 were selected for cataloguing and approximately 57,500 microfilm frames were recorded.¹⁰ In spring 2004 a follow-up project was started in Gengma County of Lincang Prefecture. In addition, a catalogue published in 2005 contains synopses of almost 200 manuscripts, mostly in Tai Nüa script, but 22 are written in the Tai-Lü Dhamma script.¹¹

2. Systems of Classification

The texts inscribed on palm-leaf or mulberry paper manuscripts were classified according to content and literary genre, with each project following its own guidelines. We can roughly distinguish between two different systems. The first system was applied by the Social Research Institute (Chiang Mai University) in the project undertaken during the 1980s in Northern Thailand. The second system was conceived by the Preservation of Northern Thai Manuscripts Project in Chiang Mai (1987–1991) and was also used in the subsequent Preservation of Lao Manuscripts Programme (1992–2002). The two systems are documented in Tables 2 and 3 and will then be compared with each other further below.

The contents of the twenty-one categories of manuscripts have been defined by the Preservation of Northern Thai Manuscripts Project as follows:

(01) *Vinaya*: The textual framework for the Buddhist monastic community, or *sangha*, containing rules of disci-

¹⁰ For details on this project, see Daniels 2005. The catalogue includes synopses in Chinese of the contents of each of the 881 manuscripts microfilmed. See Yin Shaoting et al. 2002.

¹¹ Yin Shaoting, and Daniels 2005.

Table 2: Classification System I (Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University)

No.	Name Thai	Name English
01	พระพุทธศาสนา	Buddhism
01A	พุทธตำนาน	Buddha's Legendary History
01B	มหาชาติชาดก	Great <i>Jātaka</i> Story
01C	ทศชาติชาดก	Ten <i>Jātaka</i> Stories
01D	ชาดกทั่วไป	General <i>Jātaka</i> Stories
01E	พระสูตร	<i>Suttanta</i> Doctrine
01F	พระอภิธรรม	<i>Abhidhamma</i> Doctrine
01G	พระวินัย	Disciplinary Rules
01H	ธรรมทั่วไป	Religious Teachings
01I	อานิสงส์ต่างๆ	Blessings
01J	ทรรศนะเกี่ยวกับจักรวาล	Cosmology
01K	ประวัติศาสตร์พุทธศาสนา	History of Buddhism
01L	ตำนานปูชนียวัตถุ	History of Sacred Objects
01M	พระสาวกที่มีชื่อเสียง	Famous Disciples
01N	พยากรณ์เหตุการณ์อนาคต	Prophecy
01O	บทสวดมนต์และพิธีกรรม	Prayers and Rituals
01P	พิธีกรรมสงฆ์	Sangha Ceremonies
01Q	เทพนิยาย	Buddhist Myths
02	นิทานพื้นบ้าน	Folktales
03	กฎหมายโบราณ	Customary Law
04	จริยศาสตร์	Ethics
05	ประวัติศาสตร์	History
06	โหราศาสตร์	Astrology
07	โคลงกลอน	Poetry
08	ยาสมุนไพร	Traditional Medicine
09	ลัทธิพิธีกรรม	Rites and Rituals
10	ไสยศาสตร์	(White) Magic
11	ปกิณฑกะ	Miscellany

pline for monks and novices. The *vinaya* is divided into five sections, i.e., *mahāvibhaṅga*; *bhikkhuvibhaṅga*; *mahāvagga*; *cullavagga*; and *parivāra*.

(02) *Sutta* (or *suttantapiṭaka*): The canonical scriptures that are regarded as records of the oral teachings of Gautama Buddha. They are divided into the following five sections or *nikāya*: *dīghanikāya* (long *suttas*); *majjhimanikāya* (medium-sized *suttas*); *saṃyuttanikāya* (related to certain

persons or places); *aṅguttaranikāya*; *khuddakanikāya* (small or less significant *suttas*).

(3) *Abhidhamma*: A category of Buddhist scriptures that attempts to use Buddhist teachings to create a systematic, abstract description of all worldly phenomena. The *abhidhamma*, representing a generalisation and reorganisation of the doctrines presented piecemeal in the narrative *sutta* tradition, consists of the follow-

Table 3: Classification System II (Preservation of Manuscripts Programmes in Northern Thailand and Laos)

No.	Name Thai	Name Lao	Name English
01	พระวินัย	ພະວິໄນ	<i>Vinaya</i>
02	พระสูตร	ພະສູດ	<i>Sutta</i>
03	พระอภิธรรม	ພະອະພິທຳ	<i>Abhidhamma</i>
04	คัมภีร์ภาษาบาลี	ຄຳພິພາສາບາລີ	Monolingual Pāli
05	บทสวดมนต์	ບົດສວດມົນ	Chants
06	อาถรรพ์	ອາถັງ	<i>Anisong</i> (Blessings)
07	ชาดก	ຊາດົກ	<i>Jātaka</i>
08	โอวาทคำสอน	ໂອວາດຄຳສອນ	Didactics
09	ประเพณีพิธีกรรม	ປະເພນີພິທີກຳ	Customs and Rituals
10	ธรรมทั่วไป	ທຳທົ່ວໄປ	General Buddhism
11	นิยายธรรม	ນິยายທຳ	Buddhist Tales
12	นิยายนิทานพื้นบ้าน	ນິยายນິທານພື້ນບ້ານ	Folktales
13	ตำนานพุทธศาสนา	ຕຳນານພຸດທະສາດສະໜາ	Buddhist Chronicles
14	ตำนานเมือง / ราชวงศ์	ຕຳນານເມືອງ / ລາຊະວົງ	Secular Chronicles
15	กฎหมาย	ກົດໝາຍ	Law
16	ตำราอักษรศาสตร์	ຕຳລາອັກສອນສາດ	Philology
17	กวีนิพนธ์ร้อยกรอง	ກະວີນິພົນຮ້ອຍກອງ	Secular Literary Works
18	ตำราโหราศาสตร์	ຕຳລາໂຫລາສາດ	Astrology
19	ตำรายา	ຕຳລາຢາ ແລະ ໄສຍະສາດ	Medicine (and Magic)
20	รวมหลายหมวด	ຮວມຫລາຍໝວດ	Miscellaneous
21	อื่นๆ	ອື່ນໆ	Other

ing seven sections: *saṃgiṇī*; *vibhaṅga*; *dhātukathā*; *puggalapaññatti*; *kathāvattu*; *yamaka*; and *paṭṭhāna*.

(4) *Monolingual Pāli*: Buddhist scripts written exclusively in Pāli, not mixed with any other language.

(5) *Chants* (or *suat mon*): This includes *parittas* and other texts recited during a wide variety of ceremonies, mostly but not exclusively religious.

(6) *Ānisaṃsa* (Thai: *anisong*): Texts describing the rewards of meritorious deeds, such as the observance of the Buddhist precepts and the making of personal sacrifices (*paricāga*).

(7) *Jātaka*: Legends about the previous lives of the Buddha. These include both canonical works, such as the stories of the ‘Ten Lives’ and the ‘Fifty Lives’, as well as extra-canonical works.

(8) *Didactics*: Admonitions and instructions (*ovāda*) of the Buddha, for example in the form of wise sayings of

the Buddha (*bhāsita*) and teachings of the elders, such as ‘Grandfather teaches his grandchild’ (*Pu sòn lan*).

(9) *Customs and Rituals*: Texts pertaining to various rituals, such as the consecration of Buddha images (*buddhābhiseka*), formulaic expressions for official acts (*kammavācā*), and sacrificial ceremonies (*phithi bucha*).

(10) *General Buddhism*: Texts dedicated to the Buddhist religion. Teachings of the Buddha constitute important components of these texts. Examples are *Dhamma-mahāvīpāka* and *Dhamma-saṃveja*.

(11) *Buddhist Tales*: Texts of Buddhist provenance in which certain persons are the heroes, for example Phra Malai and Nang Wisakha (*Visākhā*).

(12) *Folktales*: Texts recorded by ordinary people, mostly based on oral traditions.

(13) *Buddhist Chronicles/ Legends*: Texts about the history of Buddhism, including legends about the Buddha or

Buddha images. Examples for such texts are the ‘Legend of the Buddha’ (*Phuttha-tamnan*) and the ‘Legend of the Five Buddhas’ (*Tamnan phra cao ha phra-ong*).

(14) *Secular Chronicles*: Historical texts about the founding of a polity (*müang*) or the history of dynasties (*rājavamsa*). Examples are the Chiang Mai Chronicle (*Tamnan phün müang chiang mai*), the Chiang Tung Chronicle (*Tamnan chiang tung*) and the Chronicle of the Dynasties of Lan Na (*Phün ratchawong lan na*).

(15) *Law*: Customary law texts such as ‘The Laws of King Mangrai’ (*mangraisat*), *Dharmaśāstra* (*thammasat*), and ‘The Customs of King Kü Na’ (*Carit kü na*).

(16) *Philology*: Textbooks on the learning of languages such as Tai Yuan (Kam Müang) and Pāli.

(17) *Secular Literary Works (Poetry)*: Poetic texts of mainly non-religious character, mostly composed in poetic structures called *khao* (used only in Lan Na) and *khlong* (used throughout Thailand).

(18) *Astrology*: Astrological treatises, including divination of auspicious days and events. Most of these treatises are written on mulberry paper (otherwise palm-leaf is the overwhelmingly used writing support), and are sometimes richly illustrated.

(19) *Medicine*: Medical treatises about curing various diseases by using local herbs. The Preservation of Lao Manuscripts Programme also includes White Magic (*sainyasad*).

(20) *Miscellany*: Manuscripts containing several texts that belong to different categories. One example is a manuscript from Nan which, though comprising a single fascicle (*phuk*), starts with a historical text and continues with a medical treatise. Thus it has been given the (artificial) name ‘History of Nan and various medical treatises’.

(21) *Other*: Texts that do not fit into any of the categories described above. This last category comprises, for example, seriously damaged manuscripts and modern texts printed in Siamese characters.

Comparing the two different classification systems outlined above, we can discern that the system applied by the Preservation of Manuscripts Programmes in Northern Thailand and Laos appears to have better coherency, clarity and structure. The system used by the Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, reflects traditional scholarship, with its basic distinction between Buddhist literature and non-Buddhist literature, the latter divided into seventeen sub-categories. The primary merits of the Classification System II is that it not only avoids unnecessary overlapping and redundancy, but also puts the categories in a well-devised order pertaining to religious versus secular contents. Furthermore, it makes sense not to distinguish between sub-categories of *Jātaka*

stories and to recognise the proximity of the categories ‘Buddhist Chronicles’ and ‘Secular Chronicles’ (called ‘History’ in Classification System I). The concordance in Table 4 may help identify texts that have been classified differently in the two systems.

A common feature of Tai literary traditions is the fact that a single work may have more than one title, and variant titles may sometimes be found *within* the same manuscript. For example, the extra-canonical *Jātaka* story bearing the Pāli title *Dvesīsahamsajātaka*, may also be named *Hong sòng hua* or a combination of these: *Dvesisa hong sòng hua*. An exceptional case is the *Vessantarajātaka*, which can be found under more than ten different titles within Laos, as for example *Vetsantala sataka*, *Vetsandòn sadok*, *Mahasat*, and *Lam pha wet*.

Conversely, general titles such as *Du sankat pi* or *Busa thevada* or *Labiap kotmai* may contain different texts. There are also a number of cases where a text with a seemingly known title is actually quite different, such as the title *Nipphana sut*, which might be presumed to contain the canonical *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, whereas in fact it is a completely different, apocryphal and vernacular text.

Apart from recording the title (if it is not indicated on the front page or in a colophon, a title is provided by the cataloguers) and determining the literary genre as well as the script and language in which the texts are written, all of the projects in Northern Thailand, Northeast Thailand and Laos also record the number of bundles and fascicles of a manuscript, the total number of folios, as well as its location, providing the names of monasteries, villages, districts, and—in the case of private libraries—owners. In the case of a manuscript being dated, its date is also supplied, as a rule according to the CS year; the month or day is only rarely mentioned. The manuscript preservation projects in Northern Thailand and Laos also provide additional information about the writing support (palm-leaf, mulberry paper, etc.) and the physical condition of the manuscripts.

Each manuscript receives a code number referring to province, district, monastery, category, the number of bundles, as well as the number of fascicles contained in each bundle. The code numbers given by the Social Research Institute (Chiang Mai University, SRI), which focuses on the microfilming of manuscripts, record only the year of acquisition, the microfilm reel, the literary genre, and the place within the microfilm reel. Thus a single manuscript is catalogued under two completely different code numbers. One example is a manuscript kept at Wat Phrathat Chang Kham Wōrawihan (วัดพระธาตุช้างค้ำวรวิหาร), Müang district, in Nan province. It contains a secular chronicle entitled *Phün wongsa cao nai sawoei ratchasombat nai müang pua lae müang nan* (พื้นวงศ์เจ้าชายเสวยราชสมบัติ

Table 4: Concordance of classifications in Systems I and II

category	number of category (System I)	number of category (System II)
<i>Vinaya</i>	01	01G
<i>Sutta</i>	02	01E
<i>Abhidhamma</i>	03	01F
Monolingual Pāli	04	—
Chants	05	01O
<i>Anisong</i> (Blessings)	06	01I
<i>Jātaka</i>	07	01A / 01B / 01 C / 01D
Didactics	08	04 / 07
Customs and Rituals	09	09
General Buddhism	10	01H
Buddhist Tales	11	01Q
Folktales	12	02
Buddhist Chronicles	13	01J / 01K / 01L / 01M
Secular Chronicles	14	05
Law	15	03
Philology	16	07
Secular Literary Works	17	07
Astrology	18	06 / 01N
Medicine (and Magic)	19	08 (/ 10)
Miscellaneous	20	11
Other	21	—

The two different code numbers of this particular manuscript, acquired for microfilming by the SRI in 1982, are as follows:

A.) Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University: 82.107.05.044–044

year		microfilm reel			category		place within microfilm reel					
8	2	1	0	7	0	5	0	4	4	0	4	4

B.) Preservation of Northern Thai Manuscripts Project: นน.01.14.002.00

province		monastery		category		number of bundle			text/ fascicle ¹²	
น	น	0	1	1	4	0	0	1	0	0

ในเมืองบ้านและเมืองน่าน), Chronicle about the rulers in Müang Pua and Müang Nan. The palm-leaf manuscript consists of one fascicle with 130 folios; it is wrapped as one bundle.

3. Digitisation of Tai Manuscripts

In 2004, a pilot project to digitise a sample of Northeast Thai palm-leaf manuscripts was started by Mahasarakham University. A new digitisation project for Northeast Thai manuscripts has been undertaken by The Center for the Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region at Khon Kaen University since 2004. In collaboration with other institutes in Northeast Thailand and supported by the Northern Illinois University (NIU), 50 palm-leaf manuscripts from Northeast Thailand — with three exceptions all written in the regional Lao variant of the Dhamma script—have been digitised and recently put online (<http://sea.lib.niu.edu/kk-palmleaf.html>). A much more ambitious project is being carried out by the Lao National Library to facilitate research and dissemination of Lao literature and culture (and research in Southeast Asian and Buddhist Studies) through the digitisation of approximately 12,000 microfilmed manuscripts and the production of inventories in Lao and English. In September 2009, the Digital Library of Lao Manuscripts was officially launched (<http://laomanuscripts.net/>).

The National Library of Laos undertook research in 2006, 2007, and 2009 towards producing an *Annotated Catalogue of Tai Nua Manuscripts in Northern Laos*, funded by The Toyota Foundation, Japan. The project focused on Tai Nua manuscripts in the *lik* script, which are kept in the homes of lay people in Müang Sing in Northern Laos. These mulberry paper manuscripts are closely related to those of the Tai Nua culture of the Dehong and Jinggu regions of Yunnan Province in Southwest China. They have received almost no scholarly attention, owing to the scarcity of expertise in reading Tai Nua script in Laos. This project is also an important step in the research on Lao literary traditions outside of mainstream Dhamma script literature.

Another centre of manuscript studies in Southeast Asia is based at the centre of the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Bangkok, which is housed within the Sirindhorn Anthropology Center (SAC), a research institute under the Thai Ministry of Culture.¹³ An important project in the field of Buddhist literature is the inventory, digitisation, and study of the corpus of manuscripts related to the tradition of North-

ern Thai *tamnan* or traditional religious chronicles. This work is also being carried on in cooperation with the Siam Society. Since 2005, François Lagirarde, the head of this project, has been in charge of organizing field trips to the provinces of ancient Lan Na, taking high-quality digital photos and coordinating the reading, translating and database processing. Two young graduate researchers from Silapakorn University and a photographer have assisted Dr Lagirarde. The primary aim of this project is very simple: easy access to primary sources. So far hundreds of bundles of palm-leaf manuscripts have been photographed and computerized, the image collection having now reached an approximate total of more than 40,000. The photos were taken of the holdings of one library in Bangkok (The Siam Society) and thirty-five different monastic libraries from all over Northern Thailand. A database of this digital collection is expected to be operational in 2011 on the EFEO, SAC, and Siam Society Internet sites.¹⁴ A comprehensive survey and documentation of Tai manuscripts in Sipsong Panna and adjacent Tai populated areas, such as Simao and Moeng Laem, including the digitisation of the most important manuscripts, is an urgent task. It should follow the guidelines laid down by the successful manuscript preservation projects supported by the German Foreign Ministry in Northern Thailand and Laos.

The above-mentioned inventories and enhanced access to manuscript resources via digital libraries will significantly widen potential research perspectives. This might range from descriptive works, such as annotated catalogues, philological studies focusing on the editing of reliable texts, comparative studies on literary works known throughout the 'Dhamma Script Cultural Domain', Theravada Buddhism, to historical linguistics. Studies on local histories, traditional law, astrology, traditional medicinal healing, and many other related subjects of cultural significance would also be stimulated by using extant manuscripts as primary source material. Finally, studies that analyze the material aspects of Tai manuscripts, their cultural significance and importance in the organisation of traditional knowledge should be strongly encouraged.

¹² This column refers to the sequence of texts/fascicles in a bundle containing several texts. If a bundle contains a single text/fascicle, the code '00' is given.

¹³ The following paragraphs are based on information kindly provided to the author by Dr François Lagirarde (personal communication, 2 February 2010).

¹⁴ This database stresses the need for identifying and distinguishing the texts and using proper titles. As a research program, the EFEO *tamnan* project aims firstly at providing an overall idea of the *tamnan* genre itself. The project will also make use of biblio-metric and biblio-economic data to propose a more accurate understanding of the genre. In its second phase, the EFEO *tamnan* project will propose a more philological and historical approach to deal with the corpus of texts henceforth available. Editing and translating of specific texts are planned, but the project will emphasize the need for comparative readings of different versions of the same text and different texts bearing the same title in order to explain the function of the traditional Buddhist chronicles from Lan Na, which represent a tradition probably born in the early fourteenth century and which became extinct only in the 20th century.

REFERENCES

- Apiradee Techasiriwan อภิรติ เตชะศิริวรรณ (2003), *Phatthanakan khòng aksòn lae akkharawithi nai ekkasan thai lü* พัฒนาการของอักษรและอักษรวิธีในเอกสารไทลื้อ (MA thesis, Chiang Mai University).
- Daniels, Christian (2005), 'Surveying and Preserving Documents in Dehong, Yunnan, China', in National Library of Laos (ed.), *The Literary Heritage of Laos: Preservation, Dissemination and Research Perspectives* มໍລະດົກວັນນະຄະດີລາວ ການປົກປັກຮັກສາ ການເຜີ້ແຜ່ ແລະ ຫັດສະນະການຄົ້ນຄວ້າ (Vientiane: Manthathulat Printing House), 335–340.
- Hundius, Harald (1990), 'The Colophons of Thirty Pali Manuscripts from Northern Thailand', *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 14: 1–174.
- (2005), 'Lao Manuscripts and Traditional Literature: The struggle for their survival', in National Library of Laos (ed.), *The Literary Heritage of Laos: Preservation, Dissemination and Research Perspectives* (ມໍລະດົກວັນນະຄະດີລາວ ການປົກປັກຮັກສາ ການເຜີ້ແຜ່ ແລະ ຫັດສະນະ ການຄົ້ນຄວ້າ) (Vientiane: Manthathulat Printing House), 1–9.
- (2008), 'The Preservation of Lao Manuscripts', in Michel Lorrillard and Yves Goudineau (eds.), *Recherches récentes sur le Laos* (Études Thématiques) (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient), 361–368.
- Isra Yanatan อิศรา ญาณताल (2001), 'Bot samruat büangton kiao-kap kan fünfu aksòn thai lü nai sipsòng panna' บทสำรวจเบื้องต้นเกี่ยวกับการฟื้นฟูตัวอักษรไทลื้อในสิบสองปันนา, in Saraswadee Ongsakul and Yoshiyuku Masuhara สรัสวดี อ่องสกุล และ โยชิยุกิ มาซุฮารุ (eds.), *Studies of History and Literature of Thai Ethnic Groups* การศึกษาประวัติศาสตร์และวรรณกรรมของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ไท (Bangkok: Amarin), 456–466.
- (2005), 'Phapsa kap khwam khit rüang müang chai-daen: kòrani süksa phün müang luang nai sipsòng panna' พับสากับความคิดเรื่องเมืองชายแดน: กรณีศึกษาพื้นเมืองหลวงในสิบสองปันนา, in National Library of Laos (ed.), *The Literary Heritage of Laos: Preservation, Dissemination and Research Perspectives* มໍລະດົກວັນນະຄະດີລາວ ການປົກປັກຮັກສາ ການເຜີ້ແຜ່ ແລະ ຫັດສະນະການຄົ້ນຄວ້າ (Vientiane: Manthathulat Printing House), 187–209.
- Kato, Kumiko (ed.) (2001), *Chûgoku, Laosu, Tai ni okeru Tai, Rûzoku shiryô no kenkyû* (The Graduate School, Faculty of Arts, University of Nagoya).
- Kato, Kumiko, and Isra Yanatan คุมิโกะ คาโต และ อิศรา ญาณताल (2001), 'Sathanaphap patcuban khòng ekkasan phapsa nai sipsòng panna' สถานภาพปัจจุบันของเอกสารพับส่าในสิบสองปันนา, in Saraswadee Ongsakul, and Yoshiyuku Masuhara สรัสวดี อ่องสกุล และ โยชิยุกิ มาซุฮารุ (eds.), *Studies of History and Literature of Thai Ethnic Groups* การศึกษาประวัติศาสตร์และวรรณกรรมของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ไท (Bangkok: Amarin), 145–150.
- Lagirarde, François (2003), 'Epigraphy and philology in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia: Current studies at the French Research School of the Far East (EFE0)', in Kannika Wimonkasem et al. กรรณิการ์ วิมลเกษม และคณะ (eds.), *Phasa-carik chabap thi 9* ภาษาจารึก ฉบับที่ ๙ (Bangkok: Silpakorn University), 60–74.
- Liew, Foon Ming, and Grabowsky, Volker (2004), 'An Introduction to the Tai Lü Sources of the History of Moeng Lü (Sipsòng Panna)', *Aséanie* 14: 149–194.
- Sai Kam Mong (2004), *The History and Development of the Shan Scripts* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books).
- Social Research Institute (SRI) สถาบันวิจัยสังคม (1986), *Lan Na Literature* วรรณกรรมล้านนา. Catalogue of Palm-leaf Texts on Microfilm at the Social Research Institute (Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University).
- (1991), *Catalogue of Palm-leaf Texts on Microfilm at the Social Research Institute* (รายชื่อหนังสือโบราณล้านนา: เอกสารไมโครฟิล์มของสถาบันวิจัยสังคม มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่ ปี ๒๕๒๑-๒๕๓๓), (Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University).
- Yin Shaoting et al. (eds.) (2002), *A Synopsis of Tay (Chinese Shan) Old Manuscripts in the Dehong Autonomous Region of Yunnan, China* (Kunming: The Nationalities Publishing House of Yunnan).
- Yin Shaoting, and Daniels, Christian (eds.) (2005), *A Synopsis of Dao Old Manuscripts in Gengma County of Yunnan, China* (Kunming: The Nationalities Publishing House of Yunnan).