

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)
announces a public lecture

by

PROF. JUSTIN MCDANIEL, *University of Pennsylvania*

Recent Investigations into Thai Manuscripts held in Western Collections

From 2009-present I have been visiting several archives and special collections in Europe, Japan, and North America in order to examine Thai manuscripts. The overall goal of this project is to digitally preserve these manuscripts and make them freely accessible on the internet through the Thai Digital Monastery and Manuscript Archive (referred to as TDMMA) based at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries (Penn Libraries). This site will make many of the finest Siamese/Thai manuscripts held at initially six major institutions (and more in the future) freely searchable and readable on the web. By using best practices and the latest technologies the Penn Libraries will preserve, catalog, and embed the manuscripts within an interactive, multi-media digital environment. It is a collaborative program led by the Penn Libraries with access permission and assistance from the archives at Princeton University Library, the Free Library of Philadelphia, The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, Penn Museum, and the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland. It will create a universal standard for collecting, cataloging, and digitally displaying illuminated manuscripts. Once they are available for detailed viewing, they will be embedded into a fully searchable, visually rich, three-dimensional multi-sensory virtual world. The TDMMA will be an authoritative, interactive, and expanding on-line archive/repository of manuscripts sustained by Penn Libraries. These manuscripts have a great significance to the humanities. They are the literary, artistic, and religious masterpieces of the golden age of the Siamese /Thai kingdom and some of the finest examples of illuminated manuscripts ever produced in any culture. They were used for religious chanting, dramatic performance, aesthetic display, as well as pedagogical tools, objects of diplomatic and royal exchange, and tableaux of scientific study. They also served as the repositories of financial, legal, and scholarly records. In the process of this work I have discovered several fascinating examples of 18th and 18th century manuscripts which I will describe in this talk.

8 July 2013 at 6 p.m., Room 0001

Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures
Warburgstraße 26
20354 Hamburg

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