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# Illuminating Archives: Collectors and Collections in the History of Thai Manuscripts

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# Illuminating Archives: Collectors and Collections in the History of Thai Manuscript

## **Keywords**

Manuscript studies, Thai manuscripts, manuscript collecting, collections, libraries, archives

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# MANUSCRIPT STUDIES

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VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

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*Special Issue:*  
*Collectors and Collections in the History of*  
*Thai Manuscripts*  
Guest Editor: Justin McDaniel

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## DEDICATION

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**T**HIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF *Manuscript Studies* is dedicated to the memories of Henry Ginsburg and Toshiya Unebe. Ginsburg passed away in 2007 suddenly at the age of sixty-six after serving as the curator for Thai, Lao, and Cambodia collections at the British Library. Jana Igunma, in the first essay, writes about his life and work extensively. Toshiya Unebe was a contributor to this volume. He sadly passed away at the age of forty-seven in Nagoya, Japan, as this issue was in the final stages of production. The editorial team helped finish his article. Dr. Unebe was a Jodo Shinshu priest, a scholar of great range, a rare intellect, and a person of unshakeable integrity. He leaves behind a wife and two children and will be terribly missed by his friends, family, and colleagues. To learn more about his remarkable life, I direct you to my profile of Dr. Unebe in Samuels, McDaniel, and Rowe, eds., *Figures of Buddhist Modernity in Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016): 23–25.

JUSTIN MCDANIEL





## Illuminating Archives

### *Collectors and Collections in the History of Thai Manuscripts*

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JUSTIN MCDANIEL  
*University of Pennsylvania*

**M**Y OFFICE IS ON 36th Street in Philadelphia. Within a twenty-mile radius, there are more than thirty Thai restaurants, three places to practice Vipassana meditation from students who studied in Thailand, four actively working Thai language teachers, seven places to practice Thai kickboxing, a cultural center where Thai-Americans and non-Thai enthusiasts can practice classical Thai music and dancing, two Thai markets, and a major Thai Buddhist monastery. Thai-style Buddha images are sold in several curio shops, and one tattoo parlor advertises Thai protective tattoos. If you go to New York or Los Angeles, the number of ways of experiencing Thai culture increases exponentially. Thai people have traditionally been great exporters and promoters of their culture abroad, providing readily available access to it in places like Philadelphia, London, Rome, Berlin, Paris, Sydney, São Paulo, Los Angeles, Tel Aviv, and Tokyo. In the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, however, the first way most foreigners—at that time this contact was limited largely to members of the leisure and upper classes—encountered Thai/Siamese culture was not through kickboxing (Muay Thai) or Pad Thai noodles, but through manuscripts.

When travelers from Europe, North America, and Japan, among other places, started exploring Southeast Asia, they often brought manuscripts back to their own museums and homes. Manuscripts are portable, beautiful, exotic, and informative. Thai travelers and diplomats often brought manuscripts as gifts when going abroad as well. Thai manuscripts have made their way into foreign collections for more than four hundred years. Although they were rarely translated, they were put on display and presented as the quintessential representative of both Thai and Buddhist culture. Unfortunately, despite the large number of Thai manuscripts available in museum, library, and private collections abroad, they have been understudied. When they have been studied, they have not been studied comprehensively. Moreover, we know little about the people that acquired them, traded them, collected them, or stole them.

This special issue of *Manuscript Studies* seeks to begin the process of studying these manuscripts. The contributors have closely examined the largest collections of Thai manuscripts abroad. We have concentrated largely on illuminated streblus asper bark (*kboi*) paper manuscripts and palm-leaf manuscripts from Central Thailand, versus Northern Thai (Lanna), Lao, and Shan manuscripts, which have been the study of work by Rujaya, LaGirarde, Pamphen, Wharton, Wannasai, Hundius, von Hinüber, McDaniel, and others. While, as mentioned below, Northern Thai manuscripts have been (and are undergoing) a massive photographing and cataloguing process, there has been, although this will hopefully change in the near future, no such project for manuscripts from Central Thailand despite their historical and aesthetic importance. Because of their aesthetic beauty, most of the collections are dominated by illuminated manuscripts from Central Thailand (Siam). Therefore, the first major aim of this issue of *Manuscript Studies* is to highlight the collections of illuminated manuscripts of Central Thailand and to show through many examples the shape and significance of their cultural importance to Buddhist textual and artistic history.

Central Thai manuscripts do not contain the wide range of genres seen in Northern Thai, Lao, and Burmese collections. Indeed, the vast majority of the Central Thai manuscripts are either drawn from or based loosely on the Abhidhamma and are frequently used for funerary rites or the story of

Phra Malai, a monk with supernatural powers who goes on a long journey to visit various levels of heaven and hell. While there are certainly other texts found within Central Thai manuscripts (as mentioned below), these two texts are dominant. The general lack of variety in textual content, however, is made up for by the wide variety of illustrations taken from birth stories of the Buddha, Hindu epics, the natural world, and daily life scenes. Therefore, this issue hopes to speak to those interested in Buddhist art as much as those interested in the history of textual transmission and Buddhist literature. More broadly, it is intended to provide comparative examples to students of illuminated manuscripts from the Near East, Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and Europe. Central Thai manuscripts offer a fascinating case of the relation between scribes and artists, monks and laity, and religious and secular power.

Besides contributing to either Buddhist history in Southeast Asia or manuscript studies more broadly, this collection of articles should also contribute to the growing field of transnational cultural exchange in the early modern period. The authors of these articles have not only described the major collections in Germany, Ireland, England, Italy, Japan, and the United States comprehensively, but also offered insights into who collected these manuscripts and how they have been preserved and studied abroad. Tracing the history of these collections and collectors provides a different perspective on orientalism, as well as economic, religious, and diplomatic history. This is a study not only about political leaders, famous monks, kings, or wealthy collectors, but of charlatans, adventurers, amateur art historians, and Buddhist wanderers. It is often these small interactions, these subtle cultural exchanges, and these eccentric go-betweens that get ignored by historians. The manuscripts generally were not brought to Japan, Germany, Italy, or the United States as part of formal diplomatic exchanges or as royal gifts, but collected and sold by a wide range of individuals, often in small batches of two or three texts. While many of them have ended up in elite and well-established university libraries and museums, most manuscripts were not collected systematically by curators. There has been a recent growth in the study of curators, collectors, explorers, and eccentrics in the history of Japanese and Chinese art and manuscripts, but no major study of

these figures and the collections they built for preserving (or profiting from) Southeast Asian cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup>

Besides highlighting the historical and cultural importance of Central Thai manuscripts and how they spread to foreign collections, this issue's second goal is to build on the great work of Henry Ginsburg, to whom this issue is dedicated. Ginsburg, whose life is described by Jana Igunma in her article on British collections of Thai manuscripts, was not the first scholar to be interested in Thai manuscripts, but he was certainly the first person to make them the subject of his scholarly life's work. He wrote two major books on Thai illuminated manuscripts—*Thai Manuscript Painting* (1989) and *Thai Art and Culture: Historic Manuscripts from Western Collections* (2000). He was actively working on studying collections of Thai manuscripts and paintings abroad before his sudden and untimely death in 2007 when he was only sixty-six years old. Ginsburg was a mentor to many authors in this issue, and we are sure that he would have been thrilled to see greater attention paid to the surveying and historicizing of these major collections. Examining his papers, notes, and photographs left on his desk after he passed away, we realized that this would likely have been the book he would have tried to write on his own. It has taken eight of us less capable scholars to try to do justice to his legacy.

## *The Study of Thai Manuscripts*

Siamese/Thai (the country officially changed its name from Siam to Thailand in 1939), Tai (Tai Lue, Tai Khoen, Tai Yai/Shan), and Lao manuscripts cover a wide array of subjects, materials, and languages. Most were produced

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1 See, for example, Craig Cunlas, "Oriental Antiquities/Far Eastern Art," in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 413–46; Charlotte Eubanks, *Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Thomas Rimer, *Since Meiji: Perspectives on the Japanese Visual Arts, 1868–2000* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012); Alice Tseng, *The Imperial Museums of Meiji Japan: Architecture and the Art of the Nation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Christine Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

between the late fifteenth and early twentieth centuries on palm leaf (*bailan*), *khoi* paper, mulberry leaf paper (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), cotton, and silk and include rare pigments like Prussian blue, chrome yellow, vermilion, and gamboge. The languages on the manuscript include the Indic classical Pali language, as well as Khmer, Thai, Lao, Mon, Shan, Tai Leu, Tai Khoen, Sanskrit, Tamil, and Siamese/Thai. Scripts also come in a wide variety, and often one can find a single Pali-language manuscript composed in Khmer/Cambodian script painted by a Lao artisan living in Thailand, or a mixed Lanna and Khom script manuscript on mulberry paper painted by a Siamese artist. These scripts are either etched into a palm leaf with a small knife or painted with gold, silver, or black ink on *khoi* and other papers. These manuscripts were often out on display and read to crowds at dramatic performances, royal decrees, chronicles, or Buddhist sermons. Some were even hung as banners. Techniques of manuscript production and illumination in Siam influenced Cambodian, Burmese, Malay, and Lao texts and paintings. Portuguese, French, Chinese, and British influence is also seen in the ways Siamese experimented with shadowing, background, and format in the nineteenth century. The contents of the manuscripts include the earliest legal codes in Southeast Asia; chronicles of the lives of famous nuns, monks, and royal family members; cosmological maps; stories of the previous lives of the Buddha (*jātaka*), great battles and royal coronations, and ethical codes. There are guides for classical dancers and musicians replete with paintings of instruments and costumes. Some texts contain recipes for magical elixirs and herbal medicine. Some manuscripts are early liturgical prayer books that most often contain sets of *paritta*. *Paritta* are protective texts that keep the chanter safe from evil spells, menacing otherworldly creatures, and the very real dangers of knives, disease, betrayal, fire, and poison. There are even manuscripts containing illustrated manuals on how to care for elephants, cats, and horses. However, as stated, the two dominant textual genres in these Central Thai manuscripts are connected to funerary rites (Abhidhamma and Phra Malai).

Even though it is not a ritual text per se, sections of the Abhidhamma are used ritually today in Southeast Asia. There is no doubt among practitioners and scholars that they represent the pinnacle of the Buddha's own insight into the complexity of the human mind. In Theravāda, there are

seven sections of the Abhidhamma: *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapañña*, *Kathāvatthu*, *Yamaka*, and *(Mahā)paṭṭhāna*. The seven sections are characterized by long taxonomic lists covering a wide range of subjects generally relating to the relationships between the sense receptors; emotions; mental states; analytical modes; physical elements; the nature of perception; conditional relationships between thought, sense, and action; and the genesis and result of these conditional relationships. They also include early Buddhist debates, the refutation of various opinions, and specific commentaries on passages from other early Buddhist texts. Quite simply, these massive tomes attempt to describe in detail the psychological nature of the individual and link that nature to virtuous/nonvirtuous actions and soteriological potentials. Their mastery, if possible, is a mark of intellectual, ethical, and social prestige for teachers and students. Neither the Abhidhamma texts nor the commentaries include specific instructions on how to conduct rituals, nor does their content have any relation to rituals. Still, Abhidhamma texts are used at cremation ceremonies, and individual syllables from the Abhidhamma can be used for ritual protection. Cambodian, Lao, and Thai monastic teachers have used the Abhidhamma in just these ways. Despite the content, though, monks in the region often use sections from the Abhidhamma. This is explicitly seen in the most common version of the Abhidhamma in Central Thai manuscripts—the *Abhidhamma chet kamphi* (*Seven books of the Abhidhamma*). This genre of texts is well known by both the elite and common people of Thailand. Often only the titles of the texts and short excerpt verses are employed in Pali and then expanded on in the vernacular in the course of a ritual and following sermon. In modern times, the Pali sections of the Thai and Pali *Abhidhamma chet kamphi* and *Abhidhamma chet kamphi ruam* are only chanted, and the actual Abhidhamma source text is not chanted. These verses are chanted while monks stand in front of the funeral pyre. Funerals are perhaps the most common and frequent times for public Pali chanting in Thailand. A funeral is an occasion when large groups of laypeople come in contact with monks. At a funeral, chanting the syllables from the titles of the texts of the Abhidhamma helps guide the consciousness of the deceased to a good rebirth.

In Central Thai manuscripts, the story of Phra Malai is often recorded not in Pali, but in vernacular Thai. In this popular story, the monk Phra

Malai uses his magical power of flight to visit the different realms of hell (*naraka*). Phra Malai gives the denizens of hell hope and feels their suffering. They ask Phra Malai to warn others on earth not to engage in misconduct that will lead them to hell in the next life. Other scenes from the story of Phra Malai include him helping others on earth undertake acts of compassion so they can be reborn in a heavenly realm. Phra Malai visits the heavens as well, and meets with the king of the gods, Indra, at the famous celestial Chulamani Reliquary. This story of suffering, but also of hope, was popular (and still is) at funerals. Images from the story of Phra Malai often appear in other manuscripts, even Abhidhamma manuscripts, which offers an interesting blending of these two genres.

Although many manuscripts were well copied and beautifully illustrated for royalty and wealthy patrons and functioned as art objects, most manuscripts did not remain unread in royal libraries. Instead, they were used every day in teaching in monasteries and are excessively marked with comments and corrections. Although there are some examples (quite a small number, actually) of manuscripts that are nearly exact copies of Pali manuscripts from Sri Lanka and Burma, most scribes were creatively engaged and constantly altered manuscripts. These changes are so common that mimetic fidelity apparently was not an ideal. These teachers and students were not merely amanuenses. They willingly and frequently changed the content and structure of Buddhist texts in the process of teaching and translating them. This dynamism makes the study of the social usage and functions of manuscripts important for getting a richer picture of the ways Buddhists in the region learned and taught their tradition before the rise of printing and mass media. These manuscripts are often the only visual witness we have to pre-modern Central Thai culture and provide information to not only religious studies and scholars of jurisprudence, but also environmental historians and botanists.

Most manuscripts were produced, copied, taught, and preserved in Buddhist monasteries, and others were produced in royal courts or royally sponsored monastic scriptoria (although, unlike in European traditions, there were not specific rooms or buildings dedicated to being scriptoria, and copying, illustrating, and writing could be done on an open-air veranda, in image rooms, in courtyards, and even in monastic cells [*kuti*]). Although

with limited space I will not be able to describe monastic or royal education in detail, let me emphasize here that monastic and court education is not simply reading texts. There are physical, economic, social, and aesthetic dimensions. Economically and socially, monkhood and royal court membership offers access to prestige and free education. It exposed and still exposes young, highly localized, (mostly) men to a world where monks, princesses, princes, consorts, handlers, scribes, and artists travel and often become involved in translocal mobile intellectual communities. Moreover, consorts, princes, and monks do not just study and converse with teachers about texts. They chant, prostrate, shave, meditate, dress, and walk in restrictive and formal ways. Physical and aesthetic awareness and discipline are complementary to textual study, memorization, ritual specificity, and concentration. The importance of the visual, the kinesthetic, and the affective sides of text-based education is often ignored. Texts are delivered, in parts or wholes, orally. Flanking the lecturer/preacher are murals, images, incense, candles, shifting feet, and the occasional cough. Texts are heard in a cacophonous sensory atmosphere, not just read.

There is little information about daily life in monastic or royal educational institutions in Thailand before the late nineteenth century. Because so many manuscripts were destroyed in the burning of Ayutthaya by the Burmese in the late eighteenth century, most manuscript collections are found in Northern Thailand and parts of northeast Thailand and Laos. There are also smaller collections in Southern Thailand. Cambodian manuscript collections are much smaller because of the destructive Khmer Rouge period, among other reasons. There are few if any eyewitness reports, no royal edicts, no photographs, and so on that can provide a snapshot of the day in the life of a teacher or student before the late nineteenth century. So, before this time we have little more than legends and manuscripts, but if we read closely, manuscripts and legends can tell us a lot.

Although scholars have not extensively studied the colophons of all known manuscripts, from a representative example we tentatively suggest some general findings. First, from colophons and local legends, we know that manuscripts were used by students, patrons, and teachers who traveled from distant towns and cities (including those in present day Laos, Cambodia, and Burma), attracted to schools because of famous teachers and impor-



tant relics, and that these teachers were known not only for their Pali scholarship, but for their ability to chant and teach the local vernacular. Frequent mobility is a virtue in both royal and Buddhist monastic life. We do know that monastic schools and various homes of the nobility were not isolated from each other. Colophons show that students, scribes, and artists (both lay and ordained) traveled between monasteries on the one hand or intermarried and mingled on the other. This is quite common today, and it is not strange to find students from many different towns and cities studying together.

Second, we know that in Thailand, vernacular texts were produced in much greater numbers than Pali manuscripts. Vernacular texts were not considered secondary to Pali texts for teaching, and teachers could become famous for their ability to write and teach eloquently in the vernacular.

Third, local leaders saw supporting textual production (and thus, we assume, monastic education) as important alongside the forging of images, construction of reliquaries, and building of monasteries and royal homes, libraries, and workshops. Although the teachers themselves sponsored the copying and composition of many manuscripts, wealthy patrons, including royalty, actively supported textual production.

Fourth, while we find that palm leaf was the standard material used in the production of manuscripts of all types in Northern Thailand and Laos, mulberry-paper manuscripts were much more commonly used in Central Thailand. Many of these mulberry-paper manuscripts have extensive illustrations.

Finally, there was no overarching standard curriculum at these or other monastic schools or royal courts until the very late nineteenth century, and even after that, standardization was not widespread.<sup>2</sup> Teachers and others did not systematically copy, translate, or comment on texts that fall into any discernible chronological, regional, or thematic order. Looking at the manuscript collections in Thailand broadly, we see that educators based their curricula

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2 For a study of the pedagogical uses of manuscripts in Laos and Thailand, see Justin McDaniel, *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words: Histories of Buddhist Monastic Education in Laos and Thailand* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).

mostly on vernacular or bilingual commentaries and glosses worked on by students from a variety of locales.

Evidence suggests strongly that scribes most often aurally copied the work (that is, a monk read one manuscript out loud while a scribe listened to the dictation and copied it onto new palm-leaf or *kboi* paper). Some manuscripts show signs that the scribe read the source manuscript and copied the text by sight. Manuscripts reveal a wide range of “faithfulness” to the purported source texts. Some manuscript copies can be traced back through many generations showing little change, but most have considerable changes from copy to copy. For many manuscripts, we do not know if the copy ever was in any contact (that is, was in the same room/same desk or on the same floor) with the source text or if the teacher was reciting the text from memory. This scribal practice allowed for the manipulation, expansion, rearranging, and pedagogical use of Pali and vernacular source texts in nonstandardized ways.

Opening up these manuscripts and reading the colophons also confirms their idiosyncratic and highly independent order and the mixed training and background of their scribes. For example, colophons reveal a world of traveling students with mixed training. We often find manuscripts that have been composed or copied at one monastery or royal scriptorium and then moved to another hundreds of miles away. Like in the medieval scriptoria of Ireland and France, many monks would sit together copying, composing, and editing one text based on sleep schedules, access to material, their teacher’s perception of their particular skills, requests by patrons, the need for many students to practice reading and writing based on a limited number of texts and prepared palm leaf, and the instructions of their teachers. Monastic teachers today often read out Pali texts that students are asked to translate word-by-word in notebooks and out loud.

The manuscripts from Laos and Northern Thailand are generally older than Central Siamese/Thai examples because of the destruction and theft of manuscripts in Ayutthaya in 1767, and their colophons have been more extensively researched. We have much more historical documentation for the Central region (travelers’ reports, photographs, royal chronicles, newspapers, and the like), and thus scholars have generally not had to rely on manuscript colophons for historical sources. Moreover, the colophons on illuminated manuscripts produced mostly in monasteries in and around

Bangkok in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provide little information besides dates, titles, and provenance for manuscripts. However, these illuminated manuscripts reveal much information about changing artistic styles, the use of the Khom (influenced by Khmer) script, European influence on painting technique, the availability of certain pigments and binding agents, and the like. Illuminated manuscripts from this region are also different in the subjects they draw upon. For example, there is a greater emphasis in the illustrations on the last ten *jātakas* (*Thosachat chadok*), the cosmology of the three worlds (*Traibhūmikathā*), scenes from various Thai versions of the Hindu/Brahmanic epic of love and war (*Ramāyāna* [*Wanakhadi ramakian*]), paintings of animals, classical dance methods and costumes, warfare and weapons, medical care, and horoscopes. The important thing to note is that the content of the illumination and the content of the text in Central Thai manuscripts often does not match. For example, a large number of abbreviated Abhidhamma liturgical manuscripts (*Chet khamp̄hi*, *Kan kae*, *Khamp̄hi ruam*, and others) have illumination from the stories of Phra Malai, the last ten *jātakas*, the life story of the Buddha, and other popular stories.

### *Foreign Collections of Thai Manuscripts*

Foreign collections of Thai manuscripts contain manuscripts largely written in the nineteenth century. Since Bangkok was the center of the southern Buddhist world in the nineteenth century (and largely still is), many artisans and Buddhist intellectuals from Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, China, Burma, and even Japan moved there and influenced local manuscript art and writing. They often also took manuscripts back to their home countries, where they made their way into museums, universities, libraries, and auction houses. Most early illuminated manuscripts from the capital city of Central Thailand (Siam), Ayutthaya, were burned or stolen by the Burmese in 1767. The manuscripts we do have are mostly large libretto books made of a type of thick mulberry paper (unlike the mostly palm-leaf manuscripts of Northern Thailand and Laos). The mulberry paper allows the scribe or artist (it seems that in most cases the person who painted the various scenes

in the manuscript and the author/scribe of the manuscript were not the same person) to paint elaborate scenes from the *jātakas* (often the *Dasajātaka* collection), the story of Phra Malai, decorative nature scenes, animals (especially animal husbandry manuals for elephants, horses, and cats), and cosmological scenes from the *Traibhūmikathā*. These manuscripts were often kept in beautifully carved wooden cabinets (*tu phratraipidok*). Good examples can be seen at Wat Sala Pun, Wat Choeng Wai, and Wat Anongkharam. These cabinets were either black lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay, or carved and painted with gold. They are strikingly different from the *hip* (manuscript boxes) of the northern and northeastern parts of Thailand that are often in red lacquer and have a removable top versus front doors and drawers. Some scenes carved on these cabinets depict European and Near Eastern visitors to Ayutthaya.<sup>3</sup> The manuscripts and occasionally the cabinets became collectors' items so much so that some manuscripts in Thailand have evidence that demonstrates they were specifically made for the foreign market. Most manuscripts ended up in France (although these were mostly palm-leaf manuscripts, not illuminated ones), Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Japan, and the United States.

The seven articles in this special issue cover a wide range of material. Jana Igunma focuses on the work of Henry Ginsburg at the British Library, but also discusses Thai manuscript collections spread throughout Great Britain, especially looking at collections at the Wellcome Trust, the Royal Asiatic Society, the Bodleian Library at Oxford, the British Museum, and the John Rylands Library. Her comprehensive study shows the wide variety of painting styles and artistic subjects in Central Thai manuscripts. Baas Terwiel provides a history of Thai manuscript collecting and preservation in Germany. He reviews the early work of Klaus Wenk and then shows that the German collections in Berlin, Dresden, Cologne, Mainz, and other places not only contain a wide variety of Central Thai manuscripts, but are particularly strong in Phra Malai collections. Moreover, the collections in

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3 The best source text for the study of Ayutthayan art is *The Kingdom of Siam: The Art of Central Thailand, 1350–1800*, ed. Pattaratorn Chirapravati and Forest McGill, with contributions by Hiram Woodward, Santi Leksukhum, Henry Ginsburg, Dhiravat na Pombejra, Natasha Reichle, and Tushara Bindu Gude (San Francisco, CA: Asian Art Museum Books, 2005).

Germany are a treasure trove of manuscript ephemera like ornamented wrapping cords, boxes, covers, and the like. Claudio Cicuzza focuses on collections of Thai manuscripts held at the Biblioteca Maurizio Taddei in the Department of Asian Studies of the University of Naples, originally from the collection belonging to Colonel G. E. Gerini, donated to the Istituto Orientale Universitario. While this collection is small compared with others in Europe, it contains excellent examples of illuminated manuscripts with illustrations from the last ten birth stories of the Buddha, a manual for elephants, and a cosmological map of the three worlds. Peter Skilling and Santi Pakdeekham look at idiosyncratic collections in Thailand itself and how local domestic collections are as unsystematic as foreign ones. Their contribution is also important because it looks at a collection held in a monastery in the rural province of Phetchaburi outside of Bangkok (where most large collections are located in Central Thailand). Toshiya Unebe provides an in-depth study of Thai manuscripts in Japan with a special focus on the Nittaiji temple in Nagoya, the Otani University collection, the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, and a newly discovered private collection. His contribution is interesting because it shows that Japan both collected manuscripts through individual traders and collectors, and had several formal exchanges orchestrated by the royal family of Thailand. He also recounts the interesting story of a manuscript found in the Matsura Historical Museum, located in Hirado (a port town in the present-day Nagasaki Prefecture), that is said to have been brought to Japan in 1616 by a Japanese merchant, Kurozaemon Ozaki. Unebe's contribution provides both a general overview and a close textual study of several important manuscripts.

Justin McDaniel looks at the development of and certain key manuscripts held at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland. He provides a short biography of Chester Beatty, a wealthy American collector who is most famous for his Islamic manuscripts, but who managed to amass one of the most impressive collections of Central Thai manuscripts in Europe. He moved to Ireland and established a library, and after his death, the collection became the foundation for the new Chester Beatty Library located on the grounds of the Dublin Castle. Finally, Susanne Kerekes and Justin McDaniel examine several major U.S. collections and collectors in Baltimore,

New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and others and then focus on the collection at the University of Pennsylvania. They highlight not only Buddhist manuscripts, but also an early translation of a section of the Christian Gospels in Thai, and a rare example of royal instructions on temple repair and military planning.

### *Manuscript Archives, Monastic Libraries, and Catalogues*

In Thailand, there are individual manuscript libraries in Nan, Phrae, Lam-pang, Chiang Mai, Phayao, Uttaradit, Ubon Ratchathani, Mukthahan, Ratchaburi, Suphanburi, Samut Prakan, Bangkok, and other places. Manuscripts are also kept in protected archives in Chiang Mai, Ubon Ratchathani, Bangkok, London, Paris, Washington, DC, the National University of Singapore, the University of Michigan, Cornell University, and the University of California at Berkeley. There has been no comprehensive catalogue for these manuscripts. David Wharton and Harald Hundius have begun to combine catalogues of northern Thai manuscripts, as well as digitize the massive collections in order to make a master list and make the manuscripts available online. The Digital Library of Northern Thai Manuscripts (DLNTM; [www.lannamanuscripts.net](http://www.lannamanuscripts.net)), with funding from the Henry Luce Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the State Library of Berlin, and the University of Pennsylvania, is now online. It is a monumental achievement and extremely useful. This project would not be possible without the work of Singkha Wannasai, Rujaya Abhakorn, and their teams in Chiang Mai who tirelessly documented manuscripts in the region for decades. Excluding the catalogues of inscriptions and reference works that are useful for studying local manuscripts, a partial list of catalogues for the major manuscripts in Thailand includes: *Raicheunangseu boran lan na ekasan maikrofilm khong sathapan wichai mahawithyalai chiang mai, 2521–2533* [1978–1990] (Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, 1990); *Banchi maikrofilm khwang lunag phrabang lae bo phaphitaphan khwang luang phrabang lae hongsamut haeng xat lao* (printed at the National Library of Laos in 1999 and updated periodically [the German Foreign Office, Chiang Mai University, and Chulalongkorn University also have copies of these catalogues]); Balee

Buddharaksa, *Pali Literature in Lan Na: Catalogue of 89 Manuscripts with Summaries* [Thai] (Chiang Mai: SRI, 2543 [2000]); and (Phra Maha) Athison Thirasilo, *Prawat Kamphi Pali* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Monastic University Press, 2541 [1998]). Catalogues for the Center for the Promotion of Art and Culture (CPAC) are produced and updated periodically for each seven Northern Thai provinces. They are available at the CPAC and have not been published or distributed. For a relatively complete list of catalogues (in the “abbreviations and references” section) in which Central and Northern Thai manuscripts appear, see the first two volumes of the *Materials for the Study of the Tripitaka*, compiled, translated, and edited by Peter Skilling and Santi Pakdeekham (vol. 1, *Pāli Literature Transmitted in Central Siam* [Bangkok: Fragile Palm Leaves Foundation, 2002]; vol. 2, *Pāli and Vernacular Literature Transmitted in Central and Northern Siam* [Bangkok: Fragile Palm Leaves Foundation, 2004]). Skilling and Santi reproduce with commentary and an introduction a list of Pali texts that Prince Damrong believed were composed in Thailand. This list was included in the introduction to Prince Damrong’s edition of the *Saṅgītyavamsa phongsawadan ruang sanggayana Phra Dhammawinai Somdet Phra Wanaratana Wat Phra Chetuphon nai Ratchakan thi 1 thang phasa Magadha* (Bangkok: Hang hun suan camkatsivaphon, 2421 [1923]). François Lagirarde, “Les manuscrits en Thai du Nord de la Siam Society,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 84, no. 1 (1996): 91–155;>. See also J. Liyanratne, “Pāli manuscripts from Sri Lanka in the Cambridge University Library,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 18 (1993): 131–48; Sommai Premchit, *Lan Na Literature: Catalogue of Palm Leaf Texts in Wat Libraries in Chiang Mai* (Chiang Mai: SRI, 1986), updated from Sommai Premchit with Puangkham Thuikaeo’s catalogue of 1975 in Thai. The Siam Society in Bangkok produces several short catalogues of their manuscript holdings (*Banchi ekasan boran*) that can be read at the library. Several texts by Supaphanh na Bangchang that are useful for the study of Thai manuscript traditions (especially Northern Thai) are listed in the bibliography. For research in Thailand, permission of the National Research Council of Thailand is often necessary to consult these Thai collections. Finally, the sixty-three-volume *Saranukhrom wathanatham Thai* (Encyclopedia of Thai culture) (especially the thirty volumes dedicated in Northern and northeastern Thailand) published by Thai Wanich Bank

beginning in 1999 are useful for some background on individual manuscripts and texts. Volker Grabowsky has worked closely with German collections at the Museum für Völkerkunde (Berlin, Germany), the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and the Museum for Indian Art in Dalhem. Examining various lists and indirect information compiled by the now deceased Klaus Wenk and Heinz Bechert (Wenk, *Laotische Handschriften* [Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1975], and Bechert, *Abkürzungsvorzeichnis zur Buddhistischen Literatur in Indein und Südostasien* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990]), and with additional information being compiled by Baas Jarend Terwiel, there could be at least 138 Thai and Lao manuscripts spread across these three collections. However, these have not been properly catalogued, and few have any photographic or digital record. There are also collections at *Det Kongelige Bibliotek* of Copenhagen for which a descriptive catalogue was compiled by Georges Coedès and published in 1966 (*Inventaire des manuscrits bibliothèque royale de Copenhague: Catalogue des manuscrits en pali, laotien et siamois provenant de la Thaïlande*). These manuscripts were collected between 1911 and 1935 by the Royal Library of Copenhagen and published as part of the catalogue of oriental manuscripts, xylographs, and so on in *Danish Collections* (vol. 2, part 2). In Paris, the Bibliothèque Nationale (Oriental Division—long held in the old Richelieu library) has a large collection, and the initial lists are found in Antoine Cabaton's *Catalogue sommaire des manuscrits sanscrits et pâlis, 2e fascicule—manuscrits pâlis* (Paris: BnF, 1908). He produced several other smaller catalogues, including *Catalogue sommaire des manuscrits indiends, indo-chinois et malayo-poly-nesians* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1912); and “Fonds indochinois de la Bibliothèque nationale,” “Manuscrits laotiens,” and “Manuscrits siamois,” *Un supplément manuscrit donne les notices des manuscrits Indochinois* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1912). Since January 2003, Monique Cohen at the Bibliothèque Nationale (Oriental Division) has been working to update this catalogue and was extremely helpful to me in my research in Paris. Other resources include Au Chieng's *Catalogue descriptif des manuscrits du fonds pali de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: BnF, 1956 [updated]); Francis Xavier Tessier, “Catalogue des manuscrits siamois de la bibliothèque Impériale,” compiled in 1858 with comments from Mgr. Pallegoix and Hermann Zotenberg, *Indochinois 512* (Paris:



BnF, 1912); and Petrus Voorhoeve's "Additions et corrections au catalogue de Cabaton" (an insertion placed in the Cabaton catalogue in 1952 in the BnF). The short book by Annie Berthier (*Manuscripts, xylographes, estampages: Les collections orientales du départements des Manuscrits* [Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 2000]) has additional, but not comprehensive information. Jacqueline Filliozat has produced a number of useful catalogues, including "Catalogue of the Pali Manuscript Collection in Burmese and Siamese Characters Kept in the Library of Vijayasundaramaya Asgiriya," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 21 (1995): 135–92; and "Survey of the Burmese and Siamese Pāli Manuscript Collections in the Wellcome Institute," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 19 (1993): 1–42. She also provides a useful guide: "Documents Useful for the Identification of Pāli Manuscripts of Cambodia, Laos and Thailand," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 16 (1992): 13–55. See also *Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts Kept in the Otani University Library* (Kyoto: Otani University, 1995). I thank my friend Yohei Shimizu for providing me a copy of this beautifully produced catalogue. Additional information is provided in Haas Ernst, *Catalogue of Sanskrit and Pali Books in the British Museum* (London: Trubner & Co., 1876); L. Barnett and D. Barnett, *A Supplementary Catalogue of Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit Books in the Library of the British Museum Acquired During the Years 1906–1928* (London: British Museum, 1988, and Cecil Bendall, *Catalogue of Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit Books in the Library of the British Museum Acquired During the Years 1876–1892* (London: British Museum, 1893). Japanese scholars Kazuko Tanabe, Yohei Shimizu, and Toshiya Unebe have worked extensively with the Nittaiji in Nagoya and the Otani University Library's collection of Thai manuscripts and produced a *Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts Kept in the Otani University Library* (Kyoto: Otani University, 1995). There are also a few manuscripts (undocumented) included in the very large (160,000-book) Thai collection at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University. Many of these resources and the history of their development are described in detail in the articles in this special collection.

Finally, two of the most useful sources for the study of Thai manuscripts are not catalogues or online resources, but studies of single manuscripts.

Naomi Appleton, Sarah Shaw, and Toshiya Unebe formed a great team in creating a book—*Illuminating the Life of the Buddha: An Illustrated Chanting Book from Eighteenth-Century Siam* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2013)—that describes a single late eighteenth-century Siamese manuscript (*samut khoi*) held in Oxford’s Bodleian Library (MS.Pali a. 27 (R)). This manuscript includes illustrations of parts of the last ten *jātakas* followed by the life of the Buddha. Manuscript illustrations of the life of the Buddha are extremely rare even though they are common on monastery murals, making this manuscript a rare find. The text of the manuscript contains excerpts from the *Vinaya*, the *Brahmajālasutta*, the *Abhidhamma*, the *Sabassanaya*, the *Mahābuddhagaṇa*, the *Mahābuddhagaṇavaṇṇanā*, and the *Uṇhissavijaya*. This is also rare, as most Siamese illuminated manuscripts of this style are either the *Abhidhamma chet kamphi* and/or the Phra Malai story. There are also few examples of this size and condition from this period. This is a large liturgical text anthology that would have guided chanters. This book will become a model for future manuscript studies in Southeast Asia and inspire codicologists, art historians, paleographers, and scholars of the history of the book in Europe, the Islamic world, and East and South Asia. It is also an ideal book to use in introducing students to Siamese Buddhism and manuscript studies. Pattaratorn Chirapravati’s *Divination au royaume de Siam: Le corps, la guerre, le destin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011) is another close study of a single manuscript. It looks at a manuscript dated to around the 1830s in the collection of the Bodmer Museum in Geneva (Switzerland). The single manuscript has three different texts: Tamraphichaisongkhram (Treatise on the art of war), Tamranuat (Treatise on pressure massage), and Prommachat (Divination manual). Chirapravati provides a full facsimile edition in the creative form of a libretto book and a descriptive study of the text.

This is the first time that a comprehensive study of Central Thai manuscripts in foreign collections has been attempted. Inspired by the early work of Henry Ginsburg, the contributors to this special issue of *Manuscript Studies* hope to not only provide a detailed guide to the contents of the British, German, Irish, Italian, Japanese, and U.S. collections of Central

Thai manuscripts, but also hope to reveal the comparative possibilities for students of manuscript studies more broadly. They also want to show that collections of Central Thai manuscripts (indeed manuscripts of all origins) are the products of thousands of decisions by collectors, traders, curators, librarians, textualists, and art historians.

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