



# SCA-UK Newsletter

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Vol. 11, December 2015

## Updates on Shan Studies and Recent Changes in the Shan State



### SCA-UK: Aiming for Promotion of Shan Arts and Culture

The Shan Cultural Association in the United Kingdom (SCA-UK) is a UK based, not-for-profit, cultural organization. We aim to maintain and promote Shan (Tai) arts and culture through cultural events and to share our culture with Shan and non-Shan who are interested in Shan arts and cultures.

We organize our own Shan cultural events like Shan National Day and Shan New Year Celebrations. We also participate in cultural events organized by other cultural associations in the UK.

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**Front cover:** Shan group dance performance in honouring the golden jubilee birthday of Venerable Professor Dr Saokhu Khammai Dhammasami, the Chair of SCA-UK, on the temple ground of Wat Holoi, his native village temple in Laikha, Shan State of the Union of Myanmar. Photo credit: Sao Khun-Hti Laikha.

**Back cover:** Traditional Shan musical band and dance performed by members of the SCA-UK at the Shan New Year event held at SOAS, University of London in November 2014. Photo credit: Media team of the SCA-UK.

**The Newsletter Team:** Dr Nang Senhom Saihkay, Dr Sai Jotika Khur-Yearn, Dr Nang Nidarphorn and Mr Sai Hseng.

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## The 2110<sup>th</sup> Pi Mai Tai New Year Message from the SCA\_UK Chairman (13 December 2015, London)

### Maisoong Pi Mai Tai - Happy Tai New Year



The way people celebrate New Year reflects their collective identity and culture. Shan people, who call themselves Tai, welcome their New Year, Pi Mai Tai, in late November or early December. For them, it is also to celebrate good crops after the harvesting time. Families and neighbours come together for khao-book, a popular cake made of sticky rice and sesame.

For decades Shan people in the Union of Myanmar have had to plan this annual festival under an authoritarian regime and there have been numerous restrictions placed on the organizers as to what could be said and expressed. Sometimes even the permission to hold the New Year celebrations was delayed until a week or less before the actual date, causing enormous anxiety and inconvenience in planning. We hope a new and progressive environment would prevail and the Shan could enjoy full freedom in celebrating their cultural identity. After all, they are among the founding fathers of the Union and deserve equality and freedom.

SOAS University of London has been one of the few places since 2007 for the overseas Shan to freely welcome their New Year. Usually there is an academic component to it. This year is no exception. We welcome Prof. Barend Jan Terwiel of Germany, Dr. Andrew Skilton of King's College University of London, Dr. Angela Chiu of SOAS and Dr. Susan Conway of SOAS to the one-day seminar on Shan. We wish to record our heartfelt thanks to Prof. Ashley Thompson of SOAS for her support. We also like to thank our friends, Ms Jana Iguma of the British Library, and Dr. Sao Hkun-Hti (Charles) for their contribution of articles to this newsletter. As in previous years, Dr. Sai Jotika Khur-Yearn of SOAS and SCA-UK academic coordinator has worked hard for this seminar. The SCA-UK is forever indebted to all the scholars their interest and effort in sustaining the Shan awareness and culture.

Just after the Pi Mai Tai this year and in Lashio, Shan State, a few hundreds of traditional scholars and university based academics will gather to exchange knowledge on Lik Loung, great texts, of the Shan. Lik Loung is a type of largely but not exclusively Buddhist literature composed to communicate the ethical and meditational messages of Buddhism to the audience. It is

intended more for listeners, then readers. The writing is styled with rhymed and tonal structures. Thousands of long Lik Loung, mostly hand-written, remain uncatalogued and are scattered in parts of Shan State where they have not been lost in civil war; their contents yet to be critically studied.

The Lik Loung conference in Lashio on 27-30 December 2015 is the third of its kind and is aimed at preserving and promoting. Some selected overseas scholars will participate for the first time. They will share their knowledge on preservation of manuscripts in Lao, Thailand, Arunachal Pradesh of India and Sipsongbanna, Yunnan of China. And, this will be the first time English is used as a second medium at this annual conference while Shan remains the principal medium.

Lik Loung should and can be considered part of Buddhist and Asian literary heritage. For that to happen, more study and exchange is needed at many levels, among the Shan and interested academics elsewhere. Here, the SCA-UK wishes to congratulate the Hidden Treasure project cataloging Lik Loung in the UK, for example, at the Bodleian Library of Oxford University and Cambridge University Library for its successful completion. The leaders of the project Prof. Kate Crosby of King's College, Dr. Gillian Evison of Bodleian Library and Dr. Andrew Skilton have contributed immensely to the preservation of Lik Loung. The funders, the Dhammachai Foundation of Thailand, have been very generous.

The SCA-UK is proud to have had some of its members such as Dr. Jotika Khur-Yearn to play an important part of this project. The SCA-UK will continue to be part of preserving and promoting the Shan culture the foreseeable future. I am honoured to chair both the SCA-UK and the Lik Loung Conference organizing Committee. I invite all Shan and non-Shan to take an interest in the Lik Loung literature which has helped deepen the understanding of the Buddha's peaceful message among the Shan Theravada Buddhists over the centuries.

On this auspicious Pi Mai Tai Day and on behalf of all SCA-UK members I take the opportunity to wish all Shan/ Tai/ Dai and their friends around the world: **Happy and Peaceful Pi Mai.**

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**Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami DPhil (Oxon)**

**Chairman, SCA\_UK; Buddhist Chaplain to Oxford University  
& Executive Secretary, International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU)**

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**The Golden Jubilee Birthday Celebrations of  
Ven. Professor Dr Saokhu Khammai Dhammasami and the Second Lik Loung  
Conference (Laikha - Shan State, Myanmar. 20-30 December 2014)**  
*Photo credit: Media Team for the 2nd Lik Loung Conference*



**The achievements of our members in 2015**



**Dr. Jotika Khur-Yearn (London, UK) - MSc Library Graduation at City University London 2015**



## A Reflection on the Extraordinary 50th Birthday Celebrations of Venerable Professor Dr Saokhu Khammai Dhammasami and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lik Loung Conference

*Dr. Jotika Khur-Yearn (SOAS, University of London)*

During the November and December last year (2014), the extraordinary event of the 50th birthday celebrations of Venerable Professor Dr Saokhu Khammai Dhammasami was held in the town of Laikha, a former Shan principality located in central Shan State, the Union of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). Laikha is also the hometown of Ven. Dhammasami, which was the reason why the place had been chosen for holding this extraordinary event.

The event was also joined by the Second Lik Loung Conference, which was intentionally organised to be part of Ven. Dhammasami's 50th birthday celebrations. Well, at the first glance, it may look a bit odd, and some may wonder how the two events could be held together. However, when considering the natures of the two events, one will see that the two events are actually well connected. Apparently, Venerable Dhammasami, who is celebrating his 50th birthday anniversary, is also the founding Chair of the Organising Committee for the Lik Loung Conference. In fact, he is also our Chairman of the SCA-UK, so is very well connected with this Newsletter too.



The event was extraordinary for a number of reasons, which I will give some highlights in this paper, and it has some great impacts on the transformation of the communities where changes for the development and peace are much needed. Because of these reasons, certainly welcome and inspired by members of the communities, the event was attended by people from all walks of life from all over the Shan State and beyond. The facts and information mentioned in this paper are mostly from an article in Shan written by Saokhu Sumana Sengwan, a Shan student monk now doing his PhD research at Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka, who was one of the busiest monks during the extraordinary event, helping running it from the beginning to the end. The full reference of his article is provided at the end of this paper.

Before writing about the formal programmes for the birthday celebrations, I would like to highlight some remarkable activities surrounding the birthday anniversary. These include the plantation of thousands of trees mostly in Laikha but also in other areas where there are connections with Ven. Dhammasami, the building of the new preaching hall of Wat Holoi, the renovation of the Laikha's public hospital sponsored by Dr Sai Mauk Kham (the Union's Vice-President) and family, the new hospital for the sangha (community of monks) at Kyaung Pang Monastery, the building of the Dhamma Hall in the former place where Ven. Dhammasami's family lived in the village of Wan Pang, the building of the Golden Jubilee Pagoda on the mountain which is about 5 miles to the west of Laikha, and the International Pali Conference held in the Shan State for the first time also in commemoration of Ven. Dhammasami golden anniversary birthday celebrations. The conference was held for two days of the 18 and 19 December 2014 at the Veluvana Temple in Taunggyi, the capital of the Shan State. More detail of this conference can be found in the report by Saokhu Nayanasa-milankara Nawsengmurng, a Shan student monk now doing MPhil/PhD research at a university in Sri Lanka and the full reference of his article is provided at the end of this article.



Also a wonderful programme as part of the event was the programme for local people to have their health check, which was sponsored by a number of medical groups both from government and private health services. It is a rare opportunity for villagers to have their health check, so there were about 6000 people who had their medical check up, many of whom were the elders having their eye-test.

Another remarkable programme dedicated to his golden jubilee birthday is that Ven. Dhammasami encouraged his friends and pupils to publish their books on any topics related to Buddhism or Shan, which he then found sponsors for publishing. There were seventy titles of books altogether, with about 150,000 copies in total, written in Shan, Burmese, Thai and English, which were published to mark the occasion. All the books were distributed at the event for free.

Moreover, there are long term projects that Ven. Dhammasami has set up as part of his 50th birthday celebrations. For example, he established a scholarship for young people in Laikha to enhance their high education at universities at home and abroad. Furthermore, there was another historical movement during the year of his 50th birthday anniversary that he was able to lead the senior members of the Shan Sangha and high profile government officials such as Dr Sai Mauk Kham (mentioned above), Sao Aung Myat, Chief Minister of the Shan State Government) and many generous devotees to raise funds and lay the foundation for the Shan State Buddhist University in Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State.

The formal programmes of the birthday celebrations were run for over ten days, arranged in several parts and several sections, some programmes even took place simultaneously, from the 20th to the 30th December 2014, while other informal but still important activities took place even several days before the formal event. As we shall see more later in this paper, the birthday celebration part was regarded by the communities as truly and extraordinary. Apparently members of the Shan communities believed that, in the

name of Ven. Dhammasami, who has international reputation and respect from the government officials, it was a great opportunity for them to show their unity, cultures and identity.

The celebration was begun with a grand opening ceremony at Wat Holo of Wan Pang Village, the native village temple of Ven. Dhammasami, and the event was attended by distinguished guests and high ranking officials from both the Sangha (community of monks) and lay societies. High profile members of the Sangha, who were participated in the event, include the Most Venerable Khuva Boonchum Nyānasamvaro, the holy monk who is highly respected among Tai communities across the borders as their spiritual reader, the Most Venerable Dr Paññānanda, the Chair of the Shan State Sangha Council, and the Most Venerable Sao Sra Sukhaminda, a meditation master and preacher who is also the Secretary General of the Shan State Sangha Council, to name a few. The lay participants were led by Lady Nang Shwe Mung, wife of Dr Sai Mauk Kham, and Sao Aung Myat (mentioned above). And, remarkably, the event was also attended by special guests from abroad, who are most likely to be the first group of foreigners to have travelled to Laikha for an official event in the last 50 years. The special guests include the Most Venerable Phra Dhammapandit, the abbot of Wat Phra Ram Kao, Thailand, Phra Sophonvachirabhorn, Vice-Rector for foreign affairs of MCU, Acting director of Dhammaduta College of MCU, Thailand, and Prof. Rathna Wijethunga & other Pali scholars from Sri Lanka.

Formal programmes for the birthday celebrations included sermons, concerts, drama shows and exhibitions. The sermons section was divided into three types: the holy sermons, the sermon for the youths, and the sermons for adults.

The holy sermons here were referred to the sermons that were delivered by the Most Venerable Khuva Boonchum Nyanasamvaro, who had travelled from his temple, Wat Phrathat Donroeng, located along



the west bank of Mekong River, near Tachileik and arrived at Wat Holoi in Laikha in the morning of the 25th November 2014. The holiness of Khuva Boonchum is very popular among Tai communities and it is also spread among Buddhist communities in the neighbouring countries and regions. He is well known for long retreats of meditation practices usually in a cave. For instance, when he turned forty-seven years of age, he started taking retreat in a cave near Lampang of northern Thailand for three years without seeing anyone, and came out of the retreat only after his 50th birthday was passed. It was apparently his way of preparing for and celebrating his golden jubilee birthday anniversary!

The followers of Khuva Boonchum believe that by paying respect to him and listen to his sermons, they will be in turn rewarded with good luck and protection from danger. Therefore, not surprisingly, wherever Khava Boonchum goes, there is always a large crowd of people from all walks of life thronging in to pay him respect and listen to his holy sermons. Wat Holoi has two big floors of preaching hall with over 10 acres of large temple ground and so the event organisers for Ven. Dhammasami's 50th birthday celebrations and the 2nd Lik Loung Conference thought they have big enough space to easily accommodate a great number of people, but when Khuva Boonchum arrived, the temple halls and the temple ground were so quickly filled with large number of audience.

Khuva Boonchum delivered his holy sermon in the evening, beginning with the chanting of Pali prayers for about two and half hours in the preaching hall and then continued the sermon on the stage especially prepared for the sermon in the large space of the temple ground until 1.30am in the following day (26th November). Amazingly, by 3.30am, Khuva Boonchum had already got up again for morning chanting. By 9am, with some monks and devotees he went up to the mountain, which is about 5 miles to the west of Laikha, where a hidden stupa was discovered, through a vision of Khuva Boonchum during one of his meditation practices, and renovated as part of Ven. Dhammasami's golden jubilee birthday celebrations. Thus, on the 26th November when Khuva Boonchum was delivering his sermon there on the mountain, it was a sunny winter but no body seemed to notice, until Khuva Boonchum pointed out to the sky, that the Sun was so low and so big! Khuva said "the Lord Indra also comes to listen to hour sermon." Indeed, all people who were there were surprised to see such a big sun, and the bright rays of the sun were shooting down exactly over them on the mountain; they believed it was a miracle! In the afternoon of the same day, Khuva Boonchum then visited Wat Houi Yen also located in the town of Laikha. The significance of this place is that Khuva saw in one of his meditative visions that it is one of his former birth places of his previous lives. So, whenever Khuva visited Laikha, he also visited this Houi Yen village temple. These are but a brief report on the holy and miraculous sermons for the extraordinary birthday celebrations.

The next type of sermon was the sermon for the youths, which is another unusual programme for most, if not all, religious ceremonies in Shan State. It is true that

in most religious ceremonies in Shan Buddhist communities, perhaps in some other Buddhist communities too, that young people are rather involved in physical activities of running the events than the spiritual parts. Therefore, this special type of sermon programme was arranged, to the wish and intention of Ven. Dhammasami, so that young people can learn the essence of Buddhism for daily life, such as Buddhist social philosophies and meditation, and apply them into daily practices. However, as this was the first special sermon of its kind, the programme was not turn up well as planned. Although it was first planned to have three sessions of the sermons for the youths, only one session was taken place with just over forty teenagers joining the session, because most of them were either busy with helping other event programmes or shy off joining the sermon session. Thus, the aim of passing the essential teachings of Buddhism to most Shan youths seems to remain a big task, a big challenge.

Then come the third type of sermons, i.e. the sermons for adults, which was obviously a major programme of the golden jubilee birthday celebrations. This type of sermon is very much normal for big Buddhist ceremonies but still very special when comparing it with the sermons given at local monasteries on Buddhist holy days or at normal religious ceremonies. A specialist monk for this type of sermon is known in Pali term as "dhammakathika" (speaker of the teaching). At this event of celebrating 50th birthday anniversary of Ven. Dhammasami, there were four dhammakathika monks, including Ven. Dhammasami himself, who delivered their special sermons. The other three monks were Ven. Sukhaminda, Ven. Nandavamsa and Ven. Revada – all of them are the most popular dhammakathika monks and highly respected in Shan communities. The four special sermons were delivered in the four evenings of 21, 22, 23 and 24 December. Despite the freezing cold of the Shan windy winter time, the large preaching hall of Wat Holoi was crowded with audience, young and old, monks and laymen, from all walks of life. Many of them had to stand in the temple ground to listen to the sermons through the loudspeakers that can be heard from the villages surrounding the temple. Although this type of sermon is usually for adults, it is actually for everyone because it is open to the public.

However, there were people who were not interested in the sermon programmes and for them there were other programmes such as stage shows of music concerts, drama plays, classical and modern dances, which were performed for free by popular Shan art groups from inside and outside of the Shan State. At least, there were 45 popular singers who were entertaining the participants of the birthday celebrations, especially to the young hearts and to the people who are keen to promote and preserve their cultural identities through arts.

The formal birthday celebrations of Ven. Dhammasami was officially ended with a great offering ceremony that took place in the preaching hall of Wat Holoi for two days on the 24th and 25th December 2014. Remarks of the ceremony include the presenting of gifts



and paying respect to the 730 elderly people who were 75 years of age and over, and the re-ordination of 51 monks. The estimated amount of money spent on the offering was about 50,000,000 Kyats (Burmese currency, about US\$50,000).

Although the extraordinary birthday celebrations officially came to an end on the 25th December 2014, the extraordinary event continued at Wat Holoi. On the 26th, an all-day workshop on academic education was held, and it was arranged in two sessions. The first session was a training for academic writing lectured by Ven. Dr Khammai Dhammsami, and the second session was on the cataloguing and preservation of Shan Lik Loung manuscripts presented by Dr Sai Pe and myself. Also part of the workshop was that the participants from different parts of Shan State were requested to gather the statistical lists of Lik Loung manuscripts and it was reported that the lists of over 12,000 of Lik Loung manuscripts had been collected although there are many areas where the lists of Lik Loung manuscripts have not yet been made.

Then, the 2nd Lik Loung Conference was held for three days of 27th, 28th and 29th December 2014. There were 51 speakers and over 600 participants attending the conference. The conference organisers were mainly the student-monks and Ven. Dhammasami's pupils who were studying at universities in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand; the conference was held in late December because it was the time when universities and schools are closed, so that they could help running the conference. The main aims of the conference are: to preserve,

promote and uplift the tradition of Lik Loung literature; to provide a room for young Shan generations to learn the values of Lik Loung manuscripts from the traditional Shan Lik Loung scholars; to train the traditional scholars how to give their presentations in the form of modern academic writing; and to create a platform for new generation scholars and traditional Lik Loung scholars to exchange their knowledge and experiences. It was indeed a very successful conference.

After the conference, on the 30th December 2014, a tour for sightseeing was arranged for participants of the conference to visit the Great Stupa of Mong Kung, a town (formerly a Shan principality) further to the north of Laikha and the visit of the place connected to the legend of Khun Sam Law and Nang Oo Pem, the young couple in the classical folklore, who were believed to have died and buried in the area a few miles to the east of Mong Kung. Mong Kung is also a famous place for traditional Shan pottery-ware, as the conference participants had the opportunity to see the pottery makers showing their skills lively. Some have even recorded with video of the live shows and uploaded them on their Facebook and YouTube.

In brief, these are some highlights of the golden jubilee birthday celebrations of Venerable Professor Dr Saokhu Khammai Dhammasami. It is indeed an extraordinary birthday celebration. Perhaps it is the best birthday celebration of all times for Shan communities.

## Reference

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## A Visit to Laikha

*Dr. Sao Khun-Hti Laikha*

The cold season spanning from November to February is the most beautiful and picturesque season in Shan State. When I was a kid there back in the 1970s and 80s, I always looked forward to this season and the blooming of the cherries, the symbol of my homeland in late December or early January. For better or worse, I found myself leaving my homeland on a November morning in 1988 and I have been living overseas ever since. Since then, despite the natural beauty of my second home, Canada, and of Sweden where I now live, it is Shan State that I have always wanted to be in when the cherries bloom there. That dream came true last December, thanks to the 50th Birthday Celebrations for Sao Khu Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, a native of Shan State and the Abbott of Oxford Buddha Vihara in England.

Not only did I go home in this beautiful season, but I also got to spend most of my time there in Laikha, which was where the Celebrations took place. Going “back” to Laikha was very significant. Although I was born and raised in Taunggyi, which was founded as capital of Shan State by the British colonial occupiers over 100 years ago, my paternal ancestors were all from Laikha, a principality in the central heartlands. Like everyone in Laikha, I am proud of Sao Khu Khammai Dhammasami who rose from relatively humble origins in a village there to become a pre-eminent Buddhist scholar on the international stage and I was happy to be back in Laikha for his Birthday Celebrations.

After a long journey via Doha, Qatar and Yangon, Myanmar, I landed in Shan State on December 19. The cool and crisp air and the clear blue skies that greeted me upon exiting the aircraft was the first taste of home. I then proceeded to Taunggyi and then to Laikha by car. As I went uphill towards Taunggyi, I was treated to the beautiful patchwork like landscape of the Yawnghwe valley below, decorated by thatch-colored ripening paddies, newly planted green crops such as garlic, and bright yellow flowers of rapeseed fields. I stopped to pick up my father and two uncles in Taunggyi and went on to Laikha. I saw the first evidence of the Celebrations as soon as I entered the town of Laikha which is the main town of the principality. The organizers of the festivities had already set up a booth at the town entrance to direct visitors to their pre-assigned accommodations. For example, visitors from Sipaw, a city in North Western Shan State, were assigned to stay at Wat Haw Kham Monastery, one of the many monasteries in Laikha. I have no such pre-assigned accommodation though because my family members always stay at Wat Haw Kham Monastery, which was formerly the Haw (Palace) of the late ruling Saophas (Princes) of Laikha. The former Haw was my ancestors had called home for the past 10 generations or more. After the passing of the last Saopha, my extended family donated the Haw to Buddha Sasana so that our former home could continue to be of use to the people of Laikha.

As we drove through the town, I was pleasantly surprised to see that numerous households flying the Sasana flag and the flag of Shan State. Sao Khu's Birthday Celebration had given the people of Laikha a chance to raise our heads high like a free people and be proud of our Tai heritage. When I arrived at Wat Haw Kham Monastery, I had a light supper and went to bed early. As I tried to sleep I heard someone playing a familiar Thai song at a distance, perhaps at the town center or at Wat Ho Loi Monastery, the epicenter of the Celebrations. The song was Phlaeng Jak Jai Thaharn Thai Yai (เพลงจากใจทหารไทใหญ่) meaning ‘A song from the Heart of a Tai Soldier’, another sign of pride and defiance in the face of our present circumstances. The ascendance of Sao Khu Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, a native son of Laikha, to the world stage in Buddhist Studies have given the people of Laikha tremendous hope that we Tai people can raise ourselves to be as capable as the free and successful peoples of the world.

The next morning, there was quite a traffic jam on the main road to Wat Ho Loi Monastery. As our car joined the long procession of cars, trucks and motorcycles towards that monastery, I saw several hundred young monks and novices lining up on the road next to Phra Luang Chedi, a landmark Temple Complex, which was built by my great-grand father. I knew they were there to welcome Sao Khu as he would be arriving in Laikha in half an hour or so. Upon seeing this, I was struck by the thought and hope that some of these young novices will be inspired by this event to build confidence in themselves and work hard and smart so that they too can one day stand on the world stage and work towards the development, education and uplifting of the people of Shan State.

When we arrived at the fair ground at Wat Ho Loi Monastery, the parking lots were full to the brim and many cars were parked on the road side. All the religious ceremonies and Dharma talks in relation to these Celebrations were to take place at the well decorated Dharma Hall. Across the yard from the Dharma hall stood an ancient Chedi, which perhaps, should be preserved in its present state. A huge decorated billboard standing next to the Chedi and facing the yard announced the Lik Luang (Tai traditional religious literature) conference which would be held at Wat Ho Loi Monastery as part of Sao Khu's birthday celebrations. Next to the yard stood a temporary exhibition hall to showcase the achievements of Sao Khu in his hitherto illustrious career as a Buddhist monk and scholar of the highest caliber. In addition, there were several temporary stores around that yard, selling Tai traditional dresses and bags and books. The fair ground extends beyond the Monastery compound. The organizers had rented the golf course next to the Monastery to accommodate numerous temporary stores, exhibitions and stages for music and cultural shows. There was also a Ferris wheel. Many bookstores can also be found on the golf course. While most of the books were in Tai, there

were a few English and Thai books.

To the Tai people, being able to print books in our own language is a big deal. Most people were illiterate at the time of the Saophas a couple decades ago. Some of the Saophas, including the Saopha of Laikha did what they could to govern their respective principalities but they were not equipped to guide their people and Shan State into the modern world. There were some highly educated Saophas but they were pre-occupied with breaking the nation free from the British rule and dealing with the Burmese to get our fair deal as equal partners in co-independence from the British rule. Very little was done towards setting up a native education system, and as a result, few people in Shan State could read and write in their own language. After attaining independence from the British, there was an attempt by the Shan State Government to introduce Tai language in public schools but it ended after the Burmese military takeover in the 1960s. Thanks to the literacy campaigns by ordinary people with the help of the Tai Sangha starting in the 1970s, the people of Shan State has now reached a stage where there is sufficient readership so that books can be published in our own language. To the Tai cultural and literary community that has kept the language and culture alive during the darkest years of Shan State and the Tai people, Sao Khu Dhammasami is a shining example and the hope that his achievements have given us goes a long way in our struggle for further revival of our identity and culture.

Sao Khu himself arrived shortly after my arrival at Wat Ho Loi Monastery. The celebrations started with a short religious ceremony. Most of the guests at this ceremony were locals but there were a few participants from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. I met a young doctor in full Tai dress but I was surprised when I found out that he was a Malaysian Chinese who had somehow become a devotee of Sao Khu. He was with a Tai doctor who thought I was another foreigner in Tai dress and both of them were volunteering at the Laikha General Hospital to provide free medical treatment during the Celebrations. We all went to the Laikha General Hospital compound in the afternoon where a new building was to be open by Sao Khu and the donors as part of Sao Khu's birthday celebrations. While waiting for the ceremony, I struck up a conversation in English with a monk and a lady who were also waiting there. Then I found out that the monk was Phra Warapanyakhun, a former head of Mahachulalongkorn Sangha University in Thailand and the lady was the head of the Yangon branch of KPMG Thailand. I began to realize the breadth and depth of Sao Khu's international contact and support network. Thanks to him, Laikha, our little town in the middle of Shan State had a chance to showcase itself to the international audience, albeit it was just a few. I then met Phra Dr. Senghurng Narinda, the director of international relations at Mahachulalongkorn Sangha University. To my surprise, I found out that he was also a native of Laikha. Well, Sao Khu's success has already inspired at least another native of Laikha to work his way to the international stage. Of a dozen or so foreign guests who visited Laikha, two stayed on for a few more days. One of

them was Dr. Betty Kunjara of University College London who is a tireless supporter of Sao Khu and the Tai community in UK. My family and I had the honor to show her around Wat Haw Kham Monastery, our former ancestral home.

Two days later, Sao Khu himself visited Wat Haw Kham Monastery. Under his guidance, the Abbott of Wat Haw Kham Monastery had set up a museum to showcase the history of the former ruling family of Laikha. Moreover, a small library had also been set up in the name of Sao Noom, my grandfather. Sao Khu visited the museum as well as the Sao Noom library to which he had donated a large number of books. By setting up a library there, Sao Khu and the Tai Sangha have done something that my ancestors did not manage to do. To see that the library is named after my grandfather despite the absence of such a facility during his rule was a hugely humbling experience. In addition to Sao Khu and Dr. Betty Kunjara, numerous visitors from other parts of Shan State also visited the former Haw and I was honored to be there to meet some of them in person and answer their questions.

I also had an opportunity to explore the fairground and downtown Laikha on foot. I visited the museum again, bought a couple of books and then went to the area with charity food stores for lunch. Each neighborhood in Laikha was tasked with setting up a Kart Niphan or charity food store to provide the visitors with lunch boxes free of charge. I stopped by at one of them to get a lunch box. The food was simple and yet unforgettably traditional to a person like myself who had been away from home for so long. In the box, I found a small pack of Khao Neo (sticky rice), Tonao-kho (fried fermented bean paste) and Emit (dried pickled mustard leaves). The only touch of modernity was the bottled water that came with the lunch box. On my way back to Wat Haw Kham Monastery after lunch, I met some of my cousins unexpectedly and changed my plan. Together, we went to a few sites around Laikha and it was quite an experience to visit Porana, an ancient pagoda complex and to gaze from there across Nong Kham Lake towards Phra Luang, a pagoda complex built by Sao Khun-Lai, my great-grand father. My cousins and I visited the fairground again that evening to see the music and variety shows. To me, the most memorable performance was a Tai traditional dance with the song 'Yong Yaw Sao Khu Maw', meaning 'Honoring the Great Teachers'. Perhaps, it was the most fitting performance for the occasion.

I left Laikha a few days later. All in all, it was a good trip. The birthday celebrations of Sao Khu Dr. Khammai Dhammasami in Laikha had given me the opportunity to see my homeland as I had never seen before. Once I heard the Mahadevi (Chief Consort) of a Saopha wondering aloud what the people of Shan State could possibly do without the guidance of the Saophas. Now I had seen the answer with my own eyes. The people of Shan State have proven that they can lead themselves in preserving the identity and culture in the modern age. As for the descendants of the Saophas, all that we can do now is to be with the people in our common struggle to find our way in the modern world.



## Elephants Caryatid Stupa in Shan State

Venerable Aggasena Lengtai ( SOAS, University of London)



**Holung Stupa, Shan State (MYANMAR)**

Burma is well-known as ‘The Land of Pagodas’ for they have dotted all over the country. However, only a few probably notice their various styles across regions. For instance, there are many stupas with their own architecture in Shan State. Here, I would like to introduce the Shan stupa which is quite unique in its style compares to the Burmese types. It is known as the ‘That Zang Lawm’ or the ‘Elephants Caryatid Stupa’. A brief historical background will also be given for readers’ information.

The most venerated and widely known ‘Elephant Caryatid Stupa’ in Shan State would be none other than Holung Stupa. It is also called as ‘Moeytaw Thatzet Holung’. Holung or Holing literally means ‘monkey head’. It is situated on the east bank of Namkhong or Salween River. Even though it is not accessible by car, still tens of thousands of devotees gather there at its annual celebration. Motor boat is the most convenient means to the stupa. From Tar Kaw port, it takes about two hours upstream the Salween River.

Historically, the Holung Stupa monastery was once the centre for Buddhist studies under the patronage of Saophas of Kengtung. At times, it housed more than one hundred student monks. However, the exact construction date of the Holung Stupa is still uncertain. The only information related to the founding of the stupa so far we have known is that it was built by a Tai Yon monk from Lānnā. The present abbot is said to be the ninth in the lineage of the abbots of the temple.

Architecturally, there is beyond doubt that the stupa is resemble the Lānnā style. It is in a rectangular form with a pavilion or mandapa. At its foot, it has the elephants caryatid square base served as pāda. There are two elephants on each of the four sides facing cardinal directions, and at four corners, there are also four elephants, so there are twelve elephant statues in total surrounding the base of the stupa.

Atop of the elephants are the rectangular superimposed pedestals supporting the pavilion. On these pedestals, there are four small stupas on each corner. The square pavilion has four niches on each side. Usually the niches are meant for housing the images of the Buddha



**Elephants Caryatid of Holung Stupa, Shan State**

but in this case, no image is installed. At the four corners on the pavilion have decorated with four smaller stupas.

Above the pavilion is a three-tier octagonal terraces of the main stupa. Upon these, there is a small bell shape-like Anda and Chattravali. The Anda is rather small and the Chattravali is tall and slender. Thus, it is locally called an inverted Shan drum. This type of architecture is very common among the old stupas found in Shan State. Above which is a banana bud and an umbrella crown or 'Htee' as its finial. The finial is unique of Shan art.

The rectangular form with pavilion is one of the two main types of Lānnā stupas. It is called 'Mondop Type' (ทรงปราสาทหรือทรงมณฑป). This is an indication that early Buddhism arrived in the Shan State is from Lānnā, not from Burma as many believe or claim. Base on the various historical sources, the Lānnā Buddhism had widely spread into Shan State since the early 14th century.

According to the Jengtung State Chronicle (JSC 2002: 229)<sup>1</sup>, the Lānnā Buddhism was brought to Kengtung by Sao Namthum, a son of Chao Khram (Chaisongkhram 1311-1325 A.D.). He was appointed a ruler of Kengtung. With him, there were two Mahā Theras, Thenhong (Hamsa Thera) and Thencan (Canda Thera). They also brought along four images of the Buddha. This account occurred in 1321 A.D. and would be the first Buddhism arrived in Shan State with historical record.

About two decades later in 1339 A.D., Phaya Phayu (1336-1355 A.D.), the king of Chiangmai, sent his son, Sao Jetpantu to rule Kengtung. Again, the royal convoy comprised four Mahātheras, four important Buddha images, relics and the Tripitaka. The important temples in Kengtung, such as, Wat Hokhong, Wat Jawmtawng, Wat Phrasing and Wat Pha Kaeu were said to have been built in his reign (JSC 2002: 235-6). This form of Buddhism is known as the Raman sect.

After the Sri Lankan Buddhism via Sukhothai arrived in Lānnā in 1369 A.D., Indaprayā (Indapaññā) spread this new sect in Kengtung in 1407 A.D. It was in the reign of Sao Yikhamkha or Phaya Kaeumadhu (1403-1460 A.D.). This sect belongs to Suan Dok.

In the Southern part of the Shan State, Mongnai, the Lānnā chronicles such as Tamnān Mūlasāsana and

Jinakālamālipakarana (JKM) record about Khun Khrue (ขุนเครือหรือขุนเครื่อง). He was one of the sons of Phaya Mangrai who was appointed ruler of Mongnai (JKM 1958: 95)<sup>2</sup>. Though the chronicles are silent about religion, it is possible that the royal dispatch would have been comprised with Mahā Theras, Buddha images and scripts as in the cases of Kengtung. Since then, Mongnai was considered as part of Lānnā kingdom. Thus, when Chiangmai faced the crisis of ruler succession in the mid 16th century, Sao Mekuti of Mongnai was enthroned as king of Chiangmai in 1555 A.D.<sup>3</sup>. He was believed to be a descendant from Phaya Mangrai (HCC 2003: 147)<sup>4</sup>.

The most influential Lānnā Buddhism would be the arrival of New Sinhala sect known as Pālaeng (Pādaeng). This new arrival is well-known for their scholarship works, such as Jinakālamālipakarana, Pannāsa Jātakas are attributed to them. Kengtung State Chronicle records that Somacitta Thera was responsible for diffusing Pālaeng sect among the Kengtung populace. It was during the reign of Phaya Sam Srisudhamma Culāmanī (1441-1456 A.D.). Griswold and Na Nagara, who has studied the Pādaeng inscription, gave the date as 1448 A.D. (JSS 1978: 67-8)<sup>5</sup>.

The Pālaeng sect had also spread to Hsenwi, in the Northern part of the Shan State. The accounts of 'Phra Kaw Mong' and Sao Ton Khuma (Khuvā) are among the best known narration on the arrival of Buddhism. Sao Ton Khumā even added some characters to the 18 Shan alphabets to write Pali in which later known as Sao Ton Khumā (Khuvā) Pāli version (Kam Mong 2004: 81)<sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately, this version is no longer in use. This account is believed to have happened between 1469-1472 A.D. in the reign of Sao Khamhipfa (1459-1522 A.D.), about the same time where Lānnā was holding the eight Sangāyanā.

Above mention is a brief history of the advent of Lānnā Buddhism to Shan State. Returning to the stupa architecture, firstly, the rectangular form is a typical type of Lānnā stupa art. It is believed to be the influence of the Lavo (Lopburi/Dvaravati) of Raman Buddhism. The stupas of Wat Kukut, Lamphun and Wat Kukham, Chiangmai are among the early Mon type stupas. According to Lānnā chronicles, the Mon of Lavo had settled in Hariphunchai since the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century. They brought with them Theravada Buddhism

<sup>1</sup> Saimong, Mangrai, Sao. (2002) The Pādaeng Chronicle and the Jengtung State Chronicle translated. University of Michigan. (Original work published 1981)

<sup>2</sup> Saeng Monvidhur, Prian. (1958) *Jinakālamālipakarana*. Bangkok: Silpakorn University.

<sup>3</sup> He is known in Burmese as Yon Bayin and after his death, he become one of the 37 nats pantheon or Burmese spirits.

<sup>4</sup> Bodin, Tuenchai et al. (2003) History of Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen. Chiang Mai: Mingmuang Press.

<sup>5</sup> Griswold, A. B. & Na Nagara, Prasert. (1978) 'An Inscription from Keng Tung (1451 A.D.)', *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 66, Part I, Jan 1978, pp. 66-88.

<sup>6</sup> Kham Mong, S. (2004) The History and Development of the Shan Scripts. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.





**Wat Changlom, Sukhothai (Credit: m.hi5.com)**



**Ruwanwelisaya, Sri Lanka (Credit: Wikipedia)**



**Wat Chediluang, Chiangmai (Credit: www.novabizz.com)**



**Wat Chiangman, Chiangmai  
(Credit: www.dekguide.com)**



**Porana, Laikha**



**Jamka**



known as Raman sect. This sect had first arrived in Shan State since the early of the 14th century.

Secondly, the pavilion or Mandapa type of the stupa (ทรงปราสาทหรือทรงมณฑป). Scholars believe that the pavilion is being the influence of Srivija art through Sukhothai. Some point to Candi Mendut, Candi Pawon in central Java as examples.

Finally, the elephant caryatids. There is no doubt it is being the influence of Singhon or Sri Lanka. Many scholars affirm that the elephant caryatid stupas found in Thailand are subject to the influence of Ruwanwelisaya stupa which constructed by King Dutugemunu in the 2nd century B.C. Lānnā and Sukhothai of the time had been looked up to Sinhala Buddhism as role model. The Ramkhamhaeng inscription (1283 A.D.) mentions that the Sinhala Buddhism from Nakon Sridhammarat presents in Sukhothai. Sumana Thera who brought Buddhism to Lānnā in 1369 A.D. also had studied under the

Udumbara Mahasvami of Sinhala lineage. Thus, the influence of Sri Lanka has felt in art and practices. The stupas of Wat Changlom in Sukhothai, Wat Chediluang and Wat Chiangman of Chiangmai are among the best examples of elephant caryatid type in Thailand. In Shan State, the similar elephants caryatid stupa are also found at the Porana stupa in the city of Laikha, at Wan Moeytaw near Wengkao in Mongnawng and among the ruin stupas in Jamka. These are some which had been found so far.

Having said so, the architectures of Holurng stupa are not totally copying from others. The so called ‘inverted Shan drum’ and the finial is a result of Shan artisans. They are the local development styles and not found in both Lānnā and Burma proper.



**Mongnawng, Moeytaw**



## Some paintings of a Shan artist in exile

*Sao Sarpao a.k.a. Feraya Ullathorne*

### A Short Autobiography of the artist

My English name is Feraya Ullathorne and my Shan name is Sao Sarpao. I was born in Kalaw, a hill station in Shan State and was brought up there and in Rangoon, and later in Maymyo before leaving for the UK. My father was Sao Hseng Ong, the second son of Sao Shwe Thaike, the Saophalong (prince) of Yawngghwe and the first Mahadevi of Yawngghwe, Sao Nang Yee. Sao Shwe Thaike became the first President of Burma when it gained Independence in 1948. My mother, Sao Hom Noan was the second daughter of the Saophalong of Lawksawk, Sao Hkun Hsa and Sao Ven Kiao, a princess of the Kengtung royal family. In 1962, General Ne Win staged a brutal and violent military coup and my grandfather and other prominent leaders were imprisoned. Soon after the death of my grandfather, Sao Shwe Thaike, who was believed to have been killed whilst in prison, my parents, my younger brother, my younger sister and I left for England. We left our home, our relations and all our friends. It was a traumatic time and a major upheaval for my family. We left with very little because we were not allowed to bring anything of much value, except the clothes we wore. We found it very cold in winter, not having any warm clothing, and I, being a girl of fourteen, was ashamed to have to wear a coat my mother had hand sewn from a rough woollen blanket.

In Bradford, Yorkshire, we had to assimilate to the Yorkshire way of life and culture where there were hardly any Asians and no other Shan. It was also the time when Pakistani immigrants were entering Britain and there was a lot of racism at that time. The influential politician Enoch Powell preached against immigrants. It was a stressful time for my parents as they struggled financially and emotionally. I found it very difficult to catch up with lessons at school because of my Burmese education. After passing my GCE 'O' levels, I attended the Northwich Art College in Cheshire. Since then, I've lived in Hong Kong, Japan and Spain. I exhibited my paintings in Hong Kong and have donated a few of my artworks to charities and a hospice.

I'm now semi-retired, volunteering at a hospice, and paint in my spare time. I live with my husband, David and son, Alexander in Windsor, Berkshire.



**(1) Shan girl (watercolour)**

Young Shan girl wearing a Shan turban with the colours of the Shan national flag, at a festival in Fang, Northern Thailand, inspired by a photograph taken by a friend at a Shan festival.





**(2) Shan brothers (watercolour)**



**(3) Shan girls in a Shan village (watercolour)**

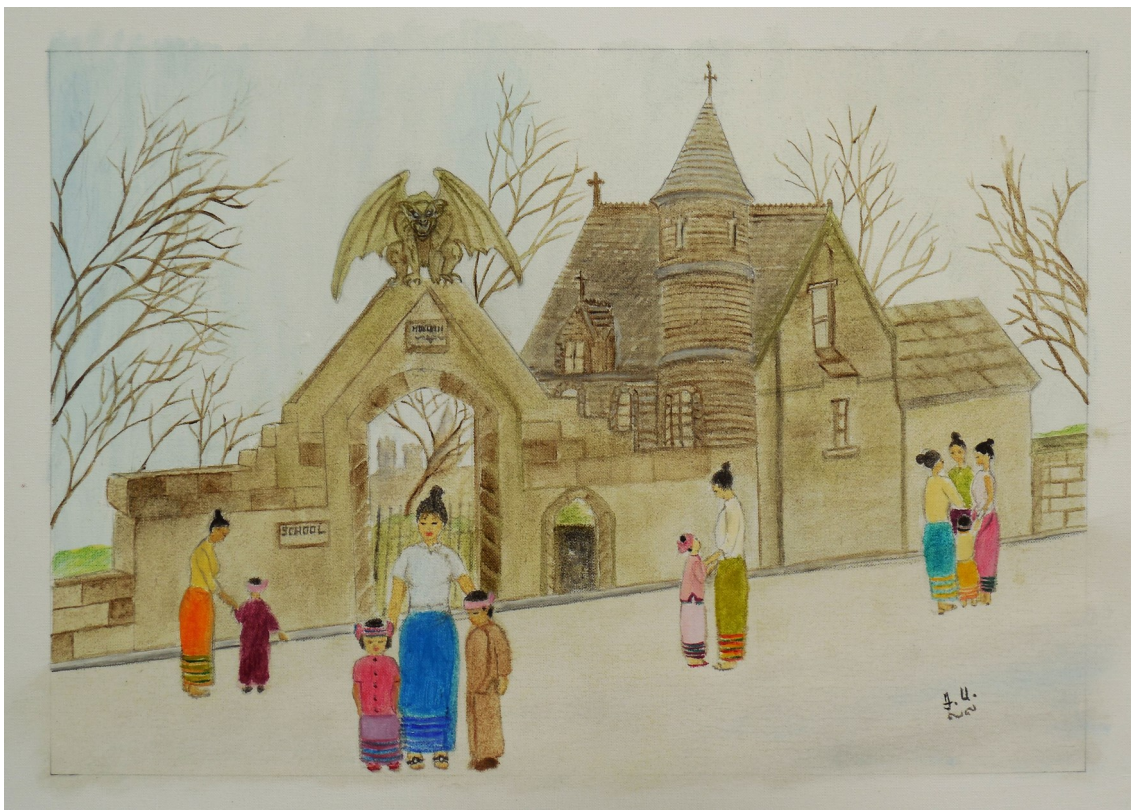
These teenage girls were at a festival in Shan State from a photo taken by a friend. Their cheerful and innocent youthfulness is typical of undeveloped parts of the world.





**(4) Shan couple in a peaceful Shan State(oil on canvas )**

This painting reflects my own philosophy. Peace, harmony and happiness within oneself and in one's relationships contribute hugely to the environment.



**(5) Shan mothers taking their children to school in UK - husbands are at work (oil on canvas )**

I wanted to describe how Shan people have to assimilate into a foreign culture, such as in England. The mothers and their children are all wearing Shan traditional costumes, because the parents want to keep the Shan tradition alive. The school is an old building which is typically Gothic and Christian. It's not always easy for Shan parents to keep Shan traditional values in the family, because they have to fit in with the environment in which they find themselves.

## SCA-UK Bursary 2015/ 2016

*Dr Nang Hnin Nu Nu Kyi @ Dr Nang Nidarphorn*

As much as there has been heartbreaking news from our home land, Shan State, this year, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage our supporters, current students and prospective students, on the silver lining for our younger generations. Education, which is the foundation to the peaceful, stable and developed nation, has always been one of the most important projects that SCA-UK has undertaken. Last year, SCA-UK education committee has doubled the amount of bursary for our students. This year, SCA-UK has granted bursary to two more students to support them for their university education. Therefore, I would like to start off my report by congratulating our current bursary recipients (Nang Lao Lao, Sao Gan-Dha Vati and Sai Khay Hseng) who have successfully completed yet another year of their university study and would like to welcome our new students (Sai Hlaing Han and Sai Kyaw Min Thu) to SCA-UK bursary family.

I would also like to express our gratitude towards Sai Aung Mong and Sai Pae who have been excellent in supporting SCA-UK education project back in Myanmar.

As it is my favourite quote from our chairman, I would like to emphasize again that Tai/ Shan people are travelling towards the direction of living in the freer world. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go to achieve our goals of equality and justice in our homeland. The main steps towards this is undoubtedly good education. An enormous amount still remains to be done to help our younger generations acquire education of a standard that would enable them to take our nation forward.

The SCA-UK, education project has grown so much since its foundation. And I wish to thank all of our supporters who have supported this education project thus far. While SCA-UK is slowly but truly expanding our university education project, we genuinely wish that you continue to support our students.

The followings are the 6 bursaries set up to provide financial support to Tai/Shan university students who are studying in various parts of Myanmar. SCA-UK is planning a long term education project to support more students who are pursuing their dreams for a better future of our people. The bursaries are named after “Khu Maw Lik” or Shan scholars who had contributed a great deal towards the history of Shan. They are:

### **a) Dr Sao Ba Nyan Medical Student Bursary**

There are two bursaries for medical student. Dr Sao Ba Nyan was born in Hsi Paw. He is known as the father of “Shan Nationalism”. He designed the Shan National Flag “Kham Sarm Tar and Lurn

Kham (Three Golder Strips and Golden Moon)”. This idea has recently been adapted to be the Myanmar National Flag. He was one of the first early Shan Doctors in Modern Medicine. He was also a gifted composer. He composed the Shan National Anthem “Alurm Kham Sarm Tar”.

### **b) Nang Kham Gu Bursary**

There are two bursaries for students studying literature and arts. Nang Kham Gu was a well known female poet and an accomplished novelist in the early 19th Century. Her most famous work was a love story called “Khun Sarm Law and Nang Oo Pim”, that is still very well known now-a-days.

### **c) Sao Garng Sor Bursary**

Sao Garn Sor was the greatest poet and composer ever recorded in Shan history in the late 18th and early 19th Century. His work including nearly 200 Lik Loang manuscripts have captured interest of many modern scholars and have become the subjects of many researches carried out in many well known institutions such as SOAS. He was the father of Nang Kham Gu.

### **d) Sao Amat Luong Merng Nong Bursary**

He was once chief minister for Saofa, ruling prince of Merng Nong in central Shan State. In his later life, he was known for his dedication and achievement in Buddhist studies and meditation.

This year, SCA-UK education project is



proud to continue supporting three enthusiastic university students, namely: Nang Lao Lao (Kyaukse, Northern Shan State), Sai Khay Hseng (Taunggyi, Southern Shan State), and Sao Gan Dha Vati (Lawk Sauk, Southern Shan State).

Nang Lao Lao is studying Medicine at University of Medicine 1, Yangon. She has been awarded Dr Sao Ba Nyan Bursary. She is in her third year, and been one of the top students in her class in Pathology. Congratulations Nang Lao Lao!

Sai Khay Hseng is a student at University of Technology (Yadanabon Cyber City), studying Advanced Material Engineering. He has been awarded Sao Garng Hso Bursary. He has completed his third year and in his final year of study.

Sao Gandha Vati has recently took her final year exam in Industrial Chemistry at Yadanabon University Mandalay. She has been awarded Nang Kham Gu Bursary. In addition to that she has received Diploma in English from Mandalay University of Foreign Language whilst also completed LCCI (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examination) level 1 and 2. Congratulations for your inspiring achievement!!

One of our new students is Sai Hlaing Han. He is studying Medicine at the University of Medicine, Mandalay. Sai Hlaing Han has become second student awarded Dr Sao Ba Nyan Medical Student Bursary. He has successfully completed his second year study.

Sai Kyaw Min Thu is studying Dentistry at the University of Dental Medicine, Mandalay. He has been awarded Sao Amat Luong Merng Nong Bursary.

I have the pleasure and am proud to include the testimonials from our students.



"Thank you to all the members of Shan Cultural Association in the United Kingdom ( SCA-UK ). Without all your support I would not be at this state. Thank you so much and deeply appreciate for your continuous support for my education expenses. Thank you for your kindness." - Sao Ghan-Dha Vati.



***Sai Khay Hseng***

"My whole family sincerely thank all of you and I also must say I would try my best in my study with your support." - Sai Khay Hseng.

SCA-UK therefore extend our appeal to our friends and supporters all over the world for your generous giving to help us expand our education project. Every penny of your donation will make a difference to the prospects of our students and hence of our country as a whole for Education is the best gift that one can provide for our future generations.

For more information on SCA-UK Scholarship programs and to support please contact by email to: [sca-uk-scholarship@googlegroups.com](mailto:sca-uk-scholarship@googlegroups.com).

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## THE KHWAN AND THE OMINOUS CALENDAR

*Prof. Dr Barend Jan Terwiel, Emeritus Professor in Tai Studies*



Before setting out on an enterprise with uncertain outcome, many traditional Tai householders would first consult a manuscript that contained a calendar in which auspicious and inauspicious moments were listed. With the help of such a calendar they would ascertain when exactly the planned activity should be engaged upon, or at least which moments of time should be avoided. Some of these calendar tables were based on the seven days of the week; others had as base the lunar month, others again the sequence of the sixty-day cycle. They told what days were best for engaging upon difficult transactions, which direction should be avoided for setting out on a particular day, or when to try and sell an animal on the local market.<sup>1</sup>

For example, one paragraph of a lengthy calendric text reads as follows:

“The five days in the sixty-day cycle ending with *hsi*, are lucky days, cattle purchased on such a day will thrive, but the five days ending with *hsai* are unlucky, cattle purchased on such a day will die (Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan*, p. 49).”<sup>2</sup>

Probably the best overview of the use of a large number of such calendars is an article Richard Davis wrote in 1976. At the outset of his study he writes: “... every day of the lunar phase is either good or bad for having new clothes made, performing wedding rites, buying farm animals, placing newly harvested rice in the household granary, felling trees, building houses, clearing fields and moving to another town or village.”<sup>3</sup>

### A puzzling calendar

Many years ago when conducting a survey of Tai sacred writing I came across an unusual type of calendric table. I found this enigmatical type of table among several Tai groups, in various parts of Thailand, among the Tais of Northern Vietnam, and also among the Tai-speakers that live scattered in Assam. Such a wide distribution is a sign that the table has been known for a long time among Tai-speaking peoples.

This genre lists a sequence of days<sup>4</sup> (often the fifteen days of the waxing moon, followed by the fifteen days of the waning moon, but the other above-mentioned temporal sequences were also occasionally found) adding for each day a position of the *khwan*. The puzzling aspect of the lists noted among Tai peoples in such diverse settings is that apart from a temporal sequence also a *khwan* is mentioned for each day. As an example, one of these tables gave the following list:

Day 1 the <i>khwan</i> is in the left knee	Day 16 the <i>khwan</i> is in the left hand
Day 2 the <i>khwan</i> is in the head	Day 17 the <i>khwan</i> is in the eye
Day 3 the <i>khwan</i> is in the back	Day 18 the <i>khwan</i> is in the nose
Day 4 the <i>khwan</i> is in the right ear	Day 19 the <i>khwan</i> is in the left ear
Day 5 the <i>khwan</i> is in the left foot	Day 20 the <i>khwan</i> is in the arms
Day 6 the <i>khwan</i> is in the chin	Day 21 the <i>khwan</i> is in the right knee
Day 7 the <i>khwan</i> is in the right eye	Day 22 the <i>khwan</i> is in the left hand
Day 8 the <i>khwan</i> is in the nose	Day 23 the <i>khwan</i> is in the cheek
Day 9 the <i>khwan</i> is in the right hand	Day 24 the <i>khwan</i> is in the right hip
Day 10 the <i>khwan</i> is in the toe	Day 25 the <i>khwan</i> is in the left foot
Day 11 the <i>khwan</i> is in the waist	Day 26 the <i>khwan</i> is in the hands
Day 12 the <i>khwan</i> is in the forehead	Day 27 the <i>khwan</i> is in the chin
Day 13 the <i>khwan</i> is in the left thumb	Day 28 the <i>khwan</i> is in the head
Day 14 the <i>khwan</i> is in the side	Day 29 the <i>khwan</i> is in the left arm
Day 15 the <i>khwan</i> is in the eyebrows	Day 30 the <i>khwan</i> is in the forehead

After acquiring copies of a number of this type from texts written by ritual specialists of the abovementioned Tai peoples, these lists were compared in the hope of finding out whether or not a common element could be found, notably whether there was a sequence that several lists had in common. In the sample listed above, for example, from day 6 to day 10, the *khwan* moves from the chin, the right eye, and the nose to the toe. Thus three *khwans* were situated in the head, and suddenly that vital element moved down to the lower extremities.

<sup>1</sup> See H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Divination in Thailand; The Hopes and Fears of a Southeast Asian People*, London: Curzon Press, 1983, p. 123 ff.

<sup>2</sup> James George Scott and J. P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States in Five Volumes*, Part 1 Vol. 2 (Rangoon 1900), Chapter 10. Another study dealing with this topic was written by Nicola Tannenbaum, "Shan Calendrics and the Nature of Shan Religion", *Anthropos*, 79, 1984: 505-515.

<sup>3</sup> Richard B. Davis, "The Northern Thai Calendar and its Uses", *Anthropos*, 71, 1976: 7.

<sup>4</sup> Commonly they listed the thirty days of the month, but the other above-mentioned temporal sequences were also occasionally found.



However, whatever sequence was tested, none of the lists showed a sequence of three or four locations in common. Neither could a system be discerned regarding the left and right side of the body. No regularities were discovered whatsoever. These lists seemed strange because calendars and *khwans* seem to be totally unrelated concepts.

All Tai peoples share the notion that a human body possesses a number of “vital elements” and in all Tai languages these are called *khwans*. This Tai belief in *khwans* is well-documented.<sup>5</sup> It is the element of life, the difference between a corpse and a living being. Humans are believed to have many *khwans*, if a person blushes the *khwans* in his cheeks are active. Signs of *khwans* can be seen in the eyebrows, the movement in the nostrils, the pulse in the wrist, a tic is evidence of a *khwan*, and so is a muscle cramp. When a child is suddenly listless, it may have lost a major *khwan* through inattention. Sneezing is dangerous, one might lose a *khwan*. Well known is the ceremony of recalling a lost *khwan*. Phya Anuman Rajadhon calls the *khwan* an insubstantial thing supposed to reside in the physical body of a person. If it leaves the body the person will be ill or experience some undesirable effects.<sup>6</sup> In a previous publication I gathered more information on this concept:

“The *khwan* of a person denotes a specific general quality, but specific parts of the body can also be assigned that characteristic. Thus a Thai can speak of the *khwan* of the eyes, of the mouth, and of the hands. This does not mean that these can be assigned separate individual “souls”. Instead such expressions simply refer to the liveliness, to the animation of that particular part of the body. In traditional medicine, it could be that a certain part of the body, say the kidneys, the ears, the intestines or the heart was found to have insufficient vitality, and a ceremony to remedy the situation was prescribed.”<sup>7</sup>

To complicate matters further, in a manuscript of the Tai Phakey in Assam (*Lik Nu Phelai Chong*)<sup>8</sup> a variant was given where for each day of the lunar month two concepts were placed in various parts of the body, first the *chai* and then the *khwan*. A whole list can be summed up in the following table:

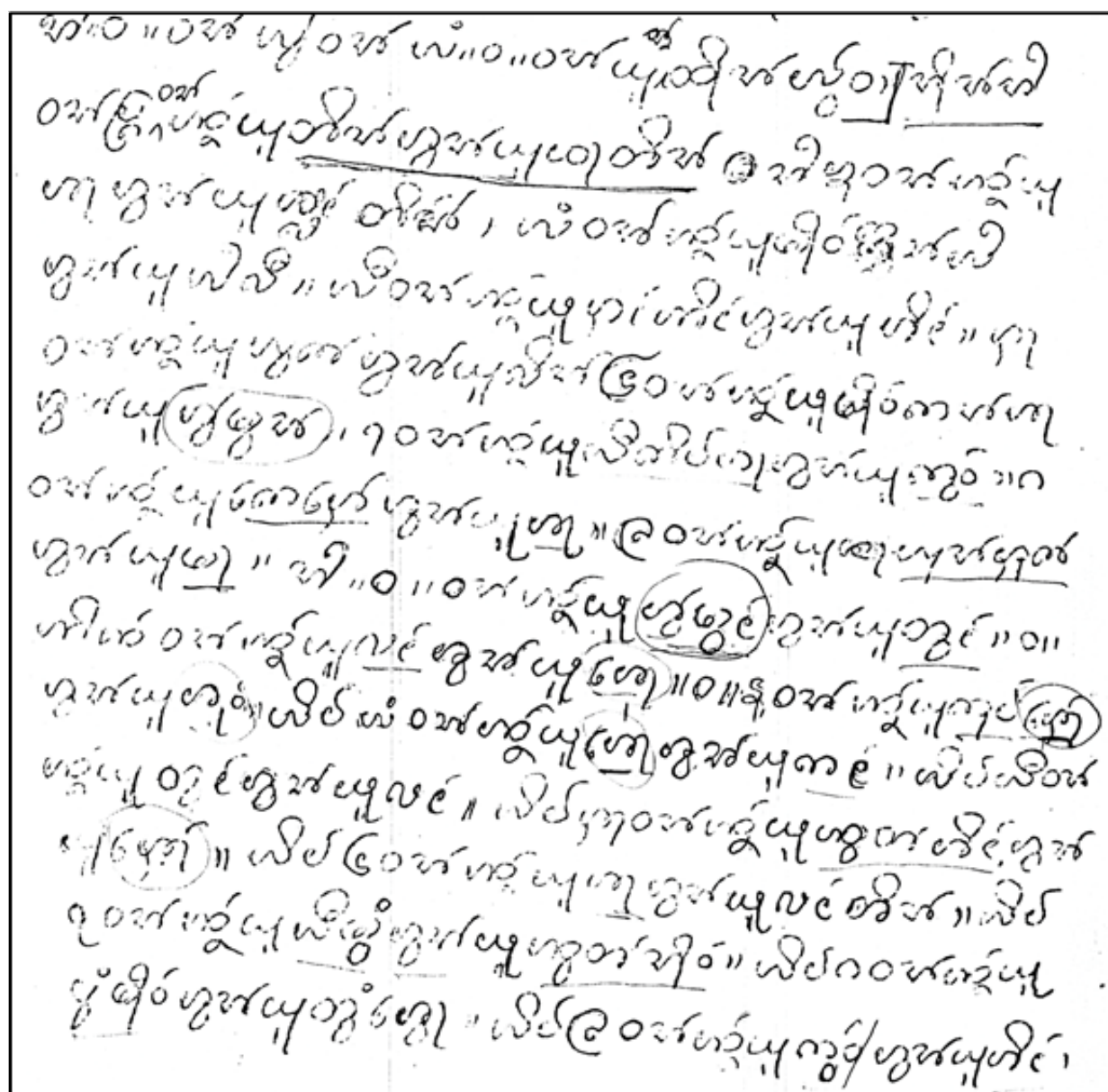
Day	Position of the <i>chai</i>	Position of the <i>khwan</i>
1	Feet	Sole of the feet
2	Legs	Heels
3	Left hand	Navel
4	Waist	Shin
5	Elbow	Tongue
6	Right hand	Top of the head
7	Right side strength	Calf of the leg
8	Armpits	Legs
9	Edge of the feet	Shoulder
10	Top of the head	Belly
11	Back	Neck
12	Throat	Head
13	Neck	Chin
14	Belly	Back
15	The whole body	Head
16	Legs	Heels
17	Top of the head	Whole body
18	Wrist	Adam's apple
19	Calf of the leg	Shin
20	Right side strength	Side
21	Finger	Eye
22	Soft part of the leg	Whole back
23	Back	Hip
24	Sole of the feet	Breast
25	Back of the hand	Chin
26	Palm of the hand	Side of the feet
27	Knee	Head
28	Left side	Feet
29	Top of the head	Mouth
30	Ankle	Hair

<sup>5</sup> Ruth-Inge Heinze, *Tham Khwan; How to Contain the Essence of Life*, Singapore

<sup>6</sup> Phya Anuman Rajadhon, *Essays on Thai Folklore*, Bangkok: The Social Science Association Press, 1968: 202.

<sup>7</sup> B. J. Terwiel, "The Tais and their Belief in Khwans", *The South East Asian Review*, 3, No 1, August 1978: 5.

<sup>8</sup> Literally: Book [with] Predictions, Complete.



### A Tai Phakey Manuscript

With the introduction of the concept *chai* (Thai: ใจ; Shan ငွံ) we are once again confronted with a term that is difficult to translate. The standard McFarland dictionary gives: “disposition” and “mind”. The word is frequently used together with conditional term, thereby indicating a mood. Well-known in Thai are the expressions *chai yen* (ใจเย็น), meaning “take it easy”, or *chai ron* (ใจร้อน), “being temperamental”. However, Fang Kuei Li points out that among the Southwestern Tai Languages it rather means “heart”<sup>9</sup>.

While losing a *khwan* has, as we have seen, unpleasant consequences, the word *chai* can be connected both with positive and with negative concepts.

A major step towards understanding this puzzling calendar, was reached when consulting the list of more than twenty types of ominous calendars that Richard Davis had found in northern Thailand. His 19<sup>th</sup> type of calendar lists for each day of the week a person’s when “glory” (Muang [northern Thai] *salii*, Sanskrit *śrī*) is concentrated in a particular part of his body, and activity concerning that part of the body is auspicious.

<sup>9</sup> Fang Kuei Li, A Handbook of Comparative Tai, Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No. 15, University Press of Hawaii, 1977: 165.



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Day of the week	Location of "glory"	Location of <i>Kālakiṇi</i>
Sunday	tongue	chest
Monday	forehead	nipples
Tuesday	nose	feet
Wednesday	face	mouth
Thursday	nipples	eyebrows
Friday	stomach	ears
Saturday	calves	hands

*Kālakiṇi* is a local Northern Thai way of writing *Kālakaṇṇi*, a name that occurs twice in the *Jātakas*. First it occurs in *Jātaka* Number 83 as the name of a servant who had this inauspicious name *Kālakaṇṇi* (usually translated as "curse"), but who nevertheless saved his master's fortune. However, the *Kālakiṇi* in Davis' 19<sup>th</sup> type of calendar refers to *Jātaka* 382 (the *Sirikālakaṇṇi-Jātaka*) where the daughter of *Virūpakka* is also called *Kālakaṇṇi*. That the table is related to this *Jātaka* is clear when we realise that the chief characters in the story are called *Śrī* and *Kālakaṇṇi*, two maidens representing "luck" and "misfortune" respectively. *Śrī* and *Kālakaṇṇi* argue who shall be first to take a bath in Lake Anotatta. *Kālakaṇṇi*, dressed in blue garments loses out to *Śrī*, who wore gold-coloured clothes<sup>11</sup>.

"*Śrī*" and "*Kālakiṇi*" in Davis' calendar type 19 are therefore the embodiment of "luck" and "misfortune" respectively. The table tells for each day of the week on what part of the body one may expect something positive by looking to the list under "*Śrī*" or where the owner of the calendar is warned of a danger lurking at a part of his body by looking under *Kālakiṇi*".

The calendar with the position of the *chai* and the *khwan* in specific body locations is clearly of a similar type. Apparently the table tells the owner of the calendar where on a certain day in the body auspicious "heart" can be found, and also where the ominous *khwan* is most vulnerable.

At this point it should be understood why the various tables vary in their position of the *khwan*. Such tables are made on order. Enterprising persons would consult ritual specialists who would – for an appropriate fee – write down a series of spells, magical diagrams and calendars for their clients and create a personal handbook to assist them in their decisions. They contained magical diagrams (*yantras*) to be copied on a piece of cloth for luck, tattooing designs with numbers and syllables that will be effective only for the owner, spells to ward off danger, moments to be avoided, complicated designs to be copied whilst saying certain texts, the latter can be rolled up, dipped in wax and burnt to have effect.

Such documents invariably were made for a particular individual, taking into account that person's moment of birth. Therefore, the information they contain was valid only for that person. The thirty-day list of where the *khwan* resides could thus be a personalised list, one that differs for each individual. Its aim was to warn the owner which part of his body would be most vulnerable on a particular day. In the first example cited above, the owner should therefore be careful on the first day of waxing moon and avoid bumping into something with his left knee.

Finally it may be asked what the relationship is between the *khwan* calendar and the *Śrī* and *Kālakaṇṇi* type described by Davis. The *khwan*-type occurs among a range of Tai-speakers, but the *Śrī* and *Kālakaṇṇi* calendar has only been found thus far among Northern Thai. Therefore I assume that Davis' type 19 is a Buddhist version of an all-Tai older list, one of a wide range of formulae with which Tai peoples attempted by magical means to increase control of their destiny.

<sup>10</sup> Davis, "The Northern Thai Calendar and its Uses": 29.

<sup>11</sup> For the *Sirikālakaṇṇi-Jātaka* see E. B. Cowell, *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, Vol. 3, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990: 165-168.

## Some highlights from the Shan manuscript collections at the British Library

**Jana Igunma** (Henry Ginsburg Curator for Thai, Lao and Cambodian at the British Library)

A small number of Shan manuscripts came to the British Library when the India Office Library and the British Museum Library became part of the British Library in 1973. Bequests and purchases from individual owners have helped to increase the number of Shan manuscripts in the Library's collections to over one hundred. The private collection of Soren Egerod, a Danish sinologist and linguist, which was acquired in 1998, contained about thirty Shan manuscripts. A bequest from Doris Duke's Southeast Asian Art Collection in 2004 included some fine Shan manuscripts, manuscript covers for palm leaves, and a manuscript chest.



Shan manuscripts that originally came from the Shan State form part of the Library's Burmese collections, and manuscripts that originated from Shan communities in Thailand or Laos were added to the Thai, Lao and Cambodian collections. The Shan manuscript collections include folding books (*pap tup*), bound & scrolled books (*pap kin*), palm leaves (*pap meu pe*), and textiles (*phuin phe*).

Folding books often contain Buddhist texts or commentaries (*lik ho*). Their covers are sometimes lavishly gilded and decorated so that these manuscripts constitute beautiful works of art. There are also *pap tup* containing non-religious texts like astrology, numerology, divination, traditional medicine, tattoo designs and yantras.



***Malai phuk ton*, 19<sup>th</sup> century. British Library Or.14007, front cover**

The image above shows the front cover of a folding book containing the first part of Maleyyattheravatthu, an apocryphal text about the monk Malai, who visited heaven and hell by merit and meditation. The legend is well known in mainland Southeast Asia, and it is the subject of many illustrated folding books from central Thailand. This book was made from *sa* paper, which is usually produced from the bark of a tree in the family of mulberry trees (*streblus asper*). The paper is folded to form a leporello or concertina-style book, and the thicker lacquered covers were added for better stability and protection from damage by humidity, insects, dust and mould. The embossed gilt covers are studded with multi-colored glass inlay for stunning floral decoration. In rare cases, similar manuscript covers could even be decorated with rock crystals and precious stones.



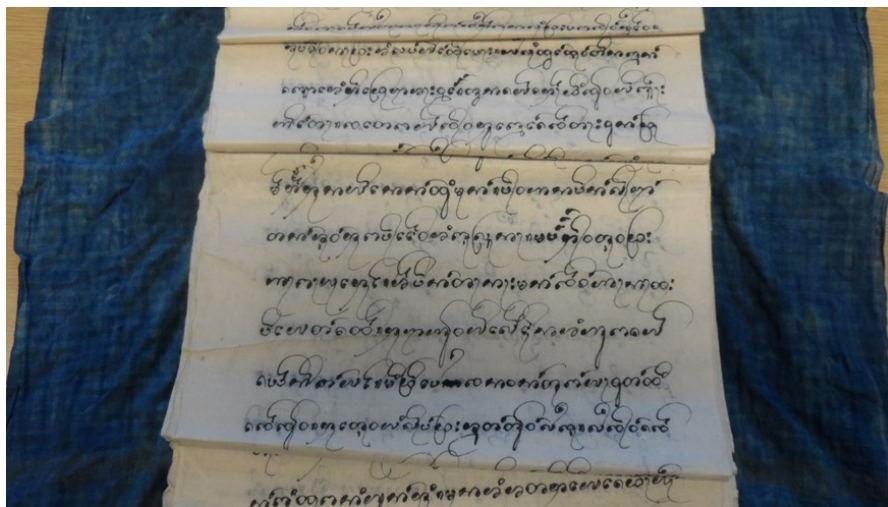


A similar highlight among the Library's Shan manuscripts is a paper folding book (image above) containing a sermon on the Abhidhamma and meditation practices in Shan language with some Pali. This manuscript, which also has lavishly embellished covers, originated from Northern Thailand and was bequeathed to the Library from Doris Dukes' Southeast Asian Art Collection.

Another type of manuscripts is *pap kin* that are often made from sheets of so-called silk paper. Sheets of this very thin, though strong type of paper were sown together into a cotton or silk wrapper. This method, called "whirlwind binding", was frequently used in the Chinese manuscript tradition. It is stored like a scroll and can easily be transported. Contents of these books can be Buddhist texts or non-religious texts.

**Sankhara bhajani kyam, dated 1916 A.D.**

**British Library Or. 16079, detail of front cover and some text**



**Malai phuk ton, 19<sup>th</sup> century. British Library Or.14007, front cover**

This manuscript can be viewed online at [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Or\\_3494](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Or_3494)

The manuscript shown in the image above is an outstanding piece of Khamti Shan calligraphy. It contains the Mahāsupina Jātaka about dreams and nightmares of King Pasenadi, the King of Kosala, and their interpretation. The paper is sown in a hand-woven blue cotton wrapper with a white/pink braided cotton string to wrap around. This manuscript was given to the British Museum Library in 1887 by D. J. Anderson and later transferred to the British Library.

Approximately one third of the British Library's Shan manuscripts has been catalogued in the online catalogue and can be ordered to the Asian & African Studies Reading Room - <http://searcharchives.bl.uk/>.

### Further reading

Terwiel, Barend Jan: Shan manuscripts, part 1. (Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland VOHD, Vol. 39.1) Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003

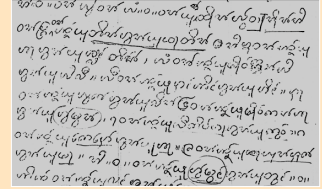
## Abstracts - Special Lectures for Shan New Year Celebrations

Sponsored by the SOAS Alphawood Fund for the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programmes

### Introducing traditional Shan magic

*Professor Barend Jan Terwiel (Germany)*

A remarkable number of Shan objects (both manuscripts and textiles) are inscribed with magical diagrams. They range from luck-binging talismans, calendrical tables to determine auspicious and inauspicious times, tattooing designs, to drawings to be used in love magic. In his powerpoint presentation, Professor Terwiel shows examples of the main categories, elucidates their underlying symbolism and explains some of the rituals that surrounded this unique aspect of Shan culture.



### Tai Magic Arts of the Supernatural

*Dr Susan Conway (SOAS)*



Susan Conway's presentation will focus on the men and women who create supernatural formulae (magic). She travelled extensively throughout the Shan States and northern Thailand to interview men and women who treat the sick and bring good luck, who banish bad luck and in some instances cause bad luck to happen to others. They use herbal remedies, magic spells, chants and incantations and some create magic through tattoos. This is a complex belief system that draws on Buddhism and the power of spirits, Tai astrology and cosmology, numerology and the power of nature. Her book *TAI MAGIC ARTS OF THE SUPERNATURAL* will be on sale.

### A Victorian Explorer in Lanna: The Journey of Carl Bock, 1881-1882

*Dr Angela Chiu (SOAS)*

Carl Bock (1849-1932) was a Norwegian naturalist who made an expedition to what is today central and northern Thailand from June 1881 to August 1882. At the time, the Lanna country of the north was not yet fully controlled by the Siamese monarchy based at Bangkok (nor the Burmese monarchy at Mandalay) and was still a geopolitically contested space. Bock's account of his travels, *Temples and Elephants*, drew much publicity upon its publication in 1884 in London. The book fits into the genre of often-sensational imperial exploration literature that flourished in the Victorian era, but it also includes ethnographic descriptions which are still of interest to researchers today. Bock also collected a variety of Lanna objects, including Buddha images, musical instruments, textiles, and jewelry, and sold about 150 items to the British Museum in 1883; thanks to Bock's writings, some of these objects may be associated with specific places and times in Lanna. Interestingly, not mentioned in Bock's book is his most dramatic act of collection of all, his bringing to Britain a 7-year old girl, probably Tai, on behalf of a showman, the Great Farini, who organized displays for the public and the scientific establishment. Though utterly repugnant to the modern mind, it was typical for showmen and ethnologists to work together for such a purpose. Carl Bock's journey to Lanna and its aftermath illustrate the interlinked contexts of imperialism, anthropology, cultures of display, and commerce in late nineteenth-century Britain.





## News in Photos: SCA-UK Activities in 2015





**Shan Cultural Presentations  
To Mark the 2110<sup>th</sup> Shan/Tai New Year Celebrations  
13 December 2015  
SOAS, University of London**

**Co-organised by the SOAS Centre of South East Asian Studies & the Shan Cultural Association in UK**