

Hybrid Production of *Anisong* Manuscripts in Luang Prabang

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ABSTRACT—In a modern world dominated by book printing and digital technologies, the old cultural practice of producing manuscripts, both as containers of texts and as artefacts, has not disappeared in Laos, Thailand and adjacent Tai-speaking areas, but has rather been transformed by these new technologies. This article explores this process of transformation by examining a corpus of two dozen “hybrid manuscripts” of a particular literary genre called *anisong* (homiletic texts used in Buddhist rituals and ceremonies) as a case study. All these manuscripts are from Luang Prabang, the old Lao royal capital and major centre of Buddhist learning where the traditional manuscript culture has survived until present. Hybridity in manuscript production is reflected in changes of writing support (from palm-leaf to various kinds of paper), visual organisation, and the mixing of handwriting, typewriting and print in one and the same object.

Introduction

Originally, products of an oral tradition in which narratives, knowledge and local wisdom were inherited over generations and learned by heart, texts to be conveyed and further transmitted in written form required the use of scripts and writing support. In the past, handwriting was the only crucial cultural technique for recording texts using several kinds of available writing support. Together with inscribed texts, materials or writing supports serve as manuscripts. Etymologically, the English term “manuscript” is derived from the Latin *manus* (‘hand’) and *scribere* (‘to write’). Thus, manuscripts are by definition handwritten artefacts and, unlike printed books today, each manuscript is unique, even if faithfully copied from another, older, extant manuscript, notwithstanding similar layouts, or having been written by the same scribes. In its broadest sense, a manuscript is “considered to be the end product of handwriting on either natural organic material or man-made paper” and means a handwritten book, roll, album, tablet, or other portable means for storing information (Lorusso et al. 2015: 5). Many different materials have been used for the production of manuscripts, the choice of which depends largely on geographical availability, the stage of technological development, and prevailing traditional values. These factors, in turn, have frequently played an important role in deciding the form and appearance of the manuscript itself, as well as influencing the script (see Ward 2008: 355).

Our ongoing research on Lao manuscript culture, focusing on Luang Prabang, the former Lao royal capital and centre of Lao Buddhism, deals with a particular genre of manuscript (understood as containers of texts *and* cultural objects) called *anisong*.

Anisong is derived from the Pali word *ānisaṃsa*, literally meaning ‘rewards’, ‘benefits’, ‘advantages’, or ‘results of meritorious deeds’; it corresponds to *puñña* in Pali and represents a textual genre and a certain kind of sermon declaring benefits derived from meritorious acts. Another terminological alternative, also referring to *anisong* sermons or texts, is the Khmer-derived word *salòng* or *song*, the latter being a contraction of the former. In Laos, the term *salòng* sermons, *thet salòng* (ເທດສະຫຼອງ), is used while people in Northern Thailand (Lan Na) prefer the term *anisong* sermons, or *thet anisong* (ເທດສະນໍານິສັງສໍ). Hence, titles of *anisong* genre texts in Lao manuscripts are mostly preceded by the terms *salòng* or *sòng*: *Salòng cedi sai* (Rewards derived from building sand stupas), *Sòng fang tham* (Rewards derived from listening to the Dhamma), or *Salòng khamphi* (Rewards derived from copying religious books). *Sòng* or *salòng* (ສອງ/ສະຫຼອງ), corresponding to *chalòng* (‘to celebrate’ ฉลอง) in Thai, is a derivative of the Khmer verb *chlòng*, referring to various meanings: ‘to cross’, ‘to inaugurate’, ‘to dedicate’, ‘to celebrate’ and ‘to spread.’ The contexts of *thet salòng* or *salòng* sermons are apparently associated with ‘to dedicate’ and ‘to celebrate’ because the sermons are subsequently performed to mark a completion of merit-making to serve the functions of acknowledging, celebrating, valuing, and admiring the meritorious deeds accomplished by the donors (as for *anisong* manuscripts in Luang Prabang, see Bounleuth 2015).

The sermon is performed in public where people are allowed to join, therefore it is ‘witnessed’ by all participants, especially by the preaching monk, who approves the successful merit and delivers the sermons to explain or ‘affirm’ the upcoming great rewards generated by their positive deeds. Such rewards are paid off to the practitioners in recognition of their precious generosity; acquirement of the rewards is thus congratulated by means of celebrations, or *salòng*. In exchange for their meritorious acts, *anisong* sermons are accordingly given to announce the completion of benevolent virtue and to promise generous donors rewarding gifts. Terminologically speaking, the term *anisong* (Th: *thet anisong* เหนืออนิสงส์) in Northern Thailand signifies ‘the announcement of rewards’, while the term *salòng* or *sòng* (L: *thet salòng* ເທດສະຫຼອງ) in Laos signifies ‘the announcement of completion.’ Grabowsky provides the following explanation:

Anisong is derived from Pali *ānisaṃsa* which means ‘benefit, advantage, good result’. In the Buddhist context, *Anisong* or *Salòng* (Lao, from Khmer: *chlan* (ឆ្លង)), ‘to dedicate’, ‘to celebrate’) – often contracted to *Sòng* – are used for homiletic purposes, such as performing sermons and preaching. Those texts, generally rather short (rarely containing more than twenty folios), describe the rewards in terms of merit, or literally the ‘advantage’ which a believer may expect from a particular religious deed.

In the Buddhist social context, where meritorious outcomes derived from praiseworthy activities are hardly calculable or immeasurable, concrete manifestations referring particularly to the Buddha, who clarified or announced meritorious incentives, matter significantly. The liturgical culture of delivering *anisong/salòng* sermons assuring practitioners of their upcoming blissful consequences, acquired by myriad religious ceremonies, has been generated and inherited for centuries.

Modern printing technology has influenced Lao manuscript culture since the second half of the 20th century (1954–1975) when some palm-leaf manuscripts were typewritten. Writing support was not restricted to palm leaves, but also included mulberry paper and industrial paper. There were frequent transmissions of *anisong* manuscripts following the advent of modern printing technology, where typewriters were introduced and numerous palm-leaf manuscripts were copied, mostly led by the venerable monk Sathu Nyai Khamchan Virachitto (1920–2007) from Luang Prabang. Religious books written in Thai script were also part of the textual transmission. Entering the age of printing, which greatly influenced the use and availability of writing support and writing tools, and which emerged in the manuscript culture of Luang Prabang in the 20th century, scribes were provided with industrial paper. In response to market and consumer demands, different types of paper and notebooks were mass-produced, and *anisong* manuscripts were increasingly written on industrial paper: some were folded resembling the format of traditional palm-leaf manuscripts (*pothi*), others followed the layout of the notebook in which they were written. Such changes can be defined as transformation of both material and layout. Specifically, *anisong* manuscripts were transformed from oblong-shaped palm-leaf manuscripts into leporello-style folded books and notebook manuscripts (Silpsupa 2022: 383–386).

As a consequence of newly applied printing technologies, *anisong* manuscripts were made by both hand and typing/printing machines. Such hybrid production became widespread and reduced the time-consuming task of handwriting. Thus, both conservative and innovative elements can coexist in an *anisong* manuscript.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010) defines the word “hybrid” as something that is a product of mixing two or more different things (2010: 764). The hybrid production of *anisong* manuscripts is thus characterized by pluralism caused by cross-cultural encounters. While the word “hybridity” appears for the first time in debates in the 18th century in the context of interracial contact resulting from overseas conquest and population displacements in Britain, France and the United States (Kraidy 2005: 48), hybridity in the context of manuscript production emphasizes text-carrying objects as the outcome of old and new tools of writing, namely, domestic and foreign means, facilitated by the international movement of people. French colonialism and the openness of people in Luang Prabang to new printing technologies from Thailand and neighbouring countries were key in enhancing the hybrid production of *anisong* manuscripts.

The key research questions raised in this article are: How long have manuscripts in Luang Prabang, including those of *anisong* texts, been produced in a hybrid manner? How important have new printing technologies been for the transmission of texts and for what reasons have they coexisted with handwritten elements in *anisong* manuscripts? Which parts of *anisong* manuscripts have been produced in a hybrid manner, e.g. writing support, templates and texts? Our study is focused on a well-defined corpus of manuscripts from Luang Prabang (see Appendix), which are all hybrid productions. The corpus of almost two dozen manuscripts is a rather unique case because they were not produced purely by hand or by type/print and they contain liturgical *anisong* texts. Compared to most other textual genres, *anisong* manuscripts are far more familiar

and associated with modern features in terms of content and material (Silpsupa 2022: 382), resulting from the living tradition of *anisong* sermons through old and new generations. Therefore, in summation, the manuscripts of our corpus provide evidence of adaptation and resilience of Lao manuscripts when facing the application of new printing technologies in the manuscript culture of Luang Prabang.

Early typewritten and printed manuscripts in Luang Prabang

The study deals with *anisong* manuscripts kept at four monastic repositories in Luang Prabang town. These collections hold a total of twenty-three manuscripts that are the outcome of hybrid productions made either from palm leaves or various kinds of paper. Six of these manuscripts are so-called “multiple-text manuscripts” containing two to four texts in the same codological unit. Arranged according to their use in rituals, the manuscripts can be divided into four categories, of which the category of gift-giving ceremonies comprises roughly one third or twelve of a total of thirty-five texts recorded in the manuscripts. Monks and novices in Luang Prabang used typewriters to print texts onto palm leaves and industrial paper between 1960–1990.

Anisong manuscripts were more openly adapted to new printing technologies than manuscripts of other textual genres. Over time, mulberry paper and industrial paper have become more popular choices for manuscripts than palm leaves, not least because inscribing skills and materials became rarer and time spent on the writing decreased. Evidenced by dated manuscripts that have survived in Luang Prabang, early typewritten and printed manuscripts have been made since the mid-20th century.

Before modern printing technologies became influential in Laos in the 20th century, manuscripts were inscribed by hand on different kinds of writing support available, mostly palm leaves. Mulberry paper manuscripts were frequently produced and used among Tai Lü speaking areas in Luang Namtha, the northern part of Laos. Scribes and sponsors were local people and collaborated in manuscript production with the aim to sustain the Teachings of the Buddha, ideally “until the end of 5,000 years” after the Buddha’s *parinibbāna* as donors’ wishes in numerous colophons testify.

Textual corrections and revisions were done by hand. With modern printing technologies, however, manuscripts could be typewritten, block-printed, photocopied, and even computer-printed, requiring a wider group of commissioners that have not been restricted merely to scribes and sponsors, but also included editors, transcribers, illustrators and proofreaders, among others.

The earliest dated hybrid palm-leaf manuscript is entitled *Panya barami* ([Rewards derived from copying] the Perfection of Wisdom) and kept at Vat Saen Sukharam under the code BAD-13-1-0760. This manuscript, dated 1963, was both handwritten and typewritten; its text was inscribed by hand with a stylus, but its colophon was typed with a typewriter (see Figure 1). There is no reliable evidence to show that the scribe, who copied the text, and the individual, who typed the colophon, were one and the same person. One is tempted to speculate that the colophon may have been newly typed in response to the tradition of re-donating manuscripts. Either the original manuscript did not carry a colophon of its own or the colophon was lost. The lack of traditional writing

tools and writing substances, notably stylus and ink, resulted in the decision to have the new colophon typed.

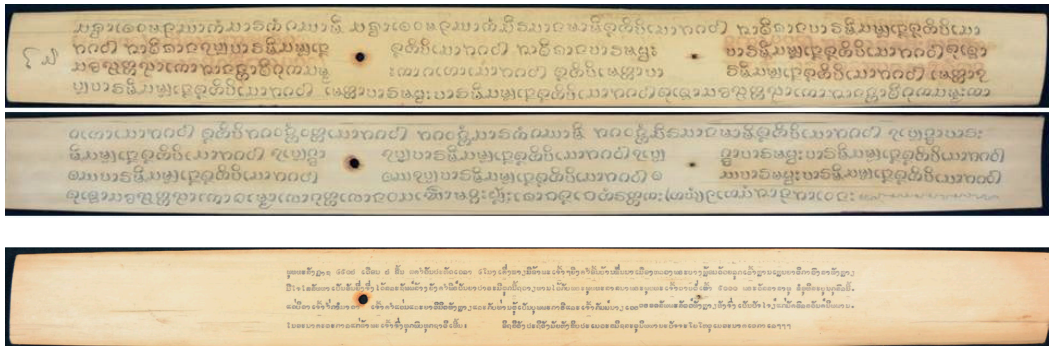


Figure 1. First dated hybrid palm-leaf manuscript with handwritten text (top) and typewritten colophon (below). *Panya Barami* ([Rewards derived from copying] the Perfection of Wisdom) Source: BAP, code: BAD-13-1-0760, Vat Saen Sukharam, 1963

The earliest dated hybrid paper manuscript in Luang Prabang, however, does not contain an *anisong* text but a collection of Buddhist prayers used on Buddhist Holy Days, on celebrations marking the end of the Buddhist Lent, and at ordination ceremonies. The manuscript is also registered at Vat Saen Sukharam under the code BAD-13-2-066 and, with the primary aim of providing a standardized version of the *Pāṭimokkha* to the sangha throughout the country (Bounleuth 2016: 97), it was manufactured by computer printing in 1959. The manuscript is mentioned as an example of a religious manuscript, kept in the abode of Venerable Khamchan Virachitto, and one that applied modern book-printing techniques, including punctuation and a preface in modern Lao script written by the Minister of the Interior and Religious Affairs and dated 22 September 1959. The venerable monk, who was also the manuscript compiler and the Ecclesiastical Minister at that time, wrote several remarks on the inside of the back cover on 22 September 1961 (Bounleuth 2016: 97–98). The religious occasions for which the manuscript was produced are regularly held ceremonies; they are significant in terms of purifying and preserving the monastic discipline by means of considering the 277 sangha rules, criticizing and discussing improper habits witnessed by fellow monks during the Buddhist Lent period, and ordaining a young man. The manuscript texts were subject to standardization in order to facilitate these important ceremonies.

Figure 2 is excerpted from the first dated hybrid paper manuscript. The cover folio and the text were mostly printed by computer, with some insertions written with ink by hand. Mistakes were deleted using strips of chemical white eraser and replaced by corrections also done by hand. Only the preface and the ending remark were typewritten, each of which documents the in-depth production background of this hybrid manuscript. The preface provides general information about the manuscript text: it was transmitted from the original version provided by Venerable Abbot Khamchan Virachitto. He assigned the Ministry of Education to publish the text with the intention of standardizing monastic discipline. The preface was issued on 12 September 1959 by Phaya Khòrayok Suwannawong, Deputy Ministry of the Interior and Education, Vientiane. The end

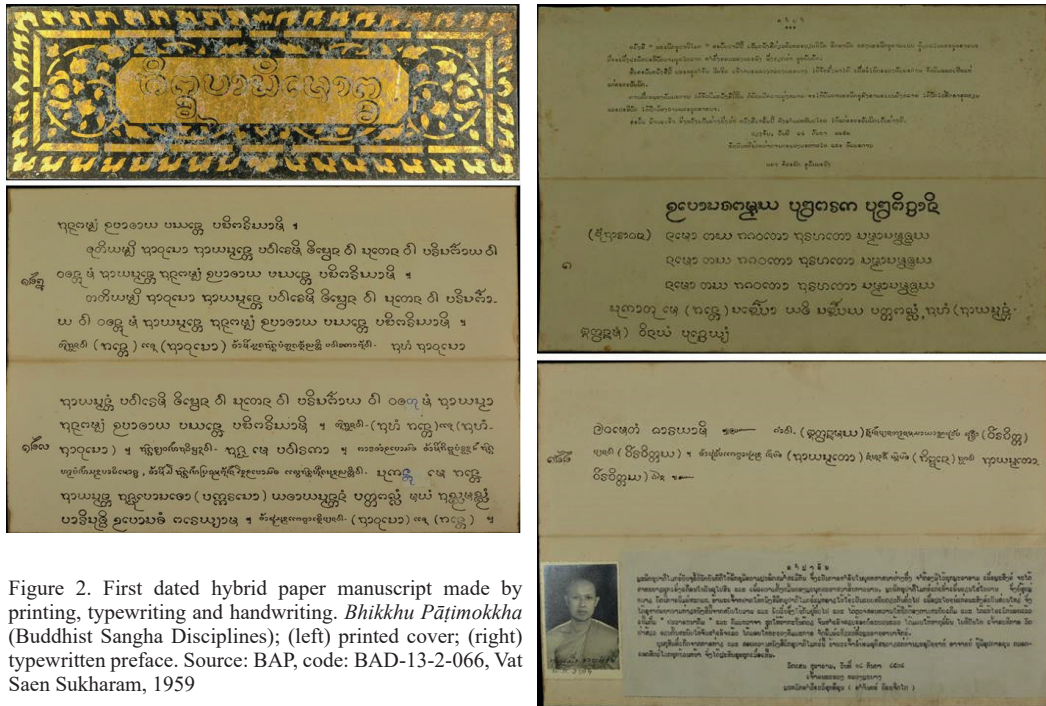


Figure 2. First dated hybrid paper manuscript made by printing, typewriting and handwriting. *Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha* (Buddhist Sangha Disciplines); (left) printed cover; (right) typewritten preface. Source: BAP, code: BAD-13-2-066, Vat Saen Sukharam, 1959

remark was added by Venerable Monk Khamchan Virachitto, the ecclesiastical head of Luang Prabang town, on 12 September 1961. It seems to have been typed later than the preface, or even after the completion of the manuscript text. The end remark highlights the significance of the *Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha* text towards the sangha and sheds light on the transmission context of the manuscript achieved by the venerable monk.

The *Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha* texts, copied in palm-leaf manuscripts, were not widely known. The widespread introduction of new printing technologies, however, inspired the venerable abbot to publish the text. To this end, he wrote the manuscript by revising several previous versions of the *Bhikkhu Pāṭimokkha*, that were originally written either on palm-leaf or on mulberry paper, and he added the *Pavāraṇākamma* and *Kammavācā* texts, the latter used in ordination ceremonies of monks and novices.¹ Then, he ordered a senior monk named Phan Bodhipañño, the abbot of Vat Pa Siao, to write the revised full text to be published nationwide by the Ministry of Education. The manuscript is thus to be considered the final well-edited version and, to this day, serves as the standard text. To honour the monk’s endeavour, the end remark was typewritten later on paper and glued into the manuscript.

A survey of *anisong* manuscripts in the aforementioned repositories in Luang Prabang reveals that hybrid palm-leaf manuscripts were produced between 1963–1990 and hybrid paper manuscripts between 1995–2016. Accordingly, the earliest hybrid palm-leaf manuscript is an *anisong*, while the earliest hybrid paper manuscript is not.

¹ *Kammavācā* is a text of a formal act, i.e. a motion (ရွှံတံတီ) together with one or three proclamations (ဓမ္မနာမာ) that may follow. The text is designed at the ordination of monks and novices and their integration into the sangha. (Payutto 2015: 317).

Purposes of hybrid production

According to the colophons of the manuscripts of our corpus, the hybrid manuscripts were produced, like traditional purely handwritten *anisong* manuscripts, to transmit *anisong* texts for posterity and in line with the primary purpose of providing religious texts to spread the Teachings of the Buddha. Compared to the time-consuming process of preparing the surface of palm leaves, mass manufacturing has made paper and school notebooks freely available in the market, resulting economically in decreasing demand and supply of labour and raw materials—palm leaves and mulberry paper—in manuscript production.

More than one (non-) *anisong* text could be written on paper in one codicological unit as a multiple-text manuscript. Saving writing space was no longer a concern. Now, multiple texts could conveniently be written in, for example, a blank school notebook with a fixed number of folios; scribes could thus allocate several texts according to the folio number. Blank notebooks, when used as a writing support, easily resulted in multiple-text manuscripts. In one particular multiple-text manuscript written in a school notebook, two titles of *anisong* texts are mentioned in the colophon: “On 6 November 2014, children and grandchildren of the grandmother (Mae Thao) of Teacher Khamwòn were principal initiators [to commission the manuscript of] *Parami* and *Unhatsawichai*” (Multiple-text manuscript containing two texts, source: DREAMSEA, code: DS 0056 00651, Vat Pak Caek, 2014).²

Hybrid *anisong* manuscripts were also used for creating master versions for further copies once paper became available in sufficient quantity. A group of paper leporello manuscripts was produced in a hybrid fashion, both by hand and in print, and evidently served as the original textual reference for future scribes or sponsors. The purpose of providing master copies reflects the intention of textual preservation that has been evidenced in both northern Thai and Lao *anisong* manuscripts (see Silpsupa 2022: 136–138).

In the following example, the colophon, highlighted by the white frame, is provided with several dotted lines to be filled in with the sponsors’ names, the merit recipients’ names, their intention and the benefits they wish to gain from the meritorious donation.³ Scribes can use this manuscript as an original version to write new manuscripts complete with actual sponsors’ names and wishes. Serving as master versions for future copies, the manuscript is part of an *anisong* manuscript collection written by a scribe, who was a local expert and master of ceremonies.⁴

² วันที่ 6.11.2014 เจ้าศรัทธาก็แม่นจำนวนลูกหลาน [...] ของแม่เฒ่า (อา)จารย์คำวอน ยังปารมีและอุณหัสสวีย์ไชย.

³ The manuscript’s colophon reads: “*Sādhu sādhu* (salutation), I am and have the religious faith to commission [the writing of] this manuscript in order to sustain Buddhism until the end of the 5,000 year Buddhist era. May the merit [derived from copying this book] bring me and three kinds of happiness with *Nibbāna* as the ultimate goal as wished. *Sudinnaṃ vattame dānaṃ āsavakkhayāvaḥaṃ hotu anāgata kāle*. The scribe was Thit (ex-monk) Niao Maniwong, living at Ban Cum Khòng, Luang Prabang.”

⁴ For further details, see section below, “Hybridity B: hybrid paper manuscript”.

Textual transmission and hybridity

Based on the living tradition of delivering *anisong* sermons in religious rituals, *anisong* texts have so far been transmitted from generation to generation through extant manuscripts made of different kinds of writing support, ranging from palm-leaf and mulberry paper to industrial paper. In the context of limited access to scarce writing materials, modern printing technologies were applied to the production of *anisong* manuscripts in order to sustain the preaching tradition. Several features of the manuscripts were replaced by new tools and techniques. Textual transmission was conveniently advanced by the advent of modern printing technologies in (Lao) manuscript culture and thanks to various worldly aspects of *anisong* texts and sermons, which are mostly given in the vernacular language. Writing, typing and printing could be combined for the transmission of *anisong* texts.

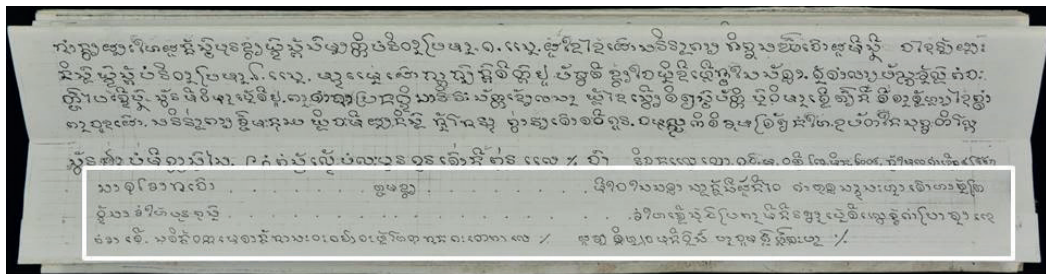


Figure 3. Hybrid paper manuscript provided with space for filling in sponsors' names and others. Salong pong sop lü phao phi (Rewards derived from participation in funerals). Source: BAP, code: BAD-13-2-034, Vat Saen Sukharam, 2004

Texts in the case study manuscripts were written either by hand or by type/print. In terms of content, they were still derived and copied from different sources, as in the case of purely handwritten manuscripts, and were not influenced by printing technologies. However, verbal patterns and visual patterns⁵ of the manuscripts, that present how the texts are displayed, were definitely affected by new printing technologies. Texts that were typewritten or printed are all in the modern Lao script and arranged in three columns, suggesting readers to read the texts by column, while those written by hand are in the Dhamma script and follow the templates of blank notebooks or paper sheets. The manuscripts in which texts were typed/printed could therefore facilitate liturgical uses by monks, who were not proficient in the Dhamma script, allowing in particular newly ordained monks to give a sermon.

Those manuscripts of our corpus, involving a mix of writing and typing, can be classified as Hybridity A type (hybrid palm-leaf manuscripts). There are five manuscripts representing this type (see Appendix), in which the scribe combined hand and typewriter to produce texts and colophons on palm leaves. The script used is always the modern

⁵ The word ‘pattern’ in this context refers to one of the four key factors (production, use, setting, pattern) in the heuristic tool initiated by Wimmer et al. (2015), affiliated to the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC). The methodology of the Four Key Factors heuristic tool guides us to investigate manuscripts from different cultures in a comparative way.

Lao script because Dhamma script letters were not available on typewriters. Those manuscripts that combine writing and printing can be classified as Hybridity B type (hybrid paper manuscripts). There are eighteen manuscripts of this type in the research corpus (see Appendix), in which the human hand and computer worked together to produce texts and templates on paper. The Dhamma script was used for writing such texts by hand since computer printers had the primary function to facilitate the production of notebooks decorated with fixed templates/layouts to be filled in.

Hybridity A: hybrid palm-leaf manuscripts

Typewritten manuscripts bear similar visual patterns that are characterized by an enlarged title, three independent textual columns, and foliation numbers accompanied by the manuscript title on the left margin of a folio. Only the initial folios of hybrid palm-leaf manuscripts were written by hand, in particular titles that were crafted using big-tipped permanent blue ink pens and placed in the centre, thus resonating the layout of printed books. The conspicuous font style of titles compensates for the limited single size of characters provided by typewriters. Other parts—texts, colophons and foliation numbers—were typewritten to serve the main purpose of transmitting religious texts in modern Lao script, the script most familiar and legible for a wider group of readers. Oriented towards typewritten texts, the titles of these hybrid palm-leaf manuscripts also appear in modern Lao script although they are handwritten. The following hybrid palm-leaf manuscript (Figure 4) was made in 1988 (Source: DLLM, code: 06011406005-15) with the intention to revise and transmit the original text (Figure 5) inscribed in 1973 (Source: BAP, code: BAD-13-1-0206). Both manuscripts are titled *Anisong het/tham bun wan koet*⁶ (Rewards derived from merit-making on birthdays) and are kept at two different monasteries in Luang Prabang.

A comparison of these two versions reveals visual organization to be the major difference. The title, which appears in the original version in the left margin (see text in the grey circle of Figure 5) is enlarged and oriented towards the centre of the first folio in the typewritten version (Figure 4). The text in the original version is written in *scriptio continua* with interruptions of space preserved for the holes, through which a cotton string is led to hold the palm leaves together. In contrast, the text of the revised version is typewritten in three independent columns. This new template suggests a by-column reading, which is not the case for its original handwritten version, where the text is to be read line by line. In the typewritten version, the left side of the first folio bears the manuscript title and a statement regarding its purpose: “[This manuscript text] is for the delivery of sermons at festive birthday celebrations that include merit-making activities.”⁷ The right side includes the name of a venerable monk, who sponsored the

⁶ The original version (1973) is entitled *Anisong het bun wan koet* while the revised version (1988) is *Anisong tham bun wan koet*. The underlined words *het* and *tham* mean “to do.” The former is a Lao word and a north-eastern Thai dialect. The latter is a central Thai word. As a result of errors passed on by mistake and various phrase editions, the 1988 version was revised to formalize the preaching text. The word *tham* was applied to comply with an expanding audience, in particular an increased Thai audience.

⁷ ອານິສິງສ໌ເຮັດບຸນວັນເກີດ ໃຊ້ສະແດງໃນເທສການວັນເກີດທີ່ມີການກະທຳບຸນໃຫ້ທານຕ່າງໆ

manuscript production, followed by his residential monastery and province: “Venerable Khamchan Virachitta Maha Thela, Vat Saen Sukharam, Luang Prabang.”⁸

Not only was the text in the typewritten version revised, but information about the production agency was also updated. The colophon of the original version mentions the Supreme Patriarch Dhammañāṇa and Teacher Wandī Itthī⁹ as the sponsor and the



Figure 4. Reproduced typewritten version (1988)

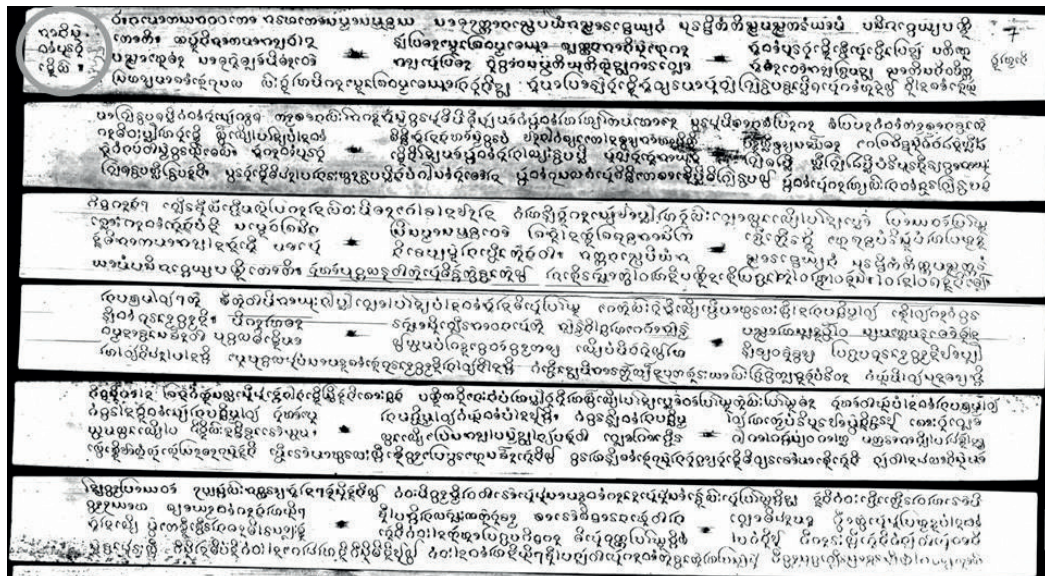


Figure 5. Original handwritten version (1973)

⁸ พระภคจาพนธ์ วิระชาิตตะมะชากฤตธะ อัตตสแนสสุธาธาม มะถอนนทวງพะชะบาย

⁹ “พระพุทธศักราชได้ ๒๕๑๕ ตัว ปีกาเป้า เดือน ๙ ขึ้น ๘ ค่ำ ยามกองแลง หมายมีศรัทธาสาทุใหญ่สมเด็จพะสังฆราช มหาเถรธรรมญาณ เป็นค้ำมูลศรัทธาได้สร้างธรรมผูกนี้ไว้กับพระศาสนา ขอให้ได้ตั้งมนโรครค้ำปรารถนาของเพิ่นสุ ประการแดเทอญ นิพพาน ปจโย โหตุ อนาคต กาเล [อา]จารย์วันตืออิทธิวิคโคมเสลา เป็นผู้เขียนเนอ” (In English) “In BE 2515 (1973), a *ka pao* year, on the eighth waxing-moon day of the ninth lunar month (Tuesday, 7 August 1973) (1335 Śrāvāṇa 8) at the time of the sunset drum (*nyam kông laeng*), [the making of the manuscript was sponsored by] Sathu Nyai Somdet Pha Sangkhalat Mahathela Thammayan, the Supreme Patriarch, to be dedicated to the Teachings of the Buddha. May all his wishes be fulfilled. *Nibbāna paccayo hotu anāgate kāle*. (May this be a condition [for me] to reach Nibbāna in the future). [A]can (teacher) Wandī Itthī from Vat Khom Salao wrote

scribe, respectively, whereas the Venerable Khamchan Virachitta Maha Thela and Monk Cinnathammo were the sponsor and the scribe of the revised version. Only the main text was transmitted, not the paratexts. The different production agents (sponsor and scribe) in the two versions originate from a local co-operation, in which different authorities shared a textual source for further transmission, resulting from the tradition of manuscript circulation¹⁰ in a locality. In other words, *anisong* manuscripts served both as sermonic texts and blueprints. Another trace of evidence emphasizing the tradition of manuscript circulation is the different names of monasteries in the two versions: Vat Mai Suvanna Phumaram in the original version and Vat Saen Sukharam in the revised version. The title written in the first folio with permanent ink (Figure 4) was made as a last step, after the folio containing the manuscript heading was inscribed. This was to prevent the surface of the handwritten ink from cracking as it was positioned in the typewriter. Handwriting and typewriting did not occur at the same time. Unlike the case of purely handwritten palm-leaf manuscripts, the foliation of this hybrid version is on the recto sides and is accompanied by the manuscript title. The preaching text is chanted at birthday events held by laypersons to celebrate one’s life transition.

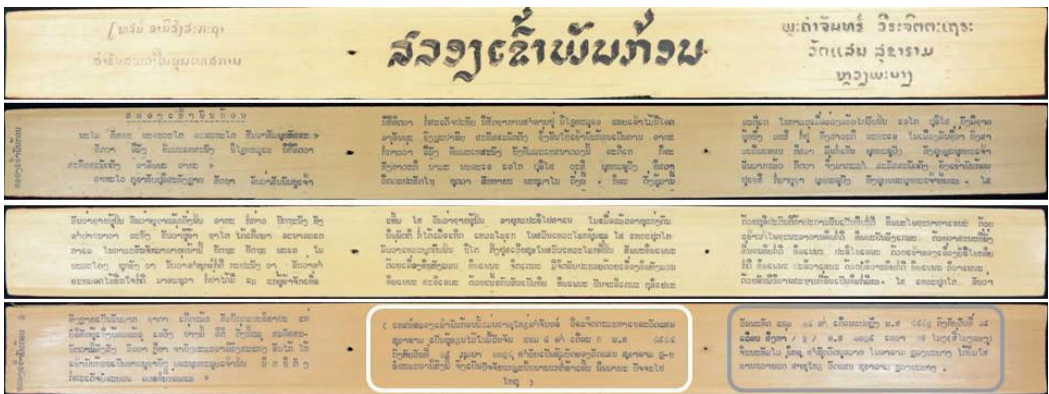


Figure 6. Hybrid palm-leaf manuscript with handwritten heading in the first folio

The hybrid palm-leaf manuscript in Figure 6 is titled *Salòng khao phan kòn* (Rewards derived from the donation of 1,000 rice balls) (Source: BAP, code: BAD-13-1-0685) and also found at Vat Saen Sukharam. The manuscript was made in 1982, the proximate year of the previous example in Figure 4, but its first folio was entirely handwritten with ink. The titles of both manuscripts are written in a similar style. On the left side of the enlarged title, the textual genre *anisong* is mentioned instead of only

[the manuscript].”

¹⁰ As manuscripts or printed religious books were kept at monasteries in limited numbers, they were lent between sites or “circulated” within a locality. A monastic repository was thus regarded as a local library where collectors and borrowers co-operated to keep the archived manuscripts in order. Admonition and librarian’s statements are particularly found in liturgical manuscripts that were in circulation to facilitate ceremonial sermons and to caution users to return and never contaminate the manuscripts. However, manuscript circulations also supported sangha monastic education, in which freshly ordained monks and novices were trained to copy palm-leaf manuscripts or even chant Pali texts. In such cases, manuscripts were used to supplement learning (Silpsupa 2022: 263–265).

the title, as in the case in Figure 4. The black permanent ink was applied using various tip sizes. The format is almost identical to that of the previous manuscript, almost certainly the result of both having been produced by the same production agents, namely Venerable Khamchan Virachitta Maha Thela and Monk Cinnathammo. The colophon is significant and states the background of the manuscript and its reproduction. It mentions the sponsor's name and the date of the original version from which this manuscript was copied, i.e. 15 February 1982. Further below, the context of the reproduction of the manuscript is mentioned, including the date, 15 August 1985. Moreover, the colophon reveals that the manuscript was typed to pay homage to the residential monastery (Vat Saen Sukharam) and to the sponsor, Venerable Khamchan Virachitta Maha Thela, who played a significant role in publishing religious texts that had originally been written in palm-leaf manuscripts in the form of printed or typewritten books in modern Lao script in order to propagate Buddhism in the late 20th century.¹¹ Hence, the manuscript was reproduced in a hybrid way. The colophon is quoted here in full:

(ເທສົນສລອງເຂົ້າພັນກ້ອນນີ້ແມ່ນສາທຸໂຫງຄຳຈັນທຣ໌ ວິຣະຈິຕຕະມະຫາເຖຣະວັດແສນສຸຂາຮາມ ເປັນຜູ້ຂຽນໄວ້ໃນມື້ວັນຈັນ ແຮມ ໔ ຄຳ ເດືອນ ໓ ພ.ສ ໒໔໒໔ ກົງກັບວັນທີ່ ໑໕ ກຸມພາ ໑໙໘໒ ສຳລັບເປັນສິມບັດຂອງວັດແສນ ສຸຂາຮາມ ຫຼ-ບ ຂໍຜະລະອານິສິງນີ້ ຈົງເປັນປັຈຈັຍແກ່ພູະນິພພານ ແກກໍ່ຂ້າເທົ້ນນິພພານະ ປັຈຈະໂຍ ໂຫຕຸ) ວັນພະຫັດ ແຮມ ໑໕ ຄຳ ເດືອນແປດຫຼັງ ພ.ສ ໒໔໒໕ ກົງກັບວັນທີ່ ໑໕ ເດືອນສິງຫາ /ຕຸ/ ຄ.ສ ໑໙໘໕ ເວລາ ໑໖ ໂມງ (ສີ່ໂມງແລງ) ຈິນນະທັມໂມ ພິກຂຸ ສຳນັກວັດພູຄວາຍໂພຄາຮາມ ຫຼວງພະບາງ ໄດ້ພິມໃສ່ລານຖວາຍແດ່ສາທຸໂຫງ ວັດແສນສຸຂາຮາມ ຫຼວງພະບາງ

This manuscript *Salòng khao phan kòn* was [originally] written by Venerable Khamchan Virachitto on Monday, on the fifth waning-moon day of the third [lunar] month, in 2524 BE, corresponding to 15 February 1982, to be provided for Vat Saen Sukharam, Luang Prabang. May the merit [derived from copying this manuscript] lead me to *Nibbāna. Nibbāna paccayo hotu*. On Thursday, on the fourteenth waning-moon day of the second eighth [lunar] month, 2528 BE, corresponding to 15 August 1985 at 16:00, Monk Cinnathammo, affiliated with Vat Phu Khuai Phokharam, Luang Prabang, typed this manuscript on palm leaves in dedication to the abbot of Vat Saen Sukharam, Luang Prabang.

What does the colophon reveal? The prototype version of this manuscript was inscribed in 1982 by Venerable Khamchan to provide preaching texts for Vat Saen Sukharam, a monastery with which he was affiliated as abbot for over sixty years (1943–2007).¹² Three years later, in 1985, a monk named Cinnadhammo reproduced the text in a hybrid palm-leaf manuscript by using a typewriter in honour of the abbot. Unfortunately, the prototype version has not survived. The selection of a copy was inspired by the

¹¹ His great contributions included (re)constructions of monastic buildings, collections of historical objects, textual compositions, textual publications and socio-religious roles (Khamvone 2015).

¹² “In 1943, after the passing of Sathu Nyai Kaenchan Katchayana Maha Thela, the abbot of Vat Saen Sukharam, Achan Maha Khamphan, as a member of the Vat Saen community’s committee, played a crucial role in persuading Sathu Khamchan Virachitto to move from Vat Siphutthabat to Vat Saen Sukharam in order to be the successor of the former abbot (Khamvone 2015: 40).”

popularity of the *Bun Phavet* festival, held annually in February throughout Laos. The procession of 1,000 rice balls¹³ is part of the festival and followed by a sermon for which a relevant *anisong* preaching text is required.

Hybridity B: hybrid paper manuscripts

In the research corpus, eighteen hybrid paper manuscripts were produced during the period 1995–2016 based on the collaboration of human hand and computer. The vast majority of the manuscripts appear to have been made from manufactured blank school notebooks that were filled in with *anisong* texts. Blank sheets of paper, used as cover pages of paper manuscripts, were also printed. Specifically, seventeen manuscripts were produced with computer printers, providing fixed writing-space templates, while only one manuscript was printed with a complete text in a so-called *lan thiam* (ลานเทียม), literally meaning “artificial palm-leaf [manuscript]”. We will now discuss this latter case in the following sub-section.

The manufactured paper manuscript

The manuscript is titled *Anisong sang phra trai pidok* (Rewards derived from copying the Buddhist canon), coded BAD-13-2-033, and kept at Vat Saen Sukharam (year unknown). The manuscript text had been entirely printed and the space (see the white frames) was initially left blank before it was filled in with the sponsors’ and recipients’ names in ink. The cover page includes the title in an enlarged size and a curved style, along with a statement expressing the purpose of the manuscript: “[The manuscript serves as a sermonic text] given on occasions of meritorious festivities and of other special events, for all purposes.” (ສຳລັບສະແດງໃນງານມະຫາກຸສິນ ແລະ ງານພິເສດຕາມຄວາມປະສົງ) The two lines of title and statement of purpose are flanked by two emblems: the left one is a Buddha image in a locket-like frame; the right one is the national emblem of the Lao Kingdom represented by a three-head elephant under a tiered white parasol.¹⁴ The left-hand emblem is identical to that of the socket, which is flanked by the title (left) and the source of text (right). Computer printing and manufactured production of the paper manuscript contributed to textual transmission and also replaced traditional bookbinding, which required holes and thread, a completely-bound object accompanied

¹³ The number “1,000” refers to the presumed number of canonical verses making up the Vessantara Jātaka story, the core text chanted on this occasion. Vessantara Jātaka is included in Khuddaka Nikāya, the fifth treatise of Suttanta Pīṭaka, and is believed to be the longest Jātaka, comprising 1,000 verses. However, 1,000 is a nominal figure; the actual number of verses is less than 1,000, totalling 786 (Fausbøll 1964, cited by Jory 1996). According to the message given by the future Buddha Metteyya via Venerable Malaya to human beings, apart from rice balls, five other kinds of offerings are also to be given in numbers of 1,000: lotuses, flowers, candles, flags/banners and multi-tiered umbrellas (Jory 1996). Despite being a nominal figure, 1,000 is thus associated with Vessantara Jātaka or the Mahachat festival. The verses in Vessantara Jātaka are also known as *katha phan* in Thai, literally meaning “1,000 verses.”

¹⁴ The Lao PDR was formerly named Lan Chang, literally “Land of a Million Elephants.” Elephants thus symbolize the national identity. It is believed that the three heads of the elephant represent the three regions of Laos, namely, Luang Prabang, Vientiane and Champassak. Another interpretation is that it symbolizes the trinity of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha (<https://www.golaos.tours/why-is-elephant-the-national-animal-of-laos/>).

by a socket. Unlike the case of handwritten palm-leaf manuscripts, the beginning of the text is preceded by the colophon. The colophon dominates one full page and is provided with blank space to be filled in with sponsors' names (“ທອງວັນ ສຸຕະພິມ ພ້ອມ ຄອບຄົວ ແລະ ລູກທຸກຄົນ ຢູ່ສະຫະຣັຖອະເມຣິກາ ຣັຖຄາລິຟໍເນັງ ທີ່ເມືອງຢູນງຽນ, Thongwan Sutaphrom and his/her family who live in Union City, California, United States of America”) and recipients' names (“ແມ່ຊື່ສາວຄຳພັນ, his/her mother named Khamphan”), as shown in the white frames.

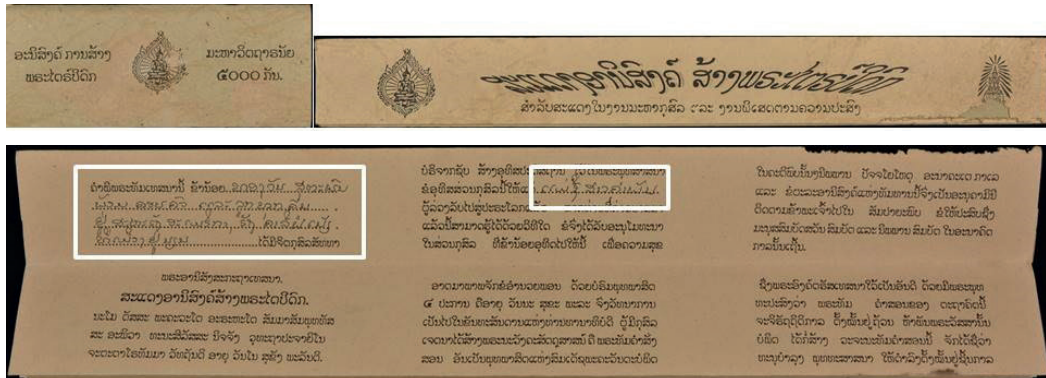


Figure 7. Printed paper manuscript with blank space for filling names of sponsors and merit recipients; (top left) socket; (top right) cover page; (below) text.

By providing a colophon at the beginning of a manuscript, a recipient monk can navigate the sponsors' names, which are to be announced in dedication rituals as part of the *Kruat Nam* (Pouring Water) ritual¹⁵ (see Silpsupa 2022: 379). Placing the sponsor's colophon at the beginning of the manuscript made the donation more visible and prominent because future readers and users will see the sponsor's names at first glance. By contrast, in the case of a printed and manufactured manuscript, placing a colophon in the space intentionally left blank at the end of the text might mean the reader overlooks it and the manuscript sponsors may miss the space to fill in their names. Traditionally, however, colophons were allocated at the end of texts or manuscripts, which were entirely handwritten. It is unlikely that a scribe would forget to write the colophon, unless it was a rare, but intentional, omission. Mentioning the names of scribes, sponsors and merit recipients was part of the commissioning of manuscripts. In contrast, in printed manuscripts, sponsors' and merit recipients' names are unspecified and replaced with a blank space to be filled in. Donors frequently failed to fill in merit-relevant names unless the colophons appeared more prominently at the beginning of manuscripts. Thus, printing technology changed the tradition of addressing commissioners. The names of sponsors/donors were no longer needed to be referred to in printed manuscripts.

At the end of the text, there is a statement from the commissioning team of monks

¹⁵ In the *Kruat Nam* ritual, other donors in the same group touch one another and the water-pouring donor in a chain, in response to the belief that merit can be shared. After the monk finishes the blessing, the water will be poured on a tree root, as it is believed that merit can be further transmitted and dedicated to the dead through the ground or the Goddess of Earth (Th: *mae thōrani*, แม่ธรณี). The act is at the same time animistic, contagious, indirect and representing a positive rite (see Silpsupa 2022: 64).

and laypeople, as shown in the white frame, comprising those who researched and edited the text (Master Monk Suwat Paphaso), transcribed and translated the text into Lao (Monk Wòn Varapañño), and printed and revised the whole manuscript (Khamphòn Phothirat). Obviously, the manuscript was transcribed and translated into Lao and printed in modern Lao script, reflecting the need to disseminate religious texts for a wider audience illiterate in Dhamma script. Whereas the production team (scribal task) was expressed in print, the dedication team (sponsoring task) was expressed in a handwritten codex *unicus*. In this way, other copies of the same text could be marked

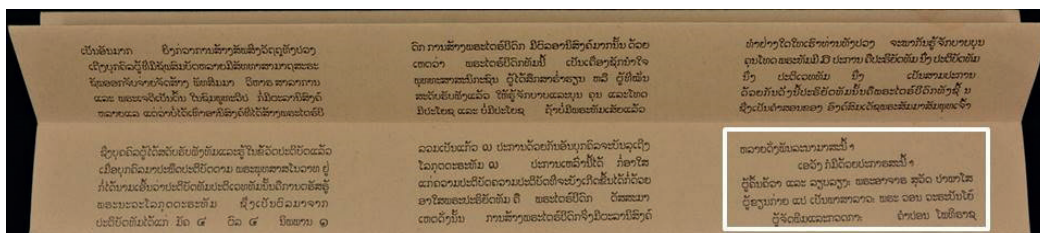


Figure 8. Statement of the commissioning team written at the end of the text

with different sponsors’ names. Printed manuscripts can thus be offered to a monastery in a one-off donation. Unlike typewritten manuscripts individually commissioned as a one-off production, printed manuscripts can (theoretically) be mass-produced in an infinite number of copies. Interestingly, the names were written in modern Lao script in accordance with the printed text, which was also written in modern Lao script. Perhaps this particular *anisong* text was popular in that period. Hybrid production was thus necessary for this case.

Paper manuscripts with printed templates: blank school notebooks and cover pages

Among the seventeen paper manuscripts, twelve are school notebooks; the other five are provided with printed cover pages. The two hybrid variants have fixed templates/layouts manufactured by printers in common. Printing facilitated the twelve manuscripts with a ready writing support, i.e. blank school notebooks, but provided the other five merely with cover pages.

The *anisong* manuscripts made from school notebooks are coded BAD-21-2-004,¹⁶ DS 0056 00586,¹⁷ DS 0056 00638,¹⁸ DS 0056 00639,¹⁹ DS 0056 00643,²⁰ DS 0056

¹⁶ *Sòng than dòk mai* (Rewards derived from the donation of flowers), Vat Si Bun Hüang, 1995.

¹⁷ *Thippamon* (Rewards derived from praying for good things), Vat Pak Caek, 2009.

¹⁸ *Thippamon* (Rewards derived from praying for good things), Vat Pak Caek, 2016.

¹⁹ *Sòng pong sop* (Rewards derived from participation in funerals), Vat Pak Caek, year unknown.

²⁰ *Sòng pha nam fon* (Rewards derived from the donation of monk’s robes in the rainy season), Vat Pak Caek, year unknown.

00644,²¹ DS 0056 00645,²² DS 0056 00652,²³ DS 0056 00646,²⁴ DS 0056 00647,²⁵ DS 0056 00650²⁶ and DS 0056 00651.²⁷ Except for the DS 0056 00651, which contains two texts, *Thippamon* and *Anisong sapphathan*, all are single-text manuscripts (STMs). Generally, *anisong* texts are no more than fifteen palm-leaf folios in length, which fits the average size of a school notebook. The notebooks are all smaller-sized than A4 (circa 16 x 22 cm). In general, the front covers of school notebooks feature images of national sightseeing spots, such as Vat That Luang (in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos), product logos or other decorations, and provide a small, formatted box to be filled in with student's names, school name, grades and subject titles. In most of the school notebooks, the national Lao motto ສາທາລະນະລັດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ ປະຊາຊົນລາວ ສັນຕິພາບ ເອກະລາດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ ເອກະພາບ ວັດທະນະຖາວອນ (“The Lao’s People Democratic Republic (Lao PDR): Peace, Independence, Unity and Prosperity”) appears in the top margin. The back covers diversely include basic information, such as: mathematic formulae; Lao consonants and vowels; the English alphabet; Arabic, Lao and Roman numerals; lyrics of the national anthem of Laos; and business contacts of companies.

The layout and the basic information on the back covers make clear that the blank notebooks were manufactured for school. They were produced in Laos and, according to some evidence, also perhaps in Thailand. The following picture (Figure 9) was taken in 2017 by one of the authors at the monastic library of Vat Ong Tü in Vientiane. A pile of blank school notebooks was prepared at the library. They were packed together using transparent plastic and hard string. Figure 10 shows the front and back covers of a notebook of the same *Nok Khu* (“Twin Birds”) brand as those in Figure 9. Twin Birds is a product of Sawang Kan Phim printing house, which was founded in Vientiane in 1987. The brand logo is illustrated on the front cover along with the motto of Lao PDR above it. A box provided for filling in school names, student names, grades and subject titles is below the logo. The scribe wrote the title of the manuscript and the sponsor's name in modern Lao script in the box, but did not follow its template. He just ‘wrote’ them above the lines but did not ‘fill in’ or ‘follow’ the template given. The back cover includes: a table of Lao consonant letters; Lao vowels; high-level and low-level consonants; Arabic, Lao and Roman numerals; the English alphabet; a table of mathematic multiplication; a calculation of time; and the business of the notebook manufacturer. However, the title (*Anisong thung*) and the sponsor's name (Monk Bun), along with his affiliation (Vat Ban Pak Caek), were written in thick ink in 90-degree rotation to the given template; this will be discussed further below.

²¹ *Anisong thung* (Rewards derived from the donation of religious flags), Vat Pak Caek, 2012.

²² *Anisong lai pae fai* (Rewards derived from the donation of floating vessels), Vat Pak Caek, 2016.

²³ *Palami sam sip that* (Rewards derived from following The Thirty Perfections), Vat Pak Caek, 2012.

²⁴ *Anisong sappha thung* (Rewards derived from the donation of religious flags), Vat Pak Caek, 2002.

²⁵ *Anisong sangkhan* (Rewards derived from merit-making at traditional New Year festivals), Vat Pak Caek, 2001.

²⁶ *Panya barami* ([Rewards derived from copying] the Perfection of Wisdom), Vat Pak Caek, year unknown.

²⁷ Multiple-text manuscript containing two texts: *Thippamon* (Rewards derived from praying for good things) and *Anisong sapphathan* (Rewards derived from the donation of all kinds of gift-giving), Vat Pak Caek, 2014.

Like printed books, the school notebooks in our corpus are bound along the left-hand margin at the point where every textual line starts. In some school notebooks, an emblem appears in the top left or top right corner, suggesting a vertical bookbinding line. However, *anisong* texts in the notebook manuscripts were written in 90-degree clockwise rotation to the given layout, causing the binding line to have a horizontal orientation. The 90-degree clockwise rotation forced preaching monks to turn pages vertically, not unlike reading traditional palm-leaf manuscripts. If the preaching monks



Figure 9. A pile of school notebooks in the monastic library of Vat Ong Tū, Vientiane



Figure 10. Front cover and back cover of the *Nok Khu* brand, printed at Sawang Kanphim

turned pages horizontally, this would look like the reading of normal printed books. The writing in clockwise rotation was thus intended to keep the traditional way of turning pages, which would perhaps appear more appropriate in a ritual context. Hence, the textual templates are partly independent of the school notebook layout and readers have to read the texts from the left side, not from the bookbinding side. In Figure 11, the writing is rotated 90 degrees from the standard template of its school notebook. The text and the title are written in the Dhamma script. Several ink colours—red, black and blue—were applied freely for corrections.

The Dhamma script was used to write *anisonṅ* texts in school notebooks and reflected a high degree of literacy in the religious script, notwithstanding the advent of new printing technologies, while modern Lao script was applied in textual paracontents.²⁸ The hybrid paper manuscripts made from school notebooks thus appear to have been written with two different scripts: Dhamma script and modern Lao script. The pictures in Figures 12 and 13 show the front cover and the back cover of two manuscripts entitled

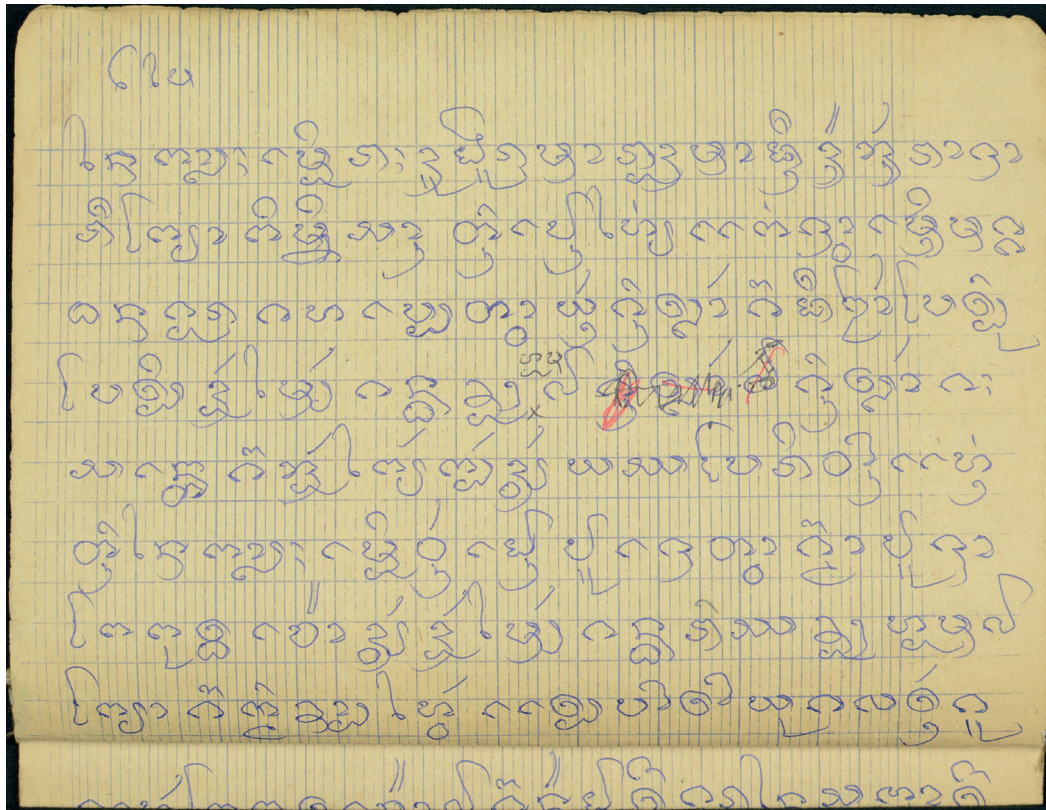


Figure 11. Text writing in 90-degree rotation of the notebook layout

²⁸ Paracontent is a set of visual signs (writing, images, marks) that is presented in a manuscript in addition to the core content(s). Unlike guest content, they provide data either on the manuscript and/or its core content(s). Paracontent can be part of original production plans of a manuscript in which it is found or be a later addition. There are three functions of paracontent: structuring function, commenting function and documenting function. For details of this rather new term, see Ciotti 2018: 1.

script. Figure 15³² shows the end part of a manuscript titled *Anisong thung* (Rewards derived from the donation of religious flags), in which the text was written in Dhamma script; but the word ສຸດ (“to end”) indicates the text ending is written in modern Lao script, as shown in the grey circle. The clear dividing line between what needs to be written in Dhamma script and what should be in modern Lao script is the religious character and sacredness of the content: *anisong* preaching texts are delivered as a sermon while it is not the case for other textual paracontents. Another reason for using the two kinds of script is the intention to target specific users of the preaching texts, i.e. monks and novices, who were literate in the Dhamma script.

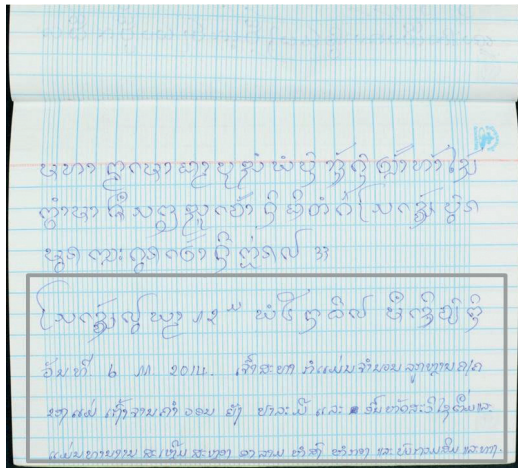


Figure 14. Bi-scriptual colophon

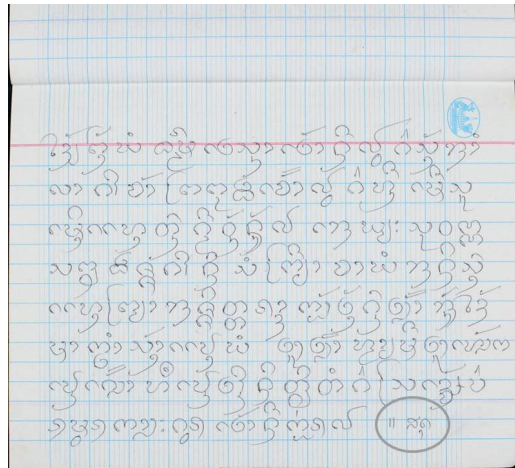


Figure 15. End mark written in modern Lao script

In addition to printed school notebooks filled with *anisong* texts, features of printing technology were applied to produce cover pages that had a fixed template. Figure 16 shows four cover pages from four hybrid paper manuscripts, coded BAD-13-2-031,³³ BAD-13-2-034,³⁴ BAD-13-2-035³⁵ and BAD-13-2-036.³⁶ Evidenced by the colophons,

³² Source: DREAMSEA, code: DS 0056 00644, Vat Pak Caek, 2012.

³³ The manuscript contains two texts: *Salòng sang nangsi* (Rewards derived from copying religious books) and *Salòng pha ap nam fon* (Rewards derived from the donation of monk’s robes in the rainy season), Vat Saen Sukharam, 2004.

³⁴ The manuscript contains four texts: *Salòng ciwòn* (Rewards derived from the donation of monk’s robes), *Salòng haksa sin* (Rewards derived from precept observance), *Salòng pha phutthahup* (Rewards derived from the donation of Buddha images) and *Salòng pong sop lü phao phi* (Rewards derived from participation in funerals), Vat Saen Sukharam, 2004.

³⁵ The manuscript contains four texts: *Salòng kò thaen si maha pho* (Rewards derived from the donation of tree poles), *Salòng vetkudi* (Rewards derived from the construction of public latrines), *Salòng sangkhathan* (Rewards derived from the donation of all kinds of gift-giving) and *Salòng sang saphan khua* (Rewards derived from the construction of public bridges), Vat Saen Sukharam, year unknown.

³⁶ The manuscript contains four texts: *Salòng kathinathan* (Rewards derived from participation in the Kathin festival), *Salòng fang tham* (Rewards derived from listening to the Dhamma), *Salòng buat* (Rewards derived from sponsoring ordination ceremonies) and *Salòng sala* (Rewards derived from the construction of pavilions), Vat Saen Sukharam, 2007.

the scribe of all these manuscripts was an ex-monk named Niao Maniwong, who was highly respected as a local expert of religious ceremonies in Luang Prabang. Bounleuth Sengsoulin mentions his social status when describing his attitudes towards dating systems.

Thit Niao Manivong (Thit Niao) was a Buddhist scholar in Luang Prabang who followed the newly introduced orthographic system of the Tham-Lao script and the new way of writing manuscripts – both the system and the way might have been put into place by Sathu Nyai Khamchan. However, Thit Niao did not use two dating systems in the same manuscript, whereas some manuscripts initiated by Sathu Nyai Khamchan regularly contain two dating systems, the Buddhist and Minor Eras. Therefore, Thit Niao had his own way of dating manuscripts (2016: 240–241).

In this way, the scribe could also share the merit of copying texts with future sponsors; the more frequently copies were made, the greater the merit to be accumulated from writing the master copy. Evidenced by other non-*anisong* manuscripts, the expression “ກວດແລ້ວ” (*kuat laeo*, “already checked”) seems to have been commonly used in the Lao manuscript culture of Luang Prabang. A palm-leaf manuscript kept at Vat Siang Thòng entitled *Sutmon nòi* or “concise prayers” (source: BAP, code: BAD-17-1-0026, 1939) also features this expression, and, according to the manuscript catalogue, *Buddhist Archives Luang Prabang Vat Xiang Thòng Project 2017–2018*, it has the same meaning: “The last folio on the verso side has a text written with a blue pen in modern Lao script which reads กวดแล้ว 31.3.1989 (already examined, 13.3.1989)” (Khamvone and Grabowsky 2018: 30).

The manuscripts were thus obviously intended to serve as master versions designed for ceremonial usage or for making further copies. Each of the covers is framed with black and white lined flower ornaments. The central part has horizontal lines to be filled in with text titles and is flanked by one flower on each side with twin curved lines in between. The scribe could therefore write the titles on the cover, as well as freely darken the central circles of the flowers. Based on these features, we can speculate that it is an original template printed by computer and provided only with the black and white lined frame. The writing part, including the flowers and the twin lines, were added later by someone else’s hand. Finally, the ‘modified’ template was photocopied or duplicated to produce several paper copies before being singled out, thereby resulting in a black and white reproduction. In the second part of Figure 16, four titles were written with blue ink; the cover was obviously photocopied before the titles were added. Interestingly, Figure 17 below is a cover page of a paper manuscript in *pothi* format produced in the same year (2004)³⁷ and with a template very similar to those in Figure 16, but done by hand. Printed layouts could therefore have an impact on the writing culture as a reverse transformation.

³⁷The manuscript contains two texts: *Salòng pong sop lü phao phi* (Rewards derived from participation in funerals) and *Salòng ciwòn* (Rewards derived from the donation of monk’s robes), source: BAP, code: BAD-13-2-037, Vat Saen Sukharam, 2004.

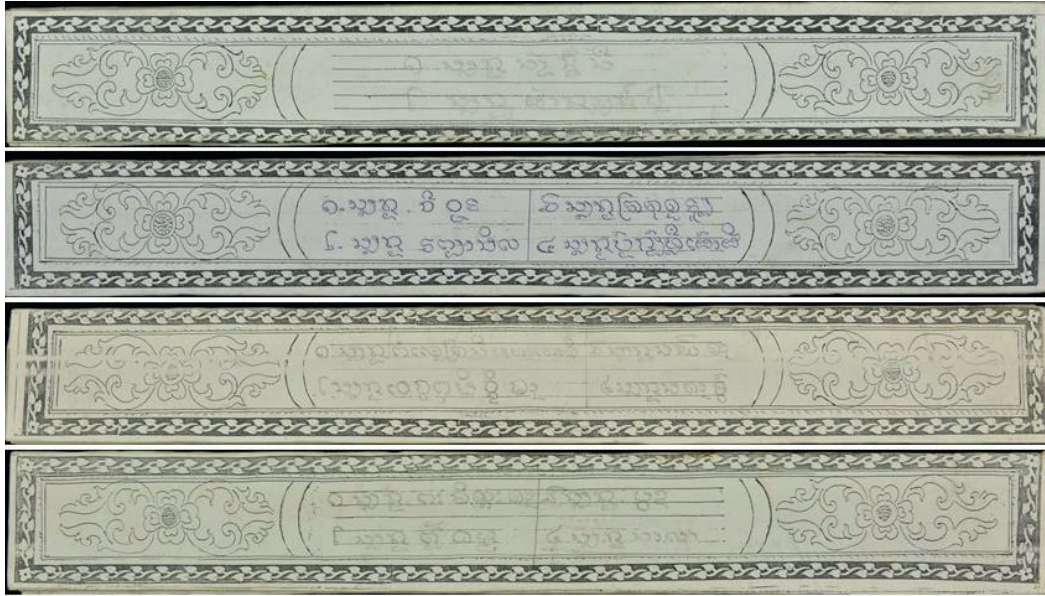


Figure 16. Four cover pages of hybrid paper manuscripts written by Thit (ex-monk) Niao Maniwong

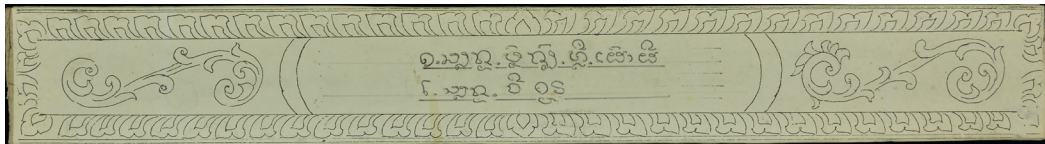


Figure 17. A cover page with the similar layout to those in Figure 16

Conclusion

Actual uses of *anisong* manuscripts in dedicational and sermonic rituals seem to be the most prominent reasons for applying new printing technologies in manuscript production, reflecting that the Buddhist religion has benefited from modern prints. Several features dealing with visual patterns and verbal patterns in traditional handwritten manuscripts were replaced or reorganized by modern features resulting from new printing tools and techniques in typewritten and printed manuscripts. Consequently, the main purpose of modern printing technological application for the sake of textual transmissions, namely reduction of time-consuming and mass production, benefited from the modern printing technology.

Despite being made of palm leaves, typewritten manuscripts were written in the modern Lao script, representing the co-existence and effort of sustaining old tradition and innovation, as well as reflecting the decrease in the number of scribes literate in the Dhamma script and the lack of traditional writing techniques over the last century, in which the culture of manuscript dedication and *anisong* sermons, however, were still active.

Unlike the typewritten palm-leaf manuscripts, those written in blank school notebooks were added with *anisong* texts by hand in the Dhamma script, reflecting the active literacy in Dhamma script among scribes. Paper templates of the blank notebooks were, however, barely followed by the scribes, who wrote the texts freely and sometimes

in 90-degree rotation. The school notebooks therefore provided the scribes only with writing support, not with their given templates and layouts.

In the artificial printed manuscript (*lan thiam*), names of the production team members were printed altogether with the text to refer to their scribal tasks, whereas names of donors needed to be written by hand later, to represent their sponsoring tasks. A mass production for numerous copies manufactured by the same factory can contribute to several donations by means of new entries of persons' names in artificial printed ones. Accordingly, the production team and the sponsoring team did not know each other, implying sponsors and scribes being totally independent. Compared to traditional production of manuscripts in ancient times, scribes and sponsors collaborated and depended on each other to finish a manuscript. The independence between the two parties in the artificial printed manuscript significantly reflects changes in the manuscript production process influenced by printing innovation. Besides, reverse transformation also occurred when features and elements in typewritten/printed manuscripts inspired handwritten ones.

The hybrid production of the case-study *anisong* manuscripts was a result of struggles in extending Buddhism and preserving sermonic traditions under the insufficiency of Dhamma script literacy and traditional writing tools. Since manuscript production is not dealing only with purely material aspects, but also with production agents or commissioners involved, the relationship between sponsors and scribes influenced by the modern prints was consequently sometimes diminished.

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Note on presenting quotations from the manuscript texts

Since the manuscripts that we used as primary sources for our research are written either in the Dhamma script or in the modern Lao script, the quotations selected are necessarily presented differently. Those from the manuscripts written/typewritten in the modern Lao script are simply presented in modern Lao script. In contrast, original texts written in Tham Lao (i.e. the Lao variant of the Dhamma script) have been transcribed into modern Thai script by largely preserving the orthography of the original. Thus, readers familiar with modern Thai might better comprehend the English translations. We consider this approach, though not without shortcomings, more appropriate than transcribing the text into modern Lao (due to the script's limited number of consonant letters) or using a Tham Lao font.

Appendix: Twenty-three manuscripts in the research corpus

Hybrid palm-leaf manuscripts

No.	Code	Year (CE)	Text(s)	Monastery
1	BAD ³⁸ -13-1-0112	1990	<i>Salòng khao phan kòn</i> สล่องข้าวพันก้อน (Rewards derived from the donation of one thousand rice balls)	VSS ³⁹
2	BAD-13-1-0206	1988	<i>Anisong het bun wan koet</i> อานิสงส์เฮ็ดบุญวันเกิด (Rewards derived from merit-making on birthdays)	VSS
3	BAD-13-1-0685	1982	<i>Salòng khao phan kòn</i> สล่องข้าวพันก้อน (Rewards derived from the donation of 1,000 rice balls)	VSS
4	BAD-13-1-0760	1963	<i>Panya barami</i> ปัญญาบารมี ([Rewards derived from copying] the Perfection of Wisdom)	VSS
5	BAD-19-1-0137	1984	<i>Anisong bun wan koet</i> อานิสงส์บุญวันเกิด (Rewards derived from merit-making on birthdays)	VSM ⁴⁰

³⁸ Buddhist Archive of Photography (BAP).

³⁹ Vat Saen Sukharam.

⁴⁰ Vat Siang Muan.

Hybrid paper manuscripts

No.	Code	Year	Text(s)	Monastery
1	BAD ⁴¹ -13-2-031	2004	1) <i>Salòng sang nangsü</i> สลองสร้างหนังสือ (Rewards derived from copying religious books) 2) <i>Salòng pha ap nam fon</i> สลองผ้าอาบหน้าฝน (Rewards derived from the donation of monk's robes in the rainy season),	VSS ⁴²
2	BAD-13-2-032	n.d.	1) <i>Salòng khao salak</i> สลองข้าวสลาก (Rewards derived from participation in the Khao Salak festival) 2) <i>Salòng khao padap din</i> สลองข้าวประดับดิน (Rewards derived from participation in the Khao Pradap Din festival).	VSS
3	BAD-13-2-033	n.d.	<i>Anisong sang pha trai pidok</i> อานิสงส์สร้างพระไตรปิฎก (Rewards derived from copying the Buddhist canon)	VSS
4	BAD-13-2-034	2004	1) <i>Salòng ciwòn</i> สลองจีวร (Rewards derived from the donation of monk robes) 2) <i>Salòng haksa sin</i> สลองรักษาศีล (Rewards derived from the observance of the precepts) 3) <i>Salòng pha phutthahup</i> สลองพระพุทธรูป (Rewards derived from the donation of Buddha images) 4) <i>Salòng pong sop lü phao phi</i> สลองปลงศพหรือเผาผี (Rewards derived from participation in funerals)	VSS
5	BAD-13-2-035	n.d.	1) <i>Salòng kò thaen si maha pho</i> สลองก่อแท่นศรีมหาโพธิ์ (Rewards derived from the donation of tree poles) 2) <i>Salòng wetkudi</i> สลองเวจกุดี (Rewards derived from the construction of public latrines) 3) <i>Salòng sangkhathan</i> สลองสังฆทาน (Rewards derived from donations to the sangha) 4) <i>Salòng sang saphan khua</i> สลองสร้างสะพานข้าม (Rewards derived from the construction of public bridges),	VSS

⁴¹ Buddhist Archive of Photography (BAP).⁴² Vat Saen Sukharam.

No.	Code	Year	Text(s)	Monastery
6	BAD-13-2-036	2004	1) <i>Salòng kathinathan</i> สลองกฐินทาน (Rewards derived from participation in the Kathin festival) 2) <i>Salòng fang tham</i> สลองฟังธรรม (Rewards derived from listening to the Dhamma) 3) <i>Salòng buat</i> สลองบวช (Rewards derived from sponsoring ordination ceremonies) 3) <i>Salòng sala</i> สลองศาลา (Rewards derived from the construction of pavilions),	VSS
7	BAD-21-2-004	1995	<i>Salòng than dòk mai</i> สลองทานดอกไม้ (Rewards derived from the donation of flowers)	VSB ⁴³
8	DS ⁴⁴ 0056 00586	2009	<i>Thipphamon</i> ทิพมณต์ (Rewards derived from praying for good things)	VPC ⁴⁵
9	DS 0056 00638	2016	<i>Thipphamon</i> ทิพมณต์ (Rewards derived from praying for good things)	VPC
10	DS 0056 00639	n.d.	<i>Sòng pong sop</i> สองปลงศพ (Rewards derived from participation in funerals)	VPC
11	DS 0056 00643	n.d.	<i>Sòng pha nam fon</i> สองผ้าจำผ่น (Rewards derived from the donation of monk's robes in the rainy season),	VPC
12	DS 0056 00644	2012	<i>Anisong thung</i> อานิสงส์ทง (Rewards derived from the donation of religious flags)	VPC
13	DS 0056 00645	2016	<i>Anisong lai pae fai</i> อานิสงส์ไหลแปไฟ (Rewards derived from the donation of light floating vessels)	VPC
14	DS 0056 00646	2002	<i>Anisong sapphathung</i> อานิสงส์สรรพทง (Rewards derived from the donation of all kinds of religious flags)	VPC
15	DS 0056 00647	2001	<i>Anisong sangkhan</i> อานิสงส์สังขาน (Rewards derived from merit-making at traditional New Year festivals)	VPC
16	DS 0056 00650	n.d.	<i>Panya balami</i> ปัญญาบารมี ([Rewards derived from copying] the Perfection of Wisdom)	VPC

⁴³ Vat Si Bun Hüang.

⁴⁴ Digital Repository of Endangered and Archived Manuscripts in Southeast Asia (DREAMSEA).

⁴⁵ Vat Pak Cack.

No.	Code	Year	Text(s)	Monastery
17	DS 0056 00651	2014	1) <i>Thippamon</i> ทิพมนต์ (Rewards derived from praying for good things) 2) <i>Anisong sapphathan</i> อานิสงส์สรรพทาน (Rewards derived from the donation of all kinds of gift-giving)	VPC
18	DS 0056 00652	2012	<i>Palami sam sip that</i> ปารมีสามสิบทัศน์ (Rewards derived from following The Thirty Perfections)	VPC

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