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Thai Cremation Volumes: A Brief History of a Unique Genre of Literature

Abstract

Scholars who have studied Thai culture have often depended on a literature unique to Thailand—cremation volumes—but to date there has been little scholarly work done on their origins. This paper constitutes an initial inquiry into the emergence of these volumes and their importance in Thai society. These booklets, published and distributed as gifts on the occasion of cremation ceremonies, have been a rich source of literature, folklore, history, and biographical information. It was not until the early 1970s that Thailand put samples of its diverse cremation volumes together in a special collection at Wat Bovornives, Bangkok, where university librarians continue to donate their time to the organization of this valuable collection.

Key words: Thai literature — Thai cremation volumes — Thai religion — Thai folklore — biography — publishing in Thailand — library science

FOR years, people who have done scholarly work on Thailand have depended on a genre of literature unique to the country: the cremation volume, or *nangsü anuson ngānsop*. Southeast Asian collections in Western libraries have made an effort to increase the number of such works in their possession. These volumes, published and distributed as gifts on the occasion of cremation ceremonies, are an important cultural artifact of Thai society, providing a rich source of literary, historical, cultural, and folk information.¹

Recently, a news reporter for the *Siam Rath* newspaper suggested that Thailand assemble its cremation-volume resources into one collection in Bangkok. After an extensive search, a repository for the collection was found at Wat Bovornives, Bangkok, where volunteer librarians continue to catalog its valuable holdings.

THE RISE OF PRINTING TECHNOLOGY AND THE POPULARITY OF CREMATION VOLUMES

The origin of cremation-volume literature can be traced to missionary influence and the influx of printing technology into Thailand. Christian missionary Dr. Dan Beach Bradley is credited with bringing one of the first Thai printing presses to Siam via Singapore (and before that Serampore, India) in 1835. Bradley later made part of his living from the printing business, and in 1839 he turned out the first government document printed in Siam: 9,000 copies of a royal proclamation banning opium (WELLS 1958, 5, 10, 14).

Prince Mongkut (later Rama IV), while still a monk at Wat Bovornives, noted the missionaries' use of publishing for the propagation of the Christian faith.² He ordered a printing press for Wat Bovornives so that Buddhists might print their own literature (*Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], 3), presumably in response to the missionaries' activities. SANGUAN Ankhong (1960 [2503], 461), for example, has written that Mongkut was "competing" (*sū kap*) with an "American religious doctor" (*mo sātsanā Amērikan*, presumably Dr. Bradley) who was produc-

ing books to proselytize Christianity. Initially, Mongkut had the *paṭimokkha* (monastic rules) and various chants published (*Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], 4).³

The custom of distributing books for free grew out of a traditional Thai emphasis on gift giving (*thān*; Pali, *dāna*), often associated with Buddhism and merit-making. More specifically, the free distribution of cremation volumes is an extension of a cultural practice of giving gifts to people to celebrate a special, meritorious occasion (*nai ngān kuson*). Before the advent of printing technology in Thailand, various gifts were often given out at birthday celebrations, promotions, and funerals: more well-to-do people distributed coins to the guests (WALES 1931, 158), pieces of gold bronze (*nāk*, an alloy of gold and copper) and silver (*ngān*), an outfit of clothing, or people drew numbers for a lottery in which they could win gold, rings, and jewelry; less well-to-do folks might hand out handkerchiefs, an ear scoop made of shaped bamboo (later of metal or plastic), or a small jar of medicinal balm.⁴ Tongyot Pratoomvongs, one of the librarians of the cremation-volume collection at Wat Bovornives, attributes the appearance of book-giving to a growing desire to present a gift of more lasting value (the handkerchiefs would deteriorate and the medicinal balm soon be used up). Hence when certain influential people began to hand out commemorative volumes, the idea soon caught on. With the rise of printing technology and increasing access to printing presses, the practice of creating books for auspicious occasions (*nai wan mongkhon*) and celebrations, including funerals, began to spread (*Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], 4). This practice of giving books also shows a concern for reading and the preservation of literature in Thailand, a country noted for its high literacy rate (WYATT 1984, 291).

One of the earliest commemorative volumes found at the National Library, entitled *Nonthukpakaranan*, was prepared for the celebration of the promotion of Krommun Aksonrasatsanasophon to the government service rank of Kromkhun Bodinthaphaisansophon in the year 1876 [2419] (SANGUAN 1960 [2503], 461 and Sulak Sivaraksa, personal correspondence). Kromkhun Bodinthaphaisansophon was a high-ranking member of the royal family who had worked at the royal printing press from the time of Rama IV. His access to this press, to precious commodities of foreign paper (*kradāt farang*), and to manuscripts of merit made the printing of this early volume possible (SANGUAN 1960 [2503], 462).

Some scholars have claimed that early volumes distributed at funerals may be traced back to about 1807, to works that were handwritten on *khoi* paper (the bark of a tree or shrub, *Streblus asper*, was

used for making this paper); this claim is dubious, however, and the history of these early works remains sketchy (*Asiaweek* 1986, 57). Informed opinion is divided into essentially two “schools” of thought concerning the origin of the cremation volumes: on the basis of the scant source material available, one tendency is to place the appearance of the first printed cremation volume in the year 1880 [2423]; the other is to cite their birthdate as 1901 [2444].

The principal sources on the subject are as follows: DAMRONG Rajanubhab’s history of the royal libraries, *Tamnān Ho Prasamut . . .* (1969 [2512], a reprint of a 1916 [2459] work written while Damrong, a half-brother of King Chulalongkorn, was in charge of the royal libraries); an important master’s thesis by SUPHAT Songsængchan (1969 [2512]) that presents a content analysis of cremation volumes during the ten-year period from 1958 [2501] to 1967 [2510]; SANGUAN Ankhong’s section, entitled *Kān chhāk nangsü pen khong chamrūai* [The distribution of books as gifts for those in attendance at celebrations], in his book *Sing rāek nai müang Thai* [“Firsts” in Thailand] (1960 [2503]); SULAK Sivaraksa’s short article *Praphēnī chhāk nangsü* [The custom of freely distributing books] (1989 [2532]); CHUN Prabhavi-vadhana’s article/outline “Special publications for free distribution” in the *Journal of the Siam Society* (1973); and a short piece on the subject in *Asiaweek*.

Sanguan, Sulak, and Chun (citing Sulak) are of the first school of thought mentioned above, placing the first cremation volume in the year 1880 [2423], while Damrong and Suphat (citing Damrong) are of the second school, putting the date in 1901 [2444].

Sanguan states with confidence that the first cremation volume was printed in 1880 [2423] and quotes extensively from its preface (SANGUAN 1960 [2503], 464–67); he goes on to say that 10,000 copies were published for wide distribution and that the book was one of the first that included Buddhist chants written in Thai characters instead of the Khom script. The volume was an edited set of Buddhist verses (*phrasūt*) and chants entitled *Nangsü sūatmon rūam phrasūt læ phraparit tāng-tāng* (1880 [2423]), given out at the funeral of Somdet Phranangchao Sunanthakumarirat Phraboromaratchathewi and her daughter Somdet Phrachaolukthøe Chaofa Kannaphonphetcharat, 1880 [2423].⁵ Somdet Phranangchao Sunanthakumarirat was the daughter of King Mongkut and was the third wife of King Chulalongkorn. She and her daughter died tragically when their boat overturned in the Chao Phraya River while they were traveling from Bangkok to Bang Pain. Because they were royalty, no one dared touch them and they drowned. For this reason, Somdet Phranangchao Sunanthakumarirat is often referred to as Phranang Rua Lom (the “capsized queen”) for short. Later,

King Chulalongkorn was to lift the prohibition on touching royalty.⁶

The work cited by the second school as the first cremation volume is a book of chants compiled by Krom Phra Sommot'amonphan in 1901 [2444]⁷ at the request of Phranangchao Sukhumanmarasi (fourth wife of King Chulalongkorn) for the funeral of Chaokhun Chommanda Samli, a wife of King Mongkut.⁸

Sulak (personal correspondence) has diplomatically said that his placing the first cremation volume earlier than the time cited by Damrong does not contradict Damrong, because Damrong mentions that the 1901 [2444] volume was done for *kānkuson* (Pali, *kusala*, as a good deed or act of merit). This distinction hardly clears up matters, however, since all such volumes have been handed out in a spirit of merit-making. What Sulak seems to be alluding to is the more specific case of families interested in printing books for auspicious occasions making arrangements with royal libraries—such as the Ho Phutthasatsanasangkaha, which opened on 11 July 1900 [2443] at Wat Benchamabphit—to reprint valuable manuscripts held there and then dedicating a portion of the books to the library, with the proceeds of any surplus copies sold to the general public going to the good of the library to improve its collections.⁹

The role of these *kuson* volumes in building library collections is an important one. Damrong points out that one of the important factors in building book collections at the early royal libraries involved the publishing of manuscripts in conjunction with auspicious occasions such as funerals. Through an arrangement with the Ho Phrasamut Wachirayan—which later became the National Library in 1905—those wishing to create volumes for auspicious occasions were permitted to reprint library manuscripts.¹⁰ Some of these volumes were handed out on the stipulated occasion and others might be sold for the benefit of library acquisitions. These arrangements were carried out with the following provisions:

- 1) The book would be sold at a price agreeable to the library;
- 2) The manuscript could be printed once; permission was required for subsequent printings;
- 3) The library would take twenty percent of all books printed as its percent rightful portion. (DAMRONG 1969 [2512], 87–88 [translation mine])

The library was very careful to suggest manuscripts for publication that were valuable and would also sell well. The library personnel in charge of these projects maintained a careful eye on the progress of

these early publications. Many of the volumes bear the stamp of approval of the Wachirayan Library itself and are called “Chabap Ho Phrasamut Wachirayan” [Wachirayan Library editions]—these editions are said to have sold better than other publications and were prized for the standards they maintained (DAMRONG 1969 [2512], 88; Tongyot Pratoomvongs 1987, field notes). As the popularity of cremation volumes spread and their production became a much more private decision, the quality and contents of the volumes changed.

What the second school above has done, then, is to base the start of cremation volumes on this information provided by Damrong. Suphat’s thesis falls into this latter category, and it is unfortunate that a work as valuable as his does not contain a better history of these volumes. While it is difficult to document, it is widely believed that there were cremation volumes created even before 1880 and that some of these volumes were sold before Damrong and others had made arrangements with printing presses and libraries to do so.

THE CONTENT AND INTENT OF SOME CREMATION VOLUMES

The Medium and Content

Thai cremation volumes can usually be identified by their white, black, or silver-gray covers, although the combination of fuchsia and black is currently enjoying some popularity.¹¹ The earliest volumes did not always contain a biography of the deceased; this practice began around 1895 (SANGUAN 1960 [2503], 469). Almost all recent samples of cremation volumes are composed of a short biography of the deceased, eulogies from friends and relatives (called *kham wai-ālai*), and selected essays or pieces of prose and literature. Often the “look” of these volumes—their length, size, and quality of appearance—can be an indicator of status. Some publications have gold-gilted covers and contain numerous color photographs, while others are simply folded, scaled-down paper replicas of palm-leaf manuscripts with a few (Buddhist) aphorisms printed on each panel and a cover bearing the name of the deceased and perhaps the date of birth and death. Some are very careful productions, while others are poorly edited and proofread, and are of relatively inferior design and binding. The final quality of the cremation volume depends largely on the education and means of the family producing the book and the time and care taken to put it together.

The volumes often contain works that had been personal favorites of the deceased or the family. By republishing long-out-of-print material many were intended as a contribution to the preservation of Thai literature. Most of the first wave of cremation volumes, as we can see with the two early volumes mentioned above, dealt with (the

Buddhist) religion. Those in positions of influence, such as Damrong Rajanubhab, who became head of the royal libraries on 3 October 1895 [2438], took note of this tendency and declared that people should try to publish volumes about subjects other than religion. He also began to put together single-volume collections of short essays and oral stories on related themes, such as the historical *prachum phongsāwadān* (*Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], 6–7).

Most cremation volumes included Pali passages and chants, often for the purpose of assisting those present at rituals to understand what the monks were reciting. Damrong Rajanubhab wrote, “In 1904 [2447] Somdet Phra Phutthachao-luang (King Chulalongkorn, Rama V) proclaimed that these volumes containing all this deep Buddhist philosophy were not very enjoyable for most people to read. He requested that people begin to publish fables, Jataka tales, and fiction” (*Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], 6). The King claimed that enough “heavy” (*nak samong*) and “dry” (*hǎng-lǎng*) works had been published and that it was time to let this genre of literature evolve in a new direction (SANGUAN 1960 [2503], 471–72).

Furthermore, while cremation volumes had been around for quite some time, their numbers and printing runs were still rather limited. The publication of these volumes required “wealth” (*kamlangsap*), “manpower” (*kamlangkhn*), and “charisma” (*wātsanā-bāramī*), and hence was not very “convenient” (*sadūak*) for the common people. Also, as in most cultures, there were those who felt that a free book could not really be of much value. It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that the subject matter of cremation volumes spread very far beyond the realms of religion, history, and archeology (*Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], 7–8).

SUPHAT Songsængchan (1969 [2512], 78, 80) has pointed out that there were essentially two kinds of cremation volumes: those that printed the selected and edited writings of the deceased, and those that printed manuscripts from other sources. Of the latter kind, the most popular subject between 1958 and 1968 remained religion; the books told people how to be good Buddhists or good Thai and explained rituals concerned with merit-making (*praphēnī tham bun*). Though less popular, other volumes dealt with topics such as biography (e.g. the famous poet Sunthon Phu), travel (especially by rail), language in the royal court, and cooking. Later, the subject of medicine gained popularity, with essays often devoted to the disease from which the deceased had succumbed (*Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], 10). (While checking the book stalls at Sanam Luang—now relocated to Chatuchak Park—this researcher was struck by the wealth of information in many

volumes on the uses of traditional herbal medicine.)

Still, religion has continued to be the most popular theme for the cremation volumes. For the general populace, this tends to involve literature on popular views of karma and karmic retribution (Pali, *kamma*)—do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil (*tham dī dai dī, tham chūa dai chūa*). For example, the well-known *Tham dī, dai dī* [Do good, receive good] or *Kot hāng kam* [The law of karma] by Thongyok Liangphibun was published some fifty-seven times in the ten-year period studied by Suphat. A large number of volumes of inspirational aphorisms (*suphāsīt*) have also been published by various compilers, even one entitled *Suphāsīt son satrī* [Aphorisms for teaching ladies] (SUPHAT 1969 [2512], 79). A more recent example is the popular book by the monk-scholar Phra Rajavaramuni (currently holding the ecclesiastical rank/title of Phra Debvedi), *Thammanūn chīwit: Phut-thačhariyatham phūa chīwit dī ngām* [Bylaws for life: Buddhist ethics for leading an excellent life], a selection of Buddhist rules, principles, and aphorisms; in 1987 it had gone through over thirty printings—so many, in fact, that the author said he could not keep track of them all—mainly due to its numerous republications on auspicious occasions.¹²

Recently, largely because of the rising cost of paper, cremation volumes are produced only selectively and are increasingly becoming an activity of the more well-to-do. Also worth noting is that videos (“VDO”s) are becoming as popular in Thailand as they are in other parts of the world. While they are not yet handed out at funerals, many funerals are being taped and copies are made as mementos. When Luang Pu Wæn, a monk from the north famous for his austerity and alleged miracles, was cremated in January 1987, copies of video tapes of the funeral and cremation were widely viewed by, shared with, and distributed to people who could not be part of the thousands who attended—it was one way of “being there.”¹³ Perhaps the cremation volume is being partially eclipsed by this newer, more fashionable, and more visual medium (albeit less accessible, more passive, and more ephemeral one—printed books last longer in the tropics than the emulsion on video tape).

The Intent

Since karma remains one of the most popular themes of this genre of literature, it is fitting to describe one cremation volume that follows the allegorical nature of a karmic retribution (*kot hāng kam*) theme. In Thailand, superstitious people believe that comets put a hex on those who see them. Ignoring the warning, two cousins—a young man and a boy—drove south of Bangkok for a better view of Halley’s

Comet. On the way, part of the steering system on their car gave out, sending the vehicle careening off the road and into a tree. Both died. The book produced to commemorate their untimely deaths carries an illustration of the stellar phenomenon on its cover and the biographies and pictures of the deceased inside. In this way, careful constructions of the various symbolic elements of the volumes make for strong statements in themselves (*Asiaweek* 1986, 57).

In other cases, the deceased may have always admired a particular writer, so that for the funeral the family might publish a collection of that author's out-of-print works. The essays and fiction in the volume not only allow us access to these scarce works, but also help us understand the character and tastes of the deceased.

The cremation volume of a twenty-five-year-old man who died of electric shock includes essays of a clearly didactic nature discussing (in graphic detail) how to work with electrical appliances safely and prevent accidents on the job. The illustrated essay on electricity (*Prakop* 1985? [2528?]) concludes with what might be considered an epitaph: If you do not know what you are doing, do not try to make electrical repairs!

In one volume (and I have yet to completely understand the logic of this one), the deceased had passed away due to a heart attack (*Anuson Khunpho Samrān Phansanit* 1982 [2525]), but the cremation volume includes three essays: "Cancer can be cured," "The dangers of electricity," and "How to grow sour tamarind."

Finally, the essential biography of the deceased that includes the *kham wai-ālai* mentioned above is of great importance in understanding Thai notions of character and how they care to remember their dead. Usually, the character (*nisai*) of the deceased is preserved in colorful and descriptive "*chai*-words"—such as *chai-dī* (good-hearted or good-natured), *chai-kwāng* (generous), and so on—that indicate the characteristics of a good person whose memory is worthy of preservation. These words of the living describe how close (*sanit*) they were to the deceased and (with more or less detail) describe that person's *nisai*. Terminology may also differ depending on status; that is, a common farmer, a business manager, a politician, and a monk would all have a different lexicon pertaining to their characters. While this is worthy of note, I will not detail the differences here.¹⁴

COLLECTING CREMATION VOLUMES

In general, publishing in Thailand continues to boom, and this is especially true for books on religion. Since the distribution of books is often chaotic, tracking down older publications can become a full-

time job. While in Thailand in September of 1990, I set out in search of an October 1989 publication. Wherever enquiries were made, answers came with the shake of a head and the words “*nān lāo*” (it came out long ago)—all copies were gone or returned to their source. One year did not seem like such a long time. Eventually the foundation that published the book had to be contacted, and, fortunately, they still had a few copies in stock.

One graduate student working in Thailand to supply books to Cornell University observed that

Thai publishing is in complete chaos. . . . Most commercially published books . . . are only published once, in an edition of 1,000 to 2,000 copies, and the books are not reprinted. . . . When sales of the book drop off, the publishers, being short of capital, will dispose of the remaining copies at cost or below cost to peddlers and sidewalk shops. These latter are well-dispersed, and once a book has reached their hands, one can find it only by chance. (ECHOLS 1966, 40)

We may debate the “complete chaos” mentioned above—after all, the writer has begun to note an order to the chaos already—but what is true for regular, commercial publications is especially true for cremation volumes. The body of cremation-volume literature is invaluable to scholars and yet is hard to assess because it is so scattered and ephemeral. Foreign collectors have realized this—one fellow researcher in the field asked, “How would I have gotten this book had I not been in just the right place at the right time?”—and have made special efforts to track them down. Echols has reported that Nibondh, a long-time supplier of Thai books to foreign libraries, used to keep track of the most important cremation ceremonies and then hire children to attend and obtain copies for their clients.¹⁵

Most curators overseeing foreign collections of Thai literature have made efforts to collect cremation volumes and often cite their importance. Cornell University states the “first-rate importance” of cremation volumes in what is now their Echols Collection, primarily due to the inclusion of historical documents, important biographies, and works of literary or religious interest (ECHOLS 1966, 40); Kyoto University has recently released a valuable catalog of their major cremation volume collection, the Charas Collection (MARASRI 1989); Northern Illinois University boasts that Thai materials are one of the “highlights” of their collection, many of which are cremation volumes (*Donn V. Hart* 1985, 5); and the National Library of Australia has been using

their cremation-volume collection for the unique purpose of establishing a standard for the romanization of Thai personal names (KAN-
NIKAR 1985).

While foreign collectors have been buying and archiving cremation volumes for many years, there was no special home for these volumes in Thailand outside of the National Library (which, according to its own rules, is to receive samples of every book published in the kingdom). It was not until the early 1970s that such a collection was established after a journalist became interested in these volumes. In 1971, Nares Naropakorn, a writer for the popular *Siam Rath* newspaper, invited people to submit samples and gifts of cremation volumes in order to establish a special library of these books. The overwhelming response left him with a big storage problem until Wat Bovornives came to the rescue (*Asiaweek* 1986, 57). Allow me to cite in its entirety a succinct account of the history of this unique collection, which is published in an important *anuson* volume concerned with its inception and inauguration:

On the 22nd of November 1954 [2497], Somdet Phra Sangkharatchao Kromluang Wachirayanawong kindly established a library at Wat Bovornives for the first time by using the spacious lower level of a royal residence [at the temple]. This building used to be the residence of Somdet Phra Mahasamanachao Kromphraya Wachirayanwarorot.¹⁶ Therefore, we can say that Somdet Phra Sangkharatchao gave birth to the library at Wat Bovornives; and he gave his kind support until the final day of his life on the 11th of November 1958 [2501]. In 1968 [2511] the library was moved to the lower level of the Bhumibol building (*Tük Pho. Po. Ro.*).¹⁷ New cabinets and other equipment were also set up.

During the time that the new library was being set up, Nares Naropakorn, a journalist for *Siam Rath*, presented an idea in one issue of this newspaper saying that there should be a library for cremation volumes (*hongsamut nangsü anuson ngānsop*). He said this because he felt that all of these books that were just handed out were worth reading and deserved to be studied. Some of the essays and articles contained in them were very rare. Some had never seen general publication before. Some of the stories were very strange, and, furthermore, what is especially interesting are the biographies of the deceased that they contain. So, if people were to put together a cremation-volume library somewhere, this could be of tremendous value to those who wanted to study these volumes. There were people who proposed various places to

establish such a library, but Nares had not agreed to any of them. Wat Bovornives thought that if such a library were to actually be set up it might be of value to people in general and so they proposed the *Pho. Po. Ro.* building, of which a part was already the library of Wat Bovornives. When Nares learned of this, he agreed and assisted in the establishment of the cremation-volume library. There were interested people who gave cremation volumes to the collection. About ten thousand such volumes flowed in. The cremation-volume collection thus began to take shape. So, it can be said that Nares Naropakorn was the initiator of this cremation volume collection at Wat Bovornives and collections of this type.

On the 22nd of November 1972 [2515], which would have been the one-hundredth birthday of Somdet Phra Sangkharatchao Kromluang Wachirayanawong, Wat Bovornives Vihara, students and those who respect him came together for a celebration called "*Wachirayānawongsānuson.*" There were monks chanting, alms-giving activities, and exhibitions about this Somdet monk. The 21st to the 27th of November 1972 [2515], is, obviously, a suitable time for opening the cremation-volume collection to benefit the general public. We have done this in recognition (*anuson*) of Somdet Phra Sangkharatchao, the person who gave birth to the library at Wat Bovornives Vihara. Furthermore, when we started this collection and opened it to the general public, Ranjuan Intharakamhæng, a professor at Ramkamhæng University [and now a nun at Suan Mokh, where the modern reformer monk Buddhadasa Bhikkhu resides], and Tongyot Pratoomvongs, a librarian at Thammasat University, and many other teachers and students from those universities were good enough to come and help organize the cremation volumes into a collection according to the study of library science. More than anyone else, Ranjuan set the standards by which the collection would be organized and divided; she also helped with the writing of the portion of this *anuson* volume dealing with the organization collection and gave permission for it to be printed. This volume is intended as a handbook for setting up collections of this type, which are something new.

Wat Bovornives Vihara would like to thank everyone mentioned on this occasion.

The Library of Wat Bovornives Vihara

21 November 1972 [2515]

(*Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], i-iv [translation mine])

The collection has declared its continued desire to receive samples

of every cremation volume printed in the country. Through contact with monks at various temples and by advertising the existence of the collection, volumes continue to flow in. One librarian said that sometimes they receive large boxes of all the leftover volumes from an event and have no way of disposing of them (or rather, in their words, they are "not brave enough" to dispose of them). The cataloging of this invaluable collection by volunteer librarians from Thammasat University continues to the present day. Currently, the collection is open only on Saturdays or by special appointment.

In order to categorize these volumes, the librarians reported that they chose to adapt the Dewey decimal classification system "to fit Thai society." Essentially, this means that by giving priority to cataloging the volumes according to the name and occupation of the deceased rather than the subject of the literature and essays contained in each volume (as the Library of Congress does), the catalog of the collection has increasingly become a reflection of Thai social structure.¹⁸ This person-oriented method has facilitated the study of Thai personal histories or biographies, and, as classification of the volumes according to subject advances, the lore that each work contains will become progressively more accessible.

NOTES

1. I want to thank Tongyot Pratoomvongs, Ranjuan Intharakamhæng, and Sulak Sivaraksa for all their assistance in Thailand; Larry Ashmun and Constance Wilson for providing me with certain books and photocopies; and David K. Wyatt, A. Thomas Kirsch, Constance Wilson, and David Mullikin for helpful suggestions as I was writing. I, however, take full responsibility for the final product.

2. Prince Mongkut entered the Buddhist order at the beginning of the Third Reign (1824); he did not leave the order until he ascended the throne in 1851 (see WYATT 1984, 175, 179-180).

3. This article uses a slightly modified version of the Library of Congress system of the transliteration of Thai. Known names are spelled according to preference or tradition, and in most cases diacritics have been omitted.

4. SANGUAN (1960 [2503], 459); interviews with librarian Tongyot Pratoomvongs, Wat Bovornives, 25 April 1987, and Ranjuan Intharakamhæng, Suan Mokh, 8 June 1987.

5. SULAK's (1989 [2532]) suggestion agrees with Sanguan, but he gives no evidence or citation for his contention and says that it "seems as if" (*dū muan*) this is the first cremation volume. He also gives the title of this volume as *Sūatmon chabaṅ lūang* (SULAK 1989 [2532], 20). For details on genealogy, see *The royal family of Thailand* 1989, 64-65.

6. In a passing reference to cremation volumes and the untimely demise of this queen, GEDNEY also agrees with the earlier date (1985, 16).

7. See the following: DAMRONG 1969 [2512], 39-40; SUPHAT 1969 [2512], 9-

10); and *Nangsü anuson* 1972 [2515], 4–5.

8. For Phra Sommot'amonphan, see TAMRONGSAK 1968 [2511], 263, and for Chaokhun Chommanda Samli, see TAMRONGSAK 1968 [2511], 433.

9. For information on the opening of Ho Phutthasatsanasangkaha, see SANGUAN 1960 [2503], 469–70, and DAMRONG 1969 [2512], 32–42.

10. For information on the foundation of the Library see DAMRONG 1969 [2512], 12–18.

11. SANGUAN (1960 [2503], 473) notes that prior to 1937 [2480], cremation volumes were printed in various colors and it was not until after WW II that white covers on these volumes began to predominate.

12. For more information, see OLSON 1989, 223 n. 37.

13. Of course, many volumes about the miracles and practices of this monk were published, sold, and distributed before and after the cremation ceremony; for an earlier example, see *Anuson Lūang Pū Wān Sučhinnō* 1986 [2529].

14. For a study of the character and characteristics of one prominent Buddhist monk, see OLSON 1989, esp. 432–437.

15. ECHOLS 1966, 41. Also, William GEDNEY and David K. WYATT both mentioned that one of the earliest cremation volumes might have been part of Gedney's personal collection that became the Gedney Collection at the University of Michigan. Unfortunately, in the process of cataloging the collection the volume was somehow "mislaidd" (personal correspondence).

16. An important educator monk and half-brother of King Chulalongkorn who established a good share of the ecclesiastical curriculum that is still in use at monastic universities today.

17. *Pho. Po. Ro.* standing for the initials of the current king, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX. For a picture of this building, see *Wat Bovornives Vihara* 1972 [2515], 50.

18. This in itself is of special importance and will receive separate treatment.

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