

Thesis Title     A Study of Mullatantrai.

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#### ABSTRACT

This analytical study primarily looks at the five original volumes of Mullatantrai ( a Thai literary work presently kept at the Thai National Library in Bangkok). These volumes were inscribed in Bai Lan (palm leaves) by a Buddhist monk, Prakranan (Khanan) Panyopol in B.E. 2340 at Wat Ban Mak, Nakhon Chai District. The purpose of the Mullatantrai was to provide good lessons to governors and soldiers who performed duties as judges. These were to encourage them to judge cases fairly and to cultivate good morals and behaviour. The literary work includes samples of various types of trial cases.

The study concerns the written characters, dealing with the construction of words, rules of spelling, socio-cultural content, language use, and certain literary devices: plot, background of the story, and literary styles of writing. The information gained in the analysis of the original Mullatantrai was assessed in various aspects and compared with the other two versions, namely, Dhamamullakantrai (Wat Pha Bong) and Mullakantrai (Wat Nantaram), in order to discover the similarities and differences among them.

The study reports the following findings.

1. The characters used in the original Mullatantraï are "Dhamma Letters", and the construction of words and the spelling or style of writing are similar to the "Dhamma Letters" of Lanna. It is hypothesized that either the inscriber was a Laotian or the inscribing took place in Laos, since some Laotian words such as "Ka Noi", "Hau Wiang Nakhon Chai" appear in the text.

2. The style of writing in the original Mullatantraï is an imitation of Jāṭaka tales (prose writing). Pali Gāthā were inserted throughout the books. Word rhyming, word repetition and figurative language (simile and metaphor) were included. These are worthwhile for studying language use, the moral code, culture and traditions, and law. There are samples of the behaviour of different people in society and various trial cases. The differences found between the original Mullatantraï and the other two versions are that the writing style of the first was an imitation of Jāṭaka tales, and some parts of the contents of the first are not found in the later versions (Wat Pha Bong and Wat Nantaram).

In conclusion, this analytical study shows that the Mullatantraï, like other folk literary works, is a valuable source for study in depth, and it should be published for further research.