



**A STUDY OF THAILAND AND LAOS RELATIONS THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE  
OF THE VIENTIANE SISAKET TEMPLE AND THE RATTANAKOSIN EMERALD  
BUDDHA TEMPLE**

**By  
Suwaphat Sregongsang**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
Program of Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism  
(International Program)  
Graduate School  
SILPAKORN UNIVERSITY  
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The Graduate School, Silpakorn University has approved and accredited the Thesis title of "A Study of Thailand and Laos Relations through the Perspective of the Vientiane Sisaket Temple and the Rattanakosin Emerald Buddha Temple" submitted by Mr. Suwaphat Sregongsang as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architectural Heritage Management and Tourism

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RATTANAKOSIN EMERALD BUDDHA TEMPLE. THESIS ADVISOR : PROF. ROSS KING, Ph.D..  
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The study of Thailand and Laos relations through the perspectives of Vientiane Sisaket temple and Rattanakosin Emerald Buddha temple is to investigate (1) the relations between the Siam and Lao kingdoms in the Sukhothai period, the Ayutthaya period, and early Rattanakosin period (Kings Rama I-III) (2) the relations between architectural characteristics of an emblematic temple in the early Rattanakosin era (Emerald Buddha temple) and an emblematic temple in Vientiane (Sisaket temple) and (3) Laotian perspectives towards Siam through an interpretation of the Sisaket temple and King Anuvong, (the Lao ethnocentric view). The method of investigation for this study is qualitative, involving in part a descriptive analysis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews with a group of people who are involved in the area and primary data from Thai and Lao chronicles in the National Archives of Thailand and the Lao National Library. For secondary data there are the books about history, religion, and architecture from libraries in Thailand and Lao Vientiane.

The study found that (1) the relations between the Siam and Lao kingdoms in that period was not smooth due to the political situation, where Lao kings had to strengthen efforts to liberate their kingdom from being annexed to Siam while Siamese kings tried to maintain their authority over the Lao states, especially Vientiane. The war between Vientiane and Bangkok which aimed for liberation could not be avoided. In 1827-1828, the war began and finished with the Bangkok triumph. As a result, Vientiane was destroyed. Lao properties, people, and valuable commodities were removed to Bangkok. However, one important building still survived from the destruction, namely Sisaket temple. This temple was built in the reign of King Anuvong, designed with a Bangkok temple architectural model. (2) The construction of Sisaket Temple yielded the only temple in Vientiane that was built almost similar to the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok in that time. King Anuvong was one of the Lao Vientiane nobles arrested in Bangkok and he spent much time in Bangkok and had close relations with King Rama II. When comparing the two temples, there are many elements that are similar in form, such as the form of building pediments, roof, struts to support projected eaves joists, cloister, column, terrace surrounding the main chapel, mondop style of the window and door frames, ceiling decoration, capitals, and the paintings of the interior murals. (3) The relations between King Anuvong and Sisaket temple construction policy could be linked to the Emerald Buddha, the most sacred object of Thai and Lao kings to legitimate their authority both in terms of politics and society. The history of the Emerald Buddha is a story of both fantasy and reality as a guardian of the Thai and Lao nation. This gives the Emerald Buddha mystical powers that awe the faithful and are all part of a mythology surrounded by mystery and ceremony. With the Indian conception of sacred kingship, wherever Buddhism has prevailed as was the case in Thailand and Laos, these beliefs were modified so that the ruler was viewed as a Bodhisatta or "Future Buddha" rather than a god. These traditions formed the basis for the Siamese and Lao kings' quest to obtain divine status and the claim of having acquired the physical marks of a Buddha. King Anuvong spent time in Bangkok as a political hostage. Although the problem of this study is that the details of the history are unclear and there is no obvious evidence to show that why Sisaket temple could survive during the war, at least this temple could be posed as the representation of King Anuvong and his yearning for liberty and his faith of the Emerald Buddha through the standing of this holy place.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Research Methodology

#### 1. Introduction

The relations between the Thai and Lao peoples are very close so that one may say they are inseparable because two peoples share the same roots in race, religion, beliefs, customs, culture and social development. They also have the same region in Southeast Asia and received cultural, religious and language influences from the Indian subcontinent.<sup>1</sup>

The Thai and Lao peoples are said to have the same ancestors (the Thai or Tai people).<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the basic ways of living of Thai and Lao peoples presently are very similar. For example, they both grow and consume rice, and there are customs concerning rice growing and harvesting that are reflected in their songs and dances. In addition, a local tradition, “Heet Sipsong”<sup>3</sup>, is a surviving custom which induces people to go to monasteries and take part in religious functions and makes them understand and appreciate Buddhist principles.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the Thai and Lao peoples also observe the principles called “Kong Sipsi”, which are practical guidelines for laymen in their relationships with their families and the Buddhist religion. At a higher level, these can also serve as guidelines to be translated into practical application by those in government.

The general characters of the two peoples are very much alike. They possess polite and gentle manners. They respect the elders. They are generous and always care about others’ feelings. In addition, there exist several customs and practices between the Thai and Lao peoples such as the presentation of robes to the monks known as “Tod Kranthin”, boat races towards the end of lent, etc.<sup>5</sup>

Buddhism is the national religion in both Thailand and Laos. The Lao people are as deeply devoted to Buddhism as are the Thai people.<sup>6</sup> In both countries, one will find in

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<sup>1</sup> Thanom Arnamwat. Thai History: From the Past to the End of Ayutthaya Era. (Bangkok: Amorn Karn Pim. 1985). 166.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid..13.

<sup>3</sup> Heet Sipsong are the practices that are traditionally performed in each month of twelve months (Sib Sorng means twelve). In ancient time, the first month (called Duan Ai or Duan Jiang) represented the start of the New Year and the twelfth month ended the year cycle. Each month had one tradition, mostly Buddhism-based. If the tradition was not Buddhism-based, people deliberately tried to make it Buddhist involved so that they had an opportunity to gather at the temple for merit-making.

<sup>4</sup> Vachirapanyo. Buddhism in Laos. (Bangkok: Bannakorn Publishing. 2002). 78.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.. 78

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

almost every town and city a monastery that is the gathering point for religious, social and cultural activities. The people have a high respect for the monks and value the latter for their guidance and wisdom. Vachirapanyo also gave an example that in 1975, the Thai Government invited a number of well-educated and highly qualified monks to advise the Laotian Government, as requested by the latter, on the teachings of the Lord Buddha, the promotion of Buddhism and the teaching of Buddhism in schools.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of the spoken languages in Thailand and Laos, they have their origin back to the Thai language in the past because both peoples are able to communicate quite easily through their spoken languages in spite of the fact that they had gone through different evolutions. Rene Sepul and Cici Olsson supported this idea that the spoken tongues of the two countries had some variations from one area to another and also from influences of foreign languages.<sup>8</sup> Even nowadays, the Thai and the Lao peoples are able to communicate without having interpreters.

However, the continual proximity and closeness of the two peoples in the past inevitably resulted in cooperation as well as conflicts as Likhit Dhiravegin observed from the disputes between the Thai and the Lao peoples, and also between the Thai and Lao peoples on the one hand, and other races such as the Vietnamese, the Chinese, the Burmese, the Mons and the Khmers, which have variously arisen depending on the political situation.<sup>9</sup> He also pointed out that the Thai and Lao peoples have even joined hands with outsiders to fight against their own peers. This is quite a natural phenomenon for any human society anywhere in the world. Likhit Dhiravegin gave the further opinion that the cooperation of different racial groups into alliances is only done to meet the requirements of certain situations, to survive, to fight against stronger forces, or to resist the threats from those who are bent towards domination.<sup>10</sup> But these alliances can only be temporary. Therefore, the relations between the two kingdoms was always depending upon time and circumstances. An example of Thai-Lao cooperation could be shown, as Sawang Veelavong, Lao historian cited on his book "Lao History" that in 1545 a Lao king who ruled over Lanchang joined with a Thai king to successfully beat off the Burmese. To mark their cooperation, the two kings jointly

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<sup>7</sup> Vachirapanyo. Buddhism in Laos. 88.

<sup>8</sup> Sepul, Rene and Cici Olsson. Laos: Gens du Laos-Lao People. (Bangkok: White Lotus Press. 1996). 6.

<sup>9</sup> Likhit Dhiravegin. Siam and Colonialism (1855-1909): An Analysis of Diplomatic Relations. (Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich. 1975). 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*. 15.

constructed a chedi named “Phra That Sri Song Rak”<sup>11</sup> now in Dan Sai District, Loei Province.<sup>12</sup>

Because there was no such notion as that of nation state, or the concept of clearly defined boundaries of states as is common in contemporary times,<sup>13</sup> this was a main factor whereby the administrative pattern in the Southeast Asian region assumed the form of a large number of small self-governed realms, each realm being composed of many cities ruled by princes and lords.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the relationships among the various realms were not fixed or rigid, nor was the dependency of a small realm upon another, or their mutual respect or lack of it. Otherwise, Likhit Dhiravegin referred to this study that the factors such as a situation existing at the time, acceptance of each other, alliance by marriage and perception of mutual benefits were significant for these relations.<sup>15</sup> Santisuk Sophonsiri advanced the further opinion that, in this kind of environment, the attempts and ability to unite realms and peoples of the same race into a kingdom or nation by various ways such as marriage, military strength, as well as the assessment of internal weakness, consequently would affect other realms and peoples.<sup>16</sup> It could be the reasons why the Thai and Lao peoples were unable to unite into one single kingdom as demonstrated in each period of their history. For example, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Thai and Lao peoples still had several separate realms such as Ayutthaya, Chiangmai, Champasak, Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Yonoknakorn, Sipsongpanna, while the Burmese and the Vietnamese had their own kingdoms and the Malays had already begun to group together. By the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, alliances and conflicts in Southeast Asia had begun to assume different forms, from those between realms and feudal domains to those between various groups with a clearer sense of nationality. On this standing point, Lewis and Sagar cited that it would have been quite possible for the aforementioned trend to have continued for a long time if the expansion of influence and power of the Western colonial powers had not entered this region.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Phra That Sri Song Rak is a Buddhist stupa built in 1560 by Laotian and Thai kings. It is located on the Man River in Dan Sai district, Loei province of modern-day Thailand, 32 km from the modern Thailand-Laos border. The name means "Stupa of Love from the Two Nations". The ancient kingdoms of Lanchang and Ayutthaya enjoyed a strong common bond, and faced a common enemy (the Burmese). In 1556 the kings of the two provinces, King Chaichetthathirat of Lanchang and King Maha Chakkraphat of Ayutthaya, decided to build a great temple celebrating a pact of mutual respect and defense between the two kingdoms. Phra That Sri Song Rak was built on the border.

<sup>12</sup> Sawang Veelavong. Lao History. (Chiangmai: Social Research Institution Chiangmai University. 1992). 90.

<sup>13</sup> Sawang Veelavong. Lao History. 30.

<sup>14</sup> Likhit Dhiravegin. Siam and Colonialism (1855-1909): An Analysis of Diplomatic Relations. 35.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*. 37.

<sup>16</sup> Santisuk Sophonsiri. “The Century of Pridi Phanomyong.” The National Committee of Education. 1985. 2. April-May) : 36-48.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, D.S. and D.J., Sagar. Political Parties of Asia and the Pacific. (Essex, UK: Longman Current Affairs. 1992). 35-40.

Due to the various periods and the unclear concept for defined boundary of states, it has been found that there were three important evolutionary stages of Thailand and Laos relations. Firstly, the Lanchang Kingdom was established following the establishment of brotherly kingdoms in Suvannabhumi or Indochina around the 13<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, there were four independent states:<sup>18</sup>

1. Lanna kingdom with its capital at Chiangmai or Lanna city (main area in the Northern part of present Thailand)
2. Lanchang kingdom with its capital at Srisatna – Kinahud or Lan Chang city (main area in Laos and the Northeastern part of present Thailand)
3. Sukothai kingdom (Lanpia) with its capital at Sukothai (main area in the lower-Northern part of present Thailand)
4. Sriyuthaya kingdom or Ayutthaya (Lanpia) with its capital at Sriyuthaya (main area in the Central part of present Thailand)

During that time, the Thai kingdoms (Lanna kingdom, Sukothai Kingdom, and Sriyuthaya Kingdom) had relations with the Lao kingdom (Lanchang Kingdom) as an independent realm.

Later on, in 1777, Lanchang was annexed to Siam, becoming part of the Siam kingdom with both Thai and Lao people. Finally, in 1893 certain Lanchang areas were colonized by France and this area became independent after the Second World War in 1945 and was called the Lao nation.<sup>19</sup>

Prior to being annexed by Siam, kings of the Lanchang kingdom had produced a significant culture through architectural style, traditions, beliefs, wisdom, and religion, etc. For example, Phra That Sri Song Rak in Loei province was patronized by King Chetthathirat who moved the capital city of Lanchang from Luang Phrabang to Vientiane in 1560. This heritage site can be seen to represent the positive relations between the Thai kingdom and the Lao kingdom as symbolic of the cooperation between the two kingdoms against Burmese army troops. However, there were negative relations between the Thai and Lao kingdoms when the Lanchang kingdom became a colony of Siam. The first aggression was when Siam in the reign of King Taksin commanded Phya Mahakasatseuk (who latter became King Rama I of the Rattanakosin kingdom) and Phya Surasi to attack Vientiane and arrest the Lao royal family, lords, people and to have the Phra Bang and the Emerald Buddha placed in Thonburi in 1779.<sup>20</sup> The second aggression was in the reign of King Rama III when an army was sent to

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<sup>18</sup> Paladisai Sittithanyakit. *History of Siam*. (Bangkok: Sukkapab Jai. 2005). 23-25.

<sup>19</sup> Sawang Veelavong. *Lao History*. 153.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*.107.

destroy Vientiane in 1827 because King Anuvong wanted to establish Vientiane as a realm independent from Siam. All temples, Buddha images, the Royal Palace, and accommodations were destroyed because Siam did not want to see Vientiane reestablished again.<sup>21</sup> The only sacred building that survived from this aggressive obscurantism was Sisaket temple. This temple was built by King Anuvong in 1818, and designed in the Thai architectural style.<sup>22</sup> It resembled the Emerald Buddha Temple in Bangkok, Thailand. Its form and architectural details will be examined in chapter 3.

## **2. Subject of Inquiry**

This research project presents an exploration of relations between Thailand and Laos from a perspective of the Vientiane Sisaket temple, Lao PDR. This temple was constructed under the order of King Anuvong who was the hero of the Lao people for his brave performance in trying to liberate Lao Vientiane from Siam in 1827. However, this king is seen to have revolted and challenged the Siamese, from a Thai perspective. As generally told in historical books, the results of the rebellion of King Anuvong were the cause of the sacking of Vientiane. Temples, royal palace, sacred Buddha statues, and historical document were destroyed but the only one place that still survived was Sisaket temple. Thus, a key to the study of the relations between Thailand and Laos during this disputed time is this remaining sacred building, Sisaket temple. There are three main issues to be investigated in this study, in terms of the following objectives.

1. The relations between the Siam and Lao kingdoms in the Sukhothai period, the Ayutthaya period, and the early Rattanakosin period (Kings Rama I-III).
2. The relations between architectural characteristics of an emblematic temple in the early Rattanakosin era (Emerald Buddha temple) and an emblematic temple in Vientiane (Sisaket temple).
3. Laotian perspectives towards Siam through an interpretation of the Sisaket temple and King Anuvong (the Lao ethnocentric view).

## **3. Significance of Sisaket temple in Vientiane**

As previously stated, the only sacred building that survived from the sacking of Vientiane was Sisaket temple, where the tentative objection why it could survive from the

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<sup>21</sup> Sawang Veelavong. *Lao History*. 110.

<sup>22</sup> Suchint Simarak. "The Architectural Style of the Gate in Rattanakosin Era." *Muang Boran Journal*. 1-4 (January-December 1995) : 185-196.

destruction wrought by Siam was due to this temple resembling the Emerald Buddha Temple in Bangkok as can be seen in the picture below.



Figure 1: Sisaket temple in Vientiane, Lao PDR

Photography: Suwaphat Sregongsang (2007)



Figure 2: Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok, Thailand

Photography: Suwaphat Sregongsang (2007)

This temple continues to be sacred for local people who live in Vientiane, in areas that used to be a colony both of Siam and France. It also has culturally significant values for Lao people in Vientiane, such as historical, social, symbolic, and aesthetic value.<sup>23</sup>

It can be seen that although the two peoples share the same roots in race, religion, beliefs, customs, culture and social development as mentioned previously, there is a cultural gap between the two countries from the past. In many cases of conflict between Thailand and Laos, it might appear that they misunderstood each other. Thai people have tended to refer to themselves as a group who have positive aims for Lao people while Lao people look towards Thai people as a group who have cheated or disdained Lao people, as revealed from the research of “Thai – Lao Relations” by Khien Thirawit from Chulalongkorn University. There are many problems that have affected the relations between Thailand and Laos in terms of politics, economics, and socio-culture following various forms of dispute.<sup>24</sup> There are distinctive events that have mirrored the negative relations between Thailand and Laos. One conflict is the disputed boundary between Thailand and Laos in Romklao–Bortan village in Pitsanulok province. A second conflict is the case of Chongmek–Vangtao checkpoint in Ubon Ratchathani province that relates to Lao royalist rebellion or terrorism. Third is the Thai popular singer “Nicole” who, it was alleged by Lao people, had accused Lao women of being dirty through a program on a Thai television channel. Finally there is the Thai movie comedy “Mak Tae” that was directed by a Thai director and uses actors portraying Lao teenagers who are football players. Thus, it can be seen that there are always sensitivities and potential conflicts between Thai and Lao people, though they are neighbors and might look for ways to solve or avoid such problems.

These sample situations can emphasize the feelings of Lao people towards Thai people which are actually the opposite of the positive images (relations between Thailand and Laos) that most people commonly understand.

Moreover, there are the events of the past that have reflected the loss and the pain of Lao people deriving from the actions of Thai people in carrying the Emerald Buddha image from Vientiane to Bangkok in the reign of King Taksin (Thonburi Era). The Emerald Buddha was at the heart of the Lao people, and thus King Anuvong had tried to request the Thai King to allow moving the image to house it in Vientiane again. However, there was no such permission from the Thai king. The important event that shows the goal of King Anuvong to lead Lao Vientiane to independence from the Thai kingdom was when he secured permission

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<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Cults. Tamnan Wat Sisaket (Chronicle of Sisaket temple). (Vientiane: Library of the Kingdom of Laos. 1954). 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> Khien Thirawat. Thai – Lao Relations in Laotians’ Perspective. (Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund Regional Office. 2001). 186.

to return to Vientiane and then to announce the war to liberate the Lao Vientiane kingdom from Siam in 1827.

The strategy of King Anuvong was simple: seize the entire Khorat plateau, repatriate and unite all Lao, and proclaim Lao independence with the support from both other tributary kingdoms, such as Luang Phrabang and Chiang Mai, and external allies, notably Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> By the end of 1826, he was ready to make his move. Four Lao brigades, three from Vientiane and one from Champasak, thrust across the Khorat plateau and headed north but, with so many to move, the process was ponderous. The Siamese had time to respond. Three armies were raised. Khorat was retaken, and the Lao were in retreat.

In retrospect, King Anuvong had miscalculated the situation. He had apparently believed that the new king, Rama III, would respond much more hesitantly than he did, because the Siamese would not be insouciant over British intentions to pursue the Siamese (the British had just defeated the Burmese in the First Anglo-Burmese War). But the Siamese court had already concluded a treaty with the British, which left them free to deal with the Lao. In doing so, not only could the Siamese recruit larger, better equipped armies than the Lao, but they also had better intelligence.

The outcome was never in doubt. The Lao made their last stand south of Vientiane in mid May 1827, but to no avail. King Anuvong fled down the Mekong as Siamese forces entered the Lao capital. The city was put to the sack, its palace and houses looted and burned, its population carried off for forcible resettlement. The following year, after King Anuvong briefly returned with a small force, Vientiane was totally destroyed. The king was captured and died in Bangkok.

King Anuvong's attempt to throw off Siamese hegemony has been viewed very differently in Thai (Siamese) and Lao historiography. What for the Thai was an unprovoked rebellion by an ungrateful vassal has been seen by the Lao as the heroic fight of a leader who fought for independence. These different perceptions are not simply academic commentary: they still haunt Thai-Lao relations, sharpened by the fact that far more ethnic Lao now live in Thailand than in Laos.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. Research Problems

With the high distinction and unique heritage values of Sisaket temple, there are a lot of visitors to this holy place each year. However, there is no confirmation of how much

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<sup>25</sup> Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvanhn. Paths to Conflagration: Fifty Years of Diplomacy and Warfare in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, 1778-1828. (New York: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University. 1998). 25-36.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*. 30-36.

these people could understand and appreciate the particular meaning of the form nor the purpose for the construction of this temple by King Anuvong. These visitors just mainly enjoy the attractive architectural style and landscape of the site. Some information on the temple has been published for visitors, although it is only the historical background of the site. Any systematic study of the architectural design, links to factors of politics, society, economics, and the background of King Anuvong is neither visible nor critically debated.

Research or study about Sisaket temple in the past has only focused on one dimension namely its architecture, construction technique, history, and conservation. Although this holy building could be studied and represented as a mirror held up to the relations between Siam and Lao Vientiane in the reign of King Anuvong, there has been no investigation or insightful interpretation of the site connecting it to the politics, societies and economics of Lao Vientiane in the reign of King Anuvong. Clearly, there needs to be a study of Thai and Lao relations from Laotian perspectives and a corresponding interpretation of Sisaket Temple through investigating the interesting questions about this temple which relate directly to King Anuvong.

## **5. Research Questions**

In order to investigate this issue, one needs to analyze how the historical relations between Thailand and Lao PDR are presented and can be interpreted through Sisaket temple in Vientiane. What is the understanding of the disputed configuration, especially the war between Siam and the Lao Vientiane kingdom in 1827-1828 (the reigns of King Rama III of Siam and King Anuvong of Lao Vientiane). Moreover the historical relations and the Laotian perspectives towards Siam during the reign of King Rama III have never been interpreted through the medium of this temple.

The following questions are arranged as the basis for the inquiries of this research:

1. Why did King Anuvong build Sisaket temple to be similar to the Emerald Buddha Temple in Bangkok and what were the unique and specific purposes (political, economic, and social) in building this temple?
2. Is there any particular meaning attached to Sisaket temple to reflect the perspective of Lao people and King Anuvong towards the Thai kingdom and how do Lao people interpret their history through this contemporary heritage site? Do these factors exacerbate the gaps between Thai and Lao people that can be seen in the present?
3. Are other factors such as politics and economics stimulating the contemporary cultural gap between the two groups?

## **6. Scope of Inquiry**

The architectural design of Sisaket temple could be a mirror to the philosophy of King Anuvong in terms of politics and society in governing the Lao kingdom including perspectives towards the Siam kingdom. In order to understand the social and political motivation in trying to liberate Lao Vientiane from Siamese annexure and the perspectives of Laotians towards the Siamese, one needs to conduct this study with inter-disciplinary insight through such means as field survey, political analysis, and socio-cultural history during the early Rattanakosin era to the reign of King Rama III, especially the political dispute between the Siamese and Lao kingdoms in 1827 to 1828.

Specifically, the research has focused on the relations between the Siam and Lao kingdoms in the Sukhothai period, the Ayutthaya period, and the early Rattanakosin period (Kings Rama I-III) in terms of history. Further study is on the relations between architectural characteristics of temples in Bangkok in the early Rattanakosin era and those of Lao Vientiane in order to find how these two temples (The Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok and Sisaket temple in Vientiane) are similar. Moreover, the research also investigates the Laotian perspectives towards Siam through the interpretation of Sisaket temple and King Anuvong by analysis from historical books from Thai, Lao, and western writers. Additionally, study of philology, etymology and literature of each ethnic group is utilized in searching for clues and vestiges from the past to the present and is incorporated into the methodology.

## **7. Method of Investigation**

The method of investigation for this study is qualitative involving in part a descriptive analysis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews with a group of people who are involved in the area and primary data from Thai and Lao chronicles in the National Archives of Thailand and the Lao National Library. For secondary data there are the books about history, religion, and architecture from libraries in Thailand and Lao Vientiane.

The research questions for this study were addressed to people who are involved in Sisaket temple and communities in the location of the temple as follows in order to study those relations from contemporary Laotian perspectives insofar as they can be interpreted through Sisaket temple.

1. Mr.Thongsa Xayyavong, as the head of the Department of Museums and Archeology in Vientiane, Laos.
2. Mr.Phothong Phouthachant, as the officer of the Department of Museum and Culture who is responsible for Sisaket temple restoration.
3. Abbot Wate Masenai, as the head monk in Sisaket temple

4. Mrs.Chayphet Sayarath, as a Lao architect, and independent scholar in Vientiane, Laos.

5. Mr.Boonleum Seesurat, Mr.Apichaiyadat Insr Chiangmai, and Mrs.Wanpengsuk Insr Chiangmai as Lao lecturers in the faculty of Architecture, National University of Laos.

The researcher arranged the schedule for interviewing these people according to their availability during January 2008 to January 2009.

This study used in-depth interview and related analyzing as the most appropriate instrument to gather information and collect data from the representative sample above. The interviews were designed for the primary purpose of describing and analyzing certain phenomena according to the research questions above, such as the uniqueness and specific purposes (political, economic, and social) in building this temple, the particular meaning attached to Sisaket temple to reflect the perspective of Lao people and King Anuvong towards the Thai kingdom including how present Lao people interpret the history through this contemporary heritage site and the factors that exacerbate the gaps between Thai and Lao people that can be seen in the present. The researcher accessed these people using permission letters from Silpakorn University as a form of reference. The researcher also analyzed data from primary and secondary sources especially to study the historical relations between the two kingdoms, respected in Chapter 2, such as “The Chronicle of Luang Phrasetsornnithi”, “The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library”, “The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the reign of the King Rama III”, “The Chronicle of Chao Anuvong, and The Groups of Letter in the Reign of the King Rama III”, etc.,. Furthermore, the primary data offer important information to be discussed in Chapter 4 about Laotian perspectives towards Siam through the Sisaket temple and the story of King Anuvong, especially the relations between Sisaket temple and King Anuvong and the specific purposes for its construction including the symbolism of this temple. The primary data are also essential for discussing the role and cult of the Emerald Buddha relative Thai and Lao kings from the past. These primary data were mostly composed in French and the researcher collected them from the French library in Vientiane, such as “Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China” by John Crawford, “The Cults of the Emerald Buddha” by Camille Notton and “Notice sur le Laos: Bulletin de la Societe de Geographie” by Jene Pallegoix.

Beside the primary data, the researcher also used secondary data to compare the ideologies and perspectives of Lao, Thai, and western historians on writing about the relations between the Siam and Lao kingdoms in terms of the war during 1827 to 1828 and king

Anuvong. Lao books consisted of “The Seminar of Lao History: To Follow the Clue of King Anuvong” by The Faculty of Humanity and Linguistics, National University of Laos, “Lao History: From Past to 1946” by Mahasila Veeravong, “Summary of Phun Viang in the Reign of King Anuvong” by Khamhung Senmany et. al., and “King Anuvong (Som Dej Phra Chao Anuvong)” by Duangchai Luangphasee. Thai books consisted of “The Early Rattanakosin Kingdom” by Viboon Vijitvathakarn, “Lao History” by The Social Research Institution, Chiangmai University, “The Role of Thai Military and Politics towards Vientiane in the Early Rattanakosin Era” by Thanom Arnamwat, and “A History of Thailand” by Rong Syamananda. Western books were “The Brief History of Lao PDR” by Grant Evans, “Lao and Khmer Perceptions of National Survival: The Legacy of the Early Nineteenth Century” by Volker Grabowsky, and “A History of Laos” by Martin Stuart Fox.

According to the research questions, the analysis of the first research question is to discern architectural relations between the Emerald Buddha temple in Thailand and Sisaket temple in Vientiane including the building policy behind the two temples in terms of politics, economics, and social issues.

The analysis of the second research question is to discern how these heritage sites can be seen to represent the positive and negative meanings, perceptions of the Lao king (King Anuvong) and people in Vientiane towards the Thai kingdom. Moreover, from these questions one can explain more about the way that Lao people interpret this temple one and can then to throw light on the gaps between Thai and Lao people in the present, which the author will consider in the conclusion.

The analysis of the third research question is to discern the other factors that might have stimulated the cultural gaps between Thai and Lao people. The researcher will focus on analyzing these in terms of economics, politics, philology, etymology and literature.

In brief, the researcher analyzes data according to all the research questions in order to find out the relations between Thai and Lao people through the interpretation of Sisaket temple and King Anuvong. The study can lead to both positive and negative conclusion concerning relations and the factors linked to cultural gaps between the two peoples. Human experience and multicultural study could also shed light on human achievement more broadly. What one learns from this research will be the conclusion of this dissertation.

## **8. The significance of the research**

The study of Thailand and Laos relations from the Laotian perspective through the interpretation of Sisaket temple can assist in understanding of the history of relations

between Siam and the Lao Vientiane kingdom during the reign of King Anuvong of Lao Vientiane and King Rama III of Siam, especially the dispute of the war in 1827-1828. The significant issue in this research that can shed light on the relations between Siam and Lao Vientiane and Laotian perspectives is the study of the particular meanings that might be hidden in the similar architectural designs of the Sisaket temple in Vientiane and the Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok. This research also views the opposing directions of political and religious policy of King Anuvong and King Rama III through the construction policy of Sisaket temple and Emerald Buddha temple respectively. Furthermore, the research provides insight into how both the Thai and the Lao kings established their authority through the legitimization of political and religious power that related to the belief in holding the Emerald Buddha. This belief can emphasize the struggle of King Anuvong to request this holy Buddha image to be returned to Vientiane and, therefore, leads to the building policy of Sisaket temple to be designed with similar characteristics to the Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok.

Moreover, the research also compares the styles of literary writing about the war between Siam and Lao Vientiane in 1827-1828 from different sources, Thai, Lao, and western history books, in order to illustrate the particular meanings conveyed in the text and the different perspectives of Thai, Lao, and western authors. Finally, the study of the relations between Thailand and Laos through the interpretation of Sisaket temple can be used as a databank for an interpretation guideline in order to enhance heritage interpretation at this site. There is also significance in the ability of the study to throw light on present attitudes and events.

## **9. Research organization**

In order to meet the dissertation questions and objectives, the researcher has divided the study to focus mainly on four points. The first was the historical relations between the Siam and the Lao Vientiane kingdoms from Sukhothai to the early Rattanakosin era in order to understand the factors that contributed to the positive and negative relations between Siamese and Lao Kingdoms, especially the war during 1827 to 1828. Second covers the relations between architectural characteristics of Bangkok's temples in the early Rattanakosin era and those of Lao Vientiane in order to observe similarities of the two temples and to discern the reasons why the two temples were constructed with the same style. Third is the analysis of Laotian perspectives toward Siam through Sisaket temple and King Anuvong, mainly focused on the specific purposes in temple construction related to the role and belief of the Emerald Buddha as legitimization of political and religious power for Siamese and Lao kingship. Finally, there is the comparison of the history writing style connected to the

war between Siam and Lao Vientiane in 1827-1828 in order to discover divergent perspectives in the Thai-Lao history authorizations.

Thus, the author will use these four main points to study the Thailand and Laos relations in a Laotian perspective through the interpretation of Sisaket temple and will divide the work into five chapters as follows:

Chapter One is the present introduction chapter giving an overview of the study such as the subject of inquiry, significance of the study of the site study, research problems and research questions, purposes of the study, scope of inquiry, method of investigation, the significance of the research, and research organization.

Chapter Two reviews the history of relations between the Siam and the Lao Vientiane kingdoms from Sukhothai to the early Rattanakosin era in order to understand the interaction between the two kingdoms in both positive and negative dimensions. Although, the author is not a historian, the intention is to use history as background to search for clues and vestiges of the past in the present. This review can assist to understand the relations between King Anuvong and the Siamese kings including the dispute during the war in 1827-1828 between the Siam and Lao kingdoms.

Chapter Three explores the relations between architectural characteristics of Bangkok's temples in the early Rattanakosin era and those of Lao Vientiane. This research uses the Emerald Buddha temple as the representative of temple architecture in Bangkok and the Sisaket temple as the representative in Lao Vientiane. The research also explains the influence of Bangkok's temple architectural style on the Sisaket temple in Vientiane such as in terms of building pediments, struts to support projected eaves' joints, the doors and walls located surrounding the main chapel, pillar style, terrace style surrounding the main chapel, and the windows decorated with the castle style. This chapter will also identify the divergence of the attributes between Thai and Lao.

Chapter Four is the most important chapter because this chapter must analyze Laotian perspectives toward Siam through Sisaket temple and King Anuvong. It focuses on the specific purposes in temple construction including the symbolism of this temple. It also concentrates on the significance and role of the Emerald Buddha as legitimization of political and religious power of the Siamese and Lao kings, especially in terms of Buddhist symbolic and the political legitimacy of kingship. Moreover, this chapter also presents the history writing and literature style directed towards King Anuvong's attempted liberation of the Lao kingdom from Siam, leading to the widening rift between the two sides.

Chapter Five is the discussion and conclusion, which returns to the relations between the Siam and Lao kingdoms including the relations of the architectural

characteristics of the Rattanakosin temple and the Lao Vientiane temple. This chapter also concludes the historical and mythic dimensions in terms of the role and the importance of myth towards the sacred Emerald Buddha as political and religious legitimacy for the Siam and Lao kings. In addition, there is discussion of the literary styles in history writing about the dispute in the war between Siam and Lao Vientiane in 1827-1828 from various views of Thai, Lao, and western authors. The chapter will accommodate the conflicts between Thailand and Laos in the sample cases of Thai singer “Nicole”, and Thai movie comedy “Mak Tae” and some other works from philology, etymology, and literature.

## **10. Glossary**

### **10.1 Ban Thalaeng**

A window style which is constructed at the top of the windows in the chapel.

### **10.2 Bussaboke**

Throne with four posts, a movable pavilion with pointed roof used as the temporary accommodation for the king and royals.

### **10.3 Chedi**

Sometimes translated as stupa or even pagoda. This generally bell-shaped tower will usually contain a relic of the Buddha, but may also be built to contain the ashes of a king or important monk. Those who can afford it may also build smaller, typically square-shaped, ones for their own final resting place.

### **10.4 Dok chor fah/chor fah**

An elaborate metal decorated with great aesthetic appeal in the form of a row of parasols or miniature pagodas at the top of the chapel's roof.

### **10.5 Erawan**

The Thai name of Airavata. It is depicted as a huge elephant, having three, sometimes with 33 heads. The heads are often shown with more than two tusks. Some statues show the Hindu god Indra riding on Erawan. It is sometimes associated with the old Lao Kingdom of Lan Chang and the defunct Kingdom of Laos. They had used Erawan, more commonly known as "The three headed elephant", as their Royal Flag.

### **10.6 Garuda**

A large mythical bird or bird-like creature that appears in both Hindu and Buddhist mythology. Garuda is depicted as having the golden body of a strong man with a white face, red wings, and an eagle's beak and with a crown on his head. This ancient deity was said to be massive, large enough to block out the sun.

### **10.7 Indra**

The King of the gods or Devas and Lord of heaven or Svargaloka in Hindu mythology, also is the God of war, storms, and rainfall.

### **10.8 Mondop**

A type of Thai architecture contributed to the utility for Buddhism and applied as the design of window in the main chapel.

### **10.9 Naga**

The Naga is a mythical serpent that, according to legend, sheltered the Buddha while he was meditating. The "accepted" version of the story is that it was a cobra, and is often represented in Buddha images. In temple architecture, the Naga will often be used as a decorative motif for stair railings and roof edges. Naga should not be confused with dragons, which are often featured in Chinese style architecture.

### **10.10 Patama base**

Lotus-flower-shaped pedestal for a Buddhist image

### **10.11 Phra Narai**

A human form of the Thai incarnation of Vishnu, also known as Narayan.

### **10.12 Prang**

A more phallic-shaped tower generally found in the center of Ayutthaya and Khmer-style temples. The prang is typically described as a "corn-cob" shape.

### **10.13 Sao harn columns**

The temple pillars which are located in front of or behind the main chapel.

### **10.14 Sema**

Boundary markers, always made of stone. The ubosot is always surrounded by eight boundary stones, marking the sacred ground of the temple. The word bai means "leaf" in Thai. The stones are usually leaf-shaped.

### **10.15 Singha base**

The lowest part of the main chapel which is designed as the figure of signha, the mythical animal in both Hindu and Buddhist mythology.

### **10.16 Sim or Ubosot**

The ordination hall, where new monks are ordained and other important ceremonies take place. The sim is not necessarily the largest building in a temple compound, and may not always be open to the public.

### **10.17 Trai Phoom**

The three worlds referring to the following karmic rebirth destinations: Kamaloka is the world of desire, typified by sexual and other desires, populated by hell beings, animals,

ghosts, humans and lower demi-gods. Rupaloka is the world of form, predominately free of baser desires, populated by jhana-dwelling gods, possible rebirth destination for those well practiced in jhanic absorption. Arupaloka is the world of formlessness, a noncorporeal realm populated with four heavens, possible rebirth destination for practitioners of the four formlessness stages.

#### **10.18 Wayuphak bird**

Wayuphak bird is a bird who eats wind as food. It is a mythical animal in the Himavanta forest.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Relations between Siamese and Lao Kingdoms**

#### **Introduction**

In order to approach the first theme in the study of Thailand and Laos relations through the perspective of the Vientiane Sisaket temple and the Rattanakosin Emerald Buddha temple, it is necessary to understand the relations between the Siamese and Lao Kingdoms from the past to the early Rattanakosin era of Siam. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the relations between the Siamese and the Lao kingdoms since the Sukhothai kingdom of Siam and the Lan Chang kingdom as the ancestor of Lao Vientiane through the presentation of an overview of relations between the Siamese and Lao Kingdoms from Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and the early Rattanakosin periods. The main focus will be thematic narration on the political conflicts between the two kingdoms especially those between Thonburi and Vientiane in 1778. These conflicts led to serious effects in Vientiane polity, economy, and society. The tense relations between the two kingdoms were demonstrated distinctly during the reigns of King Rama I to III in the early Rattanakosin era in terms of polity. The policy to govern Vientiane was changed during each of the three reigns, though especially in the reign of King Rama III. He used a strong policy to govern Vientiane. It was a different government policy for Vientiane and the Lao states from that of Kings Rama I and II because he decided to avoid reconciliation. This severe policy led to declining relations between Siamese royalty and Lao Vientiane royalty that used previously to be marked by unity. Furthermore, the conflict and the war between Bangkok and Vientiane then ensued. This chapter also demonstrates the conflicts between Vientiane and Bangkok leading to the war that became the determining scene for Thai and Lao history, the rebellion of King Anuvong in 1827-1828. This war fundamentally changed the politics of Vientiane and Bangkok and the perspectives of the people in the two kingdoms.

Thus, this chapter will present the five sections of thematic narration. First is the relations between Siam and Vientiane before the Thonburi period. Second is the relations between Bangkok and Vientiane in the reign of King Rama I. Third is the relations between Bangkok and Vientiane in the reign of King Rama II. Fourth is the conflict between Nakornratchasima and Vientiane and finally is the relations between Bangkok and Vientiane in the reign of King Rama III.

## 1. The Relations between Siam and Vientiane before the Thonburi period

### 1.1 Sukhothai Period

From about the 13<sup>th</sup> century of the Buddhist era, there is evidence indicating that tribes who spoke Thai moved from the southern part of China to Suvannaphummi. One of those tribes, called “Lao”, occupied the land along two sides of the Mekong River in the North, neighboring Chiengthong and Vientiane, where Khmer early settled down. Another group, named “Siam” or “Thai”, moved to the Chaopraya River valley and some vital rivers of the North as well. Later, Sukhothai was founded the capital city by some of those Thai and Siam people.<sup>1</sup> This migration to Suvannaphummi of those tribes, speaking Thai caused the authority of Khmer who first settled down along the Mekong and Chaopraya Rivers to disappear. Both kingdoms in this period were close both politically and in culture.<sup>2</sup>

Sukhothai was established the capital city in 1257 after Siam could break from the authority of the Khmer. King Ramkhamhang, the third king of the Sukhothai royal house, strengthened the kingdom with authority in the land of Suvannaphummi. There is not much evidence existing to study the relations between the Sukhothai and Lao kingdoms. There is just a message in the Sukhothai inscription stone 1, referring to territories of Sukhothai with brief mention of such relations.

“After stopping Khmer’s influencing, Sukhothai spread out its territory to Vientiane, Viengkum, Pra, Nan, Plua and Chava.”<sup>3</sup>

With reference to the message above, it is revealed that Sukhothai in that period occupied colonies of Lanchang, especially along the east bank of the Mekong River.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2 Ayutthaya Period

After the reign of King Ramkhamhang, the authority of Sukhothai declined. There was a further Thai kingdom, called Kungsri Ayutthaya, the kingdom of Thais who lived along the Chaopraya River. They established their land independently with the King Ramathibordi I or the King U-thong, while in the kingdom of Lanchang there was King Fah Ngum who combined various dependent lands altogether.<sup>5</sup> Neither kingdom was under the direct influence of Sukhothai which finally lost its authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard B. Fall. *Anatomy of A Crisis*. (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1969). 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>3</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle 1<sup>st</sup>. *Sukhothai Chronicle 1<sup>st</sup>*, (Bangkok: Kurusapa Co. Ltd. 1963), 167.

<sup>4</sup> Sangoun Boonrod. “Where is Viengkham?,” *Borankadee* 3 (May 1997): 54.

<sup>5</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle 1<sup>st</sup>. *Sukhothai Chronicle 1<sup>st</sup>*, 154.

The relations between Vientiane and Ayutthaya persisted from 1330 to 1559, although there is little record of that history. The relations between Lan Chang and Ayutthaya related to Chiengthong or Luangphrabang, the capital of Lan Chang. Occasionally, the kingdom of Lan Chang was under the influence of Ayutthaya in the King Trilokkanath reign around 1480.<sup>6</sup>

The relationships between the kingdoms appeared more obviously after King Chaichedthathirach moved the capital of Lan Chang to Vientiane, because of political cooperation between the two kingdoms against Burma during 1548 to 1569.<sup>7</sup>

The important reason for this relationship was the expanding boundaries of the King Tabengchaveti and King Burengnong reigns. To defend the kingdom from an enemy, King Chaichedthathirach and King Mahajakkrathat made an agreement to cooperate with their troops against Burma. Therefore, their relations were reformed.

However, Ayutthaya lost its independence to the Burmese for the first time in 1556, and Vientiane lost its as well in 1571.<sup>8</sup> They were under Burma, so their relations ended after 1556.<sup>9</sup> In 1574 King Naresuan, the son of King Mahathammaraong, proclaimed the independence of Siam. Later, there is evidence from 1593 revealing that Vientiane was later governed by Ayutthaya later.<sup>10</sup> When the King Naresuan reign ended, the relations between Ayutthaya and Vientiane also stopped.<sup>11</sup>

### **1.3 The Conflict between Thonburi and Vientiane in 1778**

#### **1.3.1 The Cause of the Conflict**

The cause of the conflict between Thonburi and Vientiane in 1778 flowed from the political situations in the kingdoms in 1767 to 1778. After Siam lost independence to Burma for a time, Siam was subsequently again strengthened. The Burmese troops were evicted from the kingdom by King Taksin and his people. Then, he succeeded to the throne under the name Pra Boromracha IV,<sup>12</sup> although he was generally called the King Kungthonburi. Moreover, the capital was moved from Ayutthaya to Thonburi in his reign. Although the Burmese troops were evicted, the war between Siam and Burma had not yet finished. Burma

<sup>6</sup> The Chronicle of Luang Phrasetsuksornnithi. (Bangkok: Klangvittaya Co. Ltd. 1967), 450-451.

<sup>7</sup> The Compilation of Ayutthaya Chronicle. The Record of Phra Chedi Sisongrak, (Bangkok: The Office of the Prime Minister. 1967), 2.

<sup>8</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. The Chronicle of Krung Si Ayutthaya. Phanchanthannumat Edition (Bangkok: Kurusapa Co. Ltd. 1969), 79.

<sup>9</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. The Chronicle of Krung Si Ayutthaya. 105.

<sup>10</sup> Due to the skill in the battlefield of King Naresuan, the boundary of Ayutthaya covered Lao Vientiane.

<sup>11</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. The Chronicle of Krung Si Ayutthaya. 330.

<sup>12</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. The Chronicle of Champasak (Bangkok: Kurusapa Co. Ltd. 1969), 200.

tried to send troops to conquer Thonburi a number of times. Then King Taksin moved to defeat the Burmese troops in Lanna.<sup>13</sup>

Facing many wars and the need for reviving the kingdom, many problems came up especially shortages of forces, provisions, elephants, and horses as vehicles in the wars. King Taksin had Vientiane as a colony where those factors were available. Therefore, this kingdom was needed to support his own during the war with Burma. Consequently, in 1771 the king of Thonburi revived the relations with Vientiane suddenly and sent a letter to ask for hands. The letter said that:

“Ayutthaya is attacked by Burma. The relations between Ayutthaya and Srisattanakanahut were stopped for a while. Now we are evicting the Burmese. We hope that Srisattanakanahut will help support us.”<sup>14</sup>

However, King Siribunsan of Laos needed to strengthen relations with both Ayutthaya and Burma because he wanted to be safe from the war. Ayutthaya commenced to realize the purpose of this double-dealing policy. In 1778, a messenger was arrested while taking a message from Burma to King Siribunsan to inform him of a time for attacking Ayutthaya through Nakornratchasima and that Burma would attack Lanna and Chedi Sam-ong.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hands, Vientiane did not cooperate with Burma. Then Thonburi urged Vientiane to help in the war with Burma. In response, King Siribunsan refused to help, giving the reason that his sons who were Burma’s hostages would be endangered. The king of Thonburi found out that King Siribunsan always tried to refuse cooperation. He got angry and did not ask for help from Vientiane any more.<sup>16</sup> Thus, their relations were ended from this situation.

### 1.3.2 The Cause of the War

Relations between Vientiane and Thonburi in that time were in a very bad situation. Moreover, in Vientiane, everything was not normal because of a war with Pra Wor and Pra Ta.<sup>17</sup> Nakornratchasima was requested for help. Vientiane attacked its enemies in the

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<sup>13</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Letter between Thonburi and Sisattanakanahut,” The Groups of the Record in Thonburi Period, No.1. 1771.

<sup>14</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Letter between Thonburi and Sisattanakanahut,” The Groups of the Record in Thonburi Period, No.1. 1771.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

land of Thonburi. When the king of Thonburi learnt of this, he was angry. Consequently, Vientiane was attacked with his troops.<sup>18</sup>

Eventually, he succeeded in conquering Vientiane in 1779. King Praya Mahakasatsuk ordered the destruction of Vientiane's provisions, orchards, and fields in order to be certain that King Siribunsan could not return to the throne. Besides, many goods and Lao people were taken to Thonburi, including King Siribunsan's three sons, Nanthasen, Inthavong and Anuvong to be Thonburi's and subsequently Bangkok's hostages. King Taksin had them live in Bangyeekan while the Lao people were taken to Saraburi.<sup>19</sup>

### **1.3.3 Results of the War**

The war between Thonburi and Vientiane was a very serious conflict. Vientiane was destroyed. Moreover, there were serious effects in its polity, economy and society owing to:

1. Vientiane became Thonburi's colony and some of the royal family members were hostages.
2. Lao people who were important resources of Vientiane were taken to Thonburi.<sup>20</sup>
3. People were separated from each other.

Vientiane was depressed by this situation for some time. The event also influenced the relations between Bangkok and Vientiane.

## **2. Relations between Bangkok and Vientiane in the Reign of King Rama I (1782-1809)**

### **2.1 The Importance of Vientiane to the Security of Bangkok**

In 1782, King Pra Mahakasatsuk was offered the crown instead of the king of Thonburi. He was later named King Rama I or Praputthayadfah.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly after he had ascended the throne, he moved the capital to the east side of the Chaopraya River, naming it "Krungthep Mahanakhon."<sup>22</sup>

Because of the policy of expanding authority, Bangkok in the King Rama I period claimed authority over Malayu, Khmer and Laos. However, Bangkok still was in danger from

<sup>18</sup> Term Vipakkit. Isan History Volume 1. (Bangkok: The Association of Society of Thailand. 1970), 63-64.

<sup>19</sup> Sawang Veeravong. Lao Chronicle. (Vientiane: 1957), 224.

<sup>20</sup> Sawang Veeravong. Lao Chronicle, 225.

<sup>21</sup> Vimon Pongpipat. History of Rattanakosin Kingdom, King Rama I to King Rama III. (Bangkok: Mitnarakarnpim Co. Ltd. 1972), 5.

<sup>22</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library Volume.1, (Bangkok: Klangvittaya Co. Ltd.), 93.

Burma, which tried to attack Bangkok, including its colonies because King Badung of Burma still sought to rule Bangkok again in accordance with the goals of the previous kings of Burma.<sup>23</sup>

The situation inside Bangkok was unreliable, especially concerning with the problems about its colonies, which tried to be independent like Patani, supported by India to help in liberation in 1789.<sup>24</sup>

Vientiane was one of the colonies that very important to the security of Bangkok for the following reasons.

1. Although Laos has been considerably damaged in the Thonburi period, in the reign of King Rama I this kingdom was revived. There were many forces, food sources, elephants and horses these which were necessary in the war. Bangkok was also being revived at that time after the war with Burma in 1777.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, support from Vientiane was essential.

2. Vientiane, like other colonies of Bangkok, wanted independence. However, this kingdom had more chances than others with many important characteristics. Moreover, it used previously to be a sovereign state like Siam, but in the meantime was just one of Bangkok's colonies. This stimulated Vientiane to try to be independent from Bangkok.

## **2.2 The Policy of Bangkok for controlling Vientiane**

King Rama I understood this situation and saw the importance of colonies which served the security of Bangkok, especially Vientiane. It was therefore paid a lot of attention, being ruled 'softly' and differently from the policy used towards other colonies.<sup>26</sup> King Rama I had previously been ordered by King Taksin to attack Vientiane. From this time, he acquired a Lao woman named Wan to be his minor wife. Having adored her, he had her be in charge of his household duties.<sup>27</sup> Then, In accordance with his succeeding to the throne, she was given the title of a minor wife the most authority in the court and could oppose King Rama I when she disagreed with him.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, she influenced the policy controlling Vientiane, so it was treated well. The policy focused on stimulating Vientiane to be faithful in ways described below.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.. 95.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.. 174-176.

<sup>25</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The Declared Letter to Suppress King Anuvong of Vientiane", The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama III, No.5. 1825.

<sup>26</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The Book of Phraya Mahayotha-Ubakong", The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama I. 1803.

<sup>27</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The Bibliography of Wan", The Bibliography of Royalists No. 167. 1825.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Firstly, the royal house of King Siribunsan who was in conflict with the king of Thonburi was offered the rule of Vientiane again by King Rama I after the king had escaped to Vietnam when he was attacked in the Thonburi period. King Siribunsan was unaccepted to reign again, however, because he did not trust him. Thus, King Siribunsan's eldest son who was Bangkok's hostage was formally ordered to rule Vientiane in 1782.<sup>29</sup> Although King Siribunsan still retained legitimacy in Vientiane, a royal command from King Rama I appeared as follows:

“In 1782, the King Rama I had Prince Nanthasen return to his kingdom to rule it again”<sup>30</sup>

The reasons for Nanthasen being chosen King of Vientiane were:

1. To control Vientiane peacefully, King Rama I needed to accept the validity of the royal house of King Siribunsan, who used previously to rule Vientiane and its colonies well.

2. If Bangkok had to accept the rule of the royal house of King Siribunsan, a person who was accepted in the meanwhile was Prince Nanthasen since he had formerly lived in Bangkok. Therefore, the King could trust Prince Nanthasen more than others and offering him the throne was conventional.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, King Siribunsan could accept the condition easily because Prince Nanthasen was his eldest son.

3. Supporting the royal house of King Siribunsan to rule Vientiane was a way, indicating King Rama I's sincerity.<sup>32</sup> Later, King Siribunsan died and King Nanthasen ruled Vientiane until 1793.<sup>33</sup> He was accused of rebellion with Phra Boromraja and accordingly resigned in 1795. Then King Rama I appointed Prince Inthavong, King Siribunsan's next son, to govern Vientiane. He was renamed Phrachao Chaichedthathirach III,<sup>34</sup> with Prince Anuvong as his assistant. He ruled Vientiane suitably until he died in 1804.<sup>35</sup> Prince Anuvong was then appointed to rule Vientiane by King Rama I.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library Volume.1. 45

<sup>30</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Governor Appointment for Siamese Annexed States”, The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama I No.2. 1791-1815.

<sup>31</sup> Thongsophit N. The Kingdom of the King Rama III. (Bangkok: The Association of Society of Thailand. 1971), 161.

<sup>32</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Letters from Vientiane”, The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama I No.7. 1782.

<sup>33</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Chronicle of Nakhonphanom”, The Groups of Chronicle, The Historical Records, and History No.30. 1803. 334.

<sup>34</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Governor Appointment for Siamese Annexed States”, The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama I No.2. 1791-1815.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Chao Phraya Thippakornvong. The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Reign of King Rama I. (Bangkok: Kurusapa Co. Ltd. 1963), 352.

The results of this operation were not successful in the beginning because the feeling of conflict could not be changed among the Lao people. This could also be seen in the case of King Nanthasen, who wanted to be independent from Bangkok. Although King Rama I tried to convince him and treated him well, he could not change his mind. King Nanthasen remembered what his kingdom had suffered from the war in the past, especially his people who were taken to Saraburi. His kingdom had lost many things. His people and their families lived apart. Therefore, King Nanthasen always remembered this and thought that he would try to move Lao people back to Vientiane although he attempted this in a peaceful way.<sup>37</sup> In 1792 there was a conflict; King Nanthasen attacked Gang and Puan successfully and took people from both kingdoms to Bangkok.<sup>38</sup> He appealed to King Rama I to allow his people to return back home, but his request was not accepted, to his great disappointment.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, his respect for Bangkok was decreased. Consequently, from the situation, King Nanthasen declared independence with the support of Phra Boromraja, the King of Nakornpranom.<sup>40</sup> However, his plan was revealed by King Anuruth, the king of Luangphrabang; consequently King Nanthasen and Phra Boromraja were imprisoned in Bangkok.

Nevertheless, the good relations between Bangkok and Vientiane were restored when Prince Anuvong was appointed to rule Vientiane in 1795. However, the lesson from the King Nanthasen case made King Rama I more careful.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, to prevent the situation getting worse, Thongsuk, his hostage and the daughter of King Inthawong, was asked to be his minor wife.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the relation became tighter after Thongsuk's giving birth. Her daughter was named the Princess Chanthaburi.<sup>43</sup>

Controlling Vientiane from Bangkok by those means was achieving. The benevolence of King Rama I was extended to the royal families of Vientiane, especially Thongsuk and Princess Chaofah Kulthonthippayawadee.

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<sup>37</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The Letters from Vientiane", The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama I No.7, 1782.

<sup>38</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The Chronicle of Nakhonphanom", The Groups of Chronicle, The Historical Records, and History No.30, 336.

<sup>39</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The government in Vientiane", The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama I No.1, 1782.

<sup>40</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The Chronicle of Nakhonphanom", The Groups of Chronicle, The Historical Records, and History No.30, 340.

<sup>41</sup> Sawang Veeravong. Lao Chronicle. (Vientiane: 1957), 238.

<sup>42</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library Volume.1, (Bangkok: Klangvittaya Co. Ltd.), 273

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

### 2.3 The Siamese Policy and its effects on Vientiane

The policy of ruling the Lao colonies was different from elsewhere. Vientiane was treated well. The policy used for other colonies emphasized on breaking the relations between colonies, achieved with Nakornratchasima's help, as recounted following.

1. New governors were appointed to govern Lao colonies instead of the old ones: There were three of these older groups.<sup>44</sup>

1.1 The families who ruled the main colonies were those of the kings of Vientiane, Luangphrabang and Champasak.

1.2 The authority groups who ruled minor colonies were groups from colonies of Laos, Luangphrabang and Champasak.

1.3 The authority groups who ruled Lao colonies, under Bangkok and Nakornratchasima directly were Chonnaboth, Pimai, Simum, Chaiyaphum and so on. The whole area of Suvannaphummi was directly under Bangkok.

As these three groups were all Lao, the Bangkok authority did not see them as reliable. It was therefore anticipated that they might think eventually to attack Bangkok. To prevent Bangkok from this problem, King Rama I advocated new groups who were closer to Bangkok to rule over Lao colonies instead of the old groups. When these new groups had such authority to rule those colonies, they acted to maintain Bangkok's security with the reason that if Bangkok maintained its authority, their own security would be assured.

2. Extending the authority of Bangkok along the west side of the Mekong River, King Rama I tried to secure the boundaries of Vientiane, Suvannaphummi and Nakorn Champasak. These kingdoms were Bangkok's colonies, but they still had strength relatively independently to Bangkok. Bangkok only had the authority of appointing governors to rule these colonies, but could not suddenly change their boundaries.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Term Vipakkit. Isan History Volume 1. 53-54.

<sup>45</sup> Term Vipakkit. Isan History Volume 1. 171.

To reach the goal of extending the authority of Bangkok, the following policies were adopted.<sup>46</sup> Firstly, Bangkok intended to support the establishment of new kingdoms on this land and appointed suitable persons to rule over them and to allow them to be under Bangkok or Nakornratchasima. Secondly, Bangkok intended to stop the influence and authority of the old authority groups in some of the colonies, with new groups appointed to replace them.

#### **2.4 The Policy for Controlling the Land along the west side of the Mekong River and its effects on Vientiane.**

Normally, the Lanchang Kingdom was divided into three parts: Vientiane and Luangphrabang were in conflict, but the relations with Champasak remained normal. Although sometimes Vientiane and Champasak came into conflict with each other, they could solve their problems by themselves. On the other hands, when King Rama I appointed a governor to rule Champasak, their relations (Vientiane and Champasak) were eventually severed.

Combining the Lao colonies along the west bank of the Mekong River affected Vientiane. Though Bangkok occupied this land, which clearly belonged to Vientiane, the behavior of Bangkok could not be trusted by the Lao. They might expand their territory to Vientiane, or do so to cover other colonies like Chaiyaphum. Therefore, Nakornratchasima and Vientiane had a conflict.<sup>47</sup> This condition tended to affect the security of Vientiane. Consequently, relations between Bangkok and Vientiane did not go along well.

#### **2.5 Benefits accruing to Bangkok from Vientiane**

Bangkok could exercise control over Vientiane in a variety of ways, while also trying to derive advantages from Vientiane at the same time. However, it focused on the advantages from politics, and the recruitment of troops and a work force.

**2.5.1 Politics:** Lao colonies became Bangkok's colonies, but these colonies covered wide areas on both sides of the Mekong River. Consequently, the wider area was controlled difficultly. Bangkok had one of its colonies exercise control over the Lao colonies instead of seeking direct control from Bangkok. The qualified sub-kingdom was Vientiane.

Controlling other colonies was centralized in Vientiane supported by King Rama I. According to the King Nanthasen era, there is evidence showing that Vientiane was accorded the greatest authority among the Lao colonies. Indeed, a letter, reporting what King

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<sup>46</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. *The Chronicle of Isan Regions*. (Bangkok: Kurusapa Co. Ltd. 1963), 214.

<sup>47</sup> Term Vipakkit. *Isan History Volume 1*. 24-25.

Nanthasen did with other Lao colonies to Bangkok clearly showed and confirmed Vientiane's position and duties.<sup>48</sup>

“We sent people and servants, controlled by Mapang and Duang. Men were 22 and women were 17, 39 families. On the other hand, farmers who were planting could not go with us.”<sup>49</sup>

Owing to the attack on Puan<sup>50</sup> by Siam, King Yuankaisern, the king of Vietnam who had authority over this city was hostile towards Bangkok. King Yuankaisern sent a letter to Bangkok.

“I thought that Siam helped Vientiane to attack my kingdom. Now I understood that King Nanthasen was appointed to rule Vientiane but no one stopped him.”<sup>51</sup>

King Nanthasen would constantly report to Bangkok if some of the colonies were unreliable. For instant, in 1791 King Nanthasen reported that Luangphrabang was partisan with Burma, whereupon King Rama I ordered Vientiane to send its troop to control the situation. After the King Nanthasen reign, Vientiane continued to perform its duties in support of Bangkok.

The results of assigning Vientiane to control other colonies continued throughout King Rama I era; Vientiane would effectively work from Bangkok's commands. Most Lao colonies were respectful towards Bangkok although if there was not a peaceful situation in the Lao colonies, it could really be stopped successfully.

**2.5.2 Troops:** As mentioned before, Bangkok faced war with Burma, so troops were needed. Although, Bangkok's power was reviving, the military forces and other factors were not yet enough. Consequently, troops were needed from its colonies especially Vientiane and other Lao colonies to support its military.

### **3. Relations between Bangkok and Vientiane in the Reign of King Rama II (1809-1824)**

#### **3.1 Continuing rule of Vientiane and its colonies from the King Rama I period**

The relations between Bangkok and Vientiane in the King Rama II reign were mostly like in the King Rama I reign. Bangkok still aimed to rule Vientiane according to the

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<sup>48</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The government in Vientiane”, The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama I No.1. 1782.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Puan was Vietnam annexed and there was King Yuankaisern governed Vietnam that time.

<sup>51</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Letter from Yuankaisern to Bangkok: the Government in Vientiane”, The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of the King Rama I No.3. 1796.

policy from the King Rama I reign that focused on maintaining equitable relation. King Rama II married Chaofah Kulthonthipyawadee, the daughter of King Rama I and Thongsuk.<sup>52</sup> Besides, he had close relationships with King Anuvong who ruled Vientiane at that time. They both liked plays and music.<sup>53</sup>

Likewise, developing relations with Vientiane in the King Rama II reign seemed successful. However, the close relationship between King Rama II and King Anuvong had little effect on the politics of both kingdoms. In some respects, the expansion of Bangkok authority to Lao colonies along the west side of the Mekong River had not been successful in the King Rama I reign. Bangkok could not achieve this effectively because the politics of the kingdoms in this area changed radically, as King Vietnamyalong revived his authority in Vietnam and extended Vietnamese authority to Khmer and Lao colonies.

In 1810, King Vietnamyalong sent a message to King Rama II in order to demand Banthaimat.<sup>54</sup> He claimed that it used to be part of the Vietnam kingdom.<sup>55</sup> Owing to avoiding the risk of having a conflict with it, King Rama II accepted this request. King Veitnamyalong successfully extended his authority to the Khmer territory. Consequently, Bangkok needed to strengthen its policy.

The policy for benefits accruing to Bangkok from Vietnam could not operate effectively because it was merely focused on the advantages of securing a work force and other useful materials to construct a reservoir and dig canals. On the other hands, it could do it effectively with Vientiane. In 1809, people from Vientiane were taken to contribute to a cremation for the funeral ceremony of King Rama I. Moreover, 30,000 pieces of white paper and fiber plants were sought from Vientiane to be used in the ceremony. In 1813, King Rama II ordered people from Vientiane to construct a reservoir in Anghthong for supporting transportation.<sup>56</sup> Then later in 1817 there was a flood in Champasak and colonies in the East. Rice from Vientiane was taken to help people who suffered from the flood. Then Champasak needed to return tributary money to Bangkok.

### **3.2 Striving for an Independent Vientiane in the Reign of King Anuvong**

King Anuvong, the youngest of King Siribunsan's sons, harbored poor

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<sup>52</sup> Thamrongsak Aryuvattana. The History of Chakri Dynasty and the King Taksin's Dynasty. (Bangkok: Ayothaya Co. Ltd. 1968), 142-144.

<sup>53</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. The Suppression of Vientiane's Rebellion. (Bangkok: Sophonpipanthanakorn Co. Ltd. 1934), 95.

<sup>54</sup> Banthaimat is called Muang Hatien by Vietnam. It was the important city located between Khmer and Vietnam. In that time, Muang Banthaimat was annexed to Siam.

<sup>55</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library Volume.1. 431

<sup>56</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The Letter to Vientiane about the Government for Muang Phutthaiphet", The Groups of the Letter in the Reign of King Rama II No.10. 1817.

experiences of Vientiane. When he finally took a chance to occupy Vientiane, being independent from Bangkok was what he needed like his brother. Having close relationships with King Rama II did not support him to revive his kingdom because he paid respect to Bangkok as much as King Rama II trusted him and his son, Kormmuenjedsadabodin. He derived advantages from being favored by King Rama II to prepare his plans as follows:

1. In 1819, terrorists in Champasak, Vientiane and Champasak emerged. Prince Mahnoi, the governor of Champasak, could not defeat the terrorists, so his people were taken to settle down along the East of the Mekong River. When Bangkok received this news, King Rama II told King Anuvong to suppress the terrorists.<sup>57</sup> He did it successfully. Prince Ratchabut arrested them and sent them to Bangkok. King Anuvong found a suitable chance to appoint Chao Ratchabut to be the governor of Champasak.<sup>58</sup> With Vietnam's expansion of its authority to Champasak and with problems there, King Rama II was very concerned.

The choice of a person to rule Champasak was considered by two groups of royal family members and senior servants. In the first group, Kormmuenjedsadabodin was the leader, arguing that this position suited Prince Ratchabut. However, the other group, led by Chaofah Kormluangpitakmontri disagreed. It was claimed that the authority should be executed by Vientiane. This, however, would be dangerous for Bangkok. Appointing Prince Ratchabut stopped the policy of dividing the Lao colonies into three parts, which was the policy pursued in the King Rama I reign. Moreover, Vientiane and Champasak could be joined more tightly than before.

2. Vientiane intended to revive the relations with Vietnam to counter-balance Bangkok's authority. After King Vietnamyalong's death in 1819,<sup>59</sup> the policy of Vietnam to extend its authority to Laos and Khmer was strengthened. A person who advocated this policy was Ongtakul, a senior servant. King Minmang who ruled Vietnam following the King Vietnamyalong reign, respected the advice of Ongtakul. Then King Anuvong sent ambassadors and tribute to strengthen relationships with Vietnam since salt, food and consumer goods were needed from Vietnam. Close relations between Vietnam and Vientiane developed rapidly.

3. Supporting and empowering troops and food for wars had been imposed after Vientiane lost its independence to Bangkok. Vientiane recovered its troops in the meantime between King Nanthasen's reign and King Anuvong's reign when it had achieved good

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<sup>57</sup> Chao Phraya Thippakornvong. The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Reign of King Rama I. 114.

<sup>58</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library Volume.1. 601.

<sup>59</sup> Chao Phraya Thippakornvong. The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Reign of King Rama I. 114.

relations with Vietnam. Assembling troops and food of Vientiane was focused upon because of wars to retrieve its independence. At the same time, moreover, the relations between Bangkok and England did not proceed well. During this time, King Anuvong paid attention closely to this situation and felt that Bangkok would surely be invaded by England.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, he tried to collect the necessary troops and food supplying to find a chance to seize independence.

#### **4. The Conflict between Nakornratchasima and Vientiane**

Nakornratchasima was an important colony of Bangkok in the land along the west side of the Mekong river. Normally Nakornratchasima governed Phukiew, Seemum, Chaiyaphom, Chonnabot and Putthaisong and colonies in the Khmer border region at the end of the Krungsri Ayutthaya era. Accordingly, these colonies were under Bangkok. Nakornratchasima was assigned to supervise Lao colonies, a burden which caused a conflict between it and Vientiane, another important colony of Bangkok. The governor in that time was Praya Pompakdee (Tong-in).

In 1791, Praya Prompakdee supervised Nakornratchasima's troops to suppress Chiengkaew and the Kha tribe, who were terrorists in Champasak, yet he could not succeed at that time. However, he took Kha people to Bangkok.<sup>61</sup> He was also assigned to take some of his troops to settle down to control Champasak at Donkong. The authority of Nakornratchasima in Champasak and the Lao colonies in the west considerably disturbed Vientiane because this authority was an obstacle to the independence of Vientiane. After Praya Pompakdee was appointed the governor of Nakornratchasima, he suggested King Rama II survey the population numbers in Lao colonies such as Kalasin, Bangmuk, Khemmarat and Ubonratchathani <sup>62</sup> to prevent Vientiane from doing so first. King Rama II agreed and assigned officers to recruit residents for labor in Lao colonies.

Later, Praya Prompakdee always acted as having the most authority in Vientiane. He usually took troops from Lao colonies to suppress the Kha in Champasak. As a result of the situation, Prince Ratchabut became hostile. The conflict among Nakornratchasima, Lao colonies and Khmer colonies continued gradually. Some Lao colonies that used to pay respect

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<sup>60</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library Volume.1. 686.

<sup>61</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. The Chronicle of Isan Regions. 190.

<sup>62</sup> Vachirayan Hall. "The Chronicle of Chao Anuvong", The Groups of Chronicle, The Historical Records, and History. 1803.

to Bangkok changed their allegiance to do this with Vientiane, the competitor of Nakornratchasima.

## **5. Relationships between Bangkok and Vientiane in the Reign of King Rama III**

### **5.1 Government Policy for Vientiane in the Reign of King Rama III**

After King Rama II passed away in 1824, King Rama III ascended the throne under the full name Phra Bat Som Deth Phra Nang Khao Chao Yu Hua. The ascension to the throne of King Rama III did not follow the palace laws, and thus there were many government officers and residents who disagreed. However, there was no violent dissent because King Rama III had high authority both politically and in terms of social acceptance.

King Rama III had a totally different government policy for Vientiane and the Lao states from that of Kings Rama I and II. King Rama III eschewed the policy of reconciliation that Kings Rama I and II had used to govern Vientiane and the Lao states. He determined controlling Vientiane strictly because Bangkok had failed to control the Lao states and the Khmer kingdom successfully in the reigns of Kings Rama I and II. His strict government policy led to declining relations between Siamese royalty and Lao Vientiane royalty that used to be marked by unity. Subsequently, the conflict led to war between Bangkok and Vientiane.

### **5.2 The Re-independence of the Lao Kingdom**

#### **5.2.1 The Causes of the Conflict between Bangkok and Vientiane**

In 1824, after King Rama III had ascended the throne, the cremation ceremony of King Rama II was set from his order.<sup>63</sup> King Anuvong and the governors of Lao states who were annexed to Siam also attended the ceremony. After the ceremony finished, King Anuvong and his followers from Vientiane were assigned to collect the palm trees in Saraburi and bring them to Bangkok. These palm trees were useful to construct the wall to protect Bangkok from their sea-borne enemies.

When the mission was completed, King Anuvong and his followers were returned to Vientiane. After completing the assignments from King Rama II, he decided to ask the permission of King Rama III as follows.<sup>64</sup>

1. To collect up Lao families in Saraburi and return them to Vientiane.
2. To bring the royal theatre of the Siamese royalty to perform in Vientiane.

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<sup>63</sup> *The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library Volume.1.* 26.

<sup>64</sup> Sawang Veeravong. *Lao Chronicle*. 244.

3. To carry Chao Doungkham who was of the Vientiane Dynasty back to Vientiane.

The requests mentioned were not accepted and allowed. This refusal could be interpreted as the intention of King Rama III to show the strict government policy for Vientiane and the Lao states relative to that seen in the reign of Kings Rama I and II. Moreover, it could imply that the relations between Bangkok and Vientiane were not smooth. Furthermore, Vientiane tended to move towards closer relations with Vietnam. King Anuvong was shamed in the eyes of the royal officers and government officers in Bangkok because he had defied King Rama III. He returned to Vientiane without bidding goodbye to royal family members and royal officers in Bangkok as he usually did. The relations between Bangkok and Vientiane were ended because of the conflict between King Anuvong and King Rama III. King Anuvong assigned the head of his defense department to mobilize his troops and prepare provisions in order to liberate Vientiane from Siam. However, King Anuvong did not decide to attack Bangkok immediately as he seems to have been waiting for some advantageous conditions and chances, especially the situation of British troops attacking Bangkok as many people had predicted at that time.

In 1826, after King Anuvong had returned to Vientiane, he invited royalists and royal governors to discuss how to assert re-independence from Siam. His royal supporters and royal governors attending an informal meeting consisted of:<sup>65</sup>

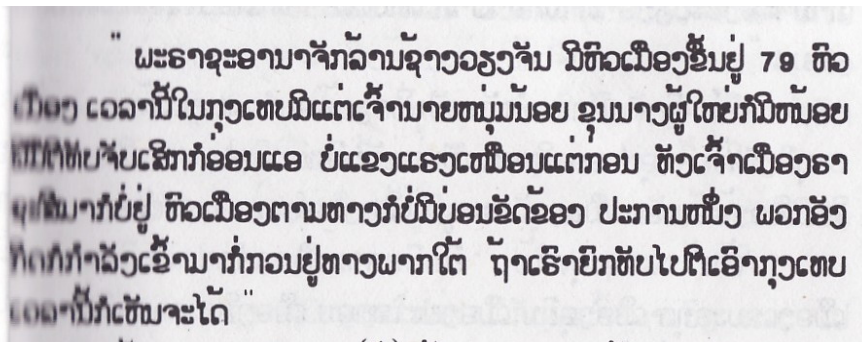
- 1) Chao Maha Upparat (Tidsa)<sup>66</sup>
- 2) Prince Sutthisan (Poh)
- 3) Prince Ratchavong (Ngao)
- 4) Prince Ratchabut (Yoh)
- 5) Phraya Maungchan
- 6) Phraya Maungsaen
- 7) Phraya Maungkang
- 8) Phraya Maungsai
- 9) The Deputy of Saen
- 10) The Deputy of Chan

King Anuvong had opened the discussion as recounted in the Lao chronicle edited by Luangpasee:<sup>67</sup>

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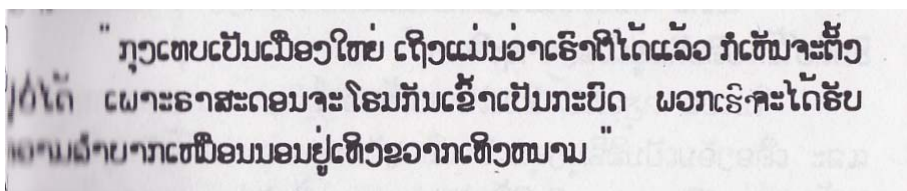
<sup>65</sup> Sawang Veeravong. Bibliography of the King Anuvong, The Last King of Vientiane Dynasty. (Vientiane: The Department of Religious Affairs. 1969), 120.

<sup>66</sup> The head of the viceroyalty in the reign of King Anuvong. He was the brother of the King Anuvong but with a different mother. He was the only one who disagreed with the plan to attack Bangkok.



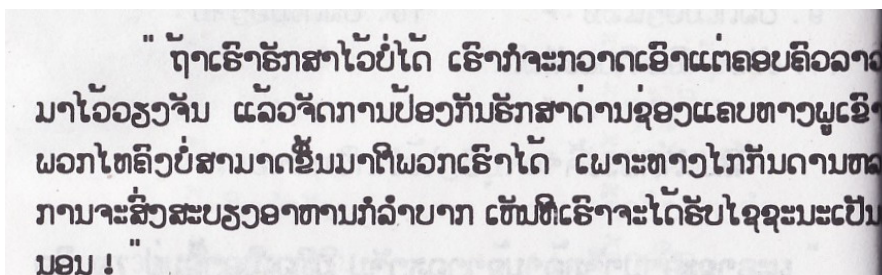
“There were 79 cities in the Lao Lanchang Vientiane kingdom. Presently, there are a lot of young governors, fewer of the highly experienced governors, and lack of fighting skill. The head administrator of Nakornratchasima is also out of the city and there is no resistance from the cities that Lao troop will pass. Moreover, the influence of England still causes trouble for Siam to the west of Bangkok. Thus, it is better to attack Bangkok at this time”.

Chao Maha Upparat Tidsa, however, disagreed with his king:



“Bangkok is the big city. Although we can attack and win the war, we cannot stay at Bangkok because the Thai people can rebel together against us. Then we may get trouble like sleeping on the thorn”.

King Anuvong replied to Chao Maha Upparat Tidsa that:

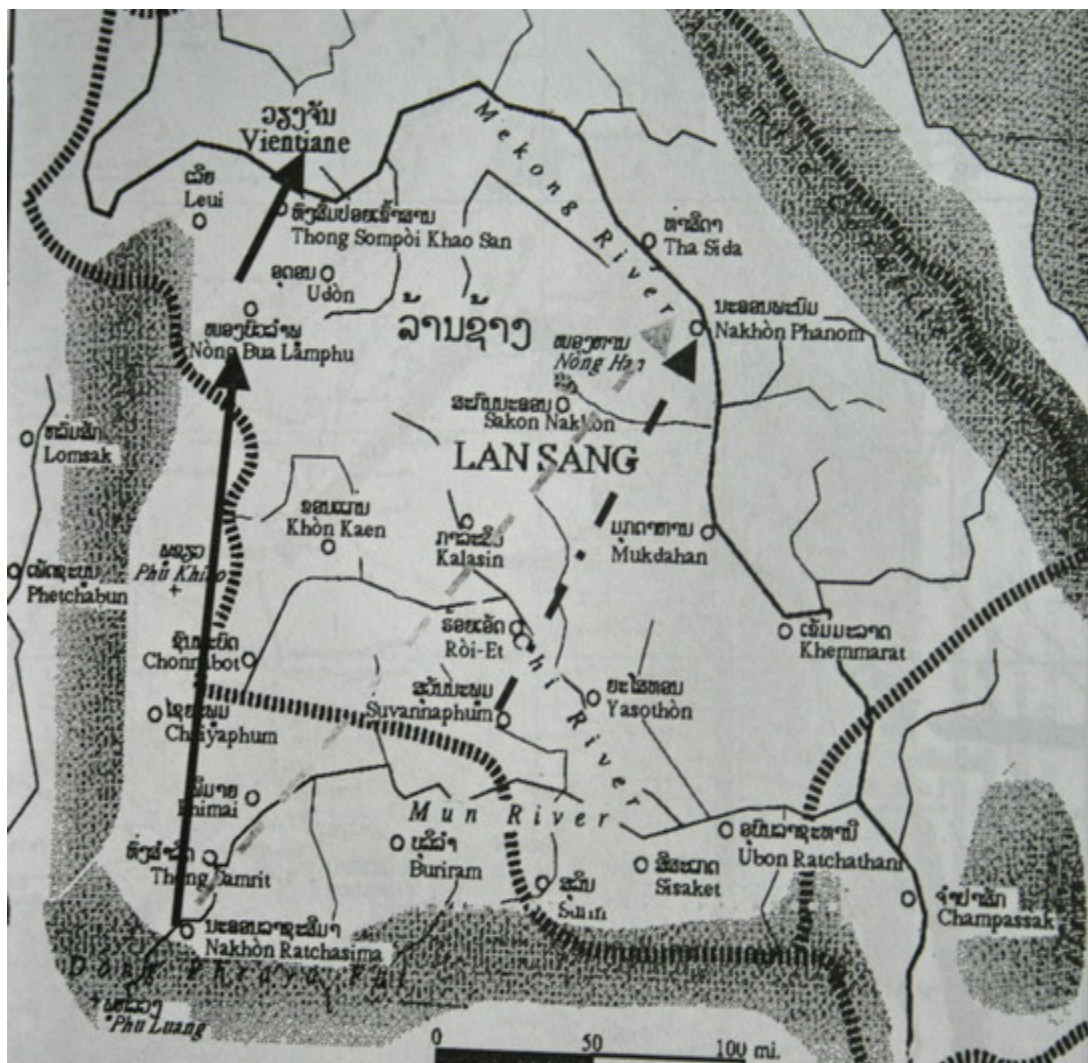


“If we cannot occupy this area, we can migrate Lao people to Vientiane and safeguard our residents from the enemy by protecting the forts on the way along the mountains. Siamese armies cannot attack us because it is very difficult to transport foodstuff to armies. Finally, we will win”.

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<sup>67</sup> DOUNGDEE LUANGPASEE. *The King Anuvong (Som Dej Phra Chao Anuvong, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Vientiane: Publisher of Lao State. 2001), 23.*

After the meeting, King Anuvong assigned Chao Upparat Tidsa to be the leader of Lao troops to move to Bangkok by way of Kalasin, Roi Et, Suvannabhumi, Khonkaen and Chonnabot. Prince Ratchabut Yoh was to be the leader moving from Champasak by passing Khammarat, Ubon, Yasothorn, Srisaket, Det Udom and assigned to seize the cities along the way to be annexed to Vientiane as can be seen in Figure 3



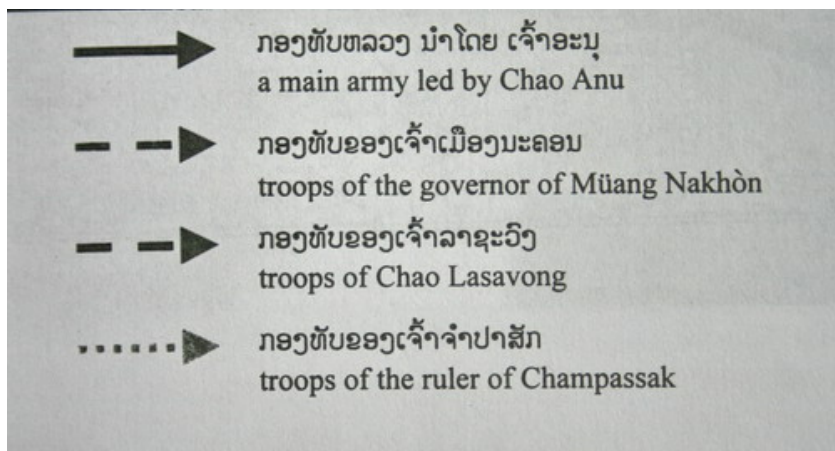


Figure 3: The routes for the troops of Vientiane to attack Bangkok

Source: Senmany K., Grabowsky, V., Paphaphanh, B., Sengsoulin, B., and Xayasithivong, N. Phun Viang (Historical Lao Literature), (Vientiane: Education Printing Enterprise. 2004), 76.

King Anuvong also submitted a letter and tribute carried by 50 people to King Manturat, the king of Lao Lanchang Luangphrabang, to persuade this king to join in the re-independence mission for the Lao kingdom.

### 5.2.2 King Manturat disagrees with King Anuvong's Rebellion

When King Manturat knew of the plan of King Anuvong, he assigned his son Prince Sukasam to inform the Siamese King of the plan of King Anuvong's revolution. Thus, the king of Siam was able to prepare his troops for the war. Moreover, King Manturat also supported Siam by recruiting 5,000 soldiers to participate in the war.

### 5.2.3 King Anuvong moves Lao troops to Bangkok

Firstly, the Lao armies were moved across the Mekong River and military camp was established for training both elephants and horses. In January 1827, King Anuvong appointed Prince Ratchavong as the leader with 3,000 soldiers to move ahead to Nakornratchasima where could be reached within one month. Prince Ratchvong played a trick on the governor of Nakornratchasima by saying that the King of Siam had ordered him to lead Lao armies to assist Siam fight against Britain. Therefore, with the trick he could move down to Saraburi safely. When he arrived at Saraburi, he used the same trick on the governor of Saraburi, that "The British are going to attack Bangkok, thus Lao people must be moved to Vientiane for safety." The Saraburi governor followed his suggestion.<sup>68</sup>

King Anuvong and Prince Sutthisan had followed Prince Ratchavong and arrived at Nakornratchasima about three weeks later with 8,000 Lao troops. King Anuvong was be

<sup>68</sup> Sawang Veeravong. Bibliography of the King Anuvong, The Last King of Vientiane Dynasty, 28.

able to control Nakornratchasima and keep Lao people there easily because by that time the governor had moved out from the city to put down a Khmer rebellion in Khukhan.



Figure 4: The monument of Ya Moh

Source: Worawut Singbamrung. The History of Rattanakosin Kingdom [Online], accessed 13 May 2010. Available from [http://www.ben2.ac.th/SET\\_1/DATA\\_1/E\\_LEARNING/data\\_el/Bangkok/BK5.htm](http://www.ben2.ac.th/SET_1/DATA_1/E_LEARNING/data_el/Bangkok/BK5.htm).

#### 5.2.4 King Anuvong falls into the trap

When the governor of Nakornratchasima, who was the husband of Ya Moh,<sup>69</sup> came back from putting down the Khmer rebellion in Khukhan, he knew what King Anuvong was doing. Thus, he pretended to the Lao King that he would move together with Lao families to Vientiane. He was trusted and given authority to escort Lao people to Vientiane. The governor and his wife, Ya Moh, halted their movement to stay overnight in Samrit field.<sup>70</sup> They poisoned the Lao soldiers with alcohol and killed almost all of them. Having learned about this situation and that the Siamese king would assign Siamese troops to attack Lao armies, King Anuvong and his son (Prince Ratchavong) decided to move their troops to Nongbualampoo.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> After catching King Anuvong completely Ya Moh, who had defeated armies in 1827 in Samrit field, was appointed as the hero of the Siamese people. There is the monument to Ya Moh in Nakornratchasima province, called “Thao Suranaree”.

<sup>70</sup> Presently, Samrit field is located in Phimai district, Nakornratchasima province.

<sup>71</sup> Nongbualampoo is a province in the upper part of Northeast Thailand.

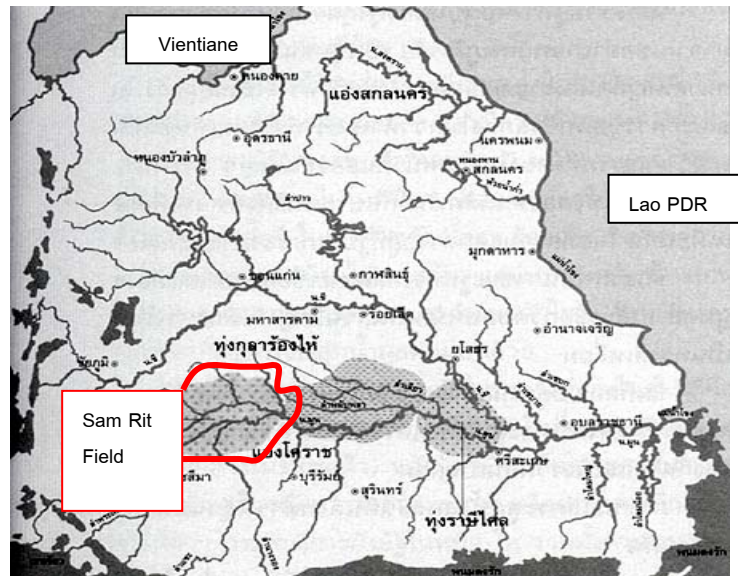


Figure 5: Sam Rit Field in Nakornratchasima province, Thailand

Source: Isan Gointer. *The Culture of Gular Field* [Online] accessed 13 May 2010. Available from [www.sarakadee.com/m-boran/2003/04-06/images/thungkula\\_14.jpg](http://www.sarakadee.com/m-boran/2003/04-06/images/thungkula_14.jpg).

### 5.2.5 Siamese troops attack the Lao rebellion

When King Rama III had learned that King Anuvong of Lao Vientiane would attack Siam with the reason that he wanted to take his people back home, Vientiane, he rapidly assigned forces to protect Bangkok from the invasion of the enemy by establishing military forts from Hualampong to Bangkokpi.

On March 3, 1827, he ordered Krom Phra Rat Cha Vang Bor Vorn Sa Than Mong Khol as the front line troops moving to Saraburi and set up military camp at Phra Bhut Tha Bhat mountain in order to muster the troops from other cities and prepare to attack the Lao armies.

### 5.2.6 Siamese troops arrive and attack Nongbualampoo

Siamese troops comprised groups led by Phraya Saenyakorn, Phraya Khlahomratchaseina, Phraya Vichaiyabunrintara, Phraya Narongkavichai, and Mom Chao Khun Nane.<sup>72</sup> All the groups of Siamese troops attacked Phraya Narin who was the chief of the Lao commanders but could not resist the Siamese armies. Phraya Narin was finally caught and put to death.

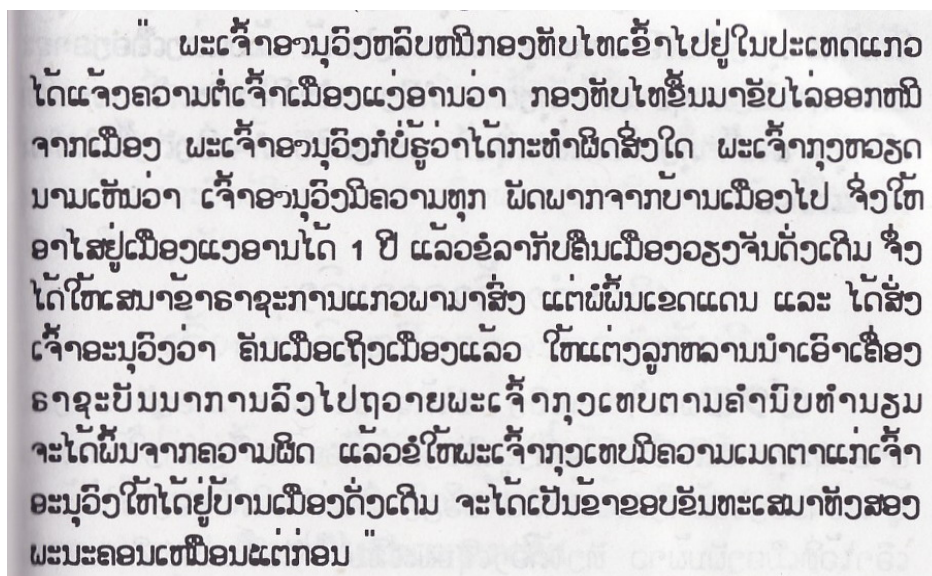
The troops of Prince Ratchavong (the son of King Anuvong) had to fight against Siamese comprising the groups of Phraya Apaiphutorn, Phraya Patpichai, and Phraya Kraikosa. With his consideration, he could not stop this advance, thus he made a decision to

<sup>72</sup> Grandchild of the King Rama II

move to the military camp of King Anuvong. When King Anuvong learned that Phraya Narin had been passed away by Siamese armies, Phraya Supoh and Phraya Chanon were appointed to protect the military camp. Then he, Prince Ratchavong and Prince Sutthisan rapidly returned to Vientiane in order to find a way to secure Vientiane. After the battle in Nongbualumpoo, Siamese armies still moved on to Vientiane in order to capture King Anuvong and his royal family.<sup>73</sup> When the troops of the Siamese crossed the Mekong River to Vientiane, the chief Siamese commander ordered the soldiers to take every valuable thing from the royal palace and dwelling places. Then Vientiane was burned and destroyed.

**5.2.7 The Informal letter from the King of Vietnam to the King of Siam to grant amnesty for King Anuvong.**

While King Anuvong was staying in Vietnam, the King of Vietnam sent a letter to the Siamese King to seek pardon for the aggression of King Anuvong. The envoy from Vietnam had arrived in Bangkok in September 1828 as recounted in the Lao chronicle edited by Luangpasee as following:<sup>74</sup>



“King Anuvong had escaped from Vientiane to stay in Vietnam because of the Siamese invasion and informed the King of Vietnam that he was driven out by Siamese armies. However, King of Vietnam did not learned what King Anuvong did wrongly to Siam, thus the King of Vietnam saw that the Lao king was in trouble from Siam. Therefore, the Lao

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<sup>73</sup> Sunate Bhothisan. Heroic Performance of the King Anuvong, (Vientiane: National Museum of Lao PDR. 2002), 25.

<sup>74</sup> Doungporn Luangpasee. The King Anuvong (Som Dej Phra Chao Anuvong), 24-26.

King and his royal family had been allowed to stay in Vietnam for a year, then they had to return to Vientiane again. Moreover, the Vietnamese king had ordered the Lao king and his royal family to visit Bangkok to present tribute in order to seek a pardon from the Siamese king”.

Vietnamese ambassadors stayed in Bangkok for eight days and the head of the embassy assigned eighteen staff to bring the letter to the director of the financial department as follow:

“The King of Vietnam had ordered his soldiers to carry the King Anuvong to the border of Vietnam and submitted the royal letter to inform the King of Siam also.”

### **5.2.8 King Anuvong: Lao heroic performance**

After King Anuvong arrived at Vientiane and learnt that Siamese troops had moved to Pan Praw city,<sup>75</sup> on the west side of the Mekong River, he assigned Lao soldiers to demolish Phra Chedi Prab Vien.<sup>76</sup> He also ordered Phra Serm <sup>77</sup> (a Buddha image) to be moved to Vientiane.

In October 1828, the war between Siam and Lao Vientiane still continued. Prince Ratchavong, the son of King Anuvong, led the Lao troops to attack the Siamese troops in Beuk Wan village.<sup>78</sup> Prince Ratchavong used a lance to stab the chief Siamese commander, Phraya Ratchasuphavadee.<sup>79</sup> Luang Phichit who was the brother of Phraya Ratchasuphavadee had been sent to help but he was also killed by Prince Ratchavong. However, the prince of Lao Vientiane was shot by Siamese soldiers, whereupon he urgently returned to Vientiane.

### **5.2.9 King Anuvong is caught**

In November 1828, Chao Noi, the lord of Pon city, ordered his commander in chief to inform Phraya Ratchasuphavadee of Siam that he would volunteer to catch King Anuvong with the condition that:

“We are willing to follow and catch the King Anuvong everywhere in order to stop the Lao king from seeking refuge in Vietnam but Siamese troops must avoid moving to Pon city.”

The soldiers of Pon city found King Anuvong and his followers at a cave in Daen Kham cliff. Both groups fought against each other but the group of King Anuvong lost

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<sup>75</sup> Pan Praw city is in Sri Chiang Mai District, Nongkhai province nowadays.

<sup>76</sup> Phra Chedi Prab Vien is a pagoda to symbolize that Siam can win the war against Lao Vientiane.

<sup>77</sup> Phra Serm is the beautiful Buddha image made by Lao artisans and now housed in Phrathumvanaram Temple in Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>78</sup> Presently in the area of Nongkhai province.

<sup>79</sup> At that time, he was the chief Siamese commander appointed by the King Rama III to attack Vientiane.

because of a smaller number of soldiers and because most of his followers were female. King Anuvong was finally caught.

#### **5.2.10 The Public Humiliation and Punishment of King Anuvong and his followers**

King Anuvong and his followers were taken to Vientiane in December 1828 and Phraya Ratchasuphavadee assigned 300 Siamese soldiers to escort these Lao people to Bangkok. When the caravan arrived at Saraburi, Phraya Vaivaree was waiting there to serve food, they made a cage and put the Lao king behind bars. Siamese troops transported the Lao caravan to Bangkok by boats and displayed the humiliation of King Anuvong along the way until they arrived at Bangkok in January 1829.

King Rama III ordered the jailing of King Anuvong and all the Lao people and ordered construction of a stage for the trial in front of the Grand Palace. King Anuvong or King Anuruttharat, or King Chaichetthathirat III, was born in 1767. He had come to reign as the king of the Lao Lanchang Vientiane kingdom when he was 37 years old. He started to fight for Lao Lanchang Vientiane re-independence from Siam when he was 59 years old and did so for 3 years. He died in February 1829,<sup>80</sup> when he was 62 years old.

#### **5.2.11 The Execution of Prince Noi, Pon city**

When the king of Vietnam knew about the death of King Anuvong and that Prince Noi was the leader who handed over King Anuvong to the Siamese troops, he assigned his soldiers to catch Prince Noi and to bring him to Vietnam to be executed. There was an argument between Siam and Vietnam about Vientiane and a war between the two kingdoms started at the end of 1829. That war lasted for many years and at its end Vientiane was still controlled by Siam. After the event of King Anuvong, the King of Siam never trusted a Lao king to govern the Lao kingdom. Instead, he appointed a group of governors to govern Vientiane with headquarters located in Nongkhai.

In 1891, the King of Siam divided the government of the Lao kingdom into four parts: *the first area* was the northern part from Luangphrabang province to Pong Salee province and called “Lao Pung Kao”; *the second area* was from Vientiane province to Kham Muan province and called “Lao Puan”; *the third area* was the southern part from Kham Muan province to the border of Cambodia and called “Lao Gao”; *the last area* was Nakornratchasima which is part of Thailand nowadays.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Some historical records have stated that King Anuvong was died in 1828.

<sup>81</sup> Sunate Bhothisan. “Heroic Performance of King Anuvong,” Proceeding of Seminar on the heroic performance of the King Anuvong, 2003. (August 15-16, 2001), 53.

In October 1893, Siam signed a contract to allow France to govern the land on the east side of the Mekong River, while the land on the west side of Mekong River was merged with Siam. However, with the influence of colonialism and pressure from France, Siam finally had to sign a contract with France to return some parts of the land on the west side of the Mekong River to the Lao kingdom.<sup>82</sup>

### 5.2.12 The Causes of Vientiane's Defeat

Vientiane had prepared quite well before declaring war against Siam. When considering the ruin and defeat of Vientiane, it could be argued that Vientiane should not have suffered and lost as soon as it did. The loss of Vientiane could be analyzed as having the following causes.

**First cause: the loss of morale and spirit of Vientiane residents.** Usually in the wars between Vientiane and Bangkok, most Vientiane residents saw Bangkok as the stronger kingdom and more often the victor in the past. The residents would be alarmed and there was additionally an earthquake in Vientiane during the declaring of war against Bangkok.<sup>83</sup> The natural phenomenon caused royal officers, soldiers and residents to feel anxious because they might believe that the phenomenon was a sign of bad luck.<sup>84</sup> It could have a big impact and diminish their spirit to attend to this war.

**Second cause: there was a weak point for Vientiane in foodstuff planning.** Vientiane troops did not pay attention in food planning because there was much foodstuff that they could collect from many cities during the journey to Bangkok. Especially, the cities that were under the control of Nakornratchasima<sup>85</sup> neglected to collect provisions from the minor cities, instead collecting these provisions into the center for their troops and then destroying these supplies when they became unnecessary. In contrast, Bangkok troops used these provisions for their soldiers after the dislodged Vientiane troops returned to Vientiane.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the provisions that Vientiane troops did not destroy became a benefit for Siamese troops.

**Third cause: the lack of encouragement from Vientiane's allies.** This was an important factor that contributed to Vientiane losing the war. Especially importance was the

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<sup>82</sup> This treaty was according to the will of France because finally the whole area that Siam lost for the Lao kingdom was governed by French governors.

<sup>83</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Reign of King Rama III, No.1, p.41-42.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>85</sup> Nakornratchasima was the major city that Bangkok had appointed to control many minor Lao states in the west side of the Mekong River. This major city worked as the fortress to protect Bangkok from the enemies in the northeast.

<sup>86</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the reign of the King Rama III. No.1, (Bangkok: Kurusapa Co. Ltd. 1961), 62.

abandonment by Vietnam. Vietnam was the top expectation of Vientiane in declaring the war against Siam. The support of Vietnam as an ally was one important key giving King Anuvong confidence to declare the war against Siam. Vietnam might not have intended to abandon Vientiane directly but the result from the conflict inside Vietnam between the group of King Minmang and the group of Ongtakul became the major factor whereby they could not support Vientiane. This failure could lead Vientiane to become clearly weaker than Bangkok and finally to lose.

### **5.3 The Role of Vietnam to the Dispute between Bangkok and Vientiane**

After Siamese troops had taken possession of Vientiane completely, Phraya Supavadee was assigned to be attached in Vientiane.<sup>87</sup> He was also ordered to destroy Vientiane; he had a royal letter conveying the permission of King Rama III as following.

“It is impossible to leave Vientiane alone because we cannot still arrest King Anuvong, Chao Phasak, Chao Ratchavong, Chao Sutthisan and Cha Thong. If we assign Muang Luang Phrabang to control Vientiane presently it may be really a risk for us in the future. Therefore, it should be better to destroy it completely.”<sup>88</sup>

However, Phraya Supavadee still did not destroy Vientiane as ordered in the royal letter after Siamese troops came back to Bangkok. He decided to assign Lao families moved by Siamese troops during the war to settle and cultivate the land in Vientiane.<sup>89</sup> King Rama III was really angry with his action and he did not appoint Phraya Supavadee to be a grand vizier replacing Chao Phraya Apaiphuthorn who had died in the war.<sup>90</sup> He again assigned Phraya Supavadee to return to demolish Vientiane.

At the same time, there was the action of Vietnam to intervene in the dispute between Bangkok and Vientiane more directly, especially the intervention led by King Minmang. Vietnam tried to encourage King Anuvong to come back to Vientiane and ascend the throne. There were many reasons for Vietnam’s intervention.

A first reason was that King Minmang understood that Vientiane was an annexed state of Vietnam because they sent tax to Vietnam every year. Thus, it was the duty of

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<sup>87</sup> The Battle of Siam (Arnamsayamyut): The Battle of Siam against Laos, Khmer, and Vietnam, No. 1, (Bangkok: Phrae Vittaya. 1971), 315.

<sup>88</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Suppression of Chao Anuvong of Vientiane”, The Groups of the Report in the Reign of the King Rama III, No.5. 1825.

<sup>89</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the reign of the King Rama III, No.1. 74.

<sup>90</sup> The Battle of Siam (Arnamsayamyut): The Battle of Siam against Laos, Khmer, and Vietnam, No. 1. 327.

Vietnam to protect Vientiane as can be seen in the letter from Vietnam to Phraya Supavadee as follows.

“Vientiane and Bangkok are close neighbor like lips and teeth. It is no reason to destroy Vientiane because Vientiane is one state of Vietnam.”<sup>91</sup>

Therefore, King Minmang could not ignore the situation when Vientiane was invaded by Bangkok because it meant that Vietnam would lose its power in Vientiane. Thus, King Minmang tried to encourage King Anuvong to govern Vientiane again in order to continue their authority over the Lao states.

The second reason was that Vietnam suffered the impact of this dispute directly because Bangkok and its troops from many cities that were annexed to Siam on the west side of the Mekong River had transferred troops across the Mekong River in order to move Lao families in Muang Mahachaikongkaew, Muang Khamkhert, Muang Thin, and Muang Nong. Vietnam also argued that these cities were within their boundary. The action by Bangkok was for security because some cities were located in the important gateway to Vietnam such as Muang Mahachaikongkaew. Siamese troops would be available to enter Vietnam if they could take possession of Muang Mahachaikongkaew. Vietnam was alarmed at this action, thus they had sent a letter to Phraya Supavadee as follows.

“This moment, the king of Vietnam assigned us with 20,000 soldiers to be attached at our frontier. We have the letter to inform your troops to return to your boundary and return Vietnamese families, as much as you had moved them, to us in order to maintain our long term relationships.”<sup>92</sup>

A third reason is that some documents stated clearly that King Anuvong had offered Muang Phaun, Muang Chiangkam, Muang Chiangdee, Muang Sui, Muang Mod, and Muang Huapan to Vietnam when he took refuge in Ngei-an (a Vietnamese city).<sup>93</sup> This was to encourage Vietnam to support Vientiane. King Minmang decided to use a goodwill ambassador to resolve the dispute between Bangkok and Vientiane in order to avoid conflict with Bangkok. He assigned the Vietnamese ambassadors to convey his letter to King Rama

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<sup>91</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the reign of the King Rama III. No.1. 74.

<sup>92</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the reign of the King Rama III. No.1. 72-73.

<sup>93</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Plea Statement of Phia Tiam Sai, Muang Puan about the King Anuvong become the Rebellion”, The Compilation of the Achieve Documents in the Reign of the King Rama III. No.28. 1846.

III concerning the performance of King Anuvong and to bring him back to Vientiane. He also ordered King Anuvong and his family to pay respect to King Rama III.<sup>94</sup>

However, the destruction of Vientiane continued. Phraya Supavadee had ordered that “the destruction of Vientiane should exclude the temple”.<sup>95</sup> After King Anuvong was transported to Bangkok, King Minmang had sent a letter to King Rama III. However, there was nothing to indicate willingness to help or protect King Anuvong although King Minmang came to agree with Bangkok to reestablish Vientiane again in order to protect Vietnam’s authority over Lao states as can be seen in the letter.

“Although King Anuvong took an illegal action and Bangkok could arrest him, however, there is no governor in Vientiane. There should be discussion between Vietnam and Bangkok to appoint the new governor of Vientiane.”<sup>96</sup>

#### **5.4 The Impact of the War on the Lao States**

This war between Bangkok and Vientiane caused Vientiane to suffer as stated previously. It also increased the impacts on the Lao states located on both sides of the Mekong River in many ways. Especially, the Lao states on the east side of the Mekong River suffered from the war more than the other areas as described following.

##### **5.4.1. Political dimension**

This war greatly changed the government characteristics of Bangkok in relation to Lao states. They dissolved Vientiane as capital and merged it under the government of Bangkok directly.<sup>97</sup> Bangkok had set up Muang Nongkhai as the center to control Vientiane and surrounding areas. Furthermore, Bangkok also expanded their authority to control the Lao states more widely by dividing the government areas into three main groups.<sup>98</sup>

The first group comprised Muang Chaiyaphum, Muang Simum, Muang Phukhiao, Muang Bamnetnarong, Muang Pakthongchai, Muang Nakhonchantuk, Muang Phutthaisong, Muang Phimai, Muang Nangrong, Muang Buriram, and Muang Rattanakiri. These cities were governed directly from Muang Nakornratchasima.

The second group comprised Muang Kong, Muang Man (Salavan), Muang Than, Muang Khamyai, Muang Detudom, Muang Nonghanoi, Muang Nongkhai, Muang

<sup>94</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the reign of the King Rama III. No.1. 83.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 88.

<sup>96</sup> The Chronicle of Rattanakosin in the Edition of National Library Volume.1. 100-106.

<sup>97</sup> Nit Thongsophit. The Kingdom of the King Rama II, (Bangkok: The Association of Society of Thailand. 1971), n. page.

<sup>98</sup> Kaewkanha B. “The Tax Collecting in Early Rattanakosin Era (1782-1868)” (M.A. Thesis, Chulalongkorn University. 1975). 56-60.

Nakhonphanom, Muang Chaiburi, Muang Chonnabot, Muang Thauthan, Muang Pakverng, Muang Chaingtaeng, Muang Khammarat, Muang Kalasin, Muang Songkla, Muang Suvannaphum, Muang Mukdahan, Muang Surin, Muang Khukhan, Muang Roiet, Muang Kusumal, Muang Khutsinarai, Muang Saenpang, Muang Ubonratchathani, Muang Khonkaen, Muang Sakhonnakhon, Muang Sisaket, Muang Sikoraphum, Muang Kamalasai, Muang Sipandorn, Muang Uttaphur, Muang Renunakhon, Muang Yasothorn, and Muang Nong. These cities were governed directly by the Department of Interior from Bangkok.

The third group composed the small Lao states and King Rama III appointed the bigger cities to control these Lao states instead of Bangkok. These Lao states were as follows. Firstly, Muang Thongkamnoi, Muang Dhong, Muang Khongchiam, Muang Salampao, Muang Sapad, and Muang Phonthong were governed directly by Muang Champasak. Secondly, Muang Manophrui was governed by Muang Khukhan. Thirdly, Muang Samier, Muang Khongchiam and Muang Khamkhaunkaew were governed from Muang Khemmarat. Fourthly, Muang Senangnikhom was governed by Muang Ubonratchathani. Fifthly, Muang Phong, Muang Phan, and Muang Songkondong were governed by Muang Mukdahan. Sixthly, Muang Phonphisai was governed by Muang Nongkhai. Next, Muang Khamkhert, Muang Khammoun, and Muang Chaiburi were governed by Nakhonphanom. Then, Muang Phannanikhom, and Muang Khusuman were governed by Sakhonnakhon. Finally, Muang Phuvieng and Muang Phon were governed by Muang Khonkaen.

However, Bangkok could not merge with and control every Lao state as mentioned previously because many Lao states were under the authority of Vietnam. The further reason was that these Lao states were located near to Vietnam's boundary, such as Muang Mahachai, Muang Khongkaew, Muang Phon, and Muang Vang. Bangkok continually tried to expand its authority to govern these Lao states. The important tradition for showing respect to Bangkok was that the annexed cities had to send silver trees and golden trees to Bangkok every year as shown in the table of sample of tax requirement from the Lao states to Bangkok in tables 2.1 and 2.2.<sup>99</sup>

In the strategy to govern the Lao states, Bangkok had reduced the power of the Lao states supporting Vientiane, especially Muang Champasak. Bangkok switched the cities that were under the authority of Muang Champasak to be governed by other cities that had shown more respect. For example, Bangkok had appointed Muang Khemmarat to control Muang Khongchiam, while Muang Man, and Muang Thong Muang Thongkhamyai were

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<sup>99</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. *The Chronicle of Isan Regions*. 238.

controlled by Bangkok. For the Lao states that had respected and assisted Bangkok to suppress the rebellion of King Anuvong, King Rama III had increased their power, especially that of their governors. King Rama III assigned them more authority to control other cities located in areas remote from Bangkok. For example, King Rama III had appointed Chao Hui to govern Muang Champasak, Chao Boonchan to govern Muang Khammarat, Thao Buth to govern Muang Kalasin, Thao Savanhanma to govern Muang Nongkhai, and Thao Fai to govern Muang Yasothorn and Muang Nakhonphanom.<sup>100</sup>

#### **5.4.2 Economic dimension**

Due to the economic decline of Bangkok in the reign of King Rama II, the income of government was not enough for its expenditures.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, Bangkok still had wars against neighboring kingdoms and the annexed states that were always against Bangkok. These factors consumed large sums of money and Bangkok needed to find more income to recover their expenditures. Therefore, King Rama III needed to collect more taxes from Lao states than in the past. These Lao states needed to send their taxes in terms of money and other valuable commodities such as gold, fiber plants, lacquer, candles, saltpeter, silk, tusks of the elephant, cloth, and teak tree.<sup>102</sup>

For tax collecting in terms of money, Bangkok had fixed certain accounts for each Lao state by counting from the number of Tua-lake.<sup>103</sup> This tax-collecting format could assist Bangkok to derive high benefit and ensure some measure of fairness in the Lao states because the big cities that had a large population and more economic activity needed to pay more taxes than the small cities. Furthermore, the rate of tax was different in each year because in some years Bangkok might require a high rate of tax but it was decreased in later years. The tables below shows a sample of tax requirements from the Lao states to Bangkok, comparing 1827 and 1828.

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<sup>100</sup> Nit Thongsophit. *The Kingdom of the King Rama II*, n. page.

<sup>101</sup> Kaewkanha B. "The Tax Collecting in Early Rattanakosin Era (1782-1868)" 9.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-93.

<sup>103</sup> Tua-lake is the name of the account unit of workers in each annexed city of Siam. It was used to calculate the number of worker who needed to pay tax to Siam.

Table 1: Bangkok's tax requirement from Lao states in 1827

City	The number of Tua-Lake (people) who must be submitted to Bangkok	The amount of money per person (Tua-Lake)	Total tax submitted to Bangkok
Muang Champasak	3,332 people	1 Tamlung <sup>104</sup> 3 Bahts	291 Changs <sup>105</sup> 11 Tamlungs
Muang Thongkhamnoi	112 people	1 Tamlung 3 Bahts	9 Changs 16 Tamlungs
Muang Chiam (Kong)	164 people	1 Tamlung 3 Bahts	14 Changs 7 Tamlungs
Muang Thongkhamyai	594 people	1 Tamlung 3 Bahts	51 Changs 19 Tamlungs 2 Bahts
Muang Dong	108 people	1 Tamlung 3 Bahts	9 Changs 8 Tamlungs
Muang Sapat	156 people	1 Tamlung 3 Bahts	13 Changs 13 Tamlungs
Muang Samier	116 people	1 Tamlung	5 Changs 16 Tamlungs
Muang Sithandorn	1,000 people	1 Tamlung	50 Changs
Muang Chiangtaeng	80 people	1 Tamlung	4 Changs
Muang Saenpang	412 people	1 Tamlung	20 Changs 12 Tamlungs

Source: Vachirayan Hall. "The Record of Sending Gold, Money, and Valuable commodities from the East Lao states", The Groups of Letter in the Reign of the King Rama III, No.13. 1830.

<sup>104</sup> Tamlung is the ancient Thai monetary unit equivalent to four Baht.

<sup>105</sup> Chang is the ancient Thai monetary unit equivalent to eighty Baht

Table 2: Bangkok's tax requirement from Lao states in 1828

City	The number of Tua-Lake (people) must be submitted to Bangkok	The number of money per person (Tua-Lake)	Total of tax had been submitted to Bangkok
Muang Champasak	3,332 people	1 Tamlung	116 Changs 12 Tamlungs
Muang Yasothon	178 people	1 Tamlung	8 Changs 18 Tamlungs
Muang Khemmarat	14 people	1 Tamlung	14 Tamlungs
Muang Dong	10 people	1 Tamlung	10 Tamlungs
Muang Thongkhamyai	17 people	1 Tamlung	17 Tamlungs
Muang Salavin	5 people	1 Tamlung	5 Tamlungs
Muang Sithandorn	37 people	1 Tamlung	1 Chang 17 Tamlungs
Muang Uttarapue	11 people	1 Tamlung	11 Tamlungs
Muang Thongkhamnoi	112 people	1 Tamlung	5 Changs 12 Tamlungs
Muang Chiam	164 people	1 Tamlung	8 Changs 4 Tamlungs

Source: Vachirayan Hall. "The Record of Sending Gold, Money, and Valuable commodities from the East Lao states", The Groups of Letter in the Reign of the King Rama III, No.13. 1830.

According to the tax requirement from the Lao states, they could submit other valuable commodities instead of money in the case where they did not have enough for tax payment. For example, with the tax collection in Muang Champasak in 1827, whereas they had to pay tax totaling 291 Changs and 11 Tamlungs to Bangkok, they could pay only 140 Changs, 10 Tamlungs, and 3 Bahts. They needed to pay the rest later. For paying tax in terms

of valuable commodities instead of money, Bangkok would fix a certain number as can be seen in Muang Nongkhai and Muang Khonkaen in the following description.<sup>106</sup>

“There are ten people (Tua-lake) in Maung Nongkhai and Muang Khonkaen. Phraya Phichai assigned to pay a tax by sending two teak trees per person. Thus, they needed to pay tax totaling twenty teak trees per year. However, in the year of the rabbit (the later year), there were one handicapped and one poor worker thus there were only eight workers who can pay the tax. Consequently, the tax paying in this year was totaling 16 teak trees.”

The tax in terms of commodities was used for building and reconstructing the grand palace, temples, including Buddha image casting, and important exports.<sup>107</sup> Most taxes were from the Lao states located on the east side of the Mekong River because at that time Bangkok had a policy to promote Lao families from the east side to migrate to the west side of Mekong River, as much as possible.<sup>108</sup> They used both soft (persuasion) and hard (war) methods to move Lao families to settle down on the right (western) side of the Mekong River. Therefore, the wild, uninhabited areas on the west side became community areas and these communities were later appointed to be cities. The Lao states that moved from the east side to the west side of the Mekong River included Muang Phulanchang, Muang Tahkhonyang, Muang Saengbadan, Muang Khutchimnarai, Muang Senangnukhom, and Muang Khamkuankaew.<sup>109</sup> These families and communities could gain more benefits in terms of tax requirements to Bangkok.

Bangkok could get a lot of tax each year from Lao states. When making a comparison of the tax collecting between the Lao states and other annexed states of Bangkok, especially the Lanna states, it should be emphasized that Bangkok could collect more tax from the Lao states than from others, by about three times.<sup>110</sup>

## Conclusion

The conflict between Bangkok and Vientiane in the King Rama III era did not happen suddenly. The source of this conflict was from the earlier conflict between Thonburi and Vientiane, when there was the first serious conflict between the kingdoms. This ended a previously good relationship. Although King Rama I tried to rebuild the good relationship,

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<sup>106</sup> Vachirayan Hall. “The Accounting of tax in terms of teak tree and candle”, The Groups of Letter in the Reign of the King Rama III, No.20, 1831.

<sup>107</sup> Kaewkanha B. “The Tax Collecting in Early Rattanakosin Era (1782-1868)”. 2.

<sup>108</sup> The Compilation of Chronicle. The Chronicle of Isan Regions, 242.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 247-254.

<sup>110</sup> Kaewkanha B. “The Tax Collecting in Early Rattanakosin Era (1782-1868)”. 73.

this not only focused on tightening the link between the two kingdoms but also on the political advantages. This brought a sense of depression to Vientiane especially in the reign of King Nanthasen, causing Bangkok to become more careful in its rule of Vientiane. Consequently, Vientiane did not have many chances to strive for its independence. Despite that, striving for independence appeared possible in the next age.

The concept of fighting for the independence of Vientiane seemed to come to its proper time in the 1820s. Something changed in 1820 after King Minmang succeeded to the throne from King Vietnamyalong. Vietnam began its policy to confront Bangkok by expanding its authority to the Khmer and Lao. The important point that served the policy of Vietnam to change was the authority to rule some areas that appeared belong to Ongtakul who was a senior servant of King Minmang of Vietnam and intended to attack Bangkok aggressively. Therefore, Bangkok and Vietnam had a serious conflict especially in the case of the Khmer colonies. With this conflict, Vientiane tried to derive an advantage. King Anuvong, who governed Vientiane in the meantime, convinced Vietnam to support him to challenge Bangkok's authority. The relations between Vientiane and Vietnam proceeded well and fast. Consequently, Vientiane tried even more to be independent. Bangkok was understandably not pleased with this situation.

The conflict between Bangkok and Vientiane increased with the policy of King Rama III. According to the conflict, Vientiane sought to claim its independence from Bangkok. Certainly, it was supported by Vietnam. They would act, however, only after Bangkok was attacked by England. While they were waiting for this event, Vientiane came into conflict with Nakornratchasima again. Prince Ratchabut (Yo), King Anuvong's son, did not allow Nakornratchasima's troops to pass through Champasak to attack the Kha. However, the governor of Nakornratchasima still insisted on passing this way. This situation caused King Anuvong to make a decision to have a war to claim independence without any conditions. On the other hands, Vietnam, which used previously to support Vientiane, was separated into two groups. The first was the group of Ongtakul. Another group sent officers to stop the plan and to convince Vientiane to continue as Bangkok's colony.

However, King Anuvong could not attack Bangkok and help his people to return to their kingdom successfully. The troops from Bangkok destroyed Vientiane. King Anuvong and some of his relatives were arrested and taken to Bangkok. After that, Vientiane was destroyed. The result of the war between Bangkok and Vientiane in this time caused many things to change in terms of politics, economy and society. Bangkok extended its authority to rule the Lao colonies and Champasak, especially lands along the right (western) side of the

Mekong River. King Rama III transferred authority from some Lao colonies which did not behave well and gave the authority to governors who had behaved well. In terms of economy, Bangkok finally put an end to those colonies to use the extracted revenue to develop the kingdom and for wars.

The importance of this chapter is that it can show the particular perspectives of both Siamese kings and Lao kings towards the political situation. Lao kings had to strengthen efforts to liberate their kingdom from being annexed to Siam while Siamese kings tried to maintain their authority over the Lao states, especially Vientiane because, there were valuable commodities and benefits accruing from Vientiane to Bangkok. The war between Vientiane and Bangkok which aimed for liberation could not be avoided. In 1827-1828, the war between Bangkok and Vientiane began and finished with the Bangkok triumph. As the result, Vientiane was destroyed. Lao properties, people, and valuable commodities were removed to Bangkok. That was the final act of the war between the two kingdoms. However, one important building still survived from the destruction namely, Sisaket temple. This temple was built in the reign of King Anuvong, designed with Bangkok temple architectural model. In accordance with its characteristics, they were similar to the Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok. There were no reasons revealing why Siamese armies did not destroy this temple. Therefore, an important issue for this study is to discuss how both temples have similar characteristics and why the Sisaket temple was designed similar to the Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok. It is necessary to enquire into the reason why King Anuvong ordered the building of the Sisaket temple in Bangkok temple style and how this temple is significant with its architectural style while the other temples in Vientiane were designed in a Lao architectural style.

Therefore, chapter three will explore how Sisaket temple in Vientiane and the Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok are similar and related. Subsequently, chapter four will discuss the particular meanings of the Sisaket temple building policy such as in terms of its political and social dimensions, especially the importance of the holy Emerald Buddha related to aspects of Buddhist symbolism and the political legitimation of Siamese and Lao kings.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Relations between Architectural Characteristics of Bangkok Temples in the Early Rattanakosin Era (Emerald Buddha Temple) and Lao Vientiane's Temple (Sisaket Temple)**

#### **Introduction**

The relations between architectural characteristics of Bangkok temples in the early Rattanakosin era, especially the Emerald Buddha temple, and Lao Vientiane's temples focusing on Sisaket temple, is the guiding issue for analysis and reflection in this dissertation. This chapter will present how the two temples are similar and how the Emerald Buddha temple appears to have influenced the Sisaket temple. Besides the comparison between the temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Sisaket temple, the chapter also presents the architectural characteristics of the temples in Bangkok that were constructed in the same period as the Emerald Buddha temple. For the characteristics of the temples in Vientiane, the chapter also presents the overall temple styles in the Lao kingdom such as in Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouan, and Vientiane styles. Another important part of the chapter is to enquire how the Sisaket temple, designed in the Bangkok temple style, is distinctive among Lao temples in Vientiane. The chapter will link to the discussion chapter (chapter four) when it will be considered why the Sisaket temple constructed in the reign of King Anuvong of Vientiane needed to be designed in the Bangkok temple style. It will seek the particular meaning underlying this construction policy especially in terms of polity and socio-religious dimensions.

#### **1. The Architectural Characteristics of the Temple in the Early Rattanakosin Era**

The royal tradition of temple building was passed on throughout the Rattanakosin period. Every reigning King has paid special attention to promoting Buddhism by means of constructing, establishing, renovating or restoring temples. The construction of the temple by the King in the Rattanakosin Era was according to the old tradition that the capital's palace

should have a “Royal Chapel” within its grounds<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, there were many temples constructed during the reigns of King Rama I to King Rama III, such as the temple of the Emerald Buddha or Wat Phra Kaew (King Rama I), Arun Ratchawararam temple (King Rama II), and Suthat Thepwararam temple (construction and restoration during the reigns of Kings Rama I to III)<sup>2</sup>. The previous dynasties followed the tradition as demonstrated by Wat Mahathat built inside the grounds of the Sukhothai Royal Palace and Wat Phra Sri Sanphetch built within the palace of the Ayutthaya monarch. The temple of the Emerald Buddha houses the Emerald Buddha image. Construction of the temple began in 1782 and was completed in 1785.<sup>3</sup> In accordance with ancient practice, King Rama I then held another coronation in the temple of the Emerald Buddha in 1785.

The varying number of temples built during each reign depended upon economic, social or political contributing factors. For example, the reign of Kings Rama I and II, which marked the inauguration of the Bangkok capital, saw economic problems and political instability. The number of temples built was thus relatively few. But the reign of King Rama III went through better economic times and more political security. This period witnessed a great many temples being built and therefore marked the most prosperous era of temple construction, establishment, renovation, and restoration in the history of the Rattanakosin capital.<sup>4</sup> The model for temple architecture in this period was greatly influenced by Chinese art since trade with China was then booming, unlike in the reign of King Rama I in which the temple model derived from the Ayutthaya period. During the reigns that followed, temple building markedly reduced in number owing to the facts that there were already a large number of temples, and that the reigning Kings shifted their attention to other forms of institutions, such as colleges and universities. As a consequence, from the reign of King Rama VI onward, the tradition of building a royal temple in honor of the reigning King was totally abolished.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it is interesting that the architectural model for temple building in the reign of King Rama V was even influenced by the western Gothic art, while significant temples built in this period still conserve their beautiful and orderly form to the present day.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Natnapit Nakavachara. Buddhist Temples in Bangkok. (Bangkok: Research Affairs Office, Chulalongkorn University, 1982), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Damrong Rachanupab. The Causes of Temple Construction in Thailand. (Bangkok: Ampon Pittaya. 1959), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Nidda Hongwiwt. The Temple of The Emerald Buddha and The Grand Palace. (Bangkok: Pannee Printing. 2004), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Damrong Rachanupab. The Causes of Temple Construction in Thailand. (Bangkok: Ampon Pittaya. 1959), 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Nor Na Paknam. Arts in Bangkok Part I. (Bangkok: Odian Store. 1978), n. pag.

The architectural styles of the temples in each reign in the early Rattanakosin era can be categorized into three relative distinctive periods as follows.

### **1.1 The First Reign**

In establishing Rattanakosin as the new capital, architectural works from the Grand Palace to forts and city moats retained the characteristics and functions of Ayutthaya and Thonburi days. All skilled craftsmen were evacuees from the former kingdom. When the king ordered the new capital and palaces to be constructed, naturally they were influenced by techniques and customs of the old days. Therefore the Rattanakosin pattern was a continuance of the once-glorious Ayutthaya. It was not because Rattanakosin could not find her own identity. Imitation is human nature, and self-imitation indicates self-betterment. The king selected only the best of Ayutthaya arts for Rattanakosin,<sup>7</sup> such as:

1. The city was located on the bank of a large river, which together with man-made canals, served as city moats. To save labor and time, construction of fortifications and city moats was done only where necessary. Strategically, the location of Rattanakosin was even better than that of Ayutthaya. Expansion of the city could be implemented according to what self-defensive forces permitted. Furthermore, the soil on the eastern side of the city was so soft and muddy that invasion with heavy weapons and elephants would be difficult.

2. The Grand Palace was constructed facing the north with the Chao Phraya River at its western side. The great river was an excellent protection for the city and the Grand Palace. It was also very convenient for the king to travel by river. This particular idea was adopted from the Ayutthaya time.

3. Architectural elements implied Buddhist philosophy, and the divinity of the king.

To sum up, Rattanakosin's architectural characteristics in the reign of King Rama I marked the revival of prosperity and a re-flourishing of Ayutthaya arts.

### **1.2 The Second Reign**

Arts and architecture of the second reign had the same characteristics as those of the first reign. All constructions from the reign of King Rama I were still in perfect condition. Thus, there was no new royal palace in the second reign. Major architectural works were restorations of temples, completion of fortifications and construction of palaces to be bestowed on members of the royal family.<sup>8</sup> Most of these structures were in Thai style, except

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<sup>7</sup> Nor Na Paknam. *Arts in Bangkok*. (Bangkok: Feung Aksorn. 1971), n. pag.

<sup>8</sup> H.R.H Saengsom Kasemsri and Vimon Pongphiphat. *Thai History: Rattanakosin Era, King Rama I – King Rama III (1782 – 1851)*. (Bangkok: Office of the secretary of the cabinet of a government. 1980), 232.

the Right-wing Garden. The Garden was designed for the King's recreation and for reception of foreign visitors. In the Garden, ponds were dug with isles of various sizes.<sup>9</sup> Buildings were removed in the third reign to be re-erected as donations at various temples. Decorative stones and pavement slabs were also moved to the temples. Therefore none of the buildings of the second reign remained except for those moved from the Right-wing Garden and donated to temples. These buildings were moved to various temples as the abbots' quarters. They are two or three-storeys with more Chinese roofing and decoration.

### 1.3 The Third Reign

Chinese junk trade had been favoured by King Rama III since the time when he was Prince Krommamun Chetsadabodin. At the same time more Chinese migrants arrived and became traders in Siam. They brought with them Chinese objects, arts, and styles of construction. Consequently, these became very popular. King Rama III decorated buildings and palaces in the Grand Palace complex with Chinese stoneware. Decorative pieces imported from China were used in the construction of many temples. The King personally favored Chinese ornaments because these materials were more durable. They did not decay with weather as easily as Thai gilded and glass decorated wood.<sup>10</sup>

Prominent architecture of the reign related to replacement of monks' wooden quarters and wooden palaces in the Grand Palace which were damaged by weather with simple brick construction so that they would be long lasting.

Although most decorations were influenced by Chinese styles, Thai customs still dominated so far as forms, functions and utilization of buildings were concerned. Foreign arts were only superficial. They did not affect the spirits of Thai people. There were many advantages from Chinese arts diffusing at that time into Siam. Originally, white-washed stuccoes were enough. When glazed ceramics became common to Thai people, they were widely used in Thai architecture. Chedis and prangs were decorated with ceramic tiles. The prang at Arun Ratchawararam temple, which was completed in this reign, is a good example.

In summary, architectural characteristics of the third reign were as follows:<sup>11</sup>

1. Building pediments were plain and solid without roof decorations.
2. If pediments should be decorated, ceramic tiles of various designs and relief figurines were used.
3. Struts to support projected eaves joists were not used.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.. 234.

<sup>10</sup> Sompong Kriengkraipetch. *Thai Worships and Antiques*. (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya. 1971), n. pag.

<sup>11</sup> Natnapit Nakavachara. *Buddhist Temples in Bangkok*. 25.

4. Chinese stone figurines were widely applied to decorating landscapes and buildings.

5. Interiors were decorated with Chinese murals and auspicious patterns.

6. Colored porcelain cups and saucers were favored to be used as decoration in Thai style architecture.

7. Brick-bonding and plaster-surfacing pillars with 45-degree cuts in semi-circular grooves were used.

8. Monks' quarters and palaces were constructed with plastered brick instead of wood.

9. Door and window frames were of wood encasements.

10. Both new and restored temples were still adorned according to Buddhist philosophy and the divinity of the King.

#### **1.4 Examples of Temples Constructed in the early Rattanakosin Era (the reign of Kings Rama I to III)**

##### **1.4.1 The Temple of the Emerald Buddha; the Chapel Royal**

To build a temple within the Grand Palace compound was an ancient custom of Siamese kings. There were examples from the Mahathat temple of Sukhothai, Phra Sisanphet temple of Ayutthaya, and Arun Ratchawararam (Temple of the Dawn) of Thonburi. This tradition allows the king to make merit within the royal compound and provides a place for royal relics.

The purposes of the construction of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha were twofold. One was to enshrine the Emerald Buddha, and the other was to be a place for taking the oath of allegiance by the King's officials. The Chapel Royal was the only building in plastered brick in the palace compound when it was completed on March 7, 1784. This was the third year of the first reign. It was recorded in an archive that Ho Phra Chetbidon was also completed in the same year. (The site of Ho Phra Chetbidon is where Wihanyot is today.)<sup>12</sup>

After the enshrinement of the Emerald Buddha within the Chapel Royal, the first celebration



Figure 6: Sema arch house  
Photography: Suwaphat Sregongsang (2007)

<sup>12</sup> Nidda Hongwiwt. The Temple of The Emerald Buddha and The Grand Palace. 7.

of Bangkok was performed in 1785, the fourth year of the first reign.<sup>13</sup>

The main chapel (Phra Ubosot), with its front facing east and rear to the west, is opposite the Hermit Gate and south of the temple. This is the largest and main building of the temple of the Emerald Buddha. The Phra Ubosot is surrounded by walls on four sides. The walls are decorated with colored tiles. Protruding from the walls around the Phra Ubosot, there are eight sema arch houses.<sup>14</sup> There is one pair of metal sema in each house with a five-spire alcove. Each spire is chedi-shaped with triple indented corners, decorated with glass, and set on a gilded lotus-designed base.

In front of the Phra Ubosot, there is a stone Guan Im, a Bodhisattava of the Mahayana sect. Lotus-designed bronze plates adorn the stone columns. The Phra Ubosot is flanked by Wayuphak birds, while a pair of bronze oxen stand at the rear. These oxen were originally placed in front of the Plowing Ceremony pavilions. When the pavilions were dismantled in the Fifth Reign, the oxen were moved to this location.<sup>15</sup>

The Phra Ubosot is a Thai-style single-story brick building which is completely surrounded by a wall. The floor has two levels, the first level is the *taksin* (south) platform<sup>16</sup> which is laid with gray marble and the second level is the Phra Ubosot floor with a lotus-designed base.

The three-tiered roof has an extension in the front and rear. The roof is constructed of wood and covered with glazed tiles. The overhang is also wood, painted bright red and decorated with carving. Small bells with Bodhi leaf clappers are hung all around. The gables of wood are carved with depictions of *Phra Narai* holding a *garuda* and covered with gold leaf.

The exterior walls of the Phra Ubosot are covered with tiles, decorated with Thai designs and adorned with white, red, blue and yellow glass. The lower part of the wall, below the windows, has a *patama* base<sup>17</sup> (lotus-design base). The lowest part of the base is decorated with glazed colored tiles with Chinese designs, while above there are three levels of patterns reaching up to the *signha* base<sup>18</sup> (lion-designed base) and decorated with alternating white and blue glass.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Sema arch house is the small building constructed to house the sema leaf to surround the Emerald Buddha temple.

<sup>15</sup> The Office of Royal Secretary. The Architecture of the Grand Palace. (Bangkok: n.p. 1988), n. pag.

<sup>16</sup> The Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand. Wat Phra Sri Ratana Sasadaram: The royal temple of the Emerald Buddha. (Bangkok: n.p. 1975), n. pag.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

*Garudas* holding *nagas* are placed atop the *singha* base. There is also gilt-stucco decorated with blue glass. In all there is a total of 112 metal *garudas* holding *nagas* around the Phra Ubosot.

Each door arch is in the shape of a *mondop*,<sup>19</sup> covered with gold and decorated with glass. The ceilings of the arches are painted bright red and decorated with large three-layered, flower patterns, gilded and covered with glass at the corner. Smaller flowers surround the large ones. The walls between the doors are covered with stucco in a motif with a Thai design. The exterior door panels are covered with pearl while the interior panels are decorated with Thai designs (symmetrical form).

The window arches are also in the shape of *mondop*, gilded and adorned with glass. The ceilings are painted bright red and decorated with a large, three-layer flower pattern, gilded and covered with glass at the center. Smaller flowers surround the large one. At the lower part of the archway is a *singha* base gilded and decorated with blue glass. The exterior walls are decorated with plaster designs depicting angels. The exteriors of the window panels are inlaid pearl while the interior panels are decorated with Thai designs in a symmetrical form.

King Rama I ordered the construction of the Phra Ubosot in 1784 to house the Emerald Buddha image, which he had brought from Vientiane in 1779. The structure was completed in 1785. Summer and rainy season robes were also created for the image.

King Rama III ordered a major renovation in 1831, and many changes were made both to the interior and exterior. These changes included covering the roof with colored tile, installing the 112 *garudas* holding *nagas*, decorating columns around the Phra Ubosot with colored glass, installing 62 candlesticks and erecting an additional eight *sao harn* columns in front of the Phra Ubosot. The interior modifications included raising the *bussaboke* of the Emerald Buddha image, painting the murals depicting the Buddha's incarnations, installing mirrors, and creating the winter robe for the image.<sup>20</sup> However, this part does not show the how this temple closer to the Sisaket style but it can emphasize how King Rama III was aware of the importance of this holy place.

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<sup>19</sup> The Committee of the Restoration of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace. The Record of the Restoration of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace: The Annual Cerebration for 200 years. (Bangkok: United Production. 1980), 34.

<sup>20</sup> The Committee of the Restoration of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace. The Record of the Restoration of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace: The Annual Cerebration for 200 years. 35.

### 1.4.2 Arun Ratchawararam Temple

This temple is located in Bangkok Yai District, Bangkok, on the West bank of the Chao Phraya River. In its south, there is a pagoda which is higher than the temple to the North. Originally, this temple was built in the Ayutthaya era. Its previous name was Wat Ma Kok (Ma Kok, temple of the olive) and changed to Wat Jaeng (Jaeng Temple) later.<sup>21</sup>

In the historical legend, it is said that King Taksin had moved the troops by river and stopped in front of this temple in the early morning. Later, he renovated the temple and changed the name to “Wat Jaeng” (Jaeng Temple).<sup>22</sup>

After King Taksin had moved the capital from Ayutthaya to Thon Buri in 1760, he built a new Royal Palace and expanded the boundary which put Wat Jaeng inside the complex of the Royal Palace. This is the reason why there were no monks in this temple in that era. He imitated this palace form from the Ayutthaya Royal Temple such as Wat Phra Sri San Pet (Phra Sri San Pet Temple).<sup>23</sup>

Wat Jaeng was considered a respectful location in Thon Buri for the Emerald Buddha and the Phra Bang (the Bang Buddha statue) which Phraya Maha Kasatsuk (later King Rama I) had taken when he had attacked Vientiane, in the Lao kingdom, in 1779.<sup>24</sup>

When King Rama I was enthroned, he ordered a new palace to be built to the east and tore down the Thon Buri Royal Palace wall. Thus, Wat Jaeng (Jaeng Temple) was then outside the palace and he granted permission for monks to stay in the temple. After the temple renovation, King Rama I passed away in 1809.<sup>25</sup>

In the King Rama II era, the renovation of the temple continued and he built the Buddha image by himself and presented his Buddha as the biggest Buddha in the temple. He renamed the temple “Arun Ratchawararam”.<sup>26</sup> In the King Rama III era, the renovation was finished and has been conserved subsequently.

The design of Wat Jaeng in the Rama II period involved roofs made from glazed color tiles, three-tiered roofs, doors crafted with images of angels with swords sitting on the throne. In front of the temple, there are three doors and two doors in the back.

The balcony is decorated with glazed yellow and green tiles. There are four entrances of the temple. The top of each entrance was decorated with the picture of Lord *Narai* sitting on the *garuda*.

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<sup>21</sup> The History of Arun Ratchawararam Temple. (Bangkok: Pakdee Pradit. 1967), 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> The History of Arun Ratchawararam Temple, 5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

### 1.4.3 Suthat Thepwararam Temple

This is located on Tree Thong Road and Bumrong Muang Road, Pra Nakorn District, Bangkok.<sup>27</sup> The temple was built in the King Rama I period to be the place for Phra Toh or Phra Yai (Toh or Yai means Big and Phra means Buddha) when King Rama I ordered Phrya Pin Thep to invite this Buddha statue from Sukhothai and named the temple “Wat Mahasuthavat” (Maha Suthavat Temple).<sup>28</sup>

In 1807, in the reign of King Rama I, the craftsmen started to build the temple base. When they had finished, they presented Phra Toh (The Big Buddha image) to be housed in this building. At that time, King Rama I was ill and passed away later.<sup>29</sup>

In the King Rama II reign, they continued to build this temple because there were still no front porticos, gable apexes, and wall with the frames of the door and the window. However, King Rama II passed away in 1824 while the temple was not completed.<sup>30</sup>

In the reign of King Rama III, the temple was finished and changed in name to be “Wat Suthat Thepwararam” (Suthat Thepwararam Temple) in 1843.<sup>31</sup>

The significant character of this temple could be defined as Early Ancient Thai Rattanakosin. There is a portico, a balcony with piers around the temple, crown-shaped windows and door, covered with golden leaves decorated with mirrors, and a Thai roof style (23.85 metres width and 26.35 metres in length).<sup>32</sup> In front of the door, there is a portico with a picture of Lord *Narai* dreaming. At the South, there is a portico crafted with a picture of Lord *Indra* sitting on the three-headed elephant (*Erawan*). There are three gates both front and back to the temple made of wood in the form of inter-twined flower stripes and animals. In relation to these doors, people believed that King Rama II had an inspiration from the *Trai Phoom*, in the Buddhist Story.

In conclusion, according to the example of the temples in the early Rattanakosin era, there are many structures of the temples that show distinctive and similar characteristics which can be shown in terms of roof style which is constructed split into three to four level roof and rectangular building in the Thai-style, the struts to support projected eaves joists, the outer wall or cloister (Phra Rabiang) which is located surrounding the main chapel. Moreover, it can demonstrate from the columns which are reduced by tapering the edge. It

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<sup>27</sup> The History of Suthat Thepwararam Temple. (Bangkok: Siwaporn Publishing. 1973), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.















<sup>30</sup> The History of Suthat Thepwararam Temple. 3.
















<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.. 5.

can be seen that the heads of each pillar of all temple are smaller than the base of each pillar, terrace is built surrounding the main chapel, and windows of the chapel are constructed with the *mondop* and *ban thalaeng* shape at the top. Ceiling decoration composed of circles and tablet flowers and the capitals are decorated with the lotus leaves style while the wall of the chapel is painted with the story of the Lord Buddha. Although building pediments with pattern for a gable end of three temples are quite similar but the difference is Suthat Thepwararam temple because there is not the roof in front of the building pediment as can be seen in the following table.

Table 3: The distinctive and similar characteristics of the temples in early Rattanakosin Era

<b>The similar and distinctive structure of the temple</b>	<b>Emerald Buddha temple</b>	<b>Arun Ratchwararam temple</b>	<b>Suthat Thepwararam temple</b>
Building pediments with pattern for a gable end			
Roof style is constructed split into three to four level roof and rectangular building in the Thai-style			
Struts to support projected eaves joists			
The outer wall or cloister (Phra Rabiang) is located surrounding the main chapel			
Each column is reduced by tapering the edge. It can be seen that the heads of each pillar are smaller			

The similar and distinctive structure of the temple	Emerald Buddha temple	Arun Ratchwararam temple	Suthat Thepwararam temple
than the base of each pillar			
Terrace is built surrounding the main chapel			
Windows of the chapel are constructed with the <i>mondop</i> and <i>ban thalaeng</i> shape at the top			
Ceiling decoration composed of circles and tablet flowers			
The capitals are decorated with the lotus leaves style			
The wall of the chapel is painted with the story of the Lord Buddha			

Photography: Suwaphat Sregongsang (2007)

## 2. The Architectural Characteristics of the Temple in the Lanchang Kingdom

The architectural characteristics and typology of the sanctuaries of the temples in the Lanchang Kingdom can be categorized into three main groups denoted by region according to the distinctive style, namely Luang Prabang, Xieng Kouan, and Vientiane style.<sup>33</sup>

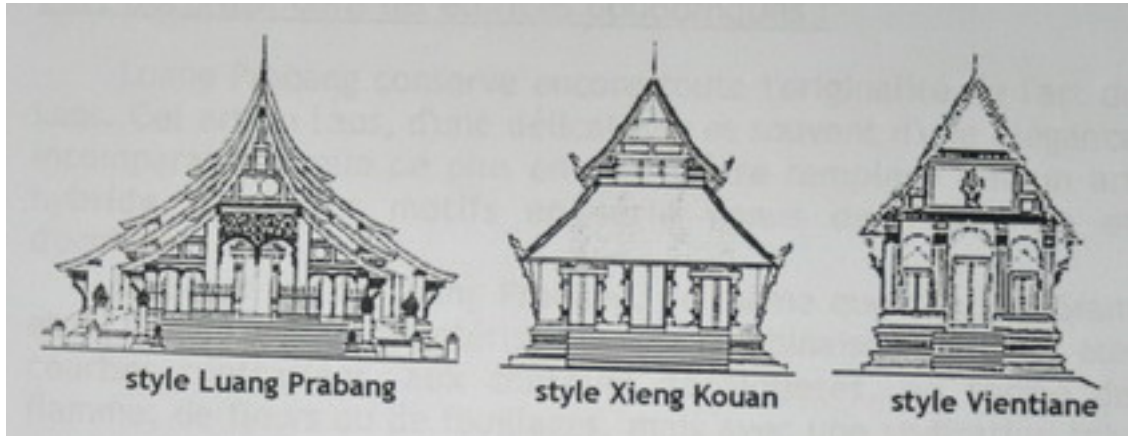
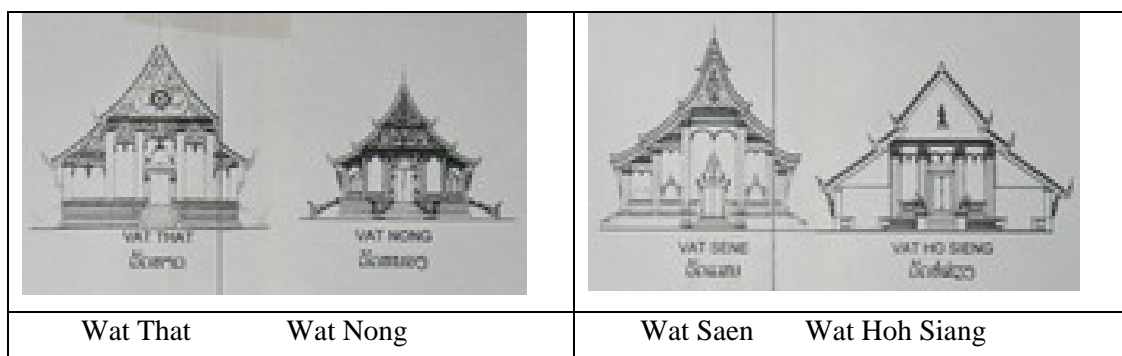


Figure 7: Architectural characteristics of the temples in the Lanchang Kingdom

Source: Ibanez, Raphael. *Techniques et matériaux traditionnels des peintures dans les temples de Luang Prabang au Laos*, Ecole d'art d'Avignon Section restauration d'oeuvres peintes. (Paris: n.p. 2005), n. pag.

Styles of the Lao sanctuaries were determined starting from their organization in plan and the provision of the roofs; it is possible to distinguish the three principal styles.

*The style of Luang Prabang*, is characterized by its immense pointed roof in tiles punts which goes down by successive plains, two or three in general, the height between the ground and the roof of the temples is closer than the style of Xieng Kouan and Vientiane. Moreover, the distinctive characteristic of the Luang Prabang temple style is the decoration of the pediment with the shape of a honeycomb.



<sup>33</sup> Ibanez, Raphael. *Techniques et matériaux traditionnels des peintures dans les temples de Luang Prabang au Laos*, Ecole d'art d'Avignon Section restauration d'oeuvres peintes. (Paris: n.p. 2005), n. pag.

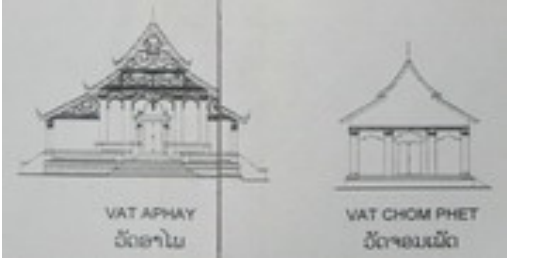

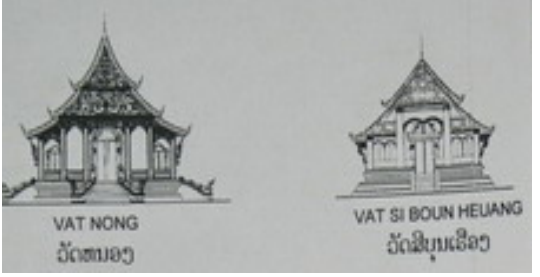
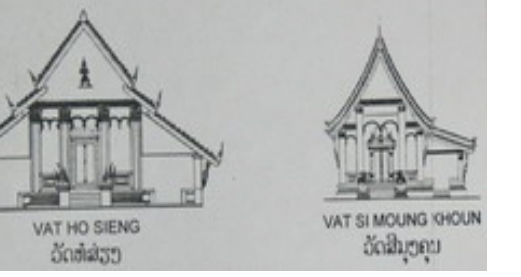
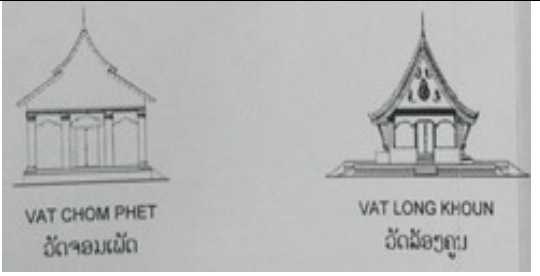
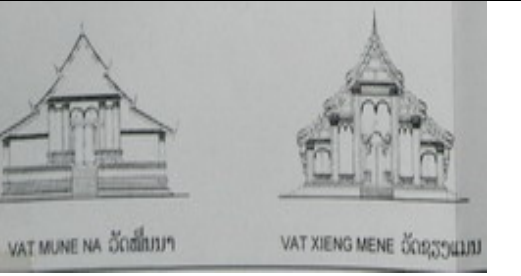

 <p>VAT APHAY ວັດອາໄຍ</p> <p>VAT CHOM PHET ວັດຈອມເພັດ</p>	 <p>VAT SOP ວັດສົບ</p> <p>VAT MUNE NA ວັດຫີນນາ</p>
<p>Wat Aphyay      Wat Chom Phet</p>	<p>Wat Sop      Wat Mune Na</p>
 <p>VAT NONG ວັດຫນອງ</p> <p>VAT SI BOUN REUNG ວັດສີບຸນເຮືອງ</p>	 <p>VAT HO SIANG ວັດຫໍ່ສິງ</p> <p>VAT SI MOUNG KHOUN ວັດສີມຸງຄຸນ</p>
<p>Wat Nong      Wat Si Boun Reung</p>	<p>Wat Hoh Siang      Wat Si MOUNG KHOUN</p>
 <p>VAT CHOM PHET ວັດຈອມເພັດ</p> <p>VAT LONG KHOUN ວັດລ້ອງຄຸນ</p>	 <p>VAT MUNE NA ວັດຫີນນາ</p> <p>VAT XIENG MENE ວັດຊຶງແມນ</p>
<p>Wat Chom Phet      Wat Long KHOUN</p>	<p>Wat Mune Na      Wat XIENG MENE</p>
 <p>VAT ARAM ວັດອາຣາມ</p> <p>VAT XIENG THONG ວັດຊຶງທອງ</p>	
<p>Wat Aram      Wat XIENG THONG</p>	

Figure 8: Sample of the temple style of Luang Prabang

Source: Ibanez, Raphael. *Techniques et materiaux traditionnels des peintures dans les temples de Luang Prabang au Laos*, Ecole d'art d'Auignon Section restauration d'oeuvres peintes. (Paris: n.p. 2005), n. pag.

*Style of Xieng Kouan*. This style is quite similar to the style of Luang Prabang. However, it accentuates the characteristics of the preceding style, with its roof going practically down to the ground and with a lower roof. The base of the main chapel is higher

than the style of Luang Prabang and its cross-section is designed into a regular pentagon shape.

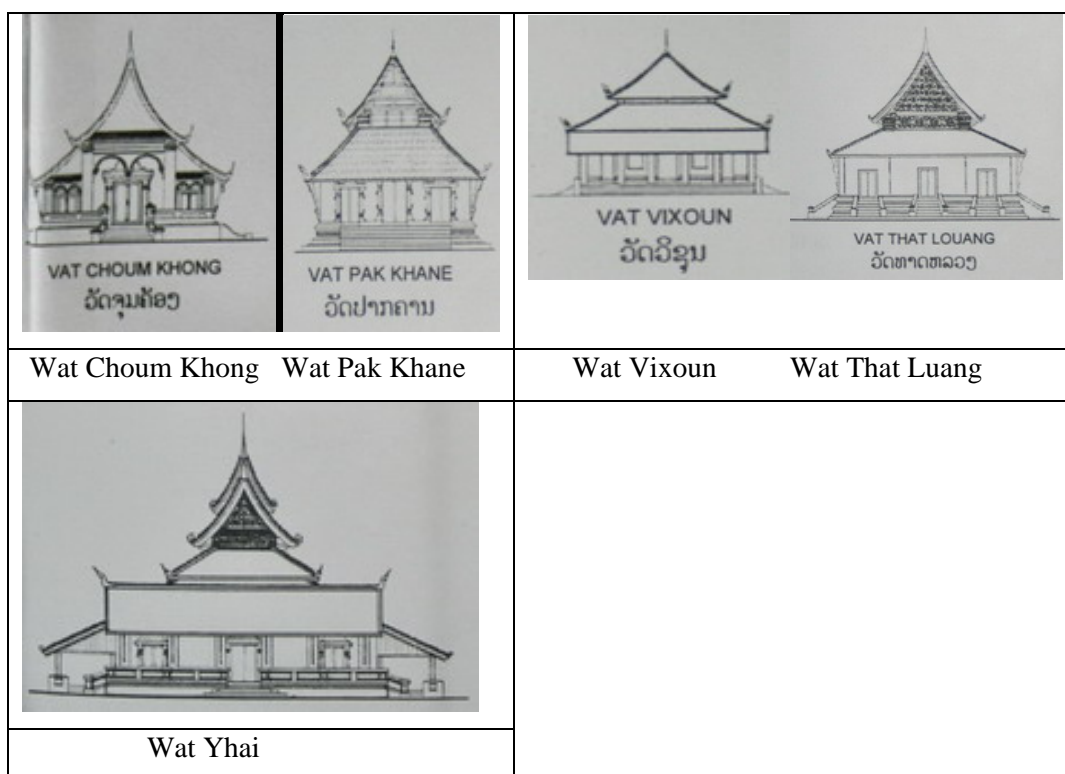


Figure 9: Sample of the temple style of Xieng Kouan

Source: Ibanez, Raphael. *Techniques et matériaux traditionnels des peintures dans les temples de Luang Prabang au Laos*, Ecole d'art d'Auignon Section restauration d'oeuvres peintes. (Paris: n.p. 2005), n. pag.

**Style of Vientiane.** The temple style of Vientiane is quite similar to the Thai style. They have two to four tiered roofs, taller and narrower, and carved wooden gables that become rather faded and weathered. The gable had a carved *garuda*, half bird, half man, a *naga* and *Indra* on his mouth, the elephant *Erawan*. The upright profile of the building and *chor fah* of the roof are in the form of a *naga*. Other details of ornamentation also show Siamese and Cambodian influence.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Parmentier, Henri. L' Art DU Laos. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Paris: Ecole Francaise D' Extreme Orient. 1988). n. pag.



Figure 10: Sample of the temple style of Vientiane

Source: Ibanez, Raphael. *Techniques et matériaux traditionnels des peintures dans les temples de Luang Prabang au Laos*, Ecole d'art d'Auignon Section restauration d'oeuvres peintes. (Paris: n.p. 2005), n. pag.

According to the architectural characteristics of the temples in the Lanchang Kingdom as categorized into three main groups denoted by region, namely Luang Prabang, Xieng Kouan, and Vientiane style, they are totally different to the architectural style of the temple in Rattanakosin era. For example, the structures of the terrace and the cloister surrounding the main chapel can be seen in the style of the temple in Rattanakosin era but they are not presented in the style of Lao temples. Furthermore, different styles are also found in the design of the roofs, terraces, building pediment, columns, windows and cloisters. Generally, the roof style of Lao temples is split into two or three tiered roof and goes down to the ground by successive plans. The height between the edges of the roofs and the ground is closer than the style of temples in Rattanakosin. Furthermore, columns of general Lao temples are designed in a round shape and reduced by tapering the edge, not as multi-corner columns as in Rattanakosin. In addition, two special parts of the chapel which are distinctively different from the temples in Rattanakosin era are the decoration of the building pediment, which is divided into three sections and each section is decorated with the figure of honeycomb. Another difference is the decoration of *dok chor fah* on the top of the roof, which is the symbol of the universe and of sacred Mount Sumeru while the figure of the tiered umbrellas on the top of *dok chor fah* are a symbol of royalty and a feature of both the Hindu and Buddhist imagery of kings.

## 2.1 Sisaket Temple: the Bangkok Temple Style in Vientiane Capital

### 2.1.1 The Boundary and Location of the Temple

Wat Sisaket is an important temple for Laotians in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). It is located in the southeast of Vientiane, between Chaichedthathirach road and Lanchang road, 215 meters from the Mekong River. To the west is an old palace of the king of Lanchang Vientiane but is nowadays a place for welcoming guests of the government from other countries. It is also called "Hoh Kum" and is usually used for meetings about issues like science, economy, culture, society, diplomacy etc.<sup>35</sup>

Next to "Hoh Kum" to the west about 24 meters is Mahosod hospital. The north of the temple is close to Lanchang road, which is opposite the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information and Culture. The temple's east side is close to Ruam Pattana Bank and the Laos Electricity Authority. To the south of the temple is the Department of National Science Development and National Administration.



Figure 11: The Boundary and location of Sisaket temple (red line)

<sup>35</sup> Bourleng Bourseprasert., *History of Art and Lao Architecture I.* (Vientiane: n.p. 1991), 80.

Source: Louisa Kevin. Vientiane Map [Online] accessed 14 May 2010. Available from <http://www.louisakevin.ca/laos/imagemap/imagemap.html>

The temple has a close relationship with the Mekong River which flows from north to south. If one walks from the temple to the river, one can see the Thai border which is Srichiangmai town, with Loie province at their right hand.

The Mekong River is large and important in the lives of Laos. It is 4,500 kilometers long, with its source from China.<sup>36</sup> It flows through Laos for about 1,865 kilometers and its branches have become transportation and communication routes from the north to the south. They are important routes for administration, army, economy, science and culture.

Vientiane city and Sisaket temple are attractions for many tourists. Each year around October, Lao people usually celebrate the end of the Buddhist lent with boat racing on the Mekong River. As Sisaket temple is one of the temples that is close to the river, many people go there to make merit and participate in the boat racing.

Sisaket temple became a museum and a tourist centre, attractive and interesting for tourists from around the world, including archaeologists. Each day, there are about 70-100 Laos and foreigners visiting the temple (with reference to information from staff of the temple). The staff noted that it is at the centre of many buildings, which are outstanding and beautiful. It is not only a tourist attraction, but also is a place for worship of the Buddha statues and for studying about history, religion and murals.

### **2.1.2 The History of the Construction of Sisaket temple**

In 1804, King Anuvong and his people saved their country from foreign attack. In 1818, he had his people build a temple, also restore, paint and cast the Buddha statues in the Sisaket temple. In King Anuwong's reign, the temple became a center for conferences about politics, economy, religious affairs, culture and society of the country. Heads of towns also came to see and discuss with the king at the temple.<sup>37</sup>

In King Anuwong's reign, Sisaket temple was maintained and restored. According to the stone inscription, a meeting hall (Ubosot), a pavilion, an inscription hall, two pagodas, a shrine, two lines of monastery, an eight room monastery, a water trough, and walls were maintained and restored; nevertheless, the structures remained unchanged. In

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<sup>36</sup> Kaewmanee, K., *History of Arts in Lao Kingdom*. (Vientiane: The Department Education. 1974), 12.

<sup>37</sup> Dongsai Luangphasee. *King Chaichethathirat*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., (Vientiane: Publisher of the Lao State. 2004), 43-45.

1873, Hoh (a Chinese tribe) invaded the country. They destroyed and pillaged the temples including Sisaket temple. Therefore, many temples were deserted for a long time.

After France had installed colonial governments in Vietnam and Cambodia, they surveyed and occupied Luang Prabang, Vientiane and Chumpasak which were Lao Lanchang, having been a colony of Siam since 1779. France obtained a control base in Laos and saw the importance of Buddhism to the Lao people. For long-term advantages, they restored temples and pagodas in 1922-1924, including Sisaket temple. After a long period of war, Laos became the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975. During the war, Laos had no chance to look after the temples as much as they might have wanted. Consequently, many temples like Sisaket temple were again ruined because of the war. In 1962, a main road was built in Vientiane. Therefore, some areas of Sisaket temple were used to enlarge Lanchang road.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.2 Examples of Lao Temples Constructed in the same period with Sisaket temple Construction

As Sisaket temple was designed and constructed similarly the Bangkok's temple style, it is totally distinguished from other Lao temples in Lao PDR. The following presents a sample of Lao temples constructed contemporary with Sisaket temple in order to demonstrate the different characteristics between Sisaket temple and vernacular traditions of contemporary Lao temples.



Figure 12: Paphane Temple  
Source: Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. (Bangkok: River books. 2005), 94.

### 2.2.1 Paphane Temple

Paphane temple is located on Phousi road in Luang Prabang and built in 1799. The Monastery of the Flame Tree Forest is today a somewhat neglected and dilapidated wat. It was originally constructed by Sene Mu Xa, a wealthy man, during the reign of King Anourat (1791-1817).<sup>39</sup> It has a three-tiered roof, and whitewashed walls with a verandah with four cylindrical red and gold columns, two short and two long, whose capitals resemble those of classical Corinthian columns. Their red and gold decoration is very faded, as is the portico and gable. Otherwise there is very little decoration on this rather deserted looking wat. There are three windows on either side, the north and south.

<sup>38</sup> Department of Education. The History of Sisaket Temple. (Vientiane: n.p. 1954), 10.

<sup>39</sup> The reign period of King Anourat of Lao Luang Prabang was the same as the reign period of King Nanthasen of Lao Vientiane. Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. (Bangkok: River books. 2005), 94.

### 2.2.2 Sieng Mouan Temple



Figure 13: Sieng Mouan Temple  
Source: Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. (Bangkok: River books. 2005), 90-91.



Figure 14: Siri Moug Khoung Temple  
Source: Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. (Bangkok: River books. 2005), 77.

Originally built in 1853 by Phragna Sisonxay in Luang Prabang, during the reign of King Chantarath (1851-72), it was known at first as the Monastery of Melodious Sounds, Wat Sieng Mouan, owing to the harmony of its drums, and then as the Monastery of the Joyous Town.<sup>40</sup> This temple features a two-tiered roof, with a single porch and triple nave. There are six doors and three windows. When it was restored in 1964, more windows were added. Note the four roundels in the carved gable with Buddha images.

The temple also has a school in a building in the compound specializing in teaching novice monks traditional arts and crafts. These include lacquer work, stenciling, painting, glass mosaic, wood carving, sculpture and other temple decoration techniques in traditional mortar. UNESCO started to provide the fund to encourage this project and then the temple received a grant fund from Norway.<sup>41</sup> There is a small exhibition room which shows some of monks' work and photographs of previous achievements.

### 2.2.3 Siri Moug Khoung Temple

This temple was built around the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Luang Prabang.<sup>42</sup> The *sim* of this temple is simple and whitewashed with an attached verandah along the north wall. But in spite of its modest appearance it has an exuberant two-tiered roof with elaborate *chor fah* finials and elegant carved eaves brackets. Four plain, undecorated cylindrical columns support a gable with abstract gold designs. There is one portico on the main entrance, and three small windows with five eaves brackets on the southern wall. *Chor fah* decorate both lengths of the pitched roof in front. Two stucco white lions with large, ferocious grins stand guard. A small

<sup>40</sup> Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. 90-91.

<sup>41</sup> Veunvilavong, B. 2001. *The Collection of Traditional Lao Patterns*. Vientiane.p.10.

<sup>42</sup> Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. 84-85.

white chapel is located by the side of the southern wall, and there are large succulents and cacti growing in the compound.

#### 2.2.4 That Luang Temple

The temple was built in 1818 in Luang Prabang, on a low hill by King



Figure 15: That Luang Temple  
Source: Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. (Bangkok: River books. 2005), 122-125.

Manthatourat (1817-1836)<sup>43</sup>, the temple has a *sim* and two large stupas. The *sim* is purported to have been built from a banyan tree which once grew close to Wat Keo. This is the monastery of the Royal Stupa, located in the southern part of the town close to the older monasteries. Before 1975, it was the place of cremation for the members of the royal family.

This temple was located in a large open stretch of land where these royal cremations were held, as well as annual ceremonies. This

whitewashed temple has a two-tiered roof. Its silhouette is unusual as the higher roof, with its *dok chor fah* (roundel of flower) of 15 parasols, denoting royal status, posed on a gold and red base, has a decorated tympanum above the lower roof, which then sweeps down and is supported by slender eaves brackets. There are three doors at either end and two doors and four windows on each side. Although the simple white staircases have little decoration, except for low newel posts in the form of lotus buns, the windows and doors are especially noteworthy.

According to the four sample Lao temples which were constructed contemporary with Sisaket temple, it can be demonstrated that their architectural styles are partly different from the architectural style of Sisaket temple. Generally, this can be seen from the design of the roofs, terraces, building pediment, columns, windows and cloisters. Firstly, the roof style of Lao temples is generally split into two or three tiered roofs and goes down to the ground by successive plans. The height between the edge of the roofs and the ground is closer than the style of Sisaket temple. Secondly, there is no cloister constructed surrounding the main chapel. Thirdly, the design of the struts to support projected eaves joists is not in *naga* shape like Sisaket temple but they are only designed into rectangular struts. Fourthly, columns of Lao temples are mostly designed in a round shape and reduced by tapering the edge, not as

<sup>43</sup> Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. 122-125.

multi-corner columns. Finally, the window design of the main chapel such as Paphane temple and That Luang temple is in a simple rectangular shape. However, there are two special parts of the chapel which are distinctively different from Sisaket temple. First is the decoration of the building pediment of Paphane temple, Sieng Moun temple and Siri MOUNG KhOUNG temple. This pediment is divided into three sections and each section is decorated with the figure of Luang Peung (honeycomb). Second is the decoration of *dok chor fah* on the top of the roof of Paphane temple and That Luang temple. Dok chor fah is an elaborate metal decoration with great aesthetic appeal in the form of a row of parasols or miniature pagodas, or interlacing nagas pointing towards the heavens. They are symbols of the universe and of sacred Mount Sumeru. Tiered umbrellas are a symbol of royalty and a feature of both Hindu and Buddhist imagery of kings.















Figure 16: Pediment decoration with Luang Peung (honeycomb) in general Lao temples in Lao PDR (left). The decoration on the top of the roof, dok chor fah (right).













Source: Heywood, Denise. Ancient Luang Prabang. (Bangkok: River books. 2005), 44-49.

### 3. The Influence of the Architectural Style of the Emerald Buddha Temple on Sisaket Temple

The influence of the Bangkok temple style on Sisaket temple can be read from the following characteristics.

Table 4: Influence of Bangkok temple style (the temple of the Emerald Buddha) on Sisaket temple

The similar structure of the building	Emerald Buddha Temple	Sisaket Temple
Main Chapel		
1. Building pediments with pattern for a gable end		
2. Roof style		
3. The struts to support projected eaves joists		
4. The outer wall or cloister (Phra Rabiang) surrounding the main chapel		
5. Each column is reduced by tapering the edge		

The similar structure of the building	Emerald Buddha Temple	Sisaket Temple
Main Chapel		
6. Terrace is built surrounding the main chapel		
7. Windows of the chapel are constructed with the <i>mondop</i> style		
8. Ceiling decoration composed of circles and tablet flowers.		
9. The capitals are decorated with the lotus leaves style		
10. The wall of the chapel is painted with the story of the Lord Buddha		

Photography: Suwaphat Sregongsang (2008)

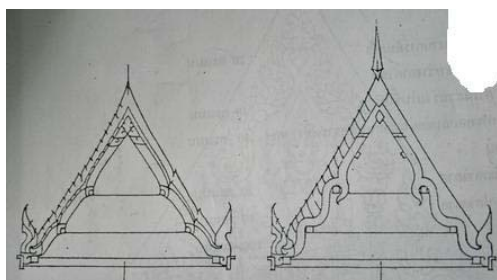


Figure 17: Building pediment  
Source: Phrombhichitr, Phra. Buddhist Art Architecture Part I. (Bangkok: n.p. 1952), 77

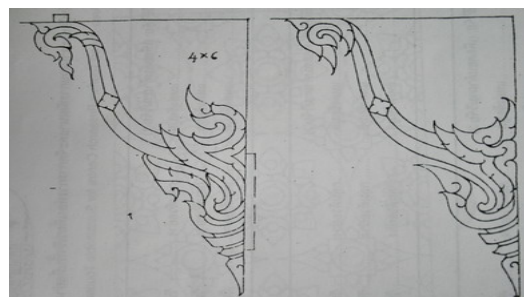


Figure 18: The Struts to support projected eaves joists  
Source: Phrombhichitr, Phra. Buddhist Art Architecture Part I. (Bangkok: n.p. 1952), 52.

The relations between the Bangkok temple style and Sisaket temple style in Vientiane are quite similar to the Emerald Buddha temple style, to explain how the structures of both temples have relations with each other.

**3.1. Building pediments**, the pediments of both temples are constructed in the pattern of a gable end to a rectangular building. They are shaped like the contour of a seated Buddha. This can shape the roof to be quite higher and can drain the rain quickly and more effectively. Furthermore, it is suitable for buildings located in a hot country because this roof style can assist ventilation and prevent high temperature inside the buildings.

**3.2 Roof style**, the roof of the Bangkok temple is split into three or four levels as can be also seen in the roof style of Sisaket temple. On top of the roof, there is the decoration of the Chorfah<sup>44</sup> that is an important part of the temple.

**3.3 The struts to support projected eaves joists**, these are decorated supports between the roof and the pillars on all sides. Thai people call this Khantuay but in Vientiane Laotians name it “Kaennang”. However, it is the same element but with different names.

**3.4 The outer wall or cloister (Phra Rabiang)**, This surrounds the main chapel of the temple. Both the Emerald Buddha temple and Sisaket temple have this structure. This part is about four to five meters high. However, there is a different figure in the Phra Rabiang of both temples. Inside the Phra Rabiang of the Emerald Buddha temple, there is a mural picture of the Ramakian or Ramayana (one episode of the Lord Buddha’s life) on the wall, while the wall of Phra Rabiang of Sisaket temple is holed and houses small Buddha images inside each hole.

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<sup>44</sup> Chorfah is decoration on the top of the roof of the temple. It is designed from the figure of the head of *garuda*.

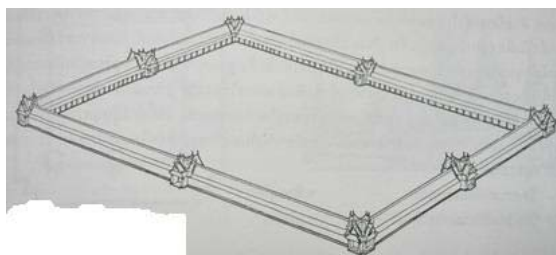


Figure 19: Outer wall or cloister

Source: Somkhit Jirathatsanakul. Temple: Thai Buddhist Architecture. (Bangkok: Thammasat University. 1994), 107.

In general, the Phra Rabiang is used to surround the important buildings in a religious place. The pediment of each door is similar to the main chapel because their shapes are decorated with the pattern for a gable end, and they have a door in each entrance. The entrance looks like a tetrahedron. In a single Phra Rabiang, the Buddha statues are enshrined in line with the wall on the one side and with the open wall on another side.<sup>45</sup>

The Phra Rabiang is influenced by Khmer concepts and architecture. As a consequence, the Phra Rabiang is built around the shrine. For instance, the castle pagoda is built in a rectangle and has the arched entrance in the middle of the so called “gopura”. Hence the idea of building the Phra Rabiang is based on the universal map simulation (cosmology of myth). It is clear that the edge wall denotes the universal area.<sup>46</sup>

**3.5 The column style**, The style of the columns of both temples is the same. This style is called Yoh Mum, meaning each pillar is reduced by tapering the edge. The base of the column is bigger than the top of the column.

<sup>45</sup> Chot Kanlayanamit. Thai Architecture. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bangkok: Thammasat University. 1998), n. pag.

<sup>46</sup> Bunrod Sanguansaur. The Art of Buddhism in the Rattanakosin Era. (Bangkok: Rungwattana. 1983), n. pag.

### 3.6 A terrace is built surrounding the main chapel



Figure 20: The window with mondop style

Source: Somkhit Jirathatsanakul. Temple: Thai Buddhist Architecture. (Bangkok: Thammasat University. 1994), 331.

### 3.7 Windows and doors of the chapel are constructed with the mondop style.

The windows of the chapel are constructed with the conoid pavilion style in several layers. This kind of architecture is aimed at responding through positive attitudes towards the Mount Sumeru symbol which is seen as the centre of the world. With the universal simulation<sup>47</sup>, the windows have many layers. In each layer, the base is decorated with the Leo and the Garuda which represent the Himmaphan Forest where is situated Mount Sumeru.<sup>48</sup> It is believed that this mountain is where the fays reside and the other higher layer is a second heaven called Daqwadeung. The Daqwadeung is the centre of the heaven where Indra rules the fays.<sup>49</sup> In architecture, constructing a Thai temple is similar to the Khmer castle or Burma castle or Bali crematorium. Therefore, the idea in these countries is derived from the same religious belief, where the Buddha is undoubtedly the main centre.<sup>50</sup>

**3.8 Ceiling decoration composed of circles and tablet flowers on a bright red background.** In each circle is a water lettuce leaf. It is a decorative design for cloth or for gult lacquered works.

<sup>47</sup> Universal simulation is the Hinduism belief that there is another universe for the spirits and there is Mount Sumeru as the center of the world. Moreover, Mount Sumeru is also the place of Indra.

<sup>48</sup> Santi Leksukhum. "The Roof Style of Ubosot and Vihan," Journal of Arts and Culture 16. 8 (June 1995): 188.

<sup>49</sup> Phrombhichitr, Phra. Buddhist Art Architecture Part I. 72.

<sup>50</sup> Keukrit Pramote. The Ideology and Religion. (Bangkok: Siamrat. 1988), 22.

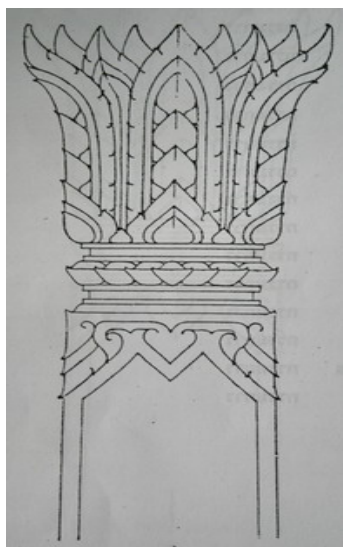


Figure 21: Capital with lotus leaves style

Source: Phrombhichitr, Phra. Buddhist Art Architecture Part I. (Bangkok: n.p. 1952), 50.

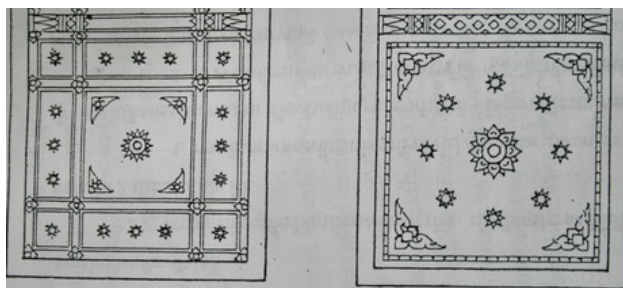


Figure 22: Ceiling decoration composed of circles and tablet flowers on a bright red background  
Source: Phrombhichitr, Phra. Buddhist Art Architecture Part I. (Bangkok: n.p. 1952), 88.

**3.9 The capitals are decorated with the lotus leaves style.** These are quadrilateral and the acute angle of each edge is reduced by tapering the edge.

**3.10 The wall of the main chapel is painted with the story of the Lord Buddha,** The paintings inside the main chapel of both temples present a story about the Lord Buddha. These paintings are extremely significant and knowing the simplified story of the Lord Buddha accompanying each mural will help visitors to understand the murals and to appreciate their great artistic and cultural value.

## Conclusion

The royal tradition of temple building of the Siam Kings continued from the Sukhothai period until the early Rattanakosin period. This tradition can reflect the relations between Siamese society and the role of the Siamese Kings. The Kings of Siam had the important role of governing the kingdom and accordingly needed to find the representative, mental center of the Siamese people. One of the most important elements of this is Buddhist maintenance so that temple building could be said to be the tangible performance of the great kings of the people.

The architectural style of the temples in the early Rattanakosin period was transformed from the style of the temples in the Ayutthaya period, such as in the form of the

plan, roofs, column, capital, cloister, struts to support projected eaves joists, and ceiling decoration.

It is quite possible that the relations between Siam and the Lao kingdom in the early Rattanakosin period could transfer the architectural style of Bangkok temples to Lao Vientiane temples, especially Sisaket temple. The major reason is that Siam had attacked Lao Vientiane and removed the important Buddha statue, the Emerald Buddha, to house it in Bangkok as mentioned previously in Chapter 2. This statue is very important for Laotians because it is the emotional and religious center for Lao Buddhists. The sacking of Vientiane by Siam inflicted heavy damage on Laotians. However, the capture of the Emerald Buddha was even more aggressive for them.

The Lao royal family and supporters were arrested and forced to stay in Bangkok as the guarantee that Lao Vientiane would not rebel against Siam again. The construction of Sisaket Temple yielded the only temple in Vientiane that was built almost similar to the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok in that time. This temple was built in the reign of King Anuvong, the Lao Vientiane monarch. He was one of the Lao Vientiane nobles arrested in Bangkok and he spent much time in Bangkok and had close relations with King Rama II. When comparing the two temples, there are many elements that are similar in form, such as the form of building pediments, roof, struts to support projected eaves joists, cloister, column, terrace surrounding the main chapel, *mondop* style of the window and door frames, ceiling decoration, capitals, and the paintings of the interior murals.

It is important to discuss and interpret these similar forms of structure in the next chapter in order to explore the particular meanings and purposes in the construction of the Sisaket temple in Vientiane by King Anuvong who was admired as a hero of the Laotians but seen as a traitor by Siam as discussed in Chapter 2.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Perspectives of the Vientiane Sisaket temple and the Rattanakosin Emerald Buddha temple**

#### **Introduction**

Temples in Buddhist society such as Thailand and Laos are seen to represent the pure land and pure environment concept of the society. Buddhism is at the center of people's hearts and political life as well as of the King's army forces. According to Chapter three which presented a comparison of the structural relations between Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) in Bangkok and Wat Sisaket in Vientiane, it could be clearly observed that there are stylistic relations between the two temples. However, the particular meanings and the reasons why these two temples were built quite similarly could not be understood by simple observation. Because of this, it is necessary to study the hidden meaning related to the significance of the construction, especially, the relations between Wat Sisaket and King Anuvong (Chao Anu or King Chaisethathirath III) who ordered the building of Sisaket temple in Vientiane by constructing it in the temple style of Bangkok such as that explained in the temple of the Emerald Buddha.

Therefore, this chapter will present a study of general information on King Anuvong and Sisaket temple, the relations between the Sisaket temple and King Anuvong and the specific purpose in temple construction including the symbolism of this temple, the significance and role of the Emerald Buddha as legitimation of religious and political power of the Siam and Lao Kings, and the impact of the loss of the Emerald Buddha and the consequent Sisaket temple building policy. Moreover, this chapter will also demonstrate the history of writing and literature styles relating to King Anuvong's liberation of the Lao Kingdom from Siam, leading to the rift between the two sides.

## 1. Biography of King Anuvong

In 1804, King Anuvong began his reign in Vientiane as the 26<sup>th</sup> king since the establishment of the Lanchang Vientiane Kingdom. His full name was “*Som Det Pra Chao Anuvong*”<sup>1</sup>. King Anuvong was seen as the brave viceroy in the reign of king In Ta Wong. He led the Lao troop to fight against Myanmar and was very much favored by the King of Siam, Rama II. He fought against Myanmar in 1798 - 1799 at Chiangmai with a Lao army of 20,000 soldiers and attacked Chiangmai and Chiengsaen in 1803 and 1804 respectively. After the war, he became the King of Lanchang Vientiane. In 1809, King Anuvong sent ambassadors to visit the King of Vietnam, Pha Chao Jak Ka Pat Ya Long, and consulted about a revolution for re-independence from Siam but the Vietnamese King did not give any suggestion about this situation.<sup>2</sup>

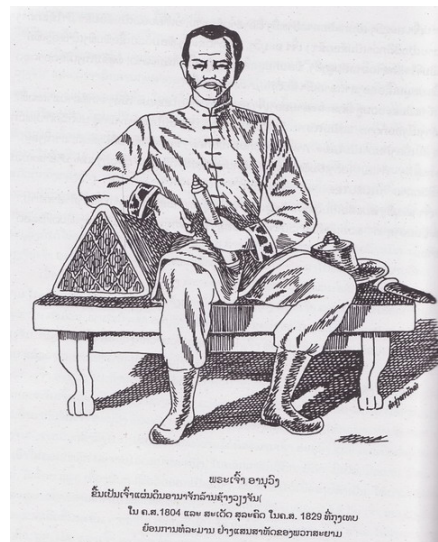


Figure 23: The Sketch of King Anuvong  
Source: Phutong Saengarkom. Lao Nationality, Lao People, Past, and Present. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vientiane: Pet Ma Nee Sing Ha Va Ra. 2006), 23.

In the reign of King Anuvong, the Lanchang Vientiane kingdom was a colony of Siam. However, this status had been an obstacle for the Lao king to develop the kingdom and, if this state could be resisted, the king could be seen as the hero of the Lao people. The various activities of King Anuvong can be summed up as follows;

In 1807, there was the order to build a royal palace in Vientiane

In 1808, King Anuvong visited the royal pool in Nakhonphanom and built Sri Boon Reung Temple in Nongkhai<sup>3</sup>.

In 1812, there was the construction of the wooden bridge across the Mekong River in Chang Peuk Temple Port (now in the area of Sri Chiang Mai District, Nongkhai province, Thailand)

In 1818, he put down the rebellion of Ai Sa Khiat Ngou in Champasak.

<sup>1</sup> In the Lao Vientiane stone inscription it was recorded that the full name of King Anuvong was “Som Det Phra Chao Chai Chet Tha Thi Rat the 3<sup>rd</sup>”

<sup>2</sup> Doungsai Luangphasee. King Chaichetthathirat. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., (Vientiane: Publisher of the Lao State. 2004), 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Presently, these are provinces in the Northeastern part of Thailand located adjacent to the Lao PDR.

In 1821, he appointed his son Chao Rat Cha Bud Yoh as the head of administration in Champasak instead of Chao Ma Noi who had died in Bangkok, and appointed Chao Kham Pom (grandson) to be the viceroy.

When Chao Rat Cha Bud Yoh became the governor of Champasak, he developed the city plan in many ways, such as the city wall, city canal and royal palace wall in order to support its defensive advantage.

King Anuvong was a hero of the Lao people. King Rama II (Phra Bhudda Lert Lah Na Pa Lai) also really liked him more than other kings in Siam's annexed states of that time because he could effectively assist Siam against Myanmar. As Deungsai Luangprasee described the relationship between the two kings in the book "Som Dej Phra Chao Anuvong", they had a close relationship. For example, in 1820 King Rama II of Siam had built the pool in the royal palace where he enjoyed much pleasure and relaxation. Then King Anuvong was invited to share his pleasure. King Rama II assigned Phraya Chakri to write the royal letter with a description of the beautiful pool in the royal palace.

In 1824, King Anuvong had assigned Lao artisans to construct the Saen Temple, to be called Sahatasahattharam (it is presently the Sisaket Temple) and celebrated a festival with much happiness and pleasure when it was completed. Furthermore, he had also ordered Lao artisans to carry out the restoration of Ho Phra Kaew (expected to house the Emerald Buddha again) and to build Ho Trai (inscription Hall) in Sisaket Temple.<sup>4</sup>

In 1825, King Rama II of Siam died, King Anuvong was sad and disappointed about this situation because the two kings were as close as relatives. This could lead to a change in the relations between Siam and the Lao Kingdom, especially for him. King Rama III of the Chakri Dynasty (his full name was Phra Bat Som Det Phra Nang Khao Chao Yu Hou) became the king of Siam in the same year.

Before the rainy season, King Anuvong requested from the king of Siam to return the Lao people to Vientiane in order to prepare for agriculture. He also requested that members of the royal families and Lao people in Saraburi should return to Vientiane as well. However, King Rama III did not allow this. Most historians have mentioned that King Rama III did not maintain the previously close relationship between King Anuvong and King Rama II because Vientiane was only seen as one of the Siam's colonies. King Anuvong could not do anything to help his people and he only kept in mind about suffering things he had received.

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<sup>4</sup> Phutong Saengarkom. Lao Nationality, Lao People, Past, and Present. 66.

## 2. The Relations between Sisaket Temple and King Anuvong and the Specific Purposes in Temple Construction including the Symbolism of this temple

As mentioned above, a temple has deep significant for Buddhists, where the building of temples indicates the authority of the king's leadership both politically and in social terms, especially for Thai and Lao kings. The temple of the Emerald Buddha is also respected as the most sacred Buddhist temple in Thailand and for the Chakri Dynasty after the Ayutthaya Dynasty fell to Burmese attack in 1767. The temple of the Emerald Buddha is also called the National Temple of Thailand. King Anuvong, in turn, restored and reconstructed on Lao temples and reformed religion in his kingdom.

The monks, who form "a kind of intellectual elite of the population,"<sup>5</sup> constituted one-eighth of the Lao population.<sup>6</sup> The ability to maintain this sizable, dependent religious order suggests the richness of the populace while also showing the influence and importance of the clergy, who provided the cultural cement for the society. King Anuvong certainly understood that religion could be used as a device for the legitimization of power. It appears that Siam understood the power of monks as well. In 1827, monks were among the Lao prisoners taken on the battlefield.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, King Anuvong devoted himself to the construction of pagodas, particularly on the right bank of the Mekong River from where Siam wanted to dismiss him,<sup>8</sup> the more closely he advanced toward his aim. His preparations went unnoticed until 1827, when King Rama I's sister, Princess Narinthonthewi, expressed some measure of fright:

"The third month, twelfth day of the waning moon, the year of the Dog, he informed that Krung Si Sattanakkhannahut (King Anuvong) offended the good name of the King (Rama III), for he wanted to undertake a new territorial division, depleting (Siam). The Prince of Vientiane, although still a war prisoner since 1779, should not dare to head for Muang Nakhon Ratchasima (Khorat) to tread it under his feet and he should not suffer to transport families on a large scale from Saraburi and Muang Kao (Ayutthaya)."<sup>9</sup>

The poor Princess Narinthonthewi had not indicated such sensitiveness when she recorded the invasion of Vientiane by her brothers, Chakri and Surasi, in 1778-1779.<sup>10</sup> "That

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<sup>5</sup> Delineau, Pandola. *Le Laos Annamite. Cam-Mon, Cam-Keut*. (Saigon: Revue Indochinoise. 1893), 266.

<sup>6</sup> Reclus, Elisee. *Nouvelle geographie universelle. L'Inde et l'Indochine*. (Paris: Hachette. 1883), 816.

<sup>7</sup> Krom Luang Narinthonthewi. *Chotmai het khwamsongcham (Memoirs of Rama I's sister)*. (Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1963), 37.

<sup>8</sup> Dhawaj, Punotok. *Raingan kanwichai ruang phun wiang: kansuksa prawattisat lae wannakam isan (Analysis of the Phun Viang Chronicle: Study of the History and Civilization of the Northeast)*. (Bangkok: Sathaban Thai Khadi Suksa, Thammasat University, 1980), p.14.

<sup>9</sup> Krom Luang Narinthonthewi. *Chotmai het khwamsongcham (Memoirs of Rama I's sister)*. 36.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-9.

which men find most divisive is that which each of them holds sacred.”<sup>11</sup> What was “sacred” for Princess Narinthonthevi was the great of Siam, and especially the security of its 1779 possession. King Anuvong considered “sacred” both his refusal to accept the defeat of 1779 and his decision to recover Lao independence. He did not think this was an impossible mission, since he and his father Siribunyan had been pursued by the same man, the Chakri who became King Rama I. In 1827, King Anuvong and his followers approached the Khorat Plateau as if they had always been there. They moved slowly, but with the self-confidence of their right to possession, which had belonged to them from time immemorial. When he was forced ultimately to retreat from the Khorat Plateau, King Anuvong left swaying on the back of his elephant at a speed of three kilometers per hour, with “a red-bordered hat on his head”.<sup>12</sup>

The political mobilization for a break-away insurrection had begun as early as 1805 and persisted, with its peak years in 1820 and 1821. The height of Lao achievement might come with the construction of Sisaket temple, as a temple of enormous political and cultural significance.<sup>13</sup> The main chapel had the noble Pali name of Wat Sattasahassa Vihararama, which means the monastery of “ten thousand felicities.” Its first brick was laid on March 4, 1818 and the pagoda was opened for the first time in 1824.<sup>14</sup> This pagoda constitutes a supreme masterwork among “admirable Laotian pagodas which are genuine artistic jewels.”<sup>15</sup> The celebration given to honor it lasted nine days and nights. Processions around Sisaket temple and around the royal palace took place for three days and nights. All the data relating to this event are carved on a black marble stele, which “bore on one of its faces an inscription of fifty-one lines.”<sup>16</sup> Professor Etienne Aymonier at the School of Oriental Languages in Paris wrote that “It’s admirable work of Laotian epigraphy.”<sup>17</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> Raymond, Aron. Paix et guerre entre les nations. (Paris: Calmann Levy. 1962), 342.

<sup>12</sup> Damrong Rajanubhab. Chotmai het ruang prap khabot wiangchan (Documents on the Suppression of the Revolt of Vientiane). (Bangkok: Sophon. 1926), 60.

<sup>13</sup> In particular, King Anuvong constructed Sisaket temple for it to become the place serving the most secret political intentions of King Anuvong. Each year King Anuvong came to receive the oaths of allegiance pledged by the Lao governors of Vientiane and Champasak. This provided a favorable occasion to tighten the unity of views and souls in preparation for the insurrection to recover independence (Ministry of Education. Histoire. (Vientiane: Institution de Recherches en Sciences Sociales. 1987), 277). Furthermore, Ratnam offers a more convincing interpretation in her book “Wat Sisaket (Sri Sakete)” that Saketa was the old name of Ayudhya the capital of Sri Rama. The Laos were fond of the Ramayana they had indigenized it and in the reign of King Anuvong there was a splendid building devoted for the play of this piece.

<sup>14</sup> Lajonquiere, Lunet. “Vieng-Chan, la ville et ses Pagodes”, Bulletin de l’Ecole Francaise d’Extreme Orient. (Paris: n.p. 1901), 107.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.. 348.

<sup>16</sup> Lajonquiere, Lunet. “Vieng-Chan, la ville et ses Pagodes”, Bulletin de l’Ecole Francaise d’Extreme Orient. 110.

<sup>17</sup> Aymonier, Etienne. Notes sur le Laos. Impressions et souvenirs sur les moeurs, coutumes, traditions, religions, et superstitions des habitants des diverses regions du Laos, Vol.2. (Hanoi: Imprimerie Coloniale. 1901), 147.

script actually shows a sample of King Anuvong's writing style. He reformed the Lao script, giving it its current form.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, inside Sisaket temple, celebrants and visitors saw a magnificent creation placed there by King Anuvong: a fascinating, complex candelabra, bathed in light from candles lit by devotees and monks. This dazzling, branched candlestick in its entire splendor brightened the main Buddha statue of the sanctuary, which was put on each side by two bronze Buddha statues that were exactly as tall as King Anuvong. He devoted himself to conducting his people along the challenging path shown by Indra. The sacred was interwoven unequivocally in this image, and the Sisaket temple candelabra delivered a potent message to those who understood the symbolic meanings of its sculptural elements.

One scholar, Louis de Carne, reported on this work of art in 1869, "I have admired among other small masterpieces of carved wood. It mixes gold and the daylight to produce the best effect."<sup>19</sup> Beside, Francis Garnier had a picture drawn and published in the *Revue Tour Du Monde*, the 'Time magazine' of the 1850s.<sup>20</sup> King Anuvong and indeed all Lao would certainly recognize the importance of the terms that Henri Marchal used to depict this famous candle-holder, whose silhouette was lively by two dragons' heads that supported it on each side.<sup>21</sup> Henri Marchal characterized the dragons as "bad-tempered," but remarked that the "splendid" *nagas* seemed to surround a door of light. *Nagas* are the symbol of Laos and source of its name, Si Sattanakhanahut, meaning the land of *nagas*. The *nagas*' heads, with their jaggedly torn crests, and the *nagas*' backs, bristling with flames, signified Lao resistance. In this carved image, the *nagas*, after insincerely supporting Siamese domination, hold up their heads in a gesture of defiance.<sup>22</sup>

The central decorative motif of the candelabra is a group of fifteen vertical rods with a set of seven half-rods surmounted with a half-prasat on each side. The motif represents the seven principal Lao polities named by Archbishop Pallegoix: "Muang Lom or Loum, Muang Vientiane, Muang Luang Phabang, Muang Phouenne, Muang Phle, Muang Nan, Muang Meung Maie."<sup>23</sup> Only the central stem is complete, however, for it represents the strength and the invincibility of the Lao country when united.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Sila, Veeravong. *Pavat nangsuo lao (History of Lao Script)*. (Vientiane: Phainam. 1973), 18.

<sup>19</sup> Carne, Louise. "Exploration du Mekong. Troisieme partie: Vienchan et la conquete siamoise." *Revue des Deux Mondes*. (n.p. 1869), 262.

<sup>20</sup> Garnier, Francis. "Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine." *Le Tour du Monde*. (n.p. 1871), 391.

<sup>21</sup> Parmentier, Henri. *L'art du Laos, Vol.2, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient*. (Paris: n.p. 1954), 263.

<sup>22</sup> Sila, Veeravong. *Pavat nangsuo lao (History of Lao Script)*. 25-30.

<sup>23</sup> Pallegoix, Jene. "Notice sur le Laos", *Bulletin de la Societe de Geographie*. (Paris: n.p. 1836), 40-41.

<sup>24</sup> Sila Veeravong. "Vannakhadi" (Study on the san lup bo sun), *Vannakhadi isan*. 6. (April 1954): 51-54.

Henri Marchal, a specialist in Lao art, noted the presence of “an emblem of the god Indra riding on the back of his elephant Airavata” at Sisaket temple.<sup>25</sup> Another critic, Henri Parmentier, also considered this “abnormal enough here.”<sup>26</sup> However, this special presence communicated King Anuvong’s intention that the war was the way to achieve the Lao objectives of unity and independence, thereby explaining the presence of Indra, the god of thunder and war. Significantly, King Anuvong and his followers swore by Indra.<sup>27</sup>

For ritualistic reasons, the pagodas in the Lao capital all face east and their flanks are aligned with the Mekong River. The only exception is that Sisaket temple, which lies differently. It lies perpendicular to the Mekong River; its axis of forty degrees southwest turns it toward the Khorat Plateau, and its focus includes Saraburi and Bangkok. The architectural precision is astonishing. King Anuvong’s contemporaries, aware of the geomantic setting of this royal pagoda, understood the intended message. “At this splendid new temple of Sisaket, King Anuvong held a grand assembly of all his feudatories twice a year to pay him homage.”<sup>28</sup> Representatives who took part in this assemblage would stand with their backs turned to Bangkok. After 1827, the court of Bangkok required that this practice cease: all the Lao were required to pay homage to Bangkok, with their faces turned in Bangkok’s direction. French colonization renewed King Anuvong’s gesture. After the French protectorate ended, the Lao kingdom neglected to reinstitute King Anuvong’s proud gesture and instead staged its homage ceremonies in a less contentious temple, Ong Tu temple, a tradition which lasted until 1975.<sup>29</sup>

### **3. The Significance and Role of the Emerald Buddha as Legitimation of Political and Religious Power of the Siam and Lao Kings**

#### **3.1 The Route of Holy Emerald Buddha and Aspects of Buddhist Symbolic and Political Legitimacy of Kingship in Thailand and Laos**

To complete the link of kingship with Buddhism is the way that both Thai and Lao kings have performed for a long time. Many ways are done to develop and preserve Buddhism such as sorting out Buddhist scriptures, renovating the old temples or ordination halls and developing Buddhism under the King’s patronage. Likewise, King Taksin and King Rama I to King Rama III of Siam, concentrated on the religious activities with the Emerald Buddha. Similarly, the Lao King, King Chaisetthathirath had translated the Emerald Buddha

<sup>25</sup> Marchal, Henry. “L’art decorative du Laos”, *Arts Asiatique*. (Paris: n.p. 1964), 14-15.

<sup>26</sup> Parmentier, Henri. *L’art du Laos, Vol.2, Ecole Francaise d’Extreme Orient*. 263.

<sup>27</sup> Archambaut, Charles. *Contribution a l’etude d’un cycle de legends Lao*. (Paris: Publications de l’Ecole Francaise d’Extreme Orient. 1980), 120-125.

<sup>28</sup> Hall, D., *A History of South East Asia*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Melbourne: Macmillan. 1976), 449.

<sup>29</sup> Dore, Amphay. *Le Partage du Mekong*. (Paris: Encre, 1980), 89.

from Chiangmai to be housed in Luang Prabang and subsequently Vientiane. Moreover, the multifarious duties of King Anuvong's father (Siriboonsarn) and King Anuvong are seen as the heroic performances by Laotians.

### **3.1.1 Thai and Lao kingship and religious reform**

The more participation in religious affairs of government leaders, the more they have been served to legitimate and strengthen the political power. Thus, a political leader always sought and gained legitimacy in part through his active participation in the religious reform of his country.

### **3.1.2 The Role of King Taksin in Buddhist Restoration**

King Taksin is regarded as an important king in Siamese history because of his heroic performance in liberating Siam. He did so when the Ayutthaya Kingdom was defeated by Burma in 1769. What Burmese did to the Ayutthaya kingdom in April 1767 threatened not only the continued existence of an independent Thai state in Southeast Asia but also the survival of many of the cultural and religious traditions that had characterized previous Thai kingdoms in the area.<sup>30</sup>

The chaotic conditions happening in and around the capital had a very bad affect on Thai religious life general and the Buddhist monastic community in particular. Many monasteries had been destroyed partially or totally in the fighting and looting; as a result some monks had been forced to look for new places of residence.

King Taksin's undoing seems to have been caused partly by his own insecurity in being king. This insecurity became expressed in increasingly irresponsible and eccentric ways. The reasons why King Taksin felt fear were that he had no right claim to the throne theoretically. His ancestry was not of royal blood and he had not been in the recognized line of succession. His political power and authority had been gained through fortuitous circumstances and the use of military force. However, force alone does not provide an enduring foundation on which to base political leadership. To be maintained successfully, political power must become legitimated in some way. Although power legitimates itself to an extent, there are obvious disadvantages relying exclusively upon force for one's authority. Coercion can be an extremely effective way to control, but it also creates opposition, and power based on tyrannies alone is famous in being short lived.<sup>31</sup>

King Taksin appears to have been well aware of the importance of legitimating his political power. Furthermore, he had recognized that his own claims to the Thai throne

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<sup>30</sup> Hall, D., *A History of South East Asia*. 426.

<sup>31</sup> Mueller, Claus. *The Politics of Communication: A Study in the Political Sociology of Language, Socialization, and Legitimation*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1973), n. pag.

were not important and problematic. One of his primary concerns was to establish the legitimacy of his new position, and thereby gain popular acceptance not only of his actual leadership but also of his right to lead. Soon after his initial military victories, he began to seek ways to reach this goal. His decision to be crowned king at Thonburi and to establish his capital there rather than at Ayutthaya may be ready in part by this objective.<sup>32</sup> By moving the capital to a new site, he would avoid the political incongruity and embarrassment of occupying a seat of government for which he had no legitimate claim. Whereas in Ayutthaya he would look suspiciously like a usurper, in Thonburi he could present himself as the founder of the new kingdom and as a legitimate ruler. Thonburi and its throne would be identified inclusively with him, and thus he would be able to side-step the obstacle of having no royal prerequisites or credentials.<sup>33</sup>

One of the important legitimating acts of former Thai kings had been the building of many splendid palaces and temples. Such buildings were a visible sign of a king's authority and greatness. Moreover, they served to impress upon the king's subjects the validity of his position as a ruler. King Taksin had desired undoubtedly to copy his predecessors and in time to transform Thonburi into an impressive center and symbol of political power. A glorious new capital would have served to validate his position and that of his descendants in the same way that Ayutthaya's greatness and magnificence had helped empower its rulers. The aim of making Thonburi into a new Ayutthaya was never realized. Social conditions remained turbulent throughout King Taksin's reign; so he was prevented from ever embarking upon the extensive building program that might have transformed the new capital into an imposing symbol of power.<sup>34</sup> In comparison to Ayutthaya's past splendor, the Thonburi settlement remained modest and unimpressive.

King Taksin tried to establish the legitimacy of his rule in other ways as well. Traditionally, one recognized way to legitimate political power was to support the Buddhist Sangha, as a demonstration of his virtue and hence of his right to rule. Almost without exception, the great Thai rulers of the past were those who had built large monastic establishments and who encouraged high moral and religious standards among the monks. Such actions gained respect and loyalty from the people, so helping to ensure submission and assent to political authority even when a particular decision or policy might be unpopular. Although because of the military and political situation King Taksin did not sponsor any

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<sup>32</sup> Wood, William. *A History of Siam*. (Bangkok: n.p. 1924), 231-250.

<sup>33</sup> One of King Taksin's rivals was a son of a former king of Ayutthaya.

<sup>34</sup> Craig Reynolds has suggested that the rapidity with which King Rama I was able to move the capital to the Bangkok side of the river indicates that plans for this shift may have already been made by King Taksin. (Reynold, Craig. *The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand*. (New York: Cornell University. 1972), 30.)

large-scale construction of religious buildings and monuments, he showed his interest and support of the Buddhist community in other ways.

King Taksin initiated his power in the Northern provinces following the defeat of the king of Fang. His concern about the organizational strength and purity of the Sangha was also demonstrated by his appointment of a highly respected monk from Nakhon Si Thammarat to the position of Supreme Patriarch in 1769. Prior to that, he had taken other steps to improve the quality and purity of Thai religious life by rewarding study of the Buddhist scripture. In 1768, a government official was assigned to decide which members of the Sangha were most advanced in religious knowledge and scholarship. King Taksin then formally recognized the scholarly achievement of those deemed most knowledgeable by presenting them with new robes. He also ordered that Buddhist manuscripts unavailable in the capital but found elsewhere in the land to Thonburi and copied. In addition, instructions were given that religious texts in friendly neighboring countries duplicated and the copies brought to the Thai capital to be used in revising the scriptures there.<sup>35</sup>

This fostering of Buddhist education and scholarship and the purification of the Sangha were traditional expressions of a king's religious piety and devotion; for that reason, he could claim legitimacy of royal power.<sup>36</sup> A harmonious and cooperative relationship between the Sangha and the government, or at least the appearance of such harmony, is an absolute necessity for long-term political success.

As for the idea that a ruler could become divine, this was not the creation of King Taksin's disturbed mind but was drawn from indigenous Southeast Asia beliefs and Indian conceptions of sacred kingship. Usually, when Buddhism prevailed, as was the case in Thailand and Laos, these beliefs were modified so that the ruler was viewed as a Bodhisatta or "Future Buddha" rather than a god.<sup>37</sup> These traditions formed the basis for the Siamese and Lao kings' quest to obtain divine status and the claim of having acquired the physical marks of a Buddha. They also help to explain why the kings were motivated to seek these goals. The possession of superhuman qualities and powers and their transformation into a divine being or Buddha would have provided clear and indisputable proof of their kingly status and their legitimate right to rule.

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<sup>35</sup> Reynold, Craig. The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand. (New York: Cornell University. 1972), 34 -35.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.. 33-34.

<sup>37</sup> Cady, John F. Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.1964), 37-38.

### 3.1.3 The Restoration of Thai Traditions: The Reign of King Rama I (1782 – 1809)

An abbreviated and relatively small ceremony of investiture for the new monarch was held on June 13, 1782. This was followed three years later by a more complicated and impressive coronation based on the model of those formerly held at Ayutthaya.<sup>38</sup> As we can see, the new king was concerned throughout his reign to identify himself and his kingdom with the heritage of Ayutthaya and to restore that kingdom's traditions to the Thai nation. It is significant that one of the royal titles given to the new ruler at his initial coronation in 1782 was Rama Tibodi, a name also given to the first king of Ayutthaya. The royal name by which Chao Chakri is best known, however, is King Rama I, a designation given to him posthumously by his great-grandson King Chulalongkorn.<sup>39</sup>

Although King Rama I was now officially in charge of the Thai government, he was faced with a situation that made his position far from secure. The immediate problem was what to do with the former king. The continued presence of King Taksin represented both an embarrassment and a potential danger to the new ruler. This problem was resolved by King Rama I by following, apparently with great unwillingness, the advice of his chief counselors and ordering his former commander's execution.<sup>40</sup> Another imminent danger was the threat of renewed military aggression by the Burmese. In order to defend against a possible attack on the capital, King Rama I decided to move the capital to the more defensible area across the Chao Phraya River from Thonburi.<sup>41</sup> The construction reinforced his newly acquired political position and power.

King Rama I, like his predecessor, had no convincing hereditary claims to justify his elevation to the office of king.<sup>42</sup> The factors behind his choice and acceptance as King Taksin's replacement were his military skill and his popularity with the army. It was possible that if he was not accompanied and supported by his troops when he returned to Thonburi, Thai leaders would not have offered him the throne readily and unanimously. Thus, it was in fact an acknowledgement of his military advantage and superiority. Furthermore, like King Taksin before him, King Rama I had gained the leadership of the nation on the basis of his military strength and, like King Taksin, he was faced with the challenge of finding additional ways in which to justify that leadership so that his hold on the throne might become more secure.

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<sup>38</sup> Reynold, Craig. *The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand*. 35-37.

<sup>39</sup> Prince Chula Chakrabingse. *Lords of Life*. (London: Alvin Redman. 1960), 70-79.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 78-79.

<sup>41</sup> Reynold, Craig. *The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand*. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Prince Chula Chakrabingse. *Lords of Life*. 80-81.

The establishing of a new capital at Bangkok was an important step in this direction. In addition to improving the nation's defenses, the building of Bangkok was a conscious and deliberate attempt to create a new Ayutthaya. The city itself was modeled as far as possible after the former capital to impress visibly upon the people the similarity between the two kingdoms. An obvious implication was to show that a parallel likeness also existed between the new ruler of Bangkok and the great kings who had once ruled over Ayutthaya.

In order to build Bangkok to become a new Ayutthaya, it needed to share creatively in the previous kingdom's cultural tradition and heritage. Although the nation had progressed both militarily and politically under King Taksin, many cultural traditions remained disrupted and the society itself went on being badly disordered and divided. If this situation was not changed, King Rama I would never be able to present himself successfully and equally as a ruler compared with the former honored kings of Ayutthaya. Thus, one of his major challenges and tasks was to restore Thai society and culture to a state comparable with that which had characterized Ayutthaya during its steadiness.

One of the divisions of Thai society that was especially disrupted and in need of immediate attention and repaired was the religious sector. Particularly, the Buddhist Sangha needed extensive reform and purification. Monastic organization and discipline had never fully recovered from the trouble caused by the destruction of Ayutthaya. Moreover, the religious irregularities of King Taksin's reign had contributed still further to the disorder and degeneracy of the monks. King Rama I was concerned with the seriousness of this decline and the negative effect that it was having on Thai society. Therefore, early in his reign he took steps to reform the Sangha and to improve the quality of religious life generally. These actions were seen by the Thai people as demonstrations of the king's religious interest and concern and as proof of his own virtue and merit. Hence, they not only benefited the Buddhist community and the society as a whole but also contributed to the king's personal quest for political legitimation.<sup>43</sup>

King Rama I had undertaken another project of religious reform that was also of the great significance to the Thai Buddhist community. In 1788 he convened a Council of

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<sup>43</sup> Melford also noted that in addition to trying to create a new Ayutthaya architecturally and to reform Thai religion, King Rama I had performed other traditional actions in order to establish the legitimacy of his rule. He had tried to seek and develop official recognition from the Chinese Emperor of his right to rule over the Thai kingdom. He had also reestablished control over Ayutthaya's former vassal states and obtained from their leaders further acknowledgement of his authority. Moreover, he ordered that several white elephants, special symbols of blessing and prosperity that had recently been discovered, be brought to the capital as visible proof that the kingdom was prospering under his rule. For the other efforts to impress visibly upon the people his power and thereby gain recognition of it, he devoted considerable attention to various royal ceremonies, often of a religious nature. (Melford, Spiro, E., *Buddhism and Society*. (New York: Harper & Row Publisher. 1970), 171-187.)

leading Buddhist monks and scholars at Mahathat temple in Bangkok for the purpose of revising the Thai version of the Buddhist scriptures. This revision was greatly needed since many of the most reliable, authoritative Thai manuscripts had been lost or destroyed during the war with Burma. Moreover, the extant texts contained many discrepancies and errors. The variant readings in the available texts could become a source of considerable confusion at times, and they raised doubts as to which reading was the authentic Buddha word. They also were difficult for the progress of religious reform since there was uncertainty about what was scripturally correct and therefore normative. To remove this uncertainty, King Rama I had convened the Council at Mahathat temple and commissioned the participants to produce a revised text that would serve as a master version of the Buddhist scriptures and as a normative guide for religious reform.<sup>44</sup>

The work of the Council was successful by two hundred and fifty scholars, taking about five months to complete. Then, the revised texts were transcribed into palm-leaf manuscripts, which were guarded and placed in a building constructed specifically for that purpose. Throughout the entire proceedings, the king played a very important role. He was present at the opening ceremony and continued to show much interest in the Council's work and progress during the days and months that followed. Also, he provided for the needs and expenses of all the participants. Sponsoring a Buddhist assembly of this magnitude had political as well as the religious significance for King Rama I. It identified him with the pious rulers of Thailand's past and with the great and devout kings of Buddhist history, kings such as King Asoka<sup>45</sup> who also had convened Councils for the purpose of reforming the Sangha and revising the scriptures.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the Council and its work served as public demonstration of his concern for the restoration of the true "Buddha-word" and his allegiance to the Dhamma or teaching of the Buddha, providing another indication of King Rama I's legitimacy as a political ruler.

The efforts of King Rama I to reform Thai religious life and improve the conditions of Thai society were highly successful. This was also true of his attempts to gain

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<sup>44</sup> Prince Dhani Nivat. *A History of Buddhism in Siam*. (Bangkok: The Siam Society. 1965), 21-30.

<sup>45</sup> An Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty who ruled from 273 BCE to 232 BCE. Often cited as one of India's greatest emperors, Asoka reigned over most of present-day India after a number of military conquests. His empire stretched from present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan in the west, to the present-day Bangladesh and Assam state of India in the east, and as far south as the Brahmagiri in Karnataka. His reign was headquartered in Magadha (present-day Bihar state of India). He embraced Buddhism from the prevalent Vedic tradition after witnessing the mass deaths of the war of Kalinga, which he himself had waged out of a desire for conquest. He was later dedicated in the propagation of Buddhism across Asia and established monuments marking several significant sites in the life of Gautama Buddha. Asoka in human history is often referred to as the emperor of all ages. Asoka was a devotee of ahimsa (nonviolence), love, truth, tolerance and vegetarianism. (Swearer, Donald. *Buddhism and Society in Southeast Asia*, (Pennsylvania: Anima Books. 1981), n. pag.)

<sup>46</sup> Prince Dhani Nivat. *A History of Buddhism in Siam*. 22-23.

political legitimacy for himself and his descendants. When he died in 1809, the succession to the throne passed peacefully and orderly to his son King Rama II. The royal line has remained in the Chakri family. The accomplishments of King Rama I during the seventeen years that he ruled over the Thai nation were a lot. Politically and militarily, he continued to build upon what King Taksin had begun. Although troubled by renewed attacks from the Burmese many times during his reign, he succeeded in increasing his kingdom's military strength and political influence and in expanding its territory until at the time of his death. Thailand was once again the most powerful country in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, even more significant than these achievements were his accomplishments in terms of cultural and religious reform and restoration. During his reign, many of the traditions that had been disrupted and were in danger of being lost were reestablished and preserved for future generations. Indeed, without his efforts much of Thailand's traditional heritage might not have survived.

Thus, in the end King Rama I had succeeded in accomplishing both of his major goals. He formed again a Thai kingdom that was in many ways modeled after and similar to the glorious and powerful one that had existed at Ayutthaya, and he established himself and his family as legitimate holders of political power and as rightful occupants of the Thai throne. These two goals might be related and, as we have tried to show, the reform of Thai religion was central to the achievement of both.

### **3.1.4 The Holy Emerald Buddha: the Symbolic Representative of Political Legitimation in Thailand and Laos**

It is a firmly established historical fact that the Theravada scriptures were brought from Ceylon to Pagan during or shortly after King Anawartha's reign (late eleventh, early twelfth centuries A.D.) and that a Holy Jewel held an important cultic position in the Angkor court of about the same period (late eleventh century). Moreover, there is now considerable evidence, which enables us to concern with the Holy Jewel, which was respected at Angkor, with the Devaraja (divine king) cult practiced by the Khmer rulers.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, there is a solid basis for confirming that this Jewel was, if not the Holy Emerald Jewel itself, at least a model which the Holy Angkor Emerald Jewel came to represent and whose sacrament it was believed to manifest.<sup>48</sup> In any event, the chroniclers explain that the Holy Emerald Jewel and the sacred scriptures became separated when the pure Theravada tradition was brought from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia. However, the chroniclers do not condone the separation, and therein lie the key to their purpose. The ideal, which is not openly stated in their narrative, is

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<sup>47</sup> Briggs, Lawrence. The Ancient Khmer Empire. Transaction of the American Philosophical Society, Vol.41, Part 1. (Philadelphia: n.p. 1951), 151.

<sup>48</sup> Lingat, Robert. "Le Culte du Bouddha d'Emeraude," Journal of the Siam Society. XXVII. 1. (Paris: n.p. 1934), 9-38.

the reuniting of the Holy Emerald Jewel, which was associated with the royal cult at Angkor and the sacred scriptures which King Anawartha had succeeded in bringing to Pagan. Furthermore, it is just this ideal which could be actualized by King Tilok of Chiangmai, and then by the other kings who subsequently possessed the Jewel. King Tilok actualized this ideal in a most dramatic way. He acquired the Jewel, brought it to his capital and established its cult. Moreover, he sponsored a great Ecumenical Council (the eighth such Ecumenical Council according to the Thai reckoning) at which the monks were enjoined reconstructing the sacred scriptures in their pristine purity. Since Tilok's time, a full copy of the most orthodox version of the Pali canon has been kept in close proximity to it.<sup>49</sup> The Thai and Laotian kings have symbolically reestablished the fullness and purity of the Buddhist religious by bringing and keeping together these two forms of the body of the Buddha. Likewise doing so, they have proclaimed the legitimacy of their own rule.

In the context of the chronicles, the Holy Emerald Jewel was, or could be seen as, a substitute for the Jewel par excellence, the gem Jewel of the Chakkavatti king. This great gem Jewel remained in its original place on Mt. Vibul, while its power was clearly seen in the world through the presence of the Holy Emerald Jewel. In the case of Angkor, this was a movable embodiment of the immobile linga's power resided on Mt. Mahendra, the sacred mountain where the great founding king of the Khmer Empire was consecrated as Chakravatin. Finally, in the various Thai and Laotian capitals, the Jewel appeared as the palladium of the reigning king, which embodied in a special way the same power which was also present in the relic encased in the stupa which served as the symbolic center of the kingdom. In the case of Chiangmai this stupa was the famous Chedi Luang which was built by King Tilok. In the case of Bangkok this stupa, which admittedly played a less prominent role than the Chedi Luang in Chiangmai or That Luang in Vientiane, was the famous Golden Mount at Wat Saket.<sup>50</sup>

What seem to be involved in these various contexts are two manifestations of the rupakaya of the Buddha whose functions directly parallel those of two different types of local deities which dominated the cadastral religion of the Asia of the monsoons from very ancient times. The first of these two types was the so-called public god of the soil, and the second was a more personalized deity often associated with the ancestor of a local chieftain who was

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<sup>49</sup> Boeles, John. "Four Stone Images of the Jina Buddha in the Precincts of the Chapel Royal of the Emerald Buddha," *Felicitations Volumes of Southeast Asian Studies Presented to His Highness Prince Dhanivat, Vol.2.* (Bangkok: Siam. 1965), 186-187.

<sup>50</sup> In Chiangmai and Vientiane, the Holy Emerald Jewel was kept in close proximity to the central stupa. However, when the Jewel was established in Bangkok, it was integrated directly into the symbolic structure of the royal palace which was located at some distance from the Golden Mount (Koson Srisang. *Thai Dhammocracy: Social Ethics as a Hermeneutic of Dhamma.* (University of Chicago. 1973), 216-218.

primarily responsible for its cult. In many cases, these two types of deities were closely identified so that the second became a personalization of the first. This was, for example, the situation in Cham cults, which were the prime focus of Paul Mus's crucial study on the subject.<sup>51</sup> However, in many other situations, particularly in societies with a more hierarchic social structure, the two were clearly distinct.<sup>52</sup>

When comparing the two segments of the discussion of the Jewel and other Buddhist symbols of legitimating, the result is a pattern in which three elements play an important role. Within this pattern the legitimating presence of the rupakaya of the Buddha is represented in two forms which parallel the two types of deities which existed in the pre-Buddhist, pre-Indianization cadastral religion of Southeast Asia and in the Brahmanism tradition of Angkor. The first of these forms is the Jewel itself, which corresponds to the more personalized ancestral deity in the local tradition and to the Khmer Devaraja, adapting and extending the role of these earlier deities based on the rich Buddhist symbolism previously discussed. The second of these forms is the stupa, which takes the place of the public god of the soil in the local tradition and of Mt. Mahendra in the Khmer context, extending and adapting their role based on the equally rich or perhaps even richer symbolism inherent in its profoundly cosmological structure and decor.<sup>53</sup> Finally, the third basic element, which completes the triune pattern, is the symbol of the dhammakaya of the Buddha, namely the sacred scriptures in their pure Pali form. For almost half a millennium the Holy Emerald Jewel maintained its distinctive position within this triune pattern through which the kings of northern Thailand, Laos and central Thailand sought to legitimate their rule.

With the identification of this broader complex of legitimating symbols and of the role of the Holy Emerald Jewel within, it may be interesting to point out that in the broader Thai and Laotian cultural arena, there is another especially sacred image. This sacred image has played a role similar to the Holy Emerald Jewel within the same basic pattern of legitimating symbols. In the cultic traditions in the old Laotian capital of Luang Prabang, it can be pointed out that the three major celebrations of the yearly ritual calendar reached their culmination in three distinct religious actions. In the respecting of the Prabang image, it served as the palladium of the reigning dynasty (as the symbolic associations of the Prabang image are similar to those of the Holy Emerald Jewel, and the two images have often been considered as rivals). The capital city's central stupa, and the abbots of the four major temples

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<sup>51</sup> Paul Mus had stated in his review of Notton's translation of the Cambodia chronicle (Mus, Paul. *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française Extrême-Orient*, Vol.XXX. (Paris: n.p. 1930), 466-471.

<sup>52</sup> Maspero, Henri. "La Société et les Religions des Chinois Anciens et celles des Tai Modernes," *Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la Chine*. (Paris: Civilisations du Sud. 1950), n. pag.

<sup>53</sup> Mus, Paul. *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française Extrême-Orient*, Vol.XXX. 466-471.

that traditionally had responsibility for the four segments into which the dividedly sacred scriptures were respected.<sup>54</sup> These three central actions involved the successive veneration of the Three Jewels in which all Buddhists take refuge, namely the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. Now, it can be argued that these three objects of veneration may also, and perhaps even more appropriately, be identified with the three basic elements in the complex of legitimating symbols, which were so persistently utilized in Chiangmai, Vientiane, and Bangkok. In other words, it now seems apparent that the Prabang image and the central stupa serve to represent and to convey the rupakaya of the Buddha in its more personalized (dynastic) and more public (communal and territorial) forms when the monks serve to represent and to convey the ultimate legitimating presence of the holy scriptures through which the dhammakaya of the Buddha is made accessible to the kingdom and its populace.

Theravada Buddhism has traditionally provided various modes of religious legitimation although political authority in South and Southeast Asia is no longer a matter of serious dispute either among buddhologists or area specialists. After many decades of modern scholarship in which the religio-political aspects of Theravada concern were either ignored or summarily dismissed, their importance has now become widely recognized among historians of religion, area historians, political scientists and anthropologists. More directly related to the focus of the present paper, investigators representing these disciplines have already explored several different Theravada scenarios in which conceptions of legitimation have been given both mythic and cultic expression, and in which various elements of the indigenous tradition have been incorporated.<sup>55</sup>

The holy Emerald Buddha is presented as the palladium of the kings of Siam and Laos with its mythic and cultic modes of Theravada legitimation in a way which will both utilize and extend the insights. The importance and significance of the Emerald Buddha for the Thai and Lao kings can be expressed in the following four parts: the first part is a brief review of the mythical and cultic in term of the historical adventures of the Emerald Buddha; the second part is the sacred power of the Emerald Buddha as the Jewel qua jewel; the third part is the association of the myth that enhanced the scarcity in the Jewel, which gives it a specifically Buddhist and royal focus; and the fourth part is an exploration of the relationship which developed between the Jewel and other Buddhist symbols of legitimating, as well as between the Buddhist pattern of legitimation and the basic pattern of cadastral religion in the Asia of the monsoons.

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<sup>54</sup> Reynolds, Frank. "Ritual and Social Hierarchy: An Aspect of Traditional Religion in Buddhist Laos," *History of Religions Journal*, 9, 1 (August 1969): 78-89.

<sup>55</sup> Falk, Nancy. "Wilderness and Kingship in Ancient South India," *History of Religions*, XIII, 1 (August 1973): 1-15.

### 3.1.5 The Significance of the Emerald Buddha in Terms of the Myth of Its History

Despite there are several of northern Thai texts, which explain the origins of the Holy Emerald Jewel, those texts do not differ in their basic account.<sup>56</sup> The story goes as follows: some 500 years after the death (Parinibbana, a stage of nirvana) of the Lord Buddha, Thera Nagasena who was at the meantime a spiritual counselor to King Milinda wanted to make an image of the Buddha in order to encourage the expansion of the faith. Owing to fearing that an image of silver or gold would be destroyed by a degenerate humanity, he wanted to make the image from a precious stone given with special spiritual power. Sakka caring for his desire decided that he would provide the jewel, and went to the wonderful Vibulapabbata (Mt.Vibul) with a hope of getting the gem jewel of the great Chakkavatti king<sup>57</sup>. Since no one but a Chakkavatti king could possess the gem Jewel, its guardians refused to give it to Sakka; but an emerald Jewel which was of the same essence and came from the same place was offered instead. He brought the emerald jewel to Nagasena and then Vissukamma, the divine architect and craftsman, appeared in the guise of an artisan and fashioned the Jewel into an image of Buddha, a task which took seven days and nights during which all sorts of miracles transpired. When the image was completed, the Thera invited the seven relics of the Buddha to enter into it, and they did so. Thereupon, the Thera prophesied that the image would be worshiped in Cambodia, Burma, Laos, and Thailand.<sup>58</sup>

As will be seen subsequently, the story of the acquisition and fashioning of the Jewel is pregnant with religious significance, but all of the modern scholars who have commented upon it from the time of King Mongkut (mid-nineteenth century) have agreed that it falls into the realm of mythology.<sup>59</sup> Certain historical facts may be reflected such as the existence of the Thera Nagasena and possibly his relationship to the widely famed King Milinda, the emergence in early Buddhist history of the previously avoided practice of fashioning images, and even the ancient use of jewels of the emerald type as a material from which images were made.<sup>60</sup> However, there is no external evidence to suggest an Indian

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<sup>56</sup> The three main texts are the *Ratanabimbavamsa*, which was probably written in Sukhothai sometime after 1450; a chapter in the *Jinakalamali*, which was written in Chiangmai in the early part of the sixteenth century; and the *Amarakatabuddharupinidana*, which was probably written in Vientiane in the latter part of the sixteenth century. (Coedes, George. "Notes sur les ouvrages palis composes en pays thai," *Buletin de l'Ecole Francaise Extreme-Orient*, Vol.XV. (Paris: n.p. 1915), 8.)

<sup>57</sup> According to Buddhist mythology when a great Chakkavatti king or Universal Monarch appears in the world, this gem Jewel, which normally resides on Mt. Vibul, comes to him along with six other great gem possessions and remains in his care until the very end of his reign (Coedes, George. "Notes sur les ouvrages palis composes en pays thai," *Buletin de l'Ecole Francaise Extreme-Orient*, Vol.XV. 9.)

<sup>58</sup> Coedes, George. "Notes sur les ouvrages palis composes en pays thai," *Buletin de l'Ecole Francaise Extreme-Orient*, Vol.XV.11.

<sup>59</sup> Bowring, John. *The Kingdom and People of Siam*, Vol.1. (London: Parker. 1957), 316.

<sup>60</sup> Legge, James. *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*. (New York: Dover Publications. 1965), 102.

origin for this image; what is more, the fabrication of Indian origins for this image and other sacred objects was a common practice in Southeast Asia.

The various chronicles continue by providing a brief sketch of the Jewel's early career. According to the account, the image remained in India until a series of calamities caused the people who possessed it to move to Sri Lanka where it was then established.<sup>61</sup> Much later, the chronicles continue, King Anawartha of the Burmese kingdom of Pagan felt the need to obtain a full and correct version of the sacred scriptures and, in order to acquire such a copy, he used this magical power to get to Sri Lanka. There the king made copies of the three major segments of the Pali canon, and of an additional collection of grammatical works. In order to send them back to Pagan he placed two of the texts in one boat and he placed the other two texts, along with the holy emerald jewel, in a second boat. However, in the course of the journey back to Burma a great storm arose and the second boat was diverted to the Khmer country (Cambodia). When King Anawartha discovered what had happened, he used his magic power to travel to the Khmer capital of Angkor where he obtained the writing but forgot his intention to take the Jewel. Later, as a result of a flood occasioned by the anger of a royal chaplain whom the Khmer king had mistreated, the people fled from Angkor and took the Jewel to a neighboring village.<sup>62</sup>

As in the case of the primitive account of the origins of the image, this recital of its travels from India to a village near Angkor owes more to the chronicler's efforts to establish its religio-political meaning than to actual historical events. Even though King Anawartha was a powerful ruler of Pagan who instituted a Theravada Buddhist reform, the story of his travels to Sri Lanka and Angkor and the related account of the Jewel's misadventures at sea and arrival at Angkor cannot be accepted as historical facts. Nevertheless, there is one scholar, Robert Lingat, who has carefully surveyed all of the sources and strongly argues that the Holy Emerald Jewel is identical with the Holy Jewel mentioned in an ancient Khmer inscription from the reign of King Suryavarman I (early eleventh century A.D.).<sup>63</sup> He has noted a commonality of both name and function and has ingeniously dealt with the problem posed by the Brahmanism rather than the Buddhist associations of Suryavarman's Jewel and the obviously later northern Thai style of the iconography of the Holy Emerald Jewel. At the time when it was being venerated in Suryavarman's court, Lingat argues, the Jewel had not yet received its image form; its transformation into an image occurred, he contends, in the context of the Theravada reform

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<sup>61</sup> Jayawickrama, N. The Sheaf of Gardlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror. (London: Luzac Company. 1968), 139-145.

<sup>62</sup> Jayawickrama, N. The Sheaf of Gardlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror. 139-145.

<sup>63</sup> Lingat, Robert. "Le Culte du Bouddha d'Emeraude," Journal of the Siam Society. 9-38.

movement which took place in Thailand during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and should be attributed to the period during which, according to the unanimous testimony of the chronicles, the whereabouts of the image were unknown.

Lingat's hypothesis has much to commend it, but the actual physical identity of the two Jewels remains problematic. There is no really valid evidence for the occurrence of any flood of the kind reported in the chronicles, and Thai incursions into the Khmer heartland before the middle of the fourteenth century were rare.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, there are stories of Thai acquisitions of sacred objects of native peoples, which suggest that the Jewel may well have been acquired in this context and only later associated with the Holy Jewel of the Angkor court. In this connection it is perhaps significant to note that in southern Laos it is reported that a precious stone considered to be an image of the Buddha was found by the aborigines in the region of Sarvane.<sup>65</sup> The chronicles recount that it was originally treated as a genie of the hunt, that after many adventures it was brought to Champasak and established in that vicinity, and that during a dynastic crisis that Jewel, by then considered to be palladium of the kingdom, was seized and carried away by the Siamese.<sup>66</sup>

Whatever they may conclude concerning the actual physical identity between the Angkor Jewel and the Holy Emerald Jewel, the chroniclers' accounts of the subsequent adventures of the Holy Emerald Jewel in central and northern Thailand almost certainly contain at least a germ of historical fact. Though the various versions involve inconsistencies which cannot be definitively resolved, the Jewel seems at different times to have fallen into the hands of the princes of Ayutthaya, Kampeng Phet, and Chiangrai and, what is the most important, the accounts all agree on the fully confirmed historical fact that in the late fifteenth century the Holy Emerald Jewel came into the possession of King Tilok of Lannathai, who brought it to his capital of Chiangmai and established it in the compound of the new central stupa which he had constructed.<sup>67</sup>

From that point forward the history of the Jewel's adventures can be traced quite precisely. In 1545, the son of the king of Luang Prabang, King Chaichetthathirat, acceded to a request to take the throne at Chiangmai where he ruled for several years. At the death of his father he returned to his homeland and when he did so he took the Holy Emerald Jewel with him. Much to the distress of the populace of Chiangmai he refused to return the image, but

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 9-38.

<sup>65</sup> Longat's argument was also supported by Coedes in his work, *Notes sur les ouvrages palis composés en pays thai*, *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française Extrême-Orient* (Coedes, George. "Notes sur les ouvrages palis composés en pays thai," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française Extrême-Orient*, Vol.XV. 12-15.)

<sup>66</sup> Coedes, George. "Notes sur les ouvrages palis composés en pays thai," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française Extrême-Orient*, Vol.XV. 12-15.

<sup>67</sup> Notton, Camille. *The Cults of the Emerald Buddha*. (Bangkok: Siam. 1931), 12-17.

rather established it in a temple near his own palace. A few years later he moved his capital to Vientiane, and again the Jewel was established in a similar location where the traditional cult was maintained. The Jewel remained in Vientiane for two hundred years until 1778 when Chakri who conquered the country sent it back to the Thai capital of Thonburi where it was received by the monks with all appropriate honors. A number of years later, when King Rama I occupied the throne, he placed the Holy Emerald Jewel in its own Chapel in the compound of the Grand Palace in Bangkok where it still remains, and where it still continues to be venerated as the protector of the Chakri dynasty and the kingdom over which it rules.<sup>68</sup>

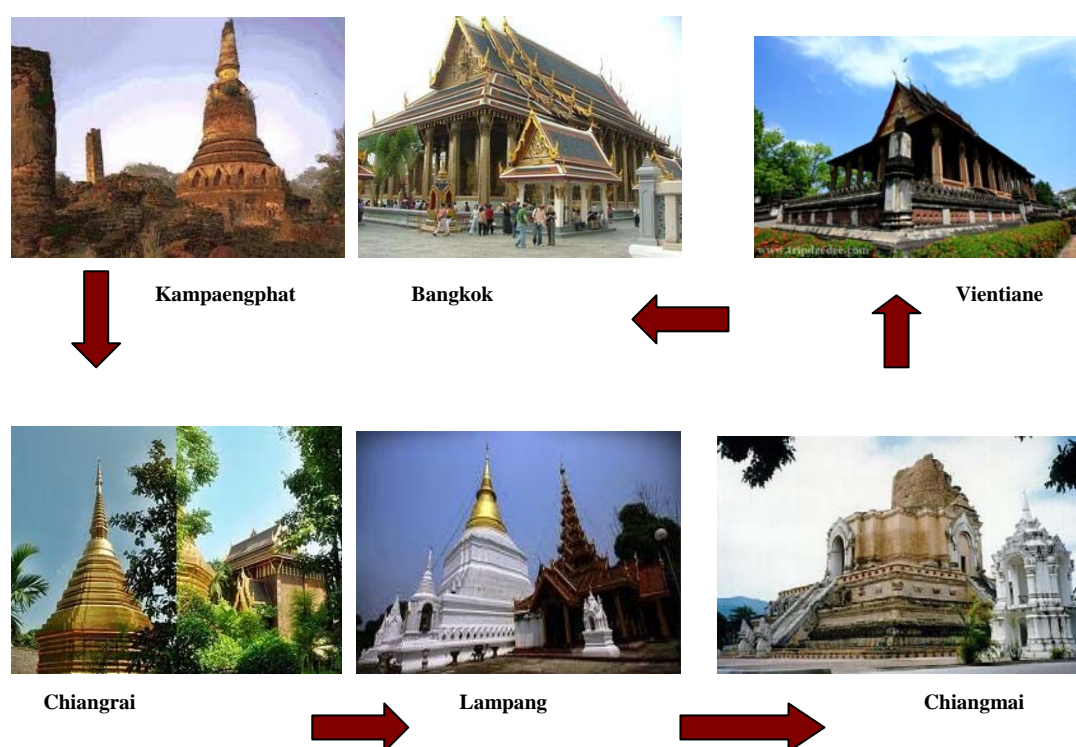


Figure 24: The route of the Emerald Buddha image

Source: Notton, Camille. The Cults of the Emerald Buddha. (Bangkok: Siam. 1931), n.pag.

<sup>68</sup> From the past to the present, this Buddha image was of special public interest in relations between Thailand and Laos because Laotians started to request the return of the Emerald Buddha to their capital while Thais responded by maintaining that the Laotians had previously stolen it from Thailand. This argument was reported in the Thai Magazine Prachachat. "Overcoming Inferiority with nationalism in Lao," Thai Weekly Magazine. (July 31 1975): 14.

The route of the Emerald Buddha image according to the sources of Northern Thai texts which are unacceptable by modern scholars and the study of Robert Lingat and Camille Notton which are acceptable by modern scholar could be concluded into below table.

Table 6: The route of the Emerald Buddha image





<b>The route of the Emerald Buddha image</b>	
<p><b><u>Unacceptable by modern scholars</u></b></p> <p>“Northern Thai texts”</p> <p>500 years after the death of the Lord Buddha</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Thera Nagasena made Buddha image to expand faith and belief of Buddhism</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Sakka (Mt.Vibul from King Chakkavatti)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Emerald Jewel</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>Vissanukamma (fashioned jewel into Buddha image with the relics of the Lord Buddha)</p>	<p><b><u>Acceptable by modern scholars</u></b></p> <p>Robert Lingat in “Le Culte du Bouddha d’Emeraude”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Khmer inscription (reign of King Suryavaraman I) <u>no flood</u>”</p> <p>Camille Notton in “The Cults of the Emerald Buddha”</p> <p><b><u>Clear evidence</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 15th century, King Tilok of Lannathai (Chiangmai): the Emerald Buddha image was housed in Chiangmai.</li> <li>- 1545 King Chaichetthathirat took the throne at Chiangmai and housed the Emerald Buddha image in Vientiane.</li> <li>- 1778 King Taksin invited the Emerald Buddha image from Vientiane to house in Bangkok (Arun Ratwararam temple).</li> <li>- 1782 King Rama I invited the Emerald Buddha image from Arun Ratwararam temple to house in new Royal Grand Palace.</li> </ul>



Figure 25: The celebration of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok, these pictures are mural paintings inside the main chapel of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok (the upper left and right hand side are the procession by water celebration and the lower left and right hand side are the procession by land celebration)

Source: Hongwiwat, Nidda. The Temple of The Emerald Buddha and The Grand Palace. (Bangkok: Pannee Printing. 2004), n. pag.

### 3.1.6 The Significance of the Emerald Buddha as Hierophant from its Jewel

The various chronicles' versions of the myth of the origins of the Holy Emerald Jewel are quite clear. They recount that Thera Nagasena, having become interested in the project of fashioning an image, wanted to have it carved from a sacred stone; and the versions are equally clear in confirming that the Jewel obtained was one, which manifested great supernatural power. From an historian's point of view, Robert Lingat has noted that the Holy Emerald Jewel was one of an important group of Thai and Laotian images, which were concerned with a *phi*<sup>69</sup> whose sacred power was a direct function of the material from which the image was made.<sup>70</sup> By taking this emphasis on the material from which the image was fashioned more seriously into account, it is possible to specify more precisely the mode of sacrality, which it manifests.

At the outset it should be noted that, despite the fact that it is called by the name of Holy Emerald Jewel, the image is not made from an emerald as that stone is usually

<sup>69</sup> An indigenous guardian spirit similar to the *nats* of Burma

<sup>70</sup> Lingat, Robert. "Le Culte du Bouddha d'Emeraude," Journal of the Siam Society. XXVII. 1. 12-

defined by mineralogists. Though the Holy Emerald Jewel is fashioned from a kind of jewel, which is relatively common around the northern Thai city of Nan, and though the material has sometimes been vaguely designated by scholars as a kind of jasper, its exact mineralogical character remains to be established. More importantly, however, it is the immediate impression, which the Jewel makes upon an observer, specifically the deep bluish-green luminosity, which conveys different aspects depending upon the lighting and the angle from which it is viewed. It is this curious and mysterious character of the appearance of the jewel which possibly led to its identification as an emerald, and which helps to explain the specific modes of sacred power which it has conveyed to those who pay respect.<sup>71</sup>

Emerald jewels of the emerald type have appeared at many points in the history of religions, and have indicated their ability to manifest various dimensions of sacrality. Through their green color, they have become associated with the positive aspects of vegetation and fertility, and with the power of the sacred to regenerate and renew.<sup>72</sup> In other instances their bluish-green cast has provided the basis for confirming their association with water in general, and with the rains in particular.<sup>73</sup> Especially in those cases where the luminosity of the emerald has been most apparent, associations with the sky and lightning have been occurred, thus the connections between the emerald and the rains have been reinforced as well.<sup>74</sup> Occasionally, emeralds have been credited with origins in the heavenly regions, while on other occasions their celestial character has been proved through their close association with a bird.<sup>75</sup> Various expressed in the accompanying mythologies, the transcendent and sacred dimensions of the sacred revealed by celestial hierophant have made themselves manifest in forms which attest to the continuing immediacy and efficacy of the sacred in the affairs of the world.

These various dimensions of sacred power, which men have perceived in this type of jewel focus around its positive aspects, around regeneration and renewal and around active benefits provided from above. It is in this context that the power of such jewels to bring relief from disease, to hasten childbirth, to restore sight, to increase wealth and the like make sense.<sup>76</sup> Also it is from these associations that George Kunz, in his *Magic of Jewels and*

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<sup>71</sup> Notton, Camille. *The Cults of the Emerald Buddha*. 12-17.

<sup>72</sup> George, Kunz. *Magic of Jewels and Charms*. (Philadelphia: J.B.Lippincott. 1915), 305.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 311.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 81.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 136, which refers to the Mexican emerald that bore the name of the “quetzal” bird with brilliant green plumes and the symbol of sovereignty in the area.

<sup>76</sup> George, Kunz. *Magic of Jewels and Charms*. 135.

*Charms*, has derived what he calls the usual meanings of emerald, namely faith, hope, and resurrection.<sup>77</sup>

These possibilities of the emerald for manifesting sacred power have been widely recognized and adapted in Southeast Asia. This fact is showed by a very popular myth concerning with the goddess Mani Mekhala that has been incorporated into the Ramakien (the Thai version of the Ramayana). It also provides the story line for one of the most renowned classical Thai dances.<sup>78</sup> The light, which this myth throws on the way in which the symbolic possibilities of the emerald have been exploited in this particular environment justifies quoting a part of summary of the myth given by Rene Nicholas: “Mani Mekhala, the nymph of the waters, possesses a marvelous emerald which produces the lighting. When she joins in with the joyous troops of gods and goddesses who, by their dances, celebrate the coming of the rains, Rama-sua, the grandson of Brahma, covets the emerald and desires to rip it away from the nymph. The nymph flees from him and the rays from the jewel shine in his face so that they blind him. The demon pursues her across the heavens, throwing his hatchet in her direction; but she evades the weapon, and striking the clouds, it causes the thunder.”<sup>79</sup> In this episode, the general association of emerald jewels with the rains and with generation and renewal are made more specific. The myth of the goddess and her jewel are connected directly with the coming of the monsoons, the most dramatic and positive event in the life of the agricultural communities of Southeast Asia. Furthermore, in the myth the jewel is intimately related to the lighting; in fact it is recognized as the very source of the light, which comes from the sky.

Turning to the case of the Holy Emerald Jewel itself, the chronicles of Chiangmai clearly testify to the fact that, while the image was in Chiangmai, it came to serve as the preeminent guardian for the city. And, just as in the case of the indigenous guardian *phi* which it superseded, it was venerated in special ceremonies held in April or May in order to assure the onset of the rains and to guarantee the prosperity and security of the realm for the coming year.<sup>80</sup> The jewel also assumed a role as the preeminent guardian of the city in

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<sup>77</sup> George, Kunz. Magic of Jewels and Charms. 281.

<sup>78</sup> Giles states in his work that, originally, Mani Mekhala appears in the Jakata as a goddess of the seas and the protector of navigators. Later on, in the Buddhist literature and cults of the Tamil country she takes on a more definite form. Moreover, in her place in the myth under consideration she is also presented in Thailand as the goddess who destines lightning discharge and rain. Giles, Francis. “An Account of the Rites and Ceremonies Observed at the Elephant-Driving Operations in the Seaboard Province of Lang Suan,” Journal of the Siam Society. XXV. (n.d. 1932): 153-214.

<sup>79</sup> Nicolas, Rene. “The Thai Ramayana,” Revue Indochinois-Extreme Asie, N.S., Vol.2. (Paris: n.p. 1928), 301.

<sup>80</sup> In traditions concerning the local guardian *phi* in Chiangmai and the introduction of the Emerald Jewel as the preeminent guardian deity of the city as can be seen in the Chronique du Mahathera Fa Bot, translated by Notton, Camille. Annals du Siam, Charles Lavauzelle, Vol.I. (n.p. 1926), 44-68.

Vientiane and Bangkok where special veneration at the time of the onset of the monsoons remained a regular focus of the cult. In addition, other special observances were held, particularly in time of crisis. For example, a great ceremony was performed in Bangkok at the time of the terrible cholera epidemic of 1820; on this occasion, an attempt was made to purify the city through an elaborate procession in which the Holy Emerald Jewel was taken around the city while the monks engaged in the recitation of sacred texts (*paritta*) which were believed to possess a special magical potency.<sup>81</sup>

The specific manifestations of sacred power, which were associated with the particular character of the jewel from which the image was carved were also closely related to various affinities and antagonisms which the image reportedly displayed during the course of its history. For example, consider the well-known affinity between the Holy Emerald Jewel and the almost equally famous image known as the Phra Sihing. In this case the Holy Emerald Jewel, both because of the symbolism inherent in the material from which it was made and because of the associations made in its mythology, was correlated with celestial power. In contrast, the Phra Sihing had explicit mythological connections with the underworld<sup>82</sup>. Thus, according to the tradition, which also affirms that the two images were made on the same day, they complement one another, and their “reuniting” in one place is most beneficial.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, consider the equally well-known antipathy between the Holy Emerald Jewel and the Phra Bang image of Laotian fame, an antipathy which was believed to have wrought great havoc when the two images were brought together in Bangkok, thus leading to the return of the Prabang image to its earlier “home” in Luang Prabang. In this case both images were associated with the celestial dimensions of power (like the Holy Emerald Jewel, the Prabang image had close mythological connections with the celestial realm) and thus they were considered to be competitive, antagonistic and prone to cause problems when they were kept together within the confines of a single kingdom.

The significance of the emerald hierophant is also evident in the close and very important connection which is made in the cult between the image, the lightning and the use of sacred fire. In the chronicles a number of instances are reported in which the image effects its will through the power of lightning. For example, when the image does not desire to be

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<sup>81</sup> The History of Wat Mahathat. *Journal of the Siam Society*. XXIV, (n.p. 1931): 1-29.

<sup>82</sup> According to the chronicles which recount the origins of the Phra Sihing, it was cast in the likeness of a naga king who had assumed the form of the Buddha, and in a local Chiangmai chronicle it is reported that immediately after its casting the naga king took it with him and descended into his underworld realm. The origins of the image and the reference to the naga king’s removal of the image to his underworld kingdom can be found in Notton, Camille. *The Chronicle of the Buddha Sihing*. (Bangkok: n.p. 1928), n. pag.

<sup>83</sup> Finot noted that in the Laotian chronicle of Khun Borom it is stated that when the people speak of the phi sua muang or local guardian deity they in reality speak of Mani Mekhala and the emerald and celestial association. Finot, Louise. “Recherches sur la Literature Laotian,” *Bulletin de l’Ecole Francaise Extreme-Orient*. XVII, 5. (n.d. 1917): 156.

placed in a shelter built for it by a local sovereign, a bolt of lightning destroys the shelter. The chronicles also report that, at a certain crucial juncture in the jewel's career, a similar bolt broke off the plaster in which it had been encased and hidden. The lightning was identified as the source of the sacred fire, which was kept beside it and through which its power became especially manifest. This connection between the lightning and the sacred fire was clearly stated in the local chronicles. Further, in the nineteenth century it was noted by Anna Leonowens who reported that on one occasion after the fire had been allowed to go out by a careless attendant it was not rekindled until lightning struck the Royal Audience Hall, thereby providing a flame, which was appropriate for the purpose.<sup>84</sup>

### **3.1.7 Significance of the Emerald Buddha in its Relations as Jewel, Buddha, and Kingship**

Without an appreciation of the basic religious character of the Holy Emerald Jewel as jewel, no integral understanding of its legitimating power can be generated. But at the same time a full understanding of the Jewel's potency must also take seriously into account the specifically Buddhist and royal associations which it has acquired. Among these associations those with Indra, the Buddha-Chakkavatti, Mahavessantara, and Rama have been of central importance.

Whatever its previous career may have been, when the Holy Emerald Jewel appeared clearly on the stage of history it was fully integrated into the Buddhist framework. And within this framework its association with Indra, the divine king who rules over the gods in the Tavatimsa heaven, has been consistently recognized. This is not surprising since there is an intrinsic connection between the dimensions of sacred power traditionally manifested by emeralds and those associated by Buddhists with the figure of Indra (for example, the connections with rains and fertility, with the sky and the lightning, etc.). This association between the Jewel and Indra is visually communicated through the fact that a deep green emerald-like color is used within the Thai and Lao tradition to identify the figure of Indra. Moreover, the association is quite clearly expressed in the accounts recorded in the chronicles. In the previous section, there was already reference to the myth of the origins of the image in which it is reported that it was Indra who obtained the Jewel which Vissaukamma, his assistant, fashioned into an image. To this can be added the fact that the chronicles clearly state that the oil for lamps which stood before the image had been given by Indra, and that the flame had come from the celestial fire (lightning) which he had provided.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Leonowens, Anna. *The English Governess at the Siamese Court*. (Boston: Field Osgood. 1873), 189-190.

<sup>85</sup> Notton, Camille. *Annals du Siam*. Charles Lavauzelle, Vol.I. 49.

What is perhaps most significant of all, there is a series of tantalizing connections which seem to link the Holy Emerald Jewel with a very important cult object in northern Thailand.<sup>86</sup>

The cult of the Indrakhila seems to have been introduced into northern Thailand by early Buddhist ascetics as a part of their activities which included the founding of settlements, bringing in Indianized chieftains from the south, and the establishment of their (probably Sanskrit) form of the Buddhist tradition.<sup>87</sup> In many respects the cult was similar to that which had previously been rendered to the indigenous guardian deities. However, the center of worship was an Indrakhila which was thought to perform the function of guaranteeing fertility, security and prosperity so long as the sovereign and the people followed the five and eight precepts and offered the proper veneration to it and to the Kumphan (lesser deities) who guarded it.<sup>88</sup> But particularly interesting here is the fact that the mythology associated with the Indrakhila correlates closely with the mythology associated with the Holy Emerald Jewel. Some of the descriptions of its form reveal striking parallels between the two sacred objects, and that the accounts of the cult suggest a strong similarity of function.

At the level of mythology the Indrakhila had its original home in the Tavatimsa heaven, and was given by Indra to an ascetic or sovereign who desired to have it established in the earthly realm in order to assure the well being of a village or kingdom. There are differences between this kind of account of the origins of the Indrakhila and the accounts of the origin of the Holy Emerald Jewel. However, the fact that they belong to the same family of stories can hardly be denied. In contrast to the accounts of the Indrakhila's origins, which remain basically constant in the different sources, the descriptions of the object itself vary a great deal. In some cases the Indrakhila is described simply as a column of bricks. But in other cases it is identified as a precious stone or is associated with an object, which had an appearance very similar to that of the Holy Emerald Jewel. This latter kind of description is provided in a fascinating account in the Chronicle of Mahathera Fa Bot in which it is reported that Indra ordered an ascetic to make a vase of alloy in the shape of an egg of the rain bird. He was instructed to polish this vase until it took on a deep green coloring, and then to fill it with statues of the 101 species of animals. When this was completed, two Kumphan came and placed the Indrakhila in the vase (an event which was accompanied by a frightening clap of

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<sup>86</sup> Sastri, Haldane. "The Sculptured Pillar of the Indrakhila Hill at Bexuwada", Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report for 1995-1996, (n.p. 1995), 95-100.

<sup>87</sup> Damrong Rachanubhab. "Histoire du bouddhisme au Siam", Revue Indochinoise-Extreme Asie, 2, 13 (July 1927): 25-27.

<sup>88</sup> In Buddhist tradition, the five precepts were the standard prohibitions against killing, stealing, lying, illicit sexual activity, and the consumption of intoxicants; the eight precepts included these five plus three more which devout Buddhists followed on a special holyday.

thunder) and thereafter the vase Indrakhila and its kumphan guardians became the object of the cult.<sup>89</sup> In a parallel version the green, egg-shaped vase is identified directly with the Indrakhila itself.<sup>90</sup> In addition to these remarkable similarities in the mythology and physical form of the Indrakhila and the Jewel, it is also evident that, during the reign of King Tilok in Chiangmai, the cult of the Holy Emerald Jewel received the same kind of veneration which had previously been given to the Indrakhila. And, to cite another more recent case in point, it is apparent from Lingat's description that the ritual which was carried out in order to purify the city of Bangkok at the time of the great cholera epidemic was a typical *Buddhist paritta* ceremony in which the Holy Emerald Jewel had come to play the role usually assigned to an Indrakhila which had been specifically erected for the occasion.<sup>91</sup>

Though it is certainly the case that associations between the Holy Emerald Jewel and Indra are both numerous (protean) and multifaceted, the connections between the Jewel and the great Chakkvatti king are of even greater significance. According to the chronicles' accounts of its origin, the Jewel, though it was obtained by Indra, was not his Jewel and did not come from the Tavatimsa heaven where he reigned; rather, it was a jewel which was of the same essence as the gem jewel of the great Chakkavatti king, and it came from the place where that gem jewel was located. Moreover, the fact that the fabulous gem jewel of the Chakkavatti king was well known in the early Thai tradition can be demonstrated simply by pointing out a significant section in the well known fourteenth century Thai text called the *Three Worlds According to King Ruang* (Tri Phoom Phra Ruang). It was devoted to a vivid description of its glories and magnificence, as well as its various magical powers.<sup>92</sup>

But over and above the Holy Emerald Jewel's association with the gem jewel on Mt. Vibul, it came to be identified with the Chakkavatti king himself or, perhaps more accurately, with the Buddha in his Chakkavatti aspect. The Holy Emerald Buddha assumed a role as a manifestation of the Buddha Chakkavatti. It is possible that this came about by the transformation of the raw Jewel into an image of the Buddha and the subsequent incorporation of the seven relics of the Buddha. But it is even more specifically expressed by the custom, which had already been adopted during the time when the Jewel was located in Chiangmai, of fitting out the Jewel with full royal regalia. Paul Mus has explicated the association between the Buddha images which were decked out with such royal regalia and the Buddha Chakkavatti in his study about the cultic practices which were carried on at the

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<sup>89</sup> Notton, Camille. *Annals du Siam*, Charles Lavauzelle, Vol.I. 43-44.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>91</sup> Schalk, Peter. *Der Paritta-Dienst in Ceylon*. (Lund: Broderna Ekstrands Tryckeri AB. 1927), 152-166.

<sup>92</sup> Reynolds, Frank. *Three Worlds According to King Ruang*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1978), n. pag.

site of the Buddha's Enlightenment at Bodhagaya.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, the significance of Mus's study is enhanced by the recognition of the strong possibility that the practice of fitting out the Holy Emerald Jewel with royal regalia was directly influenced by the Bodhgaya tradition. The evidence of the practice in relation to the Holy Emerald Jewel comes from the reign of King Tilok who sent a mission to Bodhagaya and who, upon its return, not only built a replica of the Bodhagaya temple in Chiangmai but also fostered the casting of images in the style of the central Bodhagaya image.<sup>94</sup> However, in northern Thai, this practice of adornment was divested of the explicitly docetic and Mahayanist connotations which it had acquired in the Indian setting and in the "Indianized" areas of Southeast Asia. In this new Theravada context, crowned images and other images representing the Buddha Chakkavatti (including, presumably, the Holy Emerald Jewel) were considered to represent a particular moment in the Buddha's life when he assumed the form of a Chakkavatti king in order to awe into submission a powerful and prideful monarch named Jambupati.<sup>95</sup>

Thus the dimensions of sovereignty suggested by the Jewel hierophant itself, and accentuated through the various associations between the Jewel and Indra, were expressed in their fullest and most complete form through the close association which was made between the Jewel and Buddhism's royal figure par excellence, the Buddha Chakkavatti. Through the proper veneration of the Jewel the king gained the support of sovereign power in its most potent and beneficent form. And, on a deeper level, the king's meditation on the jewel imbued him with that power and thereby enabled him to exercise authority, to establish order, and to guarantee protection and prosperity for the kingdom. Moreover, it was this identification between the Jewel and the Buddha Chakkavatti which provided the ultimate justification for one of the most important functions associated with the Jewel in the Thai and Laotian kingdoms where it was venerated, namely the role as the sovereign ruler before whom the various princes of the kingdom swore their fealty to the reigning monarch who possessed it.

During the course of its history in Thailand and Laos the basic symbolism of the Jewel as Buddhist sovereign was given a further and very important twist through the connection which came to be made between the Jewel and Mahavassantara, the king whom the tradition identifies as the Bodhisattva in his last life prior to the one in which he attained Buddha-hood. Though there are some references to the stories of the Buddha's previous lives in the chronicles, both the evidence for the association between the Jewel and Mahavassantara

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<sup>93</sup> Mus, Paul. *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française Extrême-Orient*, Vol. XXX, 466-471.

<sup>94</sup> Griswold, Alexander. *Dated Buddha Images of Northern Siam*. (Ascona: Artibus Asiae. 1957), n. pag.

<sup>95</sup> Finot, Louise. "Recherches sur la Littérature Laotian," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française Extrême-Orient*. 66-69.

and the key to its significance are to be found in the cult. At least from the time that the Emerald Jewel was located in Vientiane, its adornments were changed twice a year, once at the beginning of the rainy season when it was fitted out with a monastic out-fit, and once at the transition between the rainy season and the cool season when it was fitted out with the full royal regalia (a third change was instituted during the nineteenth century when King Rama III provided a third royal outfit which was subsequently used to adorn the image during the dry season).<sup>96</sup> At least by the time of the Bangkok period this ritual of changing the Jewel's adornments had come to involve, as a central element, the chanting of the Mahavessantara Jataka.



Figure 26: The adornment of the Emerald Buddha in each season, the dry season adornment (left), rainy season adornment (middle), and cool season adornment (right)  
Source: Hongwiwat, Nidda. The Temple of The Emerald Buddha and The Grand Palace. (Bangkok: Pannee Printing. 2004), n. pag.

In order to understand the significance of the association which was thus made between the Holy Emerald Jewel and the figure of Mahavessantara, it is necessary to take two different facts into account. The first is that, through the changing of the outfit of the Emerald Jewel at the beginning and at the end of the rainy season, the Theravadins expressed their conviction that the true Buddhist sovereign was a paradigmatic model for and of the traditional seasonal vacillation between the concentrated piety and renunciation appropriate for the four month rainy season (the “Lenten” season in the Buddhist context) and the more normal “secular” life appropriate for the remaining eight months of the year. And, the second fact that needs to be taken into account is that the story of Mahavessantara is one in which the royal protagonist exhibits these two modes of existence in their most impressive and dramatic forms. On the one hand, the great Mahavessantara story recounts the way in which

<sup>96</sup> Lingat, Robert. “Le Culte du Bouddha d’Emeraude,” Journal of the Siam Society. XXVII. 1. 26-27.

Mahavessantara was perfected in giving by giving his kingdom and all of his possessions (wife, children, and so on) and adopting a radically renunciatory mode of life. But, on the other hand, the story culminates in a miraculous restitution of all of the possessions which he had previously given away and his return to his throne with the celebrations of all his subjects.<sup>97</sup> In addition, the association of the Jewel with the figure of Mahavessantara reinforced and dramatized the same point which was made in the cultic performance as a whole, namely the intrinsic and intimate correlation between the two phases in the life of the Jewel (monastic or renunciatory and royal), the two phases in terms of the cosmic cycle (rainy season and other seasons), and the two phases in the life of community (the phase of concentrated piety and the phase of normal “secular” existence).

Having considered the way in which the symbolism of the Holy Emerald Jewel was both extended and given a specifically Buddhist and even more specifically Theravadin form through various associations which connected it with Indra, the Buddha Chakkavatti and Mahavessantara, one may turn the attention to the last of the four significant associations, which have been widely affirmed in that part of its history that relates to the figure of Rama. There is no reason to believe that this relationship was affirmed during the earlier periods of the Jewel’s history, but its importance during the Bangkok era is demonstrated by the fact that, in the Chapel of the Holy Emerald Jewel in Bangkok, the galleries which surround the building are covered with murals depicting paintings of the Ramakien in which Rama is the great hero.

The fact that identification between the Jewel and Rama is intended is obvious, but its significance is not immediately apparent. However, it is true that in Buddhist circles Rama was sometimes recognized as a future Buddha, but this tradition is not strong enough and does not seem to be significant in this particular context. Rather, the key to the association is in the fact that at a very early point in its history especially the Thai (Chakri) dynasty chose especially to identify itself with the figure of Rama. When this crucial element in the situation is taken into account, it becomes self evident that the very vivid and very public demonstration of the connection between the Jewel and Rama is meant to convey to the people of the Bangkok kingdom the identity between the religious merit and sovereign power of the jewel and the religious merit and sovereign power of the reigning dynasty founded by King Rama I and presently represented by his lineal descendant, King Rama IX.

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<sup>97</sup> These culminations of the story are often reenacted while the Mahavessantara story is being chanted in the ceremonies marking the end of the rainy season in many areas of Thailand and Laos, and help to account for the promise that those who listen to the recitation will be reborn when the future Buddha Metteya comes to establish his reign on earth. It is also quite probable that this culmination explains the reason for a chronicler’s report that when the Holy Emerald Jewel was brought to Chiangmai the procession was accompanied by the chanting of the Mahavessantara story. Notton, Camille. The Cults of the Emerald Buddha. 12-17.

### **3.1.8 The Jewel and other Legitimizing Symbols**

The discussion above has focused on the symbolism of the jewel itself, taking account both of its intrinsic power as a hierophant and of the more specifically Buddhist and royal meanings which came to be associated with it during its history. However, in order to gain a more complete understanding of the role which the Jewel has played in legitimating the role of Thai and Laotian kings, it is crucial to look more closely at the relationship between the Jewel and the sacred scriptures, and then to consider the relationship between the Jewel and the sacred mountain or stupa. As in the preceding, the account will consider certain fascinating parallels between the Buddhist patterns of legitimation in which the Jewel played an important part, and other patterns of legitimation which preceded it in the Southeast Asian context.

In the chronicles' accounts of the Holy Emerald Jewel, the "theoretical" relationship between the Jewel and the sacred sculptures can be seen as suggested by the myth which deals with its origins, while the historical dimension is brought directly into the foreground in the legends of King Anawartha's activities. In recounting the Jewel's origin, the chronicles describe the fashioning of the raw Jewel into an image of the Buddha and the consecration of the image which occurs when the Thera Nagasena invites the seven relics of the Buddha to enter into it; and in this way they establish the Jewel's character as the rupakaya (material body or form body) of the Buddha which, according to the tradition, is the manifestation of the Buddha's continuing presence which must coexist with and supplement his dhammakaya (dhamma or scriptural body). On the historical level, the subsequent account of the chronicles presupposes that the Jewel and the sacred scriptures coexisted with one another in Ceylon, but maintains that in Southeast Asia, due to the storm which diverted one of Anawartha's boats and his later forgetfulness, the two became separated, the jewel becoming established at Angkor, the scriptures in Pagan.

Although the details of the history are obviously mythical or legendary in character, there are good reasons to believe that the denouement of the story concerning King Anawartha reflects an actual historical situation which existed in Southeast Asia early in the second millennium A.D.

### **3.2 The Loss of the Emerald Buddha and the Sisaket Building Policy**

Siam's efforts to dominate Laos, beginning with King Taksin's accession to power, were marked by a number of achievements, including the imprisonment of Laotians as slaves and the control of the flourishing trade routes of the region. It might seem that the loss of the Emerald Buddha could not be as significant to the Laotians as these other losses.

However, the capture of this statue was absolutely effective in rousing King Anuvong and his followers, inspiring them to resist Siam in 1827. In fact, the loss of this Buddha image still continues to rankle with the Laotians to this day. This statue has served as a center point for all conflict between Bangkok and Laos since this image was seized and brought, along with many other Lao sacred statues and texts, from Vientiane to Bangkok in 1779.

The religious dimension of Bangkok's hegemony has been crucial in shaping its attitude toward the Lao. In addition to his monopoly over the possession of white elephants, a symbol of the universal monarchy's manifest destiny, King Taksin, as king of Siam, also secured possession of the Emerald Buddha. Siam had recently recovered from its upheaval of 1767 and King Taksin also had a need for regalia. This Buddha image referred to as the Phra Kaew or Emerald Buddha is the supreme symbol of politico-religious legitimacy in this part of Southeast Asia. Probably of Chiangmai workmanship, the Emerald Buddha was valued by travelers in the early nineteenth century at approximately one million francs or the price of two hundred kilograms of gold.<sup>98</sup>

It can be showed that King Rama I, King Taksin's successor, began his new capital, Bangkok, with the 1782 construction of a pagoda to house the Emerald Buddha. Lunet de Lajonquiere noted that Lao prisoner craftsmen from Vientiane in 1779 constructed the temple.<sup>99</sup> This pagoda remained an awesome place; over a century ago, it both impressed and desolated one visitor.

The Emerald Buddha became the chief obsession of the Lao in the nineteenth century. The psychic, physical, and political acts of dispossession initiated by Siam against the Lao failed to stifle the renaissance and force for religion in Laos. Paradoxically, the thefts actually helped legitimize and focus political power in Laos. When the Emerald Buddha, resident of Lanchang for three hundred years, was spirited away, it provoked an awareness of the necessity for national recovery among the Lao. The loss of this prestigious and legendary medium, the Emerald Buddha, classified the Lao people to mobilize politically. Political mobilization drew its strength from a simple metaphorical parallel: the Emerald Buddha, like Lao independence, was a prisoner in Bangkok.

King Anuvong, who appreciated its importance, tried to ensure that the Emerald Buddha was returned to the Lao by ordering the creation of substitutes and many new

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<sup>98</sup> Crawford cites that Phra Kaew is not made of emerald but more likely of jasper. He pictured it as a deity of a green colored stone, and about eighteen inches high. Thus he might assume that it was made of green colored stone or jasper, because the material has not the appearance of being highly polished but is dull and opaque. Moreover, he also refers to the fact that the Phra Kaew measured forty-five centimeters wide and seventy-five centimeters high, and the statue would have been carved five hundred years after the death of Buddha. See Crawford, John. *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol.2. (London: Colburn and Bentley. 1834), 153.

<sup>99</sup> Archambault, Charles. "L'histoire de Champasak", *Journal Asiatique*. (Paris: n.p. 1961), 567.

pagodas. The foundation of Vientiane's Ho Phra Kaew was restored and raised<sup>100</sup>, which invaders had destroyed in 1779. This could remind the Lao of their Emerald Buddha's power and serve to focus and widen the political energy of this symbol.<sup>101</sup> From its original inception in the sixteenth century, this pagoda had been the sacred place for the political and religious life of the country. For instance, in 1779, King Anuvong's sister, Princess Khieo Khom, took refuge in Ho Phra Kaew when the defense of Vientiane collapsed before the Thai armies. Fifty years later, in 1828, when he returned from deportation in Vietnam, King Anuvong spent his nights under the roof of this pagoda.<sup>102</sup> Lunet de Lajonquiere described its beauty:

“...the gracious silhouette of the superimposed roofs, that are easy to reconstitute by thought, the elegance and the boldness of the colonnades, the lines simple and harmonious of the principal body, the spacing of the terraces make this monument a remarkable edifice.... It is likely to be the best expression of the architectural art in the capital of the Lanchang kingdom”.<sup>103</sup>

This may have been the most impressive and inspiring pagoda that King Anuvong constructed, but it was certainly not the only one. Recalling the Buddhist allegory of Savatti, where the Buddha infinitely multiplied his image to confuse unbelievers, King Anuvong and the Lao expanded the construction of pagodas devoted to the Emerald Buddha throughout their territories. As in Vientiane, the various Ho Phra Kaew in the Lao metropolises sheltered great political meetings, where new high officials were installed, or housed ceremonies for the oath-taking of officials. These temples also served as the center for the celebrations on festive days.

A Ho Phra Kaew was founded by King Anuvong at Srichiangmai<sup>104</sup>, across the river from Vientiane.<sup>105</sup> His ally, Chao Noi, Prince of Siang Khuang, also constructed the Ho Phra Kaew in his capital. It was decorated like the one in Vientiane.<sup>106</sup> Prince Yo, King Anuvong's son and the monarch of Champasak, built the Ho Phra Kaew in his new capital.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ho means the building that was constructed like the main chapel of the temple in order to house the Emerald Buddha in the Lao Kingdom. Particularly, Lao kings would order construction of Ho Phra Kaew in the important cities, such as Vientiane, Srichiangmai, Siang Khaung, and Champasak. Although the Emerald Buddha was not housed inside the Ho Phra Kaew, these Ho were constructed as the representative of the Emerald Buddha.

<sup>101</sup> Parmentier, Henri. *L'art du Laos, Vol.2, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient*, 112.

<sup>102</sup> Phongsawadan Muang Phuan (*Chronicle of Siang Khuang*). Chao Khammanh Vongkottrattana ed., (Vientiane: National Library, 1969), 18.

<sup>103</sup> Lajonquiere, Lunet. “Vieng-Chan, la ville et ses Pagodes”, *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient*, 109.

<sup>104</sup> Presently, Srichiangmai is a district located in Lery province (the northern part of Thailand).

<sup>105</sup> Dhawaj, Punotok. *Inscriptions from Isan during the Lao Period*. (Bangkok: Khunphim Aksonkit, 1987), n. pag.

<sup>106</sup> Archaimbault, Charles. “Les annals de l'ancien royaume de S'ien Kwang,” *Bulletin del'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient*. (Paris: n.p. 1967), 578.

<sup>107</sup> Archaimbault, Charles. “L'histoire de Champasak”, *Journal Asiatique*, 566.

In their songs, children predicted that in the near future, “Ubon will come also to construct a Wat Ho Phra Kaew.”<sup>108</sup> Ubon<sup>109</sup> was the metropole of the descendants of Phra Vorapita.

The construction of these pagodas devoted to the Emerald Buddha functioned as challenges launched by the Lao against Bangkok’s domination, particularly when King Anuvong succeeded in recovering faith and fervor in his country. King Anuvong’s effort to return the sacred Buddha to the Lao also indicates that he was calling his resources and gathering his inspiration and strength in preparation for the supreme, ultimate facing with Bangkok.

The political consolidation of Lao identity and the restoration of Buddhist ideology were integrated. King Anuvong had begun these twin tasks early in his reign as a vice king of Vientiane, and it is clear that he recognized the ways in which political allegiance and religious allegiance could reinforce each other. To found the new capitals referred to as Muang Hua Muang (called Hua Pho or “capital father”) and Muang Siang kho (called Hua Mae or “capital mother”), pagodas and stupas were built in the towns of the Hua Phan Ha Thang Hok (now Sam Nua).<sup>110</sup> At the meantime, the ruler of Siang Khuang, formerly the center of Buddhism in Laos, had his Buddhist leader to Vientiane to study as well. In return, Vientiane sent the abbot of Wat Pa (the forest pagoda) to teach Buddhism at Siang Khuang. The year 1798 was a watershed in the religious history of this principality, for “during this year, monks and novices left the red robe” and Burmese ritual;<sup>111</sup> their adoption of the yellow robes of Theravada Buddhism showed their willingness to cooperation with Vientiane. King Anuvong used a similar method to seal his new alliance with the migrant Phuthai<sup>112</sup> when he sent them a monk from Vientiane.<sup>113</sup> These religious commitments and exchanges were all part of a greater plan to unite the Lao and their allies.

Buddhist councils have met to reconstitute the Buddhist scriptures, the Tripitaka or the Triple Gems, three times in Lao history. The first time was done in 1359 under the king who first united Laos; the second one was done under Phothisarath in 1523, Fa Ngum; and the third time took place in 1813 under King Anuvong. He also constructed a Ho Tai (pavilion to

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<sup>108</sup> Chaleun, P., *Phaen pavatsat lao (Consideration on Lao History)*, Vol.3. (Vientiane: n.p. 1978), 22.

<sup>109</sup> Presently, Ubon is located in Thailand (namely Ubon Ratchathani province)

<sup>110</sup> Macey, Paul. “Commissaire at Muang Sone”, *Bulletin de l’Ecole Francaise d’Extreme Orient*, (Paris: n.p. 1901), 408-409.

<sup>111</sup> Archaimbault, Charles. “L’histoire de Champasak”, *Journal Asiatique*, 576.

<sup>112</sup> Phuthai is one group of Lao ethnic and there are many Phuthais live in the east and west sides of the Mekong river presently.

<sup>113</sup> Sano, N., “History of the Phu Thai, *Isan khadi*, (Mahasarakham: Mahasarakham Teachers College. 1978), 163.

shelter the Tripitaka) near his pagoda, Wat Sisaket,<sup>114</sup> to house a complete set of the Tripitaka identified to the one belonged to the king of Luang Prabang.<sup>115</sup> In the cosmological and political order, the reign of King Anuvong seemed to have achieved its essential fullness and harmony.

This third Buddhist council was convened after the completion of Ho Phra Kaew at Srichiangmai and the bridge linking the two sides of the Mekong River in front of Vientiane. These two highly significant construction projects had been begun in 1810 and finished in 1812. Then it was consecrated by a festival lasting seven days and seven nights.<sup>116</sup>

The new wave in Lao self-esteem and in their destiny, and the mobilization of hearts and souls were all motivated by the same goal: to realize the unity of Laos and to recover their independence lost in 1779.<sup>117</sup>

Pilgrims, monks and the devout crowded to Vientiane. The national stupa, That Luang, which was supposed to house the Buddha's hair, attracted its share of popularity. King Anuvong decorated the That Luang of Vientiane and added a cloister, the Thammahaysok kiosk also dates from this period. A big festival was held to celebrate the completion of this architectural work.<sup>118</sup> In the seventeenth century, the gold covering the stupa was estimated the Dutch merchant Van Wuysthoff to weigh about one thousand pounds.<sup>119</sup>

The religious success of Laos coupled with the continued rumor that Laos was "the holy land where all prodigies are accomplished and where the religious teaching originated"<sup>120</sup> contributed to King Rama III's aggression with the Lao. The Siamese king wanted his country to be the unique of the Buddhist faith in this part of Asia.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, King Rama III had strongly encouraged the reform movement of Buddhism in Siam, apparently driven by his decision to engineer "a strengthening of royal Buddhism to the prejudice of popular Buddhism."<sup>122</sup> King Rama III and King Anuvong repeatedly set themselves in opposition to one another. In religious matters, King Rama III tried to hold a

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<sup>114</sup> Royaume du Laos. Petition to Raise Funds to Constitute the Tripikata, (Vientiane: Ministry of Cults. 1956), 4-5.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.. 6.

<sup>116</sup> Dhawaj Punotok. Inscriptions from Isan during the Lao Period, (Bangkok: Khunphim Aksonkit. 1987), n. pag.

<sup>117</sup> Sila, Veeravong. History of the National Stupa of That Luang, (Vientiane: Ministry of Cults. 1971), 12-13.

<sup>118</sup> Groslier, Bernard. The Art of Indochina, (New York: Crown Publishers. 1962), 223.

<sup>119</sup> Carne, Louise. "Exploration du Mekong. Troisieme partie: Vienchan et la conquete siamoise." Revue des Deux Mondes, (Paris: n.p. 1869), 493.

<sup>120</sup> Garnier, Francis. "Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine," Le Tour du Monde, (Paris: n.p. 1871), 277-278.

<sup>121</sup> Vella, Walter. Siam Under Rama III, (New York: Locust Valley. 1957), 107.

<sup>122</sup> Ling, Trevor. Buddhism, Imperialism and War: Burma and Thailand in Modern History, (London: Allen and Unwin. 1979), 54.

monopoly over the faith and the guardianship of sacred, Buddhist books.<sup>123</sup> Was not Bangkok “the city of angels, sublime city, and the most precious gem of Indra?”<sup>124</sup> However, the Lao Sangha (monkhood) maintained its independence of Thai control, an accomplishment that did not please Thai rulers.<sup>125</sup> A specialist on Lao-Thai history rightly emphasizes:

Thai kings were regarded as world conquerors, an image which was still popular in the middle of the nineteenth century. Proclamations sent to the outer towns referred to the sacred lineage of the Thai ruler. One doubts that the image of the king as a divine ruler penetrated to the Lao states, where the king’s right to rule was founded instead upon moral authority according to the principles of the *dharma*.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Kobkua, S., 1988, “Nationalistic Historiography: Considering Luang Vichitr Vadakarn,” Review of Thai Social Science, (Bangkok: n.p. 1988), 65.

<sup>124</sup> Wenk, Klaus. The Restoration of Thailand under Rama I, 1782-1809, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 1968), 19.

<sup>125</sup> Breazeale, Kennon. The Integration of the Lao States into the Thai Kingdom, (Oxford: Oxford University. 1975), 38.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

#### 4. History Writing and Literary Style towards King Anuvong's Liberation of the Lao Kingdom from Siam leading to the rift between the Two Sides

One important part of this chapter is to demonstrate the history writing and literary style relating the story of King Anuvong's liberation of the Lao Kingdom from Siam leading to the rift between the two sides. The researcher had collected various history books from Thai, Lao, and western sources that demonstrated the perspectives of the authors towards the conflicts between Siam and the Lao Vientiane kingdom and the war of Vientiane's attempted liberation in 1827 to 1828. The sources are from the libraries in Thailand and Lao PDR. The perspectives of the different three groups of Lao, Thai, and western authors are categorized into the table below. The various narratives of authors will be discussed more in order to understand how these various narrative record the rift between the two sides.

Table 7: The Various Narratives of Authors regarding the Performance of King Anuvong in the War between Siam and Lao Vientiane (1827-1828)

Source	Name of the book	Context	Author
Lao	The Seminar of Lao History: To Follow the Clue of King Anuvong	King Anuvong was the hero of the Lao nation. His heart was full of nationalist spirit, the love of his people and land without surrender to the oppression of another nation. He had decided to motivate Laotians, and courageously go into battle with their hearts. Accept sacrifice in order to recover national independence. But from the past history, there were many people who misrepresented the fact by allegations and slanders that King Anuvong revolted because of envy of their advantages. <sup>127</sup>	The Faculty of Humanity and Linguistics, National University of Laos

<sup>127</sup> The Faculty of Humanity and Linguistics. The Seminar of Lao History: To Follow the Clue of King Anuvong, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Vientiane: National University of Laos. 2002), 22.

Source	Name of the book	Context	Author
	Lao History: From Past to 1946 <sup>128</sup>	King Anuvong is the warrior and the masculine one. With his patriotism and love of freedom, these characteristics lead him to wait for the opportunity to liberate Laos from Siam. For the purpose of the liberation, he only thinks to liberate and reconstruct his kingdom as a sovereign country, not to occupy all the Siamese kingdom or take revenge for his father. Thus, he had ordered Lao troops to return Lao families from Saraburi and Khorat to Vientiane. Finally, he was captured to Bangkok with his royal family and then died in 1828.	Mahasila Veeravong
	Summary of Phun Viang <sup>129</sup> in the Reign of King Anuvong <sup>130</sup>	From Muang Mahasai, Chao Sanon <sup>131</sup> led his troops (travelling) up the Mekong River to Vientiane. When he arrived at Vientiane, Chao Sanon did not meet King Anu but heard the news that King Anu had been captured and brought to Bangkok by the Thai. Chao Sanon had no other thought than hurrying to follow King Anu. He hoped that he could die together with King Anu, as his fate had been bound to that of his king since their previous lives.	Khamhung Senmany, Prof.Dr.Volker Grabowsky, Assoc.Prof.Dr.Boualy Paphaphanh, Bounleuth Sengsoulin, Nou Xayasithivong

<sup>128</sup> Sila Veeravong. Lao History: From Past to 1946. (Vientiane: The National Library of Lao PDR. 2001), 136-137.

<sup>129</sup> The Research Committee of the Department of Lao Language and Literature has done a thorough research on Phun Viang (The Legend of Vientiane) that refers to the important historical events during the reign of King Anuvong (1804 -1829).

<sup>130</sup> Senmany, et.al., Summary of Phun Viang in the Reign of King Anuvong. (Vientiane: Education Publishing Enterprise. 2004), 231-270.

<sup>131</sup> Chao Sanon was one of King Anuvong's bravest military commanders. He did not retreat in time with his troops from Khorat along with the king but he retreated later.

Source	Name of the book	Context	Author
		After a march of many days and nights, Chao Sanon arrived at Bangkok. The Thai soldiers captured him and held him in custody. At that time, King Anu had already passed away, and a cremation ceremony had been performed with dignity; the <i>phamen</i> <sup>132</sup> with the dead body was decorated beautifully and finally set on fire including the sprinkling of consecrated water to give merit to the king according to custom.	
English	The Brief History of Lao PDR <sup>133</sup>	King Anuvong of Vientiane had mutinied against the Chakri dynasty king who was his dominion in 1827. This action has become legendary as Lao nationalist creed has brought it to new popularity. Furthermore, the recounting of the story causes feelings of violence. King Rama III of Siam ordered the destruction of Vientiane and capture of the Lao people in 1828. King Anuvong was arrested and taken in a cage to Bangkok. He was also punished by pillory and died.	Grant Evans
	Lao and Khmer Perceptions of National Survival: The Legacy of the	In 1824, King Rama III of Siam had an enthronement over the Kingdom of Laos. He had faced the challenge from Vientiane under the government of Chao Anu (1804-1828). Vientiane was	Volker Grabowsky

<sup>132</sup> A cremation tower in the form of an elaborate, many-storied pagoda.

<sup>133</sup> Evans, Grant. The Brief History of Lao PDR, (Australia: Allen & Unwin. 2002), 27-33.

Source	Name of the book	Context	Author
	Early Nineteenth Century <sup>134</sup>	the largest Lao capital with many citizens. Chao Anu tried to get possession of all the northern sector of the northeast of Siam. He invaded and attacked Khorat. Despite his initial success, he could not achieve victory because the greater unity of Siam could force the withdrawal of Lao troops.	
	A History of Laos <sup>135</sup>	The strategy of Anuvong to liberate Laos from Siam was simple: seize the entire Khorat plateau, repatriate and unite all Lao, and proclaim Lao independence with the support both of other tributary kingdoms, such as Luang Phrabang and Chiangmai, and of external allies, notably Vietnam. By the end of 1826, he was ready to make his move. Four Lao armies, three from Vientiane, and one from Champasak, thrust across the Khorat plateau as far as Khorat itself. Lao on the Chaophraya and the southern plateau were repatriated north, but with so many people to move, the process was slow. The Siamese had time to respond. Three armies were raised. Khorat was retaken, and the Lao were in retreat. The outcome was never in doubt. The city was put to sack, its palace and houses looted and burned,	Martin Stuart Fox

<sup>134</sup> Grabowsky, Volker. "Lao and Khmer Perceptions of National Survival: The Legacy of the Early Nineteenth Century" *The Journal of Society and Humanity*, 18, 4 (July-September 2000): 66-79.

<sup>135</sup> Stuart Fox, Martin. *A History of Laos*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University. 1997), 14-15.

Source	Name of the book	Context	Author
		its population carried off for forcible resettlement. The following year, after Anuvong briefly returned with a small force, Vientiane was totally destroyed. The king was captured and died in Bangkok.	
Thai	The Early Rattanakosin Kingdom <sup>136</sup>	In the reign of King Rama III, there was a serious situation that, however, was rather droll. Chao Anuvong, the ruler of Vientiane City had a queer idea to move Lao military aggression against Siam. With intent to attack Bangkok and occupy Siam as an annexed kingdom of Laos, this action was very pitiful because in the previous long history there was only Siam who attacked and occupied the Lao kingdom. The Lao Kingdom was independent except for temporary submission to the Siamese kingdom.	Viboon Vijitvathakarn
	Lao History <sup>137</sup>	King Anuvong was a so-called brave warrior who had the blood of nationalism and freedom. He always tried to liberate Lao Vientiane from being the annex of Siam. In the war for re-independence between Lao Vientiane and Siam in 1827-1828, the main purpose was only for liberation, not for other reasons such as sacking	The Social Research Institution, Chiangmai University

<sup>136</sup> Vijitvathakarn. The Early Rattanakosin Kingdom, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Bangkok: Sangsan Books. 1999), 75-81.

<sup>137</sup> The Social Research Institution. Lao History, (Chaingmai: Chiangmai University. 1992), 110-111.

Source	Name of the book	Context	Author
		Siam or revenge for his father. Thus, he had ordered Lao troops to pick up Lao families from Saraburi and Khorat to Vientiane. Finally, he and his royal family were arrested to Bangkok where he died later in 1828.	
	The Role of Thai Military and Politics towards Vientiane in the Early Rattanakosin Era <sup>138</sup>	The purpose of the plan to attack Siam of Chao Anu was to capture all the Siamese Kingdom. If this mission could not be achieved, they would seize Lao people and Siamese properties to be returned to the public treasury as far as possible into Vientiane. Most Laotians disagreed with this war and were not willing to fight with Siam. Furthermore, Lao people also mentioned that Chao Anu was a rebel with even the supreme patriarch and the clerical title holders of Laos attempting to dissuade him because that war would lead to harm for the Lao Kingdom. However, Chao Anu still disobeyed in a mulish fashion and continued to attack Bangkok.	Thanom Arnamwat
	A History of Thailand <sup>139</sup>	Chao Anuwongse, more conveniently called Anu, was a man of great ability, whose aim was to free Wiengchan from subordination to Bangkok. In 1827, he rebelled against Rama III and	Rong Syamananda

<sup>138</sup> Arnamwat, T., "The Role of Thai Military and Politic towards Vinetiane in Early Rattanakosin Era", The Journal of History, 9, 2, (May-August 1984): n. pag.

<sup>139</sup> Rong Syamananda. A History of Thailand. (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University. 1971), 116-117.

Source	Name of the book	Context	Author
		<p>took Nakorn Ratchasima, while his forward troops ransacked Saraburi. During his return journey, he was one day suddenly attacked by the inhabitants of these two towns whom he was carrying off. Led by the Deputy Governor of Nakorn Ratchasima and his brave wife named Mo, the Thai prisoners killed 2,000 Wiengchan troops and freed themselves. Two Thai armies went in pursuit of Chao Anu, routed him in battle and occupied Weingchan in May 1827, but he escaped to the Vietnamese Court of Minh-Mang (1820-41). With Vietnamese aid, he recovered Weingchan, but he was decisively defeated and brought down as a prisoner to Bangkok in January 1828. Approximately enough Rama III raised the liberator of Nakorn Ratchasima, Mo, to be Tao Suranari</p>	

According to the table above, it can be indicated from various stories that King Anuvong's attempt to throw off Siamese hegemony has been viewed very differently in Thai (Siamese) and Lao historiography. What for the Thai was an unprovoked rebellion by an ungrateful vassal has been seen by the Lao as a just struggle for independence. These differing perceptions are not simply academic: they still disturbed Thai-Lao relations, sharpened by the fact that far more ethnic Lao now lives in Thailand than in Laos. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that the suppression of Vientiane has been one of the bitterest episodes of Thai history. However, there are three sides of the attitude towards King Anuvong's doing in the war between Siam and Lao Vientiane during 1827-1828. The Lao authors have supporting ideas towards the performance of their king expressed in phrases like

“heroic performance” quite clearly. Lao history perceives King Anuvong’s rebellion as a war of independence. King Anuvong became a war hero who staked everything for his country. Moreover, he was considered one of the bravest men in Lao history. It is beyond doubt that he was a brave warrior. He proved himself a daring soldier when he served under the king of Bangkok and drove out the Burmese and recaptured Chiangsang from the enemy. Even among the Thai, he was honored as such. Oppositely, the Thai side feels against him and looks upon this action as a desperate or impossible mission. King Anuvong’s rebellion is understood as one of the most daring and ruthless that was suppressed in Thai history. For the western authors on Lao history, in relations to the war between Siam and Lao Vientiane in 1827, their narratives were necessarily shaped by their professional and ideological (generally European) frameworks, which had the merit of being more consistent and detailed than those of some indigenous observers.

The first detailed difference between Thai and Lao books can be seen in the use of the words “Chao Anuvong”. Almost all Lao books have referred to this king as King Anuvong while the Thai side usually referred to him as “Chao Anuvong” or “Anu” without the title of king before his name. The use of Chao Anu in Thai books was usually meant to imply the puny one or the youngster. A symbolic name presented the authority diminution reserved for this king’s country. Owing to his popularity by this appellation, Thai books should refer to this king as Chao Anu or simple Anu for simplicity’s sake.

The second narrative difference between Thai and Lao books can be seen from the alleged purpose of this war, where most Lao authors stated that King Anuvong only wanted to liberate the Lao Vientiane kingdom from Siam without sacking or capturing the entire Siamese kingdom. However, Thai historians usually referred to the liberation of King Anuvong as rebellion where the main purpose was to destroy and capture the Siamese kingdom. Beside, the blame narratives relating to King Anuvong’s rebellion from the Thai history books, Viboon Vjithvathakarn, one of the Thai history authors, had asserted in his work “The Early Rattanakosin Kingdom” that the rebellion of Chao Anuvong was rather dull that this rebellion was very pitiful because in the long history there was only Siam who attacked and occupied the Lao kingdom. The Lao Kingdom alleged to be independent other than for temporary submissions to the Siamese kingdom.

On the right of the cage a large gallows is erected, having a chain suspended from the top beam, with a large hook at the end of it. The king, after being tortured, will be hung upon this hook. In the front, there is a long row of triangular gibbets, formed by three poles joined at the top, and extended at the bottom. A spear rises up, from the joining of the poles a foot or more above them. The king’s two principal wives are to be fixed on these as upon a

seat. On the right of the cage is a wooden mortar and pestle to pound the king's children in. (Nine of his sons and grandsons were in the iron cage; most of them grown up, but two were mere children). Such are the means these unsophisticated children of nature employ to maintain their superiority over one another, such the engines of power despotism employs to secure its prerogatives and such the worse then fiendish cruelty of man towards his fellow man, when left to the unsoftened dictates of his own depraved heart. Shortly afterwards, the old Lao king expired, and thus escaped the hands of his tormentors. He is said to have gradually pined away, and died of a broken heart. His corpse was removed to the place of execution, decapitated, and hung on a gibbet by the river side, a little below the city, exposed to the gaze of everyone passing by, but left a prey to the birds. His son afterwards escaped, but on being pursued, put an end to his existence. On the fate of the others, we have never heard.<sup>140</sup>

From the different versions in Thai and Lao history books and also western narratives about the attempted liberation of King Anuvong, what do we learn? One result that cannot be denied is that these different versions of history have been widely disseminated in school and university textbooks in Thailand as well as in Laos. A further effect from the various narratives relates to the increasing gap between Thailand and Laos. This starts with the Thai government and its officials, who have initiated and supported efforts to interpret King Anuvong as a traitorous figure in areas populated by Lao. For example, in 1934 in Khorat officials erected a statue dedicated to Khun Ying Mo, a woman credited with having led the insurrection of her town against King Anuvong. Thirty years later, in 1964, as Cold War conflicts spread into regions surrounding Thailand, writings patronized by the Thai Fine Arts Department presented King Anuvong as a traitor, allied to a power (Vietnam) that figured as a competitor of or antagonist to the Thais. Local notables, seeking to stimulate interest in the impoverished condition of the Northeast provinces among officials in the Thai central government, initiated the celebration of historic figures who had resisted the invader King Anuvong. For example, Chaiyaphum province commemorated the hero faithful to Bangkok, Chao Pho Phraya Lae, who headed to Vientiane when the Thai armies began to roll across the Khorat Plateau. However, Thai archival documents undeniably prove that the story of Chao Pho Phraya Lae and Khun Ying Mo was a fiction and dressed up in exaggerations by inventive subjects eager to please Siam.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Duangjai Luangphasee. *King Chaichetthathirat*, 43 - 45.

<sup>141</sup> Dhawaj, Punotok. *Raingan kanwichai ruang phun wiang: kansuksa prawattisat lae wannakam isan (Analysis of the Phun Viang Chronicle: Study of the History and Civilization of the Northeast)*. 158-166.

From the literature on Lao history from the Lao side, during the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1868), King Anuvong's nephew, Chao Nokham was made governor of Ubon, the center of the Pak Nam Mun area.<sup>142</sup> The oral history conveyed by the Phun Viang embodied the political culture and value system present in the daily lives of the inhabitants of the two banks of the Mekong River. Millenarian *phu mi bun* (holy men) movements drew intellectual references from it and, perhaps most importantly, a source of legitimacy from it. Repeatedly, leaders of these movements presented themselves as the heirs, by bloodline or politically, to King Anuvong himself. An expert on social phenomena in the region has clarified both the limits and breadth of this epic's influence as,<sup>143</sup> although there were references to Vientiane in a number of the revolts (*phu mi bun*), there were no concrete attempts to establish an administration modeled on the dynastic state of Vientiane as it existed during its period of prosperity under King Anuvong. In only one case were Northeasterners persuaded to return to Vientiane. The references to Vientiane were, therefore, attempts to achieve cultural cohesiveness rather than to forge identity with a dynastic state. In other words, Vientiane was used as a symbol for unity and the city could exist anywhere, as Chatthip<sup>144</sup> asserted that Vientiane was as a new Jerusalem, to use the idiom of some millenarian movements. In addition, with these continued influences, books on Lao history written during these central decades of the twentieth century reshaped and diminished the figure of King Anuvong in an attempt to bring Lao history into correspondence with the Thai version.

## 5. Conclusion

The religious reforms of King Rama I reestablished a pattern of religious reform that was followed in succeeding reigns. Whereas King Taksin had made a significant break with past Thai traditions on the question of religious authority and the relationship between the monarchy and the Sangha, King Rama I consciously attempted to recreate and return to patterns of religious life found in the past of Thailand. The intention of his reform was not to produce radical innovations in Thai religion but to restore the beliefs and practices characteristic of the former kingdom of Ayutthaya prior to its decline and fall. Thus, his religious reforms were basically of a very traditional and conservative nature, and for that

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<sup>142</sup> Presently, Pak Nam Mun means the area of Mun river, the main river of Ubon Ratchathani province (the Northeastern part of Thailand)

<sup>143</sup> Gay, Bernard. Les mouvements millenaristes au centre et au sud Laos et dans le nord-est du Siam, 1895-1910, Vol.3, (Paris: Centre de recherches sur l'histoire de la peninsula indochinoise. 1987), 34.

<sup>144</sup> Chatthip Natsupa. "The Ideology of Holy Men in Northeast Thailand", In History and Peasant Consciousness in Southeast Asia, Andrew Turton and Shigeharu Tanabe ed., (Kyoto: Senri Ethnological Studies. 1984), 128.

very reason they proved to be more successful, and more acceptable to the Sangha and the Thai people, than had been those of King Taksin. This aim of recreating an ideal religious past continued to be the dominant theme and motivation behind Thai religious reform in the years that followed.

The examples of King Taksin and King Rama I are also related to the development and reforming of Buddhism in the Lao kingdom in the reign of King Anuvong. This can illustrate the important role that both Thai and Lao government have traditionally played and can still play in bringing about religious reform. In the latter part of the eighteenth century the Thai and Lao kings were both symbolically and in reality the head of the government. As we have seen, King Taksin and Kings Rama I-III of the Siamese Kingdom and King Anuvong of the Lao Kingdom actively involved themselves in the religious matters of the nation. Both officially initiated or attempted to initiate significant changes in the Thai and Lao religious sector and their support of its activities were used to strengthen and legitimate their political power.

The assistance of both the Thai and the Lao governments has been extremely important and necessary for the success of religious reforms. This aid has traditionally come from the king or other members of the royal family. In the past, the king and his family possessed real political power and institutional control, and they could exercise this power and control in support of a particular reform, thereby almost ensuring its success.

The development and reforming of religion becomes the royal tradition that the Buddhist kingdoms needed to continue, especially in the Thai and Lao Kingdoms. Therefore, the performance of King Anuvong in the liberation of the Lao Vientiane Kingdom from Siam is not a rebellion in the perceptions of both past and present Laotians. Without question, there are differing narratives in Lao history about the war between Siam and Laos in 1827-1828. The results of this dispute still influence the literary style and the perceptions of the new generations of both Thailand and Laos. Thus, it mixes well-known fact and distinct fantasy when one refers to King Anuvong's need to liberate the country from foreign domination such as Siam and Vietnam. By making this statement, the Lao history books strove to generate an anti-Vietnamese and Thai racism. The Lao history books had a circulation of numerous issues, an enormous figure by Lao standards. The revision of history has continued. Since the establishment of Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975, the idea of King Anuvong was manipulated and revived. It will be difficult to wipe out this bias from the history books with their popular and regional impressions.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Conclusion

#### Introduction

This thesis has investigated Thailand and Laos relations through the perspectives of Vientiane Sisaket temple and Rattanakosin Emerald Buddha temple. There were three important objectives, namely (1) to review the relations between the Siam and Lao kingdoms in the Sukothai period, the Ayutthaya period, and the early Rattanakosin period (Kings Rama I-III), (2) to investigate the relations between architectural characteristics of Bangkok temples in the Rattanakosin era and Lao Vientiane and (3) to discover the Lao perspectives towards Siam through an interpretation of the Sisaket temple and King Anuvong. The relations between Thailand and Laos have been studied in terms of anthropology, sociology, economy, and politics, especially in the dimensions of disputation. However, in terms of architectural expression meaningful to modern day people, there has been no previous work. Therefore, most visitors to Sisaket temple only perceive the aesthetic values of the buildings and the physical topography of the site and understand and appreciate something of the Lao heritage significance, while the more abstract and particular meaning remains hidden inside this holy temple together with its link to King Anuvong's vision of Lao liberation.

In order to understand King Anuvong and Lao perspectives towards the Siam kingdom and the Thais, the author attempted to discover the significance of the similarities in structure, form, and design of the Sisaket temple in Vientiane, Lao PDR, and the Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok, Thailand, that might be linked to King Anuvong's ideology in liberating his kingdom and ensuring his political and Buddhist legitimacy.

Despite similar characteristics of both temples, King Anuvong never mentioned that he had replicated a Thai style in the Sisaket temple because he wanted to counterbalance the influence of Thailand through architectural expression. However, it is certain that King Anuvong tried to liberate his kingdom from Siam by demonstrating political legitimacy and Buddhist fulfillment as the leader of the Lao kingdom. This link was related to the dispute with Siam as shown in the historical reviews in Chapter 2. Thus, the Lao king had reinvented his roles, images and the Lao position in the world by using an architectural expression to promote Lao liberation for political purposes. This architectural expression is the important

key for the researcher to study this holy building as an expressing of the ideology of King Anuvong to liberate Lao Vientiane from Bangkok because presently this temple is appointed as a representation of King Anuvong and as Lao museum. Therefore, it is important to investigate King Anuvong's ideology in relation to Lao liberation and how it might have been reflected through the architectural expression of the Sisaket temple.

This discussion and conclusion chapter is divided into four parts. First is a discussion on the relations between Bangkok and Vientiane, then is the comparing of the similar characteristics of the temple in Bangkok and that in Lao Vientiane, next is the discussion on the Lao perspectives towards Siam through an interpretation of Sisaket temple and King Anuvong. Final is the conclusion on the myth and history of the origin of the sacred Emerald Buddha.

### **1. The relations between the Bangkok and Vientiane kingdoms (from the past to the early Rattanakosin period: Kings Rama I-III)**

The Lan Chang kingdom was very powerful in the land called Suvannabhumi since the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The establishment of the Lan Chang kingdom was roughly contemporaneous with the establishment of the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya kingdoms of the Siamese people. However, there is little evidence to demonstrate how the Siam and Lao kingdoms related to each other. In the Sukhothai era, there was only the evidence in the stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng that Lao Vientiane was one of the colonies of Sukhothai. However, there is no other historical evidence to support this statement. Thus, one cannot demonstrate that this information is correct. During the Ayutthaya era, the relations between Siam and Lao Vientiane are more distinctly demonstrated because the building of the Si Song Rak chedi could be reasonable historical evidence. It could support the notion that both kingdoms, Siam and Laos, had good relations during the Ayutthaya period. This holy chedi was to represent the cooperation of the two kingdoms to resist Burma. Nevertheless, negative relations were presented in the early Rattanakosin era, especially in the destruction of Vientiane in the reigns of King Taksin and King Rama III, including the seizure of the holy Emerald Buddha. This Buddha statue had been housed as the heart of Laos. It is quite clear that the relations between Bangkok and Vientiane were negative and sensitive to conflict, especially in the reigns of Kings Rama I and III.

King Rama I ruled Vientiane with a 'soft' policy due to Vientiane being one of the colonies that was very important to the security of Bangkok with supply of forces, food sources, elephants and horses which were necessary in war. However, Vientiane still tried to be independent from Bangkok. The appointment of Princes Nanthasan, Inthavong and

Anuvong, the sons of King Siribunsan, to rule Vientiane from 1782 to 1827 was the way to show King Rama I's sincerity. However, this policy could not succeed because the feeling of conflict of Lao people could not be changed from that engendered in the war in the King Taksin era. Therefore, this was the main reason for King Rama I to support the establishment of new kingdoms and to appoint suitable persons to rule over them and to rule over Lao colonies instead of the old group in order to defend Bangkok from the providing problems and to maintain Bangkok security. However, King Rama I still supported Vientiane to be the center to control other colonies along the Mekong River because they were far from Bangkok, and in order to gain advantages from politics and from the recruitment of troops and a work force from these colonies.

When King Rama I passed away and King Rama II came to the throne, he still continued to rule over Vientiane and its colonies from the King Rama I policy that focused on maintaining equitable relations and maintained a close relationship with King Anuvong who ruled Vientiane at that time. However, the depressed feeling of Lao people emerged when King Anuvong prepared to liberate Vientiane from Bangkok with his request for his son to govern Champasak. Thus, Champasak and Vientiane could be joined more tightly than before. Moreover, King Anuvong also intended to revive the relations with Vietnam to counter-balance Bangkok's authority.

What could we learn from the struggle of Kings Rama I and II to govern the Lao kingdom through a 'soft' policy? It failed because Lao kings through each reign tried to liberate their kingdom from Bangkok. Moreover, the conflict also revealed that the relations between Bangkok and Vientiane still faced many obstacles. When King Rama III ascended the throne, he eschewed the policy of reconciliation in governing the Lao states. He adopted a harder policy because Bangkok had failed to control the Lao states and the Khmer kingdom had been increasing successfully in the reigns of Kings Rama I and II. This strict government policy led to declining relations between Siamese royalty and Lao Vientiane royalty that used previously to be marked by amity. Subsequently, the conflict led to war between Bangkok and Vientiane.

Finally, the experience in the complicated situation in Vientiane caused King Rama III to divide the government of the Lao kingdom into four parts: the first area was the northern part from Luangphrabang province to Pong Salee province and called "Lao Pung Kao"; the second area was from Vientiane province to Kham Muan province and called "Lao Puan"; the third area was the southern part from Kham Muan province to the border of Cambodia and called "Lao Gao"; the last area was Nakhonratchasima which is part of Thailand nowadays. The decision of King Rama III to divide the government of the Lao

kingdom reflected the collapsed relations between the two kingdoms whereby Bangkok could not govern Lao Vientiane with a soft policy because of fear that Lao Vientiane would try to liberate itself from Siam.

## **2. The relations between architectural characteristics of temples in Bangkok of the Rattanakosin era and in Lao Vientiane**

The traditions of temple architecture could reflect the relations between the societies and the roles of the kings. The kings of both Siam and Laos had the important role of governing the kingdom and accordingly needed to find the representative, symbolic center of the people. One of the most important elements of this is Buddhist maintenance so that temple building could be said to be the tangible performance of the great kings of the people.

It is quite possible that the relations between the Siam and Lao kingdoms in the early Rattanakosin period could account for the transfer of the architectural style of temples in Bangkok to Lao Vientiane temples, especially the Sisaket temple. The possible reason was that Siam had attacked Lao Vientiane and moved the Emerald Buddha to be housed in Bangkok. This statue was very important for Lao because it is the emotional and spiritual center for Lao Buddhists. The destruction of Vientiane by Siam inflicted heavy damage on the Lao. However, the capture of the Emerald Buddha was even more traumatic for them as can be seen from most historical books by Lao authors in Vientiane.

The Sisaket Temple and Ho Phra Kaew were the only two temples in Vientiane that were built almost similar to the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok in that time. Sisaket temple was built in the reign of King Anuvong, the Lao Vientiane monarch. He was one of the Lao Vientiane nobles previously arrested and transferred to Bangkok where he spent some years and had close affinities with King Rama II. The similar forms of structure can be demonstrated through the building pediments, roof, struts to support projected eaves joists, cloister, columns, terrace surrounding the main chapel, *mondop* style of the window and door frames, ceiling decoration, capitals, and the paintings of the interior murals.



Figure 27: The location of Sisaket temple (A) and Ho Phra Kaew (B) in Vientiane, Lao PDR  
 Source: Louisa Kevin. Vientiane Map [Online] accessed 14 May 2010. Available from <http://www.louisakevin.ca/laos/imagemap/image-map.html>

Originally, the Emerald Buddha was housed in Ho Phra Kaew which King Chaichetthathirat ordered to be constructed in 1565 when he moved the capital from Luang Phrabang to Vientiane. It was located on the east side of the old royal palace in Vientiane as can be seen from figure 27. The red line shows the border of the royal palace and Sisaket temple which was one part of the royal palace. As King Anuvong spent part of his life in Bangkok in the early Rattanakosin era, it is possible that he applied the architectural style of the temple in Bangkok to construct the Sisaket temple, as discussed previously. However, Lao people have argued that this temple was constructed with an originally Lao architectural style. In fact, there are only two temples in Vientiane, Sisaket temple and Ho Phra Kaew, which were constructed similar to the temple architecture in Bangkok while other temples in Vientiane were constructed in a Lao style, associated with Luang Phrabang. These temple styles were close to Lanna; especially, they had immense pointed roofs in tile punts which go down by successive plains, two or three in general. The height between the ground and the roof of the temples was less than in the style of Vientiane and Bangkok. Moreover, they were decorated with the Lao cho fah on the top of the roof and honeycomb while there was no the cloister and terrace built surrounding the main chapel.

The hypothesis is that King Anuvong might have replicated the architectural style of Ho Phra Kaew for use in the Sisaket temple. However, there is no reasonable evidence to prove this because representation of Ho Phra Kaew before it was destroyed by the Siamese army cannot be found. Moreover, Ho Phra Kaew, located to the east side of the old royal palace at present, was a new reconstruction by Chao Suwannaphuma during 1937 to 1940. Therefore, it is more reasonable to refer to the Sisaket temple receiving influence from the Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok rather than Ho Phra Kaew in Vientiane when considering the main structure as shown in figure 28. However, Boonleum Seesurat, lecturer in the school of construction in Vientiane cited in his book, *The History of Lao Architecture* that the new Ho Phra Kaew was reconstructed according to the original style because the group of the Lao people who attempted the reconstruction of the ruined Ho Phra Kaew had found the original plans of this building when they cleared away the vine and brick ruins. This is shown in figure 29. Furthermore, it can be argued that the architectural styles of both the Emerald Buddha and the Sisaket temples were originally inherited from the temple style of the great kingdom of Ayutthaya, in the past due to the struggles of King Taksin and King Rama I to establish their new capitals as succession to the Ayutthaya kingdom.



Figure 28: Comparing the Emerald Buddha temple in Bangkok, constructed in 1784 (left), Sisaket temple in Vientiane, constructed in 1818 (middle) and Ho Phra Kaew in Vientiane, constructed in 1565 (right).

Photography: Suwaphat Sregongsang (2008)

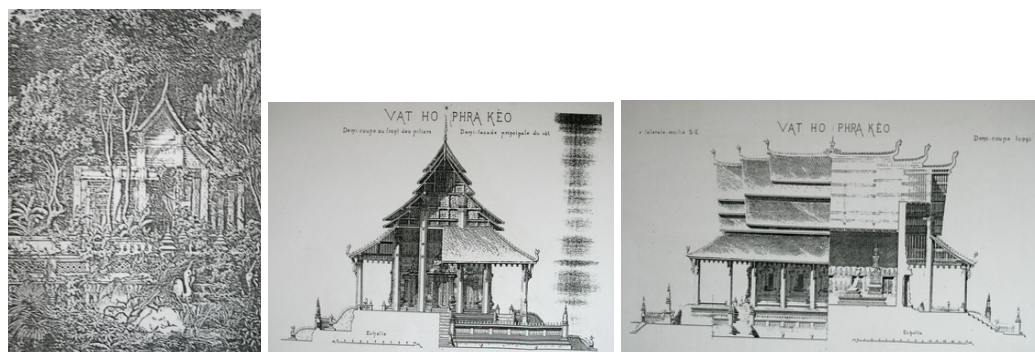


Figure 29: The ruins of Ho Phra Kaew in Vientiane after the war between Siam and Lao Vientiane in 1827-28 (left), the plan of Ho Phra Kaew according to the original style from the reference of lecturer in the school of construction in Vientiane (middle and right)  
Source: Boonleum Seesurat. The History of Lao Architect. Vientiane: The School of Construction. 1985.

The intended meaning of the Sisaket temple construction policy is unknown. However, it is possible that, although they had lost their holy Emerald Buddha to Siam, the abode and the memory of this Buddha statue were still to be kept alive by the prominent presentation of the Sisaket temple. One factor was the strong link between the Thai and Lao kingships through the Emerald Buddha and Buddhism. This linkage also helps to unite the people, the monarchy and the state. As discussed by Reynolds, one can see an important role that the Emerald Buddha has played in legitimating the status of the Chakri and Lao kings by identifying the king's power with the Emerald Buddha's sacred power. When people worship the Emerald Buddha, they can also be seen as worshipping the kings. It then seems that this relationship – at – a – distance rendered the Thai kingship more sacred.<sup>1</sup> With this relationship between the Emerald Buddha and the Sisaket temple, Phraya Ratchasuphavadee's and the Siam Royal Army's decision to avoid the destruction of the Sisaket temple was most likely intentional because of its dignify and the cult of the Emerald Buddha.

In addition, while the mythical dimension of the Emerald Buddha serves Buddhist emotional needs, it also emphasizes the conceptualization of social space of Siam and Laos. In view of the great relationship of King Anuvong with King Rama II of Rattanakosin, King Anuvong chose to carry on that relationship to build the Sisaket temple as a partial replica of the Siam Royal Palace.

<sup>1</sup> Reynold Frank. Ritual and Social Hierarchy: An Aspect of Traditional Religion in Buddhaist Laos. Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma. (Chambersburg: Smith B.L. Ed. Anima Books. 1978), 87-91.

### **3. Lao perspectives towards Siam through the interpretation of the Sisaket temple and King Anuvong**

Since the eleventh century until the present, Buddhism has been an important factor in the political history of the Thai and Lao kingdoms. It has symbolized the transcendental unity of a moral community. Historically, the relationship between the religious order and the pretentious secular order has been one of tensions. The development of Buddhism by kings was therefore part of the sacred traditions dealing with religious authority and the relationship between the monarchy and the Sangha (monkhood).

The development and reforming of Buddhism in the Lao kingdom in the reign of King Anuvong can illustrate the important role that the Lao government had traditionally played and could still play in bringing about religious reform. In the later part of the eighteenth century the Thai and Lao kings were both symbolically and in reality the head of the government. As we have seen, King Taksin and Kings Rama I-III of the Siam Kingdom and King Anuvong of the Lao Kingdom actively involved themselves in the religious affairs of the nation as means of expressing symbolic power. Both officially initiated or attempted to initiate significant changes in the Thai and Lao religious sector and their support of its activities was used to strengthen and legitimate their political power.

Therefore, the development and reforming of religion becomes the royal tradition that the Buddhist kingdoms needed to continue, especially in the case of the Thai and Lao kingdoms. Nevertheless, the performance of King Anuvong in the liberation of the Lao Vientiane kingdom from Siam was not a rebellion in the perceptions of both past and present Lao. This can be demonstrated from the various narratives in Lao history about the war between Siam and Laos in 1827-1828 and is reflected in the literary style and the perceptions of new generations of scholars in both Thailand and Laos. Thus, it is a distinctive phenomenon that the Lao history books strove to represent a cruel and irreverent Thai performance. Those books had a circulation of numerous issues, an enormous figure by Lao standards. The revision of history has continued. Since the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 1975, the idea of King Anuvong has been manipulated and revived. It would be difficult to wipe out this bias from the history books with their popular and regional impressions.

Additionally, the standing of the Sisaket temple is also important to Lao people as the representative architectural monument in the period of King Anuvong and a holy place to remind them of their hero king to the present time. With accounts of the particular relationships between this temple and King Anuvong, and of the atmosphere of the place and

the ruins of Buddha statues destroyed from the aggression of the Siamese in 1827, the texts could stimulate Lao people to realize the sufferings of their ancestors, oppressed by Siamese.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the perspectives of Lao people towards Thai people were distinctive and negative. It is clear that there were many negative situations and tensions between the two countries persisting over time. As noted in the previous chapter, the conflict between the Thai and the Lao kingdom dates from the early Rattanakosin period. The Lao people have not forgotten the destructions of Vientiane on the order of King Taksin and King Rama III of Siam, especially the removal of the Emerald Buddha from Vientiane to Bangkok. The Emerald Buddha was at the heart of Lao people. The relations between Lao people and this holy Buddha statue were not different from the belief of Thai people, also, towards the Emerald Buddha. In accord with those situations, Lao perceptions had seen Siam as the cruel aggressor while King Anuvong was a rebel in Thai views. However, this king was the hero or would be the emancipator who attempted to liberate Lao people and the Lao kingdom from the suppression of Siam. Moreover, the performance of King Anuvong also convinced Lao people that their king was completely accomplished in both Buddhism and the secular world. Besides this political conflict, the influence of western colonization in the Southeast Asia region and the struggle of France to occupy the Lao kingdom was also a major force to widen the gap and stimulate the negative relations between Thailand and Laos.

Moreover, the influence of French policy which had occupied the Lao kingdom by the development of education and religion might have been good for Lao people but the French government still gained benefits from colonies likely to be profitable such as Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China which produced rice, tea, rubber and other exportable commodities.<sup>3</sup> However, the important policy of France to impress the Lao people was to return Lao people to Vientiane, whereby the French planned to encourage a mass return of Lao to Vientiane after the 1893 Franco-Siamese treaty. The French asserted that Lao people taken by force from their home villages by the Siamese had the right to French protection. Between 1896 and 1898 French consular officials from Bangkok traveled to Lao settlements in Prachinburi to encourage Lao to return to the Vientiane district, issuing French identification papers and promising assistance once they reached the French side of the Mekong. The Thai government did not recognize the right of the Lao in Siamese territory to this protection but apparently did not put obstacles in the path of any who wished to return. During the dry seasons of 1897 and 1898, hundreds of Lao families set out in the direction of

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<sup>2</sup> Doungsai Luangphasee. *King Chaichetthathirat*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., Vientiane: Publisher of the Lao State. (2004), 24-27.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, Nicola. *France in Indochina: Colonial Encounters*. (Oxford: Berg. 2001), 159.

Vientiane in response to the French appeals.<sup>4</sup> With this inducement policy, France could appeal to a lot of Lao people from Thai territory to move to French territory. Moreover, the struggle of the French in economic development for Vientiane was also an important key to encourage Lao people to agree with French policy. Due to limited economic resources, there was encouragement for Vietnamese and Chinese traders to step into the breach and soon the burgeoning commercial center was inhabited by the Kinh Viet and Chinese. Vientiane's Chinese, Vietnamese and Lao brick and cement shop-houses started to appear on the inland side of the Mekong River. The transportation system was also developed, parallel with the river. The economic development could lead Lao people to perceive that the French intended to reconstruct Vientiane which was certainly different from the actions of Siam.<sup>5</sup>

The opposition between Thailand and Laos had continually manifested with sensitive relations and could easily fall into open dispute from some misunderstanding. In the process of globalization, information or news can be accessed by anyone with advanced network technologies such as the Internet, blogs, email, television, including satellite and radio networks. This can stimulate the perceptions of both Thai and Lao people to know what each other think and how they behave. There are important problems from Thai media which is consumed by Lao people because Thai media is overwhelmingly for the purpose of trade. Therefore, their programs are mostly entertainment, variety shows including advertising and Thai news. In contradiction, the Lao government governs their people along lines of socialism that differs from the democratic practices as expressed in Thai rhetoric. Thus, Lao people cannot avoid being dominated by Thai media. There is much evidence to show the conflict between Thai and Lao people deriving from the non-boundary of information. For example, the disputation in the movie "Mak Tae" (or Lucky Loser in the English title) from a Thai director, Adisorn Tresirikasem, was a good example. The movie promotion and advertising was by banners and billboards with statement that "Lao will go to the World Cup". Unfortunately, the Lao government stated that the movie could jeopardize diplomatic relations and the movie was halted unconditionally in order to avoid any further dispute and misunderstanding. Further, the Lao government declared that there were no Laotian football players who dye their hair or armpit hair bronze. Thus, Lao people were dissatisfied with comical portrayals in Thai views.<sup>6</sup> It was the same conflict as in the case of Nicole (a Thai woman singer) who, it was alleged by Lao people, had accused Lao women of being dirty

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<sup>4</sup> Smuckarn, Snit and Breazeale, Kennon. A Culture in Search of Survival: The Phuan of Thailand and Laos. (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1988), 127-128.

<sup>5</sup> Raquez, Alfred. Pages Laotiennes. Vientiane: Co-edition Institut de Recherche sur la Culture (Laos) and Cercle et de Recherches Laotiennes (France). (Paris: n.p. 2000), 107-108.

<sup>6</sup> Keztudio. Mak-Tae: The Shocked World. [Online] accessed 18 May 2010. Available from <http://keztudio.exteen.com/20060517/entry>

creatures through a program on a Thai channel. The producers of Thai television tried to prove their sincerity by providing a recorded copy of the television program but the Lao people did not accept this.<sup>7</sup> The resistance of Lao people towards Thai people was further proved by the research of Khient Theerawit and his department on “the study of Thailand and Lao relations in Laotian perspectives”.<sup>8</sup> They found that in the case of Nicole, Lao people believed that she had blamed Lao women as they appeared in a newspaper. Without any evidence to prove that it was real or fake, it could be emphasized that network technologies were important factors aggravating the relations between Thailand and Laos. Furthermore, Lao people always feel negative towards Thai people and tend to aggravate problems when there has been misunderstanding of each other.

While above discussion was the dimension from Lao side, the perspectives of Thai people towards Lao people were absolutely the opposite of the Lao views. Although the relations between Thailand and Laos can be seen in terms of similarities of religion, culture, tradition, and ways of life, especially in relation to the people in the northeastern part of Thailand, the boundary (Mekong River) could divide people who live in the plateau of the Mekong River into two sides. It cannot, however, break the relations of similar culture, religion, and way of life of the people on both sides. However, the concepts of the Thai were different starting from the national policy of King Rama V towards modernization, especially relating to economic development in the central part of Thailand. This could lead to differences between the center and the cities on the periphery. People in the center perceived that people who live in the boundary areas are rustic, uncivilized and unsuitable for a modernized society, especially some who live in the northeastern part of Thailand including Lao people. Mostly, it is a question of the subjectivity of Thai people towards Lao people. Thus, the national development policy under a modernization concept caused people to perceive a division in terms of Lao or Thai.

The other important but more positive perception of Thai people towards Lao people is linked to the cultivation and consumption of sticky rice, which is understood and omnipresent. This kind of rice can be produced on the plateau of the northeastern area and in Laos. The people who live in the central region of Thailand, by contrast, cultivate and plant non-glutinous rice. The central region is more productive than the other parts of Thailand. Moreover, non-glutinous rice is the main export product from the plain of the Chao Phya River to the international market. Therefore the sticky rice becomes a symbol of ‘Lao

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<sup>7</sup> The Nation. Mak Tae. [Online] accessed 24 April 2009. Available from [Http://www.nationmultimedia.com/new/ndo505.shtm](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/new/ndo505.shtm)

<sup>8</sup> Khien, Theerawat. Thai – Lao Relations in Laotians’ Perspective. (Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund Regional Office. 2001), 186.

identity'. Furthermore, the opposition between Thai and Lao people has supported the separating of Thailand and Laos related to the policy of King Rama V and the later Thai kings, leading to establishing the Thai language as the national language while Laos was under the government of France.

#### **4. Historical and mythic dimensions: the role and the importance of myth towards the sacred Emerald Buddha as political and religious legitimacy**

Legend straddles the line between history and myth, similar to the blurring between reality and fantasy. History is supposed to be about truth but most history also creates and supports myth, embellishment, and personal belief in order to yield a response to people's psychological needs such as emotional satisfaction and the hope of favorable rebirth.<sup>9</sup> The Emerald Buddha, Thailand's most sacred object along with the Thai monarchy and city pillar shrine, is seen as important because it serves to mark and reinforce the monarchy and the religion of Buddhism that unite Thailand. The history of the Emerald Buddha is a story of both fantasy and reality as a guardian of the Thai nation. This gives the Emerald Buddha mystical powers that awe the faithful and the visitors. The Emerald Buddha, along with the monarchy, is seen as the protector of Thailand. In fact, the Thai monarchy and the Emerald Buddha are all part of a mythology surrounded by mystery and ceremony. In all religious traditions from prehistoric ones to new religions, the notion of faith is fundamental.<sup>10</sup> The myth of the Emerald Buddha also leads to the special ritual and ceremonies where believers carry out certain functions to display and reinforce their faith in their religion such as the changing of the costume of the Emerald Buddha image in each season and the prayers that the monarch offers up to the Buddha, so that Thailand will continue to flourish.

Therefore, there is little doubt that the Emerald Buddha was very important to Thai and Lao kings to legitimate their authority both in terms of politics and society. King Taksin and King Rama I of Siam are good example because these kings did not have royal blood. It is not Thai tradition for the person who ascends not to be of the royal family. These kings had only the political power and authority gained through military force. King Taksin tried to seek legitimacy by establishing his capital in Thonburi rather than Ayutthaya and by supporting the Buddhist Sangha including improving the quality and purity of Thai religion. For these reasons, he would claim the legitimacy of royal power. King Rama I followed the

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<sup>9</sup> Hudson, Frederic. "The Concord Fight." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 50, 300. (May 1875): n. pag.

<sup>10</sup> Rhys-Davids, William. *Buddhist Birth Stories*. (Boston: Houghton and Mufflin. 1880), 45-48.

concept of King Taksin. He established the new capital at Bangkok as a deliberate attempt to create a new Ayutthaya. He also had undertaken a project of religious reform that was very important and significant to the Thai Buddhist community.

With the Indian conception of sacred kingship, wherever Buddhism has prevailed as was the case in Thailand and Laos, these beliefs were modified so that the ruler was viewed as a Bodhisatta or “Future Buddha” rather than a god.<sup>11</sup> These traditions formed the basis for the Siamese and Lao kings’ quest to obtain divine status and the claim of having acquired the physical marks of a Buddha. They also help to explain why the kings were motivated to seek these goals. The possession of superhuman qualities and powers and their transformation into a divine being or Buddha would have provided clear and indisputable proof of their kingly status and their legitimate right to rule. According to this reasoning, besides the variety of their religious activities, King Taksin and King Rama I tried to link themselves with the cult of the Emerald Buddha. The importance and significance of the Emerald Buddha for the Thai and Lao kings could be shown through the historical adventures and the sacred power of this Buddha statue. For example, the power of the Emerald Buddha could allegedly bring relief from disease, hasten childbirth, restore sight, increase wealth and the like, to make sense as the meaning of faith, hope, and resurrection. In Buddhist circles, Rama was sometimes recognized as a future Buddha. The Chakri dynasty chose especially to identify itself with the figure of Rama. The connection between the Jewel and Rama is meant to convey to the people of the Bangkok kingdom the identity between religious merit and the sovereign power of the jewel and the religious merit and sovereign power of the reigning dynasty founded by King Rama I and presently represented by his lineal descendant, King Rama IX.

For the view from the Lao side, what do we know about how this holy Buddha statue was important for Lao kings and their people? Because the Emerald Buddha was the supreme symbol of politico-religious legitimacy in this part of Southeast Asia, the capture of this statue was absolutely effective to rouse King Anuvong and his followers, inspiring them to resist Siam in 1827. It rankles with the Lao to this day. This statue has served as a one important point for the conflict between Bangkok and Laos since it was seized and brought from Vientiane to Bangkok. King Anuvong, who appreciated its significance, attempted to ensure that the Emerald Buddha was returned to Laos by ordering the creation of substitutes and many new pagodas. He restored and raised the foundation of Vientiane’s Ho Phra Kaew as also in other cities such as Champasak and Srichiangmai. The construction of these chapels

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<sup>11</sup> Cady, Coedes. *Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company. 1964), 37-38.

dedicated to the Emerald Buddha functioned as challenges launched by the Lao against Bangkok's domination, to remind the Lao of their Emerald Buddha's power and to focus and magnify the political energy of this symbol.

In the chronicles' accounts of the Holy Emerald Jewel, the "theoretical" relationship between the Jewel and the sacred sculptures can be seen as suggested by the myth which deals with its origins, while the historical dimension is brought directly into the foreground in the legends of King Anawartha's activities. In recounting the Jewel's origin, the chronicles describe the fashioning of the raw Jewel into an image of the Buddha and the consecration of the image which occurs when the Thera Nagasena invites the seven relics of the Buddha to enter into it; and in this way they establish the Jewel's character as the *rupakaya* (material body or form body) of the Buddha which, according to the tradition, is the manifestation of the Buddha's continuing presence which must coexist with and supplement his *dhammakaya* (dhamma or scriptural body). On the historical level, the subsequent account of the chronicles presupposes that the Jewel and the sacred scriptures coexisted with one another in Ceylon, but maintains that in Southeast Asia, due to the storm which diverted one of Anawartha's boats and his later forgetfulness, the two became separated, the jewel becoming established at Angkor, the scriptures in Pagan.

The discussion in Chapter has emphasized the links of history in terms of positive and negative dimensions between Siam and Laos, especially the wars in the reigns of King Taksin and Rama III. One important point in Chapter was the time King Anuvong spent in Bangkok as a political hostage. This would have underlain the feeling of being dominated, depressed and yearning for liberty. These feelings exploded in the war between Siam and Lao Vientiane in 1827 and ended with the sorrowful scene of the destruction of Vientiane. However, the important element that has reflected the attitude and ideology of King Anuvong, anointed appointed as the hero of the Lao people, was the architecture of Sisaket temple. This temple was the only one place that still remained undestroyed from the war. Sisaket temple could be the point that throws light on the connection of the Emerald Buddha and both Thai and Lao kings, especially in their attempt to achieve legitimation to rule their kingdoms, endorsed through the importance and manifestation of this sacred statue.

The problem of this study is that the details of the history are unclear and there is no obvious evidence to show why the Sisaket temple could survive during the war; however, the following possible reasons can be suggested.

1. The Sisaket temple was the only temple in Vientiane that was built almost similar to the temple of Emerald Buddha in Bangkok. Thus, Siam Royal Army's intention to

avoid the destruction of Sisaket temple was not unintentional because of its dignify and because the cult of the Emerald Buddha.

2. This temple has been set up as the military base for the Siamese army to attack Lao Vientiane. It is similar to the case of Na Phra Mane temple where the Burmese army set up cannons to fire on the king's palace in 1760 in Ayutthaya and finally the temple was left untouched when Ayutthaya was sacked for the second time.

Although these suggestions could not be proved with acceptable evidence, at least this temple could be posed as the representation of King Anuvong and his yearning for liberty and has faith of the Emerald Buddha through the standing of this holy place.

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation has mainly focused on legitimation issues especially in relations to opposed perceptions. Among general, Thai views, and Lao views, there are plenty of different opinions from each party to notions of legitimacy and to perception and actions towards each other. Siamese perceptions were initially formed around the boundary and expansion of power, mainly in the era of King Rama III in terms of economic power, while Lao perceptions have related to emancipation and the hardship of Lao citizens, the memory of missing home, breaking up of families, negation of culture and tradition in playing music and poetry and finally the atrocity perpetrated on King Anuvong and his family by the Siamese. However, the point from this discussion is that each needs to review their ideas more objectively with the purpose of eliciting truth without manipulation and bias.

However, when consider opinions from many foreign authors to demonstrate the negative and positive relations between the two countries, starting from the relations in the past. There were many situations where Siamese oppressed the Lao people such as the two occasions of the destruction of Vientiane including the removal of the holy Emerald Buddha from Vientiane to Bangkok. The suppression of the Lao people through Thai aggression is still remembered negatively. In addition, the treatment of the Lao people and kingdom by the Siamese was resisted. It was further expressed when colonialism invaded the Southeast Asia region with the coming of the French to the Lao country. The French-Siamese treaty in 1893 was set because Siam tried to protect its independence. The treaty gave France a Mekong border on the eastern side while the western side was still governed by Siam. The establishment of the French Lao land behind a new river border with Siam had moved Vientiane from being contiguous with Siam, while the Mekong River changed from being the 'main street' of Lao society to become a political boundary dividing the Lao people between French and Siamese control.

On the other hand, nowadays culture is gradually changed by nature and the treat of the punishment in the past does not exist anymore. Furthermore, the friendship between tow countries are lighten and prosperity. The more recent performances of Thai royalist factions have been important in fostering good relations between the two countries. Especially, the activities of the royal patronage of King Bhumipol (the present King Rama IX) and Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn have supported Lao people such as by providing a budget for Laos in constructing schools and hospitals, and developing agriculture and public health. Lao people are also welcome to the royal activities of the Thai princess. The performances of Thai royalty have encouraged the relations between Thailand and Laos widely.

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2009: Tourism in the Age of Modernization versus the Survival of Architectural Heritages in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR. The Proceedings from Tourism Conference "Liberty & Sustainability". July 17-19, 2009. Ubon Ratchathani University