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Preface

For political and financial reasons, Tai Studies has been an under-studied area from many aspects. This is deservice to the scholarship as well as to attempts to create understanding, unity and peace in the society.

Mindful of this gap, my colleagues and I helped organize the first conference on Tai/Shan Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University in 2007 when a couple of dozens of international scholars converged to give a boost to the subject. Since then, I have noticed some mini or medium size conferences taking place in south and Southeast Asia. Any increase in research related to the Tai Studies is by all means a very welcome development.

Now the newly established Centre for Tai Studies based in Taunggyi has come out with an academic journal, an encouraging sign for those inside and outside the Shan State, the Union of Myanmar who are interested in the subject. Many new articles in it will certainly help further our understanding on the various aspect of Tai people and their culture. I believe the CTS keeps up with its good work and its journal becomes another source scholars can rely on. For this to happen, the CTS needs our help academically and financially.

So far, all the academic activities of the CTS have centered around its director, Prof. Sai Kham Mong, a distinguished Shan historian, who has had to call upon his experience and international contacts to bring out this volume. As a student of Buddhist history, I am forever grateful to him and all the contributors for sharing the fruits of their research and insight.

Venerable Khammai Dhammasami
University of Oxford, U.K

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Editor's Note

The Centre for Tai Studies, established on 27th of March 2016, at the meeting attended by learned Tai monks, elders and scholars is the first of its kind in Shan State. It is dedicated to promoting knowledge about the Tai ethnic groups – their language, culture, art, religion and history.

The awareness of forming the Tai Research Centre was first conceived by the Tai *Sanghas* who are the only Tai learned, conversant in old Tai scripts, and who appreciated the importance of and highly valued old Tai writings in paper scroll and folding paper called *Kein* and *Pub* in the Tai language. It was they who decided to establish the Centre at the Lik Luong Conference (Conference on old Tai scripts) held at Lashio (Northern Shan State) in December 2015. The aim of the CTS thus was to promote Tai studies; to know the value of and to research the old Tai manuscripts; to disseminate, and preserve the knowledge, culture, tradition, religion and history of the Tai and the ethnic groups in the Tai regions. The Mission Statement of the CTS also stipulates:

Centre for Tai Studies is established by likeminded scholars and lovers of education, understanding, peace and wisdom, to encourage, pursue and promote studies and original research related mainly but not exclusively, to Tai people in the world.

To achieve this aim, it is to research and undertake a study of the old Tai manuscripts in *Lik Tai Luong*, *Lik Tai Mao*, *Lik Tai Khamti* and *Lik Tai Khun* – encompassing the Tai history, culture, tradition, beliefs, religion, stories, poems,

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astrology and 550 Great Stories of the Lord Buddha. These writings in old Tai scripts spread in remote Tai villages in Shan, Kachin States and Sagaing Division in Myanmar are invaluable and can by no means be neglected in any credible study of any aspect of the Tai people.

It must be noted that the Tai studies is a very wide scope covering the Tai areas in mainland Asia and continental Southeast Asia. Once we cross over the Myanmar frontier to the East, North, and Northeast and even to the West, we find Tai Studies Centres in Yunnan, Thailand, Vietnam and in Assam of India. But regrettably we do not have such Tai Society or Centre in Myanmar notwithstanding the fact that the Tais are one of the major ethnic groups – spread widely in Shan, Kachin States, Sagaing Division and even in lower part of Myanmar. It is for this reason that we decided to establish the Centre for Tai Studies to promote knowledge on Tai and related ethnic groups – inhabitants of the Tai region.

The Centre for Tai Studies is very grateful to Shan Literature and Culture Association of Taunggyi and those who help financially for the publication of this Journal and also to those who have contributed to the establishment of the CTS.

Sai Kham Mong

Contents

Preface	a
Editor's Note	c
Tun Aung Chaing Change in Kengtung (1837-1917): A Review of Two Accounts	1
Ryuji OKUDAIRA Some Problems Arising from the Variant Version of a Text, with special reference to the Manugye Dhammathat copied in 1782	25
Peter Koret The Mushroom King: How an early 20th century Lao poet told the history of French Colonial Laos in a thousand pages of Buddhist verse	41
Jotika Khur – Yearn A study of Shan Lik Loung Literature: A Timeline of Shan authors and Their works	57
Yin Yin Nwe Education and Social capital in Shan State	83
KIKUCHI Taihei Shan Sawbwa's Requirements in the Independence Period of Burma/Myanmar (1945-1947)	101
Shwe Zin Maw British Plan for Pacification of Shan States (1886 – 1889)	119
Soe Aung The influence of Northern Thailand on Kengtung Buddhism	129

J.N. Phukan Tai Ahom Heritage in Assam	139
Satya Nath Chetia Tai Ahom Marriage	151
Ye Hom Buragohain Poi Sengken (Sengken water pouring festival)	169
Nanthariya Sah-iam Elders in Thai/Tai proverbs	183
Kalaya Lu Banking the Indigenous Knowledge of Tai Culture of the Tai People of Myanmar	189
Thida Hlaing Taxonomic Study on Tribe Bambuseae Growing in Southern Shan State	207
Sai Kham Maung The emergence of Thamanya Sayadaw and the Thamanya Community	235
Sai Kham Mong Kokang question	251