

ບົດທີ່ນຶ່ງ

ພຣະພຸທຮູບສັກສິດເສັງ



ຕອນເຊົ້າມື້ແຮມ໑໐ຄ່ຳເດືອນແປດ ພ.ສ. ພຣະສົງ
ອົງຄະເຈົ້າແລະປະຊາຊົນໃນນະຄອນວຽງຈັນພາກັນຕື່ນເຕັ້ນ
ຖາມກັນຈິແຈເພາະໄດ້ຊາບຂ່າວເລົ່າລືຕໍ່ກັນໄປວ່າ ພຣະ
ພຸທຮູບນ້ອຍອົງນຶ່ງທີ່ເຮົາເຄີຍນັບຖືວ່າເປັນອົງສັກສິດນັ້ນ ໄດ້
ຫາຍຈາກວັດສີສະເກດໄປ.¹ 1

ພຣະພຸທຮູບອົງນີ້ໄດ້ຕັ້ງໄວ້ບ່ອນສຳຄັນ, ພິກຂຸສາມະເນນ
ຄອຍຮັກສາຢ່າງລະມັດລະວັງຢູ່ສເມີ ແຕ່ເຖິງດັ່ງນັ້ນກໍດີ ກໍຍັງ
ເສັງໄປໄດ້ຢ່າງເລິກລັບ.² ກ່ອນອັນທີ່ພຣະພຸທຮູບເສັງນັ້ນ

1. ແຮມ is the period of the waning moon (the period of the waxing moon is called ຂຶ້ນ); there are 15 sections (days) in each period, each called ຄ່ຳ. ພ.ສ. Is the abbreviation for Buddhist Year or ພຸດທະສັກກະລາດ. See Culture Notes, this chapter, for more. ຈິແຈ means "in a loud, chaotic, frenzied manner". ຊາບ is a formal term meaning "to know". ອົງ is the classifier for Buddha images. ສັກສິດ is holy, blessed, sacred. ວັດສີສະເກດ is the oldest standing temple in Vientiane (see photo above), the only temple which survived the Siamese sacking and burning of the city in 1828.

2. ພິກຂຸ is a fully ordained monk; ສາມະເນນ is a novice. ຄອຍ in other contexts means "to wait," but before a verb (as here) it means "to do [verb] constantly and with a high level of interest". ເຖິງດັ່ງນັ້ນກໍດີ "despite all that..."; ເລິກລັບ mysteriously.

ກໍບໍ່ຜາກົດວ່າມີຄົນແປກປອມໄດ້ເຂົ້າມາໃນວັດ ຈຶ່ງບໍ່ມີຄວາມສົງສັຍຜູ້ໃດຜູ້ນຶ່ງເລີຍ ພຣະ
ພຸທຮູບອົງນີ້ຫຼໍ່ດ້ວຍທອງດໍາເປັນອົງຍືນ, ຍາວປະມານ໑ຄືບ ມີຜູ້ຂຸດໄດ້ມາຈາກພຣະບາດ
ໂພນສັນ, ພຣະພິກຂຸຕົນນຶ່ງໄດ້ເອົາມາມອບໄວ້ເປັນສົມບັດຂອງວັດສີສະເກດ ໄດ້ສືບກວ່າປີນີ້
ແລ້ວ ຊາວລາວພາກັນນັບຖືສັກກາຣະບຸຊາ ນິຍົມກັນວ່າພຣະພຸທຮູບອົງນີ້ພາໃຫ້ເຈົ້າຂອງຜູ້
ສຸຈຣິດນັ້ນແຄ້ວຄົງ, ພັນບໍ່ເຂົ້າຍິງບໍ່ອອກແລະຄໍ້າຄຸນຜູ້ທີ່ບົວລະບັດຂັດສີ ນົບໄຫວ້
ນະມັສການເພິ່ນ ແລະຣະລຶກເຖິງບຸນຄຸນຂອງເພິ່ນ.³ 2

ເມື່ອຂ່າວເຮືອງເສັງຫາຍນີ້ໄດ້ຊອດເຖິງຣາຊການຕະເວນລັບແລ້ວ ທ່ານຫົວໜ້າການ
ຝ່າຍນີ້ກໍຮີບຈັດພັນກາງານຕ່າງພາກັນແຍກຍ້າຍອອກສືບສວນໃນທັນທີທັນໃດນັ້ນ.⁴ ເພື່ອຈະ
ກວດກາຕາມບ້ານຕ່າງໆທີ່ຢູ່ແຄມທາງໄປປາກຊັນນັ້ນ ຣາຊການຝ່າຍຕະເວນລັບໄດ້ແຕ່ງໃຫ້
ທ່ານສອດແນມຜູ້ນຶ່ງຊື່ ອັງຕວນ ອອກເດີນທາງໄປພ້ອມພັນກາງານລາວຜູ້ນຶ່ງ. ທ່ານອັງ
ຕວນ ເປັນລູກຊອດ ພໍ່ຝຣັ່ງແມ່ລາວ ເປັນຄົນຕໍ່າເກິ່ງຫ້າວຫັນ ປາກມ່ວນຫົວຫວານ ແລະ
ຂຍັນໃນທາງການ.⁵ ເພິ່ນຮັບຣາຊການມາໄດ້ຫຼາຍປີແລ້ວ, ຈຶ່ງມີຄວາມຊໍານິຊໍານານ

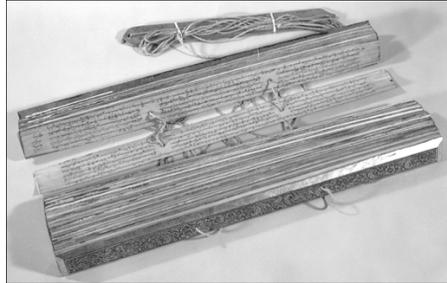
3. ອັນທີ່ “the matter of...”; ສົງສັຍ to suspect; ຫຼໍ່ to be cast (said of metal); ຄືບ a traditional measurement: span of the outstretched thumb and middle finger, about .25 cm. See Culture Notes, this chapter, for more. ຕົນ here is a classifier for monks. ສັກກາຣະບຸຊາ is to make contributions to a temple to gain merit; ນິຍົມກັນວ່າ “they all believed that...”; ແຄ້ວຄົງ “invulnerable”; ພັນບໍ່ເຂົ້າຍິງບໍ່ອອກ “impervious to stabbing with a knife and shots from a gun”; ຄໍ້າຄຸນ “support” (noun); ນົບໄຫວ້ນະມັສການ pay proper respects to (the Buddha image). The pronoun ເພິ່ນ in this sentence refers to the Buddha image. ຣະລຶກ is to remind or be reminded of; ບຸນຄຸນ is holiness or goodness.

4. ຣາຊການ royal service (equivalent to “civil service” in the US); ຝ່າຍ is section or division; ສືບສວນ “to investigate”; ທັນທີທັນໃດ suddenly, on the spur of the moment.

5. ກວດກາ to inspect, patrol; ລູກຊອດ person of mixed race; ຕໍ່າເກິ່ງຫ້າວຫັນ “modest and assertive in equal measures”; ຫົວຫວານ “sweet laugh;” jovial. ຂຍັນໃນທາງການ “dedicated to [his] work”.

ໃນທາງສືບສວນເປັນຢ່າງດີ. ສ່ວນພນັກງານຜູ້ໄປນຳເພິ່ນນັ້ນຊື່ ທ້າວສຸວັນ, ເປັນຄົນຂຍັນ
ຂັນແຂງ ເໝືອນກັນແລະເຄີຍໄດ້ຮັບຄວາມຊົມເຊີຍມາແລ້ວເນື່ອງຈາກຄວາມດີຄວາມຊອບທີ່
ໄດ້ທຳມາໃນທາງຮາຊການ.⁶

3



6. ຊຳນິຊຳນາມ skilled; ຂຍັນຂັນແຂງ diligent; ຊົມເຊີຍ to praise; ເນື່ອງຈາກ concerning; ຄວາມຊອບ
satisfaction.

Chapter One Vocabulary

ບົດ chapter

ຢ່າງລະມັດລະວັງ carefully

ແປກປອມ suspicious (adjective)

ທອງດຳ a dark type of gold

ອົງຍືນ standing Buddha (style of the stolen Buddha image)

ຜູ້ຊຸດ person who uncovered or dug up the image

ມອບ to present something as a gift

ຂັດສີ to polish

ຊອດເຖິງ to “get to” or arrive at (as in “the news got to...”)

ແຍກຍ້າຍ to scatter, divide up

ປາກມ່ວນ amiable, easy-going manner

Culture Notes

Lunar Months

In Laos, especially in the cities and for official events, functions and schedules, the solar calendar (based on the Western zodiac and thus corresponding exactly to the calendar we use in the West), adopted from the French, is fully in use today. However, farmers still use the lunar calendar when discussing the progress of growth of their crops, the timing of important festivals, and many other significant events in their daily lives.

In the lunar system, unlike the system we're used to in the West, the moon isn't divided into four quarters. In the Lao system, the moon is divided into 30 tiny sections, each corresponding to one day. The month is further divided into two main divisions or ປັກ: the period of the waxing moon ຂຶ້ນ, and the period of the waning moon, ແຮມ. Each division is divided into 15 sections called ຄ່ຳ, each equal to one day. The day of the full moon (which comes in the *middle* of the lunar month) is called ມື້ເພັງ, and the day of the new moon (which signals the end of the lunar month) is ມື້ດັບ. Remember that the eighth and fifteenth days of each ປັກ or half of the cycle (that is, the waxing half and the waning half of each month) are Buddhist holy days or ວັນສີນ. Thus there are four holy days per lunar month, the most significant being the day of the full moon and the day of the new moon. These two days are when all important festivals are held.

So it works like this: the first day of a given lunar month (that is, the first day of the waxing moon of that month) is called ມື້ຂຶ້ນນຶ່ງຄ່ຳ (with the number of the month *following* that phrase. Note that the lunar months in former times all had names as well. While some of those names are still used by farmers and in religious contexts (you'll see the name of one lunar month in Chapter Four), it's far more common nowadays to use the numbers of the months). The second day of the waxing moon is ມື້ຂຶ້ນສອງຄ່ຳ, and so forth and so on, on up to what *would* be "ມື້ຂຶ້ນສິບຫ້າຄ່ຳ," which is instead called "day of the full moon" or ມື້ເພັງ. The day after that, we begin counting the divisions of the ປັກ of the waning moon with ມື້ແຮມນຶ່ງຄ່ຳ, on up to what *would* be the 15th day of that division ("ມື້ແຮມສິບຫ້າຄ່ຳ"), which is of course instead called ມື້ດັບ ("day of the new moon"), the end of that lunar month.

Note that the lunar months do not coincide with our Western, solar months. The exact way they fit with them varies from year to year. More or less, though, lunar months tend to start (and end) in the middle of a solar month. These months are the same in all Theravada Buddhist countries, by the way. To see more precisely how the lunar months line up with other things you know about--like the life of the Buddha and important Lao religious festivals--see Chapters Two and Four of your Lao Heritage textbook, where some of this material was already discussed.

You're certainly "excused" for not memorizing all of this, but note that if you plan to spend a good deal of time doing research or other work among Lao rice farmers, you will need to learn this system well. Any Southeast Asian rice farmer worth her or his salt can look at the moon on any given night and tell you pretty much exactly which of the 15 divisions of the waxing or waning moon we're currently at! Ask your instructor(s) if anything about this system or how it's discussed is not clear to you.

Buddhist Vs. Christian Years

This is another topic you were first introduced to in Chapter Two of your Heritage textbook, when we discussed the Life of the Buddha. The system of numbering years from the birth of Christ (or, more commonly nowadays, from the beginning of the Common Era or C.E....Lao and other Southeast Asian languages still refer to this system as "Christian, however) is called ຄິດຕະສັກກະລາດ or ຄ.ສ.; the system of numbering years from the birth of Buddha is ພຸດທະສັກກະລາດ or ພ.ສ.. The C.E. system is more commonly used in Laos nowadays for most events, but you will encounter the Buddhist years in religious and various formal contexts, and certainly in older texts. To calculate the Buddhist year given any C.E. year, simply add 543 to the C.E. year. Thus, the year in which I'm putting this book together is ຄ.ສ. 2009 or ພ.ສ. 2552. Another shortcut you can sometimes use when talking about the past 60 years or so is remembering that the year

2500 in the Buddhist system--considered a very important and auspicious milestone in Buddhism--was 1957.

Traditional Body-Based Measurements

This is perhaps an even more archaic topic than that of the lunar months, but believe it or not, some of the terms discussed here are still known in the countryside. That is, the system of using body parts for measurement, in the days before centimeters, meters and other units were introduced by the French. All cultures came up with something like this; witness our own "foot" as a linear measurement, etc. What better way to measure things than with parts of the human body, especially when, as in many traditional societies, (probably largely due to nutritional reasons), the general body dimensions from person to person tended to be fairly consistent.

Realistically, this is probably only going to be of interest to you insofar as you encounter these terms in older Lao texts, but if you do much reading of such texts, you certainly will see some of these. In fact, you've seen one already in this chapter (the term given in describing the dimensions of the Sacred Buddha image stolen in Chapter One of the novel). So below is a list of some common traditional measurements. Note that this is by no means an exhaustive list! Some, you have to admit, though, are pretty fascinating. Ask your instructor's

opinion on this topic, especially if they have any experience in the countryside or studying historical texts, you might find what they have to say pretty interesting:

Hand and Arm-based Length Measurements

ຄືບ this is the one that appears in this chapter, it refers to the span of the outstretched thumb and middle finger (about .25 cm).

ຜູ້ is the distance--when one clenches one's fist--from the end of the thumb to the edge of the closed fist.

ວາ the distance from fingertip to fingertip when the arms are fully extended in opposite directions.

ສອກ besides meaning "elbow," this term refers to the distance from elbow to fingertip (about 50 cm.).

ກຳ is the width of the bottom of a fist (about 12.5 cm).

Hand-based Volume Measurements

ຟາຍ a handful (.25 liter).

ກອບ a double handful(!).

ໃຈມື the amount of a substance that will fit in the palm of the hand (a 1/4 handful).

Other interesting distance measurements

ອຸສະພະ thirty-five times the distance of a ວາ (fingertip to fingertip of outstretched arms)

ໂຍດຊະນະ the distance of "four yells" (presumably, one person hears the first yell, passes it on the second, etc.)

ຄາວູດ (this is my personal favorite) the maximum distance over which the lowing of cattle can be heard (about 4,000 yards).

Exercise for Chapter One

Write two sentences for each of the following terms, which you should memorize and be able to use after studying this chapter. You will find two of them in the footnotes, and two in the vocabulary list. Consult your instructor if you don't know how to use these (after studying their occurrence in the text of this chapter):

ນິຍົມ

ເຖິງດັ່ງນັ້ນກໍດີ

ຢ່າງລະມັດລະວັງ

ຊອດເຖິງ