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Writing Buddhist Histories from Landscape and Architecture: Sukhothai and Chiang Mai[1]

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ABSTRACT: This essay offers a preliminary account of the ways in which alterations to the landscape of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Sukhothai and Chiang Mai figured within the micro-politics of these city-states. I show how landscape alterations inspired by Laṅkā and mainland South Asia served the consolidation and projection of royal power within the context of local and regional competition, and how such alterations formed part of strategic royal engagement with Buddhist monastic lineages.

INTRODUCTION

Historical narratives and lineage texts produced in Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia often include accounts of the alteration of landscape [2] by Buddhist

1. This essay is dedicated to Donald K. Swearer with great respect, gratitude, and affection. An early version of this essay was read at the 9th International Conference on Thai Studies (at DeKalb, Illinois, 2005) for a panel in celebration of Professor Swearer's many contributions to Buddhist Studies and Thai Studies. I am grateful for questions and comments on that version, especially those offered by Professor Swearer himself. My first attempt to explore the historical and hermeneutical problems raised by the study of spatial copying and the constitution of landscape occurred with students at Cornell University in a seminar titled 'Monks, Texts, and Relics: Transnational Buddhism in Asia'. I would like to thank Bryce Beemer and Christian Lammerts for their thoughtful contributions to our work, and Lawrence Chua and Jonathan Young for later stimulating conversations on related topics. A revised version of the essay was read to the UK Association of Buddhist Studies conference held at Lancaster University in July 2006. I am particularly grateful to Ashley Thompson, Ian Reader, and Peter Skilling for their comments on that occasion. Subsequently, I have greatly benefited from comments and references offered by Peter Harvey, Justin McDaniel, Stanley O'Connor, and the anonymous reader for *Buddhist Studies Review.*
2. Susan Alcock writes of the term 'landscape': 'Landscape, a capacious and currently much utilized concept, contains a multitude of meanings, all of which revolve around human experience, perception, and modification of the world. Landscape thus embraces the physical environment, patterns of settlement, boundaries and frontier, fields, cities, natural features, monuments, pathways, holy places, wilderness, and much much more' (2002, 30). In this essay I am most concerned with sites associated with protective supernatural powers, and sites that served as foci for remembrance of Sakyamuni Buddha and powerful rulers.

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patrons. That is, such texts include reports of meritorious activity in the form of building construction and the establishment of sites for the recollection of Sakyamuni Buddha and other enlightened beings. Such reconstitutions of the landscape are, in particular, evoked and described in reports of kingship. Thus, for example, the *Mahāvaṃsa* reports of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi:

> Spending a hundred thousand (pieces of money) the king hereupon commanded a great and splendid ceremony of gifts for the great Bodhi-tree. As he then, when entering the city, saw the pillar of stone raised upon the place of the (future) thūpa and remembered the old tradition, he became glad, thinking; 'I will build the Great Thūpa. ... When the wherewithal to build was thus brought together he began the work of the Great Thūpa on the full-moon day of the month Vesākha, when the Visākha-constellation had appeared. ... When the king, glad at heart, had thus had preparation made upon the spot where the Great Thūpa was to be built, he arranged on the fourteenth day of the bright half of the month Āsāḷha, an assembly of the brotherhood of the bhikkhus, and spoke thus: 'To-morrow, venerable sirs, I shall lay the foundation-stone of the Great Cetiya. Then let our whole brotherhood assemble here, to the end that a festival may be held for the Buddha ...
>
> (Geiger 1950, 28:1–3, 29:1–2, 13–16)

So, too, the *Jinakālamālī* celebrates some of the actions of King Tilokarāja[3] as follows:

> The Emperor Tilaka, the Universal Monarch Siridhamma, for the sake of his parents' gaining substantial merit had an Uposatha-hall constructed at the place of cremation of the remains of his mother and father at the Great Rattavana Monastery. On the Great Invitation day of the following year, the year of the Monkey of the Royal Saka Era, the Sovereign Lord Tilaka measured out a region of twenty fathoms on all sides of the Uposatha-hall ... . When the formal act of the Order of Agreement on a Sīmā was over, for seven days, the righteous monarch conducted a magnificent ceremony of dedication. (Jayawickrama 1968, 137–8)

Such textual references strongly suggest that we should see the Buddhist worlds of South and Southeast Asia as participating within a 'cultural system of using buildings and statues to signal approbation and power' (Elsner 2003, 219).[4] Historians of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia have long recognized the importance of such merit-making and patronage to Buddhist kingship and elite politics. However, we have not yet assessed such acts of construction as elements in arguments developed geographically in response to micro-political demands. We have not, in other words, yet adequately explored the ways in which

3. See the end of this article for a list of Thai kings and their dates.
4. Elsner writes of the Roman world.

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the construction and reconstruction of buildings for Buddhist activities, and the delineation of landscape sites for ritual and pilgrimage, formed part of specific local efforts to consolidate and articulate lineage and power.[5] In this essay I hope to offer a preliminary account of some of the ways in which alterations to the landscape of Buddhist practice in Sukhothai and Chiang Mai[6] occurred within the context of the micro-politics of these city-states, and efforts to alter or affirm local and regional hierarchies of status, authority and potency. Such efforts assumed several simultaneous functions of space and site that present-day scholars of Buddhism might be inclined to distinguish (given our own taxonomies), namely: (1) the samsaric protection offered by landscape alteration as merit-making; (2) the immediate potent (or 'magical') protection provided by marking and enhancing certain sites; (3) the demonstration of power and authority through massive visual signs of patronage and the reorientation of spaces for ritual practice; (4) the alteration of the hierarchy of monastic lineage controlled by a king through the enhancement of sites related to one line and the diminution or neglect of those related to another; (5) the 'citation'[7] of claims to participate in the unfolding of a specific local history of the *sāsana.* By 'citation' I refer to the manner in which the material forms instantiated through architecture and landscape alterations help to shape, and then to support, oral and textual claims made to lineage and inheritance, as well as claims of supersession and encompassment.

Examining two instances of altered landscape (in the area we know as Thailand) during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, I show how these interventions, which drew inspiration from elements of Buddhist landscape in Laṅkā[8] and mainland South Asia, served the consolidation and projection of royal power, royal engagement with competing Buddhist monastic lines, and the protection of Buddhist persons. I look at the reconstitution of Buddhist landscapes in Sukhothai

5. The most substantial contribution in this regard is Duncan (1990), which I discuss in the concluding section of this essay.

6. I have developed this essay without independent access to materials in Thai, Northern Thai and Khmer and the essay is thus greatly dependent on translated materials and secondary scholarship on Chiang Mai and Sukhothai. I look to colleagues working more centrally in the local histories of Southeast Asian Buddhism for further refinements and corrections.

7. This term was suggested to me by Ashley Thompson (personal communication), in a slightly different context. I find it a richly suggestive term with which to think about the power of material forms to make, or to participate in, narrative arguments about temporality and belonging. An examination of the place of material forms in such arguments made within the Buddhist worlds of South and Southeast Asia could fruitfully include study of the micro-politics involved in selecting and establishing copies of powerful images, in addition to the already well discussed traffic in the theft of relics and royal palladia. On image copies, see the important and suggestive work of A. B. Griswold (1957; 1965). Justin McDaniel rightly notes, in his thoughtful treatment of the *Jinakālamālī*, that Lān Nā chronicles such as the *Jinakālamālī* work to establish 'temporal and spatial authenticity' for Lanna through the use of 'spatial terminology and the establishment of sacred geography in their histories' (2002, esp. 161, 168). In this regard see also McDaniel (2000).

8. I use the term 'Laṅkā' to refer to the island we now know as Sri Lanka in the period before 1948.

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and Chiang Mai as activities that were, for royal patrons, part of 'building a world'[9] in their present, and for their samsaric futures. In what follows here I focus on the immediate context for patronage, construction and landscape alteration rather than the reception accorded to such changes. However, I certainly do not assume that the patron's vision of his or her altered landscape (its aims, its effects) was something received with uniformity. There would have been, presumably, a range of responses, affected by very personal experiences as well as by social location.

THE BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINTS AT SUKHOTHAI

Territory and Power

According to Betty Gosling, King Lü Thai or Mahā Dhammarāja I (r. 1347–?)[10] commissioned four engravings of the Buddha's footprint in the 1350s and had them placed on hilltops at Nakhon Sawān (Braḥ Pāṅ), Bang Phān (Pāṅ Bān), Si Sajjanalai, and Sukothai (1991, 70-71).[11] Her claim finds support in Sukhothai Inscription 3 (in Thai), which lists a series of footprint installations in Sukhothai, Si Sajjanalai, Pāṅ Bān, and Pāk Braḥ Pāṅ, and emphasizes that '[t]there is an inscription with (the footprint) at each of those places' (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 464). According to this inscription, which accompanied the enshrinement of a relic at Nagara Juṃ, each of the footprint installations was placed at the top of a hill or mountain.[12] The footprints are explicitly associated with Laṅkā:

> Brañā Dharmikarāja sent to Siṅhala to make impressions of the trace of … Our Lord's Foot which is stamped on top of Mount Sumanakūṭaparvata, to measure its size, and to bring (the impressions) back to be copied for everyone … (465, original parentheses)

This refers to the Lankan site of Śrī Pāda, or Adam's Peak, located in the south-central region of Laṅkā, long understood by Asian Buddhists to be one of the locations on which Sakyamuni Buddha reached, and marked, the island we now know as Sri Lanka.

The content of this inscription suggests that the installation of Buddha footprints on these sites served as an opportunity for the articulation of royal authority (real or desired) in relation to competition from other *müang* (city-state) centres. Reference to the Buddha footprint installations follows words of praise for the king and a condensed account of his expectations regarding proper kingship, succession and inheritance for men of rank as well as commoners:

9. The words are Stanley O'Connor's, in a lecture addressed to the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell University, 2 September 2004.
10. See further below regarding these regnal dates.
11. See also Griswold (n.d., 55–8).
12. Griswold & Prasert date the inscription to 1357 (1992, 433).

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* Wat Saphan Hin

* Ram Khamhäng's Mango Grove
* Mahā Dhammarāja I's Royal Mango Grove Monastery
* Brahminic Shrine

* Wat Mahāthāt. Royal Palace

* Mahā Dhammarāja I's Sukhothai Footprint

MAP 1: Sukhothai sites[13]

> From now on if any ruler ... in this city he must do what is right ... [he must do homage to] stupas, cetiyas and śrīmahābodhi trees [along the banks of] this River Biṅ without missing a single time; he must respect the monks, [honor his parents, love his elder and] younger brothers, and respect the aged. He must be kind to the common people; [if they are strong enough to perform a certain] task, he may use them for it, but if they are not strong enough he must not use them, [and those who are too old should be allowed to do as they please]. He must (keep) reserves of rice and an abundance of salt in his Möaṅ; if [he does so] ... [the rulers of] other countries will come to rely and lean upon him; but if [he does not], he himself (may have to) seek help from the countries of other rulers, who will treat him with contempt and ... him besides. When commoners or men of rank [die] ... he must not seize their estates; when a father dies (the estate) must be left [*to the sons; when an elder brother dies, it must be left to] the younger. Any ruler who acts in accordance with these principles ... will rule this Moaṅ for a very long time; any (ruler) who acts in violation of them will not last long at all.
>
> This statement is rather brief but there is a detailed statement in an inscription at Sukhodaya ... at the Mahādhātu, ...
>
> (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 463–4, original punctuation)

The location of the footprint installations described by Inscription 3 suggests that the footprints, and their inscriptional accompaniments, served as a means through which Mahā Dharmarāja I made claims to royal authority at Sukhothai and over territories beyond the *müang*. In addition to the footprint established in Sukhothai, the inscription refers to Si Sajjanalai, a city-polity sometimes linked

13. Adapted from Gosling (1996, 75; 1991, rear inset); not to scale.

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to Sukhothai by royal family line, strategically located to the north of Sukhothai and a buffer to the polities of Nān and Lān Nā. Pān Bāng and Braḥ Pāṅ were both sites to the south of Sukhothai, important to the control of trade and military movement between Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and southern political centres.[14]

The possibility that Buddha footprint installations functioned in part to articulate territorial claims and to forge (or at least to mark) royal authority within a competitive local and regional climate finds further support from Face I of Inscription 11 (in Thai), attributed by A. B. Griswold and Prasert ṇa Nagara to the reign of Mahā Dhammarāja I and discovered near Braḥ Pāṅ.[15] This face of the inscription describes a royal patron clearing the area, building a cover for an existing Buddha footprint, and planting a *bodhi* tree at the site. The patron subsequently established a *cetiya*, a *vihāra*, and another *bodhi* tree in the nearby town. All of this activity is linked by the inscription to the celebration and protection of two family lines, that of the patron and that of a high-ranking person named Brañā Braḥ Rāma. 'May whatever sons, grandsons and great-grandsons in (our) family lines who become rulers in the future follow the example of these two brothers, the elder and the younger, who loved each other' (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 472). Historians of Sukhothai debate the identity of Brañā Braḥ Rāma. The important point for our present purposes is that the royal inscription once again connects a Buddha footprint site to the stability of royal succession and alliances within the Sukhothai region.[16]

Another Sukhothai inscription clarifies the competitive context within which King Mahā Dhammarāja I's footprint installations occurred. This is Inscription 4, composed in Khmer well after the king's accession to the throne and after he had (temporarily or permanently) left the throne as an ordained monk. The inscription offers a retrospective account of Mahā Dhammarāja's acquisition of the throne at *müang* Sukhothai. Sukhothai historiography remains rife with controversy about the politics surrounding Mahā Dhammarāja I's accession (as about much else). Inscription 4 gives the following account of the challenges connected to the king's *abhiseka*.

14. Gosling (1991, 97) and Stratton and Scott (1989, 15) have argued that the installation of copies of the *stūpa* tower at Sukhothai's Wat Mahāthāt in neighboring cities may have been intended to served a similar function of signaling royal authority over and access to these areas. On the cosmological designs of the Buddha footprints see Stratton and McNair (1981, 87), Griswold & Prasert (1992, 202–7), DiCrocco (2004, 31–64), and Woodward (2005).

15. The surviving text of the inscription contains only a partial name, 'Brañā Mahādhar.' Their attribution is made on the basis of style and spelling forms (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 466–7).

16. For a fuller discussion see Griswold & Prasert (1992, 466–72). Vickery argues that the dating of both faces of Inscription 11 is uncertain. 'Concerning Face II, its content does resemble part of No. II [2], and the opinions of Griswold and Prasert and Prince Chand that it refers to Srī Saddhā [Si Satha] are acceptable, although the assertion that he was the author is not certain. I would say in conclusion that all historical reconstructions based on No. XI must be set aside pending further study' (1978, 187–8).

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> In 1269 śaka, a year of the boar, Braḥ Pāda Kamrateṅ Añ Ḷidaiyarāja, who is the grandson of Braḥ Pāda Kamrateṅ Añ Rāmarāja, having led his army out of Śrī Sajjanālaya, came up rapidly, with all his troops prepared, (to a point) outside the capital. On Friday the fifth day of the waxing moon of jyaiṣṭha he commanded his troops ... to approach, to surround, to seize, to break open the gates, to attack, and to strike down all his enemies. Then ... he entered [the capital] to reign supreme in this land of Sukhodaya, as successor to his father and his grandfather. Quickly ... all the kings living in the four directions [*filled with affection towards him,] brought .. the crown, the [sacred] sword Jayaśrī and the white parasol, conferred the abhiṣeka on him, and gave him the name Braḥ Pāda Kamrateṅ Añ Śrī Sūryavaṃśa Mahādharmarājādhirāja.
>
> (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 490, original punctuation)

Although Inscription 4 does not detail the 'enemies' who stood in the way of Mahā Dhammarāja I's accession, David Wyatt has noted the unstable character of Sukhothai's regional alliances at this time, and the king's attempts to control his territory in the face of growing power in Ramaññadesa, Lān Nā, and Ayutthaya (2003, 48–9).[17]

Spatial Copying

The Buddha footprints established on hilltops in and near *müang* Sukhothai were, in a sense, copies of Laṅkā's Śrī Pāda. Inscription 3 makes evident the desire to copy publicly from the Lankan site,[18] as does the name used for the hilltop site of the Sukhothai footprint, Mount Sumanakūṭa (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 465). However, as Hiram Woodward notes, the style of two extant footprints attributed by him to Mahā Dhammarāja I's reign, betrays a more complex heritage of association to Laṅkā. 'The two footprints of 1357, in which there is Sri Lankan stylistic influence, display the symbols [of a Buddha's marks] in the Burmese configuration' (2005, 304). The footprints suggest the conjunction of Lankan and Paganese influence mediated through Martaban, where Sīhala monastic influence was established.[19]

Griswold's discussion of relic copies offers some assistance as we consider the possible motivations for, and the claims made by, the introduction of footprint copies in Sukhothai. Griswold considers the copying of material objects associated with the activities of Sakyamuni Buddha, such as *bodhi* trees and Buddha footprints, as well as those, such as Buddha images, which are icons for remembrance

17. See also Gosling (1991, 93).
18. 'Brañā Dharmikarāja sent to Siṅhala to make impressions of the trace of ... Our Lord's Foot which is stamped on top of Mount Sumanakūṭaparvata' (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 465).
19. On Pagan footprints see Woodward (2005, 300) as well as Di Crocco (2004, 44–9).

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of Buddha virtues and Buddha biography.[20] According to Griswold, in this context effective copying of a structure or object is a matter of copying what is essential rather than every detail. He argues that what is essential is what relates to lineage in the sense that it must be possible to identify the new copy as participating in a series of forms connected to powerful places and moments in mainland South Asia and Laṅkā.

> Copying is creation. Certain essential features must be reproduced, but not necessarily the outward appearance. (1965, 181)[21]

> The principle governing this kind of copying is like the process of planting a descendant of the living paribhogacetiya, the original Mahabodhi tree: the sapling, though far smaller, and possessed of far fewer branches and leaves, is no less a *ficus religiosa*; and while it can never resemble its ancestor exactly in configuration, it will be able to exercise the same power over men's minds. (p. 181)

Griswold understood relic copies to serve the interests of elite patrons as well as larger communities of Buddhists who sought the reassurance and merit of contact with traces of Sakyamuni Buddha. With respect to royal construction and installation projects at Sukhothai, Griswold noted the importance of copies such as footprints and Buddha images to the activities through which rulers expressed their authority and their claims to support the *sāsana.*

> And when a ruler wishes to signify that in his land 'Buddha's religion will flourish', he can hardly do better than to install such seals on hilltops near his principal cities, at the same time ordering his sculptors to make images of the lord of the world himself converting the people and impressing his Footprint. (n.d., 57)

Moreover, he stressed the way in which alterations to the landscape through copies of sites associated with Sakyamuni Buddha created opportunities for local pilgrimage and ritual action in mainland Southeast Asia.

20. Cf. the three kinds of shrines (*cetiya*s) referred to at *Jātaka* IV.228 (cf. *Milindapañha* 341): (i) *sarīrika-cetiya*, containing funerary remains of the Buddha or an *Arahant*, or copies of these, or hair or nail clippings from such people; (ii) *pāribhogika-cetiya*, shrines of things used by the Buddha – the *bodhi*-tree or its descendants, his bowl or robe, or copies of these, and sites associated with his life; (iii) *uddesika-cetiya*, shrines 'indicating' the nature of a Buddha, in the form of symbols or images of him.

21. Writing about Sukhothai footprints, Griswold notes that '[s]ince the grouping [of the 108 symbols on the footprint] varies so much in different examples, it is plain that the Footprints are by no means accurate copies of any one model, let alone the print on Adam's Peak – they are inspired simply by the list given in the Pali texts' (n.d., 56). It is not clear, however, which of such texts were present at what date, orally or in written form, at Sukhothai. Peter Skilling indicates that 'the earliest list known in Siam is that given in Pāli verse in a 14th century stone inscription from Wat Traphang Chang Phuak at Sukhothai' (1992, 67), an inscription dated by Griswold and Prasert to the period shortly prior to Mahā Dhammarāja I's accession to the throne (1992, 203).

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> Journeys to such far off places as Bodhgaya and Ceylon were beyond the reach of most people, but this sort of copying provided a substitute. Places could be named after the holy sites in Ceylon and India, and their most important features reproduced ... By such means the stay-at-homes could be given the opportunity to make the same merit that they would have got from worshipping at the original holy places, and to gain the same psychological advantages. (1965, 181–2)

Ian Reader has noted a similar dynamic at work in the development of miniature pilgrimage circuits in Japan such as those associated with Kōbō Daishi.

> Thus the [Shikoku] pilgrimage was really only accessible to those who could leave home for many months, who had sufficient funds to permit this or who were prepared to endure the hardships of begging for sustenance. For most people in most parts of the country, then, the Shikoku pilgrimage was not a very realistic prospect. In consequence, the energy inherent in the pilgrimage culture of the Tokugawa age found its expression diverted, to a great degree, to local and more accessible levels. In short, when the pilgrim could not go to the pilgrimage, the pilgrimage was brought to the pilgrim. (1988, 55)

In addition, according to Reader, the proliferation of miniature pilgrimage circuits served local and regional interests in another sense as well, since the 'desire to assert more clearly a sense of local identity' contributed to their rise (p. 55).[22]

Lineage and Landscape

These observations by Griswold and Reader provide a provocative broad context within which to consider Mahā Dhammarāja I's move to install footprint copies within his region. We can, however, also move towards another scale of analysis in the interpretation of the footprint installations by examining more closely the ways in which the micro-politics of royal and monastic lineage intersected with alterations to the Buddhist landscape in Sukhothai and its environs.

Looking at the inscriptions from this period we see Mahā Dhammarāja I's considerable attention to incorporating within his kingdom potent signs and persons connected to Laṅkā and Sīhala (i.e. descended from the Lankan *saṅgha*) monastic lineages. In addition to the footprint installations, Mahā Dhammarāja I patronized a new community of Sīhala monks imported from the south and developed

22. Reader makes two other points relevant to the Southeast Asian phenomena discussed by Griswold. The terminology used to refer to smaller pilgrimages associated with Shikoku made explicit a lineage relationship between original and subsequent miniature pilgrimages (1988, 58). Moreover, the forms of miniatures focused more on 'the symbolic levels of meaning than on any direct physical replication (apart, of course, from the obvious point of having the same number of sites)' (p. 61).

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sites for these monks as centres of royal ritual. He even took ordination (*pabbajā* and *upasampadā*) within the community of monks he had imported. I suggest that we understand the king's footprint installations – his introduction of copies associated with Sakyamuni Buddha and with the *sāsana*'s Lankan supports – within the context of the unstable politics internal to Sukhothai and characteristic of his place within the region.

It is important to note that Mahā Dhammarāja I was not the first person of high rank at Sukhothai to seek connections to Laṅkā. His own engagement with sites and persons associated with Laṅkā and the Sīhala *saṅgha* should be understood as participation in a cluster of arguments about authority, potency and purity already underway within his realm. His grandfather, for instance, King Ram Khamhäng, brought monks within a Sīhala lineage to Sukhothai from Nakhon Si Thammarat, settling them at Wat Saphan Hin west of the city (Gosling 1991, 29).[23] During the following reign of King Lo Thai, the period immediately prior to Mahā Dhammarāja I's own reign, the ordained son of a leading family in neighboring *müang* Rat made an extended visit to Laṅkā. This man, Si Satha Mahāthera, returning from the island with Lankan relics, undertook major repairs as well as new construction in the centre of Sukhothai at Wat Mahāthāt.[24] Si Satha belonged to one of two families that had played a central role in the establishment of Sukhothai under Tai rule in place of Khmer control, and was thus a high-ranking person within the region. Although Mahā Dhammarāja I's accession to the throne appears to have been fraught with difficulty involving competition within *müang* Sukhothai and the immediately adjacent *müang*, there is insufficient evidence to judge conclusively whether Si Satha and/or his family contested Mahā Dhammarāja I's accession to the throne or supported competing interests after the death of King Lo Thai. However, the contents of Inscription 2 frames Si Satha's activities at Wat Mahāthāt in terms of his own family line, and it is striking that such lineage claims would have been made in one of Sukhothai's central ritual locations at a time of instability within Sukhothai and its court. The inscription suggests that the connections forged by Si Satha to Laṅkā and Lankan monastic communities were in some way drawn into competing patron–client relations at Sukhothai. I thus agree with Michael Vickery's reading (1978, 212) of the inscription (in Thai) as intended to glorify a family line other than the Sukhothai royal line of Lo Thai and Mahā Dhammarāja I.[25] This supports Gosling's suggestion that

23. See also Hazra (1982, 142–8).
24. See Griswold & Prasert (1992, 343–5, 402–3) and Gosling (1991, 42). Griswold and Prasert attribute Inscription 2, and thus Si Satha's return, to the period of King Lo Thai's reign. However, Prince Chand (1976, 44) says that Si Satha returned during the period after Lo Thai's death, perhaps before the accession of Mahā Dhammarāja I or in the early years of his reign.
25. There is considerable disagreement about the authorship of Inscription 2 and about the location of some of the events it discusses. A voice shift within the inscription from third person to first person in the account of Si Satha's activities has posed interpretive problems. Vickery (1978) summarizes and addresses earlier scholarship on this and other Sukhothai inscriptions. Although Griswold (1967) attributed the inscription to King Lo Thai (the father of King Mahā

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some of Mahā Dhammarāja I's construction projects at Sukhothai be understood as a rejoinder to the activities of Si Satha at Wat Mahāthāt (Gosling 1991, 65–6).

The alterations to the Buddhist landscape undertaken by Mahā Dhammarāja I are intelligible as acts of patronage undertaken in the context of elite competition, particularly the command of public royal ritual space through the development of new sites in and near the city. Close to Wat Mahāthāt and the city centre, so greatly enhanced by Si Satha, the king constructed his own royal palace (Gosling 1991, 65). However, his royal monastery was constructed two kilometres west of the city walls, midway between an earlier forest monastery associated with Ram Khamhäng and the central Wat Mahāthāt, in a grove of mango trees said to have been planted by King Ram Khamhäng (Gosling 1996, 28; Gosling 1991, 65–6).[26] New large images of Viṣṇu and Śiva were installed in a brahminic shrine nearby (Gosling 1991, 65, 67). With such acts, the centre of gravity for royally sponsored monastic and protective rituals appears to have shifted west of the city centre, some distance from Mahāthāt.[27]

Mahā Dhammarājā I's installation of the Buddha footprints followed these developments, with the Sukhothai footprint installed slightly more than ten years after his *abhiseka* (Gosling 1991, 70–72; Griswold & Prasert 1992, 551). The site of the footprint installation at Sukhothai coheres well with the king's move to situate the royal monastery in the western sphere. It was located west of the city centre, to the south of the Mango Grove complex that included the new royal monastery, due south from the earlier forest monastery associated with King Ram Khamhäng and the Sīhala *saṅgha* supported by him. Within one or two years of the dedication of this Sukhothai footprint, King Mahā Dhammarāja I brought

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Dhammarāja I), in their later joint work Griswold and Prasert stop short of that attribution, while discussing reasons in favor of such a reading (1992, 358–60). According to Gosling the 'writer and protagonist of Inscriptions 2 and 11.2 is Si Satha, a grandson of Sukhothai's liberator, Pha Muang, and a nephew of Ram Khamhaeng' (1996, 24). To my mind, the inscription reads fluidly as an account of Si Satha's heritage, Buddhist aspirations, experiences in Laṅkā and activities at Sukhothai. If we assume that he was the patron of the inscription or the primary force behind it, rather than its author in the narrowest sense, it becomes easier to understand both the shift in voice internal to the inscription and the manner in which the inscription combines the styles of recounting lineage, announcing merit-making, and reporting relic miracles since each of these topics has its own generic formulation. I agree with Vickery (1978, 212) that the inscription includes references to the Lankan Mahādhātu. Vickery notes further: 'that to the extent the author, probably Srī Saddhā, dealt with Sukhothai history at all, it was to glorify a family other than that of the Sukhothai kings and who may plausibly be seen as his ancestors and their rivals' (p. 212). See also Vickery (p. 216) on the question of Lo Thai's succession and the possible reign of Nua Nāṃ Thaṃ.

26. See Inscription 5: 'Formerly this place was the royal [garden] of Braññ Rāmarāja the grandfather ... [who] planted this grove of mango-trees in rows' (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 508, original punctuation).

27. Gosling notes the presence of an *uposatha* hall with *sīmā* in the vicinity of the royal monastery though she does not date those structures (1996, 28). It would have been natural for King Mahā Dhammarāja I to establish a new centre for monastic ordination in proximity to his royal monastery and the residence of the *saṅgharāja* appointed by him. See further below.

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monks from Martaban who were associated with a forest-dwelling lineage of Sīhala *saṅgha* monks, establishing one of them as Saṅgharāja at the Mango Grove complex (Gosling 1991, 73; Griswold & Prasert 1992, 475–6). Since Buddhist monks, and indeed Buddhist monks connected with Laṅkā and her *saṅgha,* were already established within *müang* Sukhothai, we must understand Mahā Dhammarāja I's introduction of a new monastic line, and the appointment of a new *saṅgharāja*, as acts that introduced new royal favourites within the *saṅgha*, and that probably reduced or constrained the power and resources of previous monastic lineages at Sukhothai. The king's appointment of the *saṅgharāja* was part of the standard repertoire of actions through which Lankan and Southeast Asian kings connected with Buddhist institutions asserted royal control and altered the balances of power and patronage within elite circles.

This understanding of the king's activities is further supported by Sukhothai Inscriptions 4 (in Khmer) and 5 (in Thai), which closely link the arrival of the new *saṅgharāja*, the dedication of a *bhūmisparśa* image in the Wat Mahāthāt compound on the side closest to the royal palace and the ordination of Mahā Dhammarāja I in 1361. The king is described as conducting his novitiate ordination in the presence of the new image and of the *saṅgharāja* within the royal palace site. The *saṅgharāja* demonstrated allegiance to the king by his presence in the royal palace before the newly installed image. Only then did the king move to the Mango Grove complex for *upasampadā*, leaving the image in residence at the palace itself. According to Inscription 5:

> If we wished to make a comparison, that road {on which the *saṅgharāja* arrived} was as beautiful to look at as a road in the city of heaven. Then [the King] invited the Mahāsāmī Saṅgharāja to go into retreat for the full three months of the rainy season.
>
> At the end of the retreat, [the King] made a great presentation of alms (to the monkhood) and consecrated a bronze statue cast [the same size as] (the statue of?) our Lord the Buddha, erected in the middle of the city of Sukhodaya to the east of the Śrīratanamahādhātu. [For the] consecration he listened to the [preaching of the] Dharma every day for a full hundred days, and at that time he distributed offerings of ten thousand of gold, ten thousand of silver, ten million cowries, ten million areca nuts, four hundred [sets of] robes, four hundred almsbowls, four hundred cushions, four hundred pillows, [four hundred] mattresses, and countless gifts of all sorts. As for the accessory [offerings] brought by members of the royal family and nobility, they cannot be counted. And the gifts presented to the Mahāsāmi Saṅgharāha {*sic*} cannot be counted [either].
>
> {I omit a discussion of the date of the king's *pabbajā*.}
>
> Brañā Śrī Sūryavaṃśa Rāma Mahādharmarājādhirāja … made the resolve to observe the Ten Precepts as an ascetic … in the presence of the golden statue of the Buddha which was installed in the Royal Palace, and which he himself had caused to be … on that day. Then he invited the Mahāsāmī Saṇgharāja, together with the theras, the anutheras, and the

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> assembly of monks, to enter the Royal Palace ... and he received the ordination as a samaṇera there. When he was about to [receive] the Precepts, Brañā Śrī Sūryavaṃśa Rāma Mahādharmarājādhirāja, standing with raised hands, did homage to the golden [statue of the] Buddha, homage to the Scriptures ... which were kept there, and homage to the Mahāsāmī Saṅgharāja. (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 512–13, curly brackets added)

Inscription 6 (in Pāli), attributed by Griswold and Prasert to the *saṅgharāja*, reports that:

> After receiving his ordination as a novice, the King went down from his palace as tranquil in mind as a mahāthera of sixty seasons. Looking ahead of him no more than the distance of a yuga, venerated with innumerable honors by the throng of weeping people, he proceeded to the excellent Mango Grove. In that charming place filled with all sorts of birds like Indra's garden, strewn with sand the color of pearls and silver, in that excellent Mango Grove, (which) because of its purity is worthy to be the abode of solitary mendicants, he received his ordination as a monk. (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 518–19, original punctuation)

According to Gosling, King Mahā Dhammarāja I's ordination in 1361 marked his abdication (1996, 252–4 n.63). Griswold and Prasert, however, argue that he remained a *bhikkhu* for a limited period, returning to active military campaigns thereafter. Central to their claim is an intertextual reading of portions of Inscriptions 3 and 8 (1992, 551–4).[28] Wyatt places the death of Mahā Dhammarāja I in the period between 1368 and 1374, mentioning his death rather than any abdication as the central moment with respect to Sukhothai's regional politics (2003, 57). I find it difficult to believe that King Mahā Dhammarāja I abdicated the throne, although I am not confident of Griswold and Prasert's reconstruction of the king's military activity from Inscriptions 3 and 8. The logic of the royal activities described in Inscriptions 4, 5, and 6 presumes the king's return to rule. There would have been little reason for the king to establish a new royal monastery and other sites for royal ritual, and to alter the administration of his monastic community at the highest level, only to give up kingship permanently. Nor, I think, is it likely that inscriptional comparisons to Vessantara and Indra would have been used to describe the activities of a permanently abdicating king. The Pāli phrase in Inscription 6 translated by Griswold and Prasert as 'abdicated the kingship in which he was firmly established' need mean nothing so final: 'the king named Lideyya, a mine of virtues, conducting himself with respect to the welfare of the *sāsana* and the welfare of the whole world, growing weary of/turning away from kingship even as he ruled ....'[29] Weeping observers and pleas from

28. See also Griswold (1967, 37) and Gosling (1996, 252–4 n.63). Prince Chand assumes the king's temporary ordination (1976, 27–8).

29. '*rājā lideyyanāmako sāsanassa hitaṃ sabbalokassa ca hitañ caraṃ rajje ṭhito pi rājattanibbindanto guṇākaro*' (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 515).

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the king's retinue to retain the throne are formulae within accounts of the virtuous, temporary, renunciation of royal power. It was not uncommon for Buddhist kings of Southeast Asia to leave the throne temporarily for monastic ordination and its spectacular merit.

Landscape, Power and Protection

In any case, whether Mahā Dhammarāja I returned to the throne or not following his monastic ordination, it should be clear that his installation of Buddha footprints occurred in temporal proximity to other alterations to the Buddhist landscape of Sukhothai that were linked to shifts within local lay and monastic lineage. The Buddha footprints were part of a network of activities that privileged certain ritual spaces and locations over others, and certain persons over others, while asserting the power and propriety of King Mahā Dhammarāja I's claim to *müang* Sukhothai and its environs. However, the function of the footprint installations was not limited to their important place within such competitive articulations of lineage and elite hierarchy. They were also intended to offer immediate and longer-term comfort and protection.

Inscription 3, dated 1357, indicates the degree to which Mahā Dhammarāja I and his contemporaries understood themselves to live at the onset of a precarious period. This inscription commemorates the enshrinement of a Lankan relic and *bodhi* tree seeds at the city of Nagara Juṃ. This inscription discusses the life-cycle of the *sāsana* at considerable length, predicting dramatic signs of decline as soon as 99 years from the date of the inscription, as well as the complete end of the *sāsana* in three thousand years and the absence of any opportunity for merit-making and heavenly rebirth.

> In the year of the boar, ninety-nine years from the year this relic is enshrined, the Three Piṭakas will disappear. There will be no one who really knows them, though there will still be some who know a little bit of them. As for preaching the Dharma, such as the Mahājāti, if the beginning is known the end will not be, or if the end is known the beginning will not be; and as for the Abhidhamma collection, the Paṭṭhāna and the Yammaka will disappear at that time. (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 453)

The inscription continues to predict further stages of decline over a subsequent three thousand years. The implications for King Mahā Dhammarāja I's contemporaries are vividly stated:

> From now on, all good people should make haste to perform meritorious actions (in accordance with) the Buddha's religion while it still survives. The present generation has the immense advantage of being born in time (to know) the Lord's religion; so everyone should be assiduous in doing homage to stupas, cetiyas and śrīmahābodhi trees, which is the same as (doing homage to) our Lord in person. If anyone (when doing

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> homage to them) makes a wish with perfect faith, it will come true, even if he makes the wish that he will be reborn in heaven, (that he will stay there) until Śrī Ariyamaitri comes down (to earth) to become a Buddha, and that he will be reborn on this earth at the same time.
> (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 456–7)

Inscription 8, attributed to King Mahā Dhammarāja I and dated some time after 1359, specifically announces the wish-fulfilling character of the Buddha footprint on the hill at Sukhothai.

> This hill is called Sumanakūṭaparvata … It is so named because (an emissary) went to make impressions of the Footprint of our Lord the Buddha which is stamped on top of Mount Sumanakūṭaparvata in distant Laṇkādvīpa, and brought them to establish on top of this hill so that everyone might get a sight of this imprint of our Lord Buddha's Footsole with the full hundred and eight signs in bright colors and that all divinities [and men] might salute it, honor it and do homage to it. May they [attain] the happy condition of Buddhahood!
>
> How can a person [attain] the happy conditions?
>
> {The inscription then contains a badly damaged discussion of births and forms of happiness, as a human king, as a monk and, perhaps, in heavenly rebirth.}
>
> If anyone climbs up to the top of this Mount Sumanakūṭaparvata and worships the imprint of our Lord Buddha's Footsole with firm faith that these three happy conditions … (can be attained), he will attain them without fail. (Griswold & Prasert 1992, 560–61, curly brackets added)

The king's inclination towards footprint installations as sites for merit-making, wish-fulfillment and samsaric protection was natural given the growing influence in Southeast Asia of monks connected to the Sīhala *saṅgha*. By the time of this inscription, Sīhala *saṅgha* monks connected to the forest-dwelling lineage of the Lankan Udumbaragiri fraternity, had already reached Sukhothai and Si Sajjanālai (Hazra 1982, 142–5).[30]

We do not know which texts accompanied these monks to the Sukhothai region, or were encountered by Sukhothai travelers to Laṅkā, and so we cannot specify the impact of particular works on devotional developments at Sukhothai. Viedlinger warns us not to overestimate the textual (as opposed to oral/aural) character of Sukhothai Buddhism (2006, 45–8). However, the thirteenth-century composition date of the Pāli *Samantakūṭavaṇṇanā*, and its apparent authorship within a Lankan line of forest-dwelling monks (Hazlewood 1986, ix), indicates the intensification of attention to the Buddha's footprint within Lankan Buddhist devotional culture, as do other works in Sinhala and Pāli composed in Laṅkā during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Skilling 1992, 68). It would have

30. See also Viedlinger (2006, 43–8).

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been entirely natural for monks connected to the forest-dwelling (*araññavāsi*) lineages of Laṅkā to transmit ideas about the power of Buddha footprints during their movement within Southeast Asian kingdoms, whatever the medium of that transmission.[31]

Against the backdrop of a lengthy Buddha biography, Vedeha Thera's *Samantakūṭavaṇṇanā* describes the creation of the Buddha's footprint at Śrī Pāda at the request of Sumana, god of the mountain. Mount Samanta is described in paradisial language and the footsole itself is depicted in terms of the *cakka* and other auspicious marks of the worlds of men and gods (Hazelwood 1986, vv. 721–70). The final verse of the text prior to the colophon runs as follows in the printed version, giving a sense of the remarkable properties of the footprint:

> Thus did the King of the Dhamma, who provided good for people and who was freed from the host of the enemy anger, make His footprint on the delightful peak of Mount Sumana in the park of Laṅkā. Like the Sage, that footprint will give you heaven and nibbāna merely when your heart believes. So, sirs, be gladdened, bow down and pay homage to that which is praised by the good! (v. 796)

In the context of anxiety about *sāsana* decline, belief in the liberating possibilities of Metteyya Buddha's dispensation and confidence in the footprint's power to fulfill rebirth wishes, were a potent combination.[32] George Coedès and Charles Archaimbault have noted acutely that the very anticipation of the *sāsana's* decline, and the specification of the phases of its deterioration, created anxious opportunities for those invested in the vitality of the *sāsana*.

> C'est Buddhaghosa, pense-t-on, qui en accordant cinq mille ans au règne du Dharma aurait repoussé l'échéance mais, en précisant les différentes phases de régression qu'il scandait en cinq périodes, il donna en fait à tous les religieux, pieux laïques, simples fidèles, la possibilité de constater par eux-mêmes le déclin inéluctable de la religion. Que Lidaiya (Lü Tai) roi de Sukhodaya ait partagé très tôt ces croyances, il suffit pour s'en convaincre relire les inscriptions qu'il fait graver pour commémorer les événements importants de son règne. (1973, ix)[33]

31. See note 20, above. De Silva (2005, 35–48) notes the rising popularity of Śrī Pāda as a pilgrimage site and focus for royal patronage after the eleventh century, tracing this in part to the increasingly forceful presence of maritime trade in the western and southwestern regions of the island.
32. In addition to the inscriptional references to *sāsana* decline discussed above, note that King Mahā Dhammarāja I's skills in mathematics, calendrical computation, and calendrical rectification are stressed within the praise sections of inscriptions from his reign. Such knowledge is part of what authorizes the king's adjudication of cosmological as well as royal cycles. See also Andaya (1978, 10).
33. 'Buddhaghosa is believed to have postponed the end of the Dharma by granting it five thousand years. But, in detailing the different phases of its decline, delineated into five periods, he actually gave all the monastics, pious laity, common devotees, the possibility of verifying for

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Mahā Dhammarāja I's inscriptional persona shows a fascination with both the threat and promise of *sāsana* decline, with the fears and aspirations to rebirth. Those connected to the installation of Buddha footprints reveal with particular clarity the promise of an encounter with such traces of Sakyamuni Buddha, who offered the security of bridging to the world of his successor, the Buddha Metteyya.[34]

The location of Mahā Dhammarāja I's footprint installations on hilltop sites prompts another line of reflection about the protective function of these alterations to the landscape.[35] *Müang* Sukhothai stood at the confluence of Khmer and

themselves the unavoidable decline of the religion. To satisfy oneself that Lidaiya (Lü Tai), king of Sukothai, shared these beliefs very early on, it is enough to re-read the inscriptions that he had engraved to commemorate the important events of his reign.'

34. Such preoccupation with cosmic order, kingship and the life of the *Buddha-sāsana* is central to the *Trai Phum* (Three Worlds). The *Trai Phum* has long been considered the work of King Mahā Dhammarāja I, and said to have been composed in his younger days as *uparāja* at Si Sajjanālai. This view was accepted with only minor reservations in a contemporary English translation of the text (Reynolds & Reynolds 1982, 10, 39), and in the French translation (Coedès & Archaimbault 1973, xi). See also Andaya (1978). However, Michael Vickery has questioned the attribution of the text to the Sukhothai period and to King Mahā Dhammarāja I, particularly on the basis of features of the exordium (introduction) and colophon within the eighteenth-century manuscripts from which printed editions have been prepared (Vickery 1974, 1991). There remains uncertainty about whether all or part of the *Trai Phum* may be attributed to the Sukhothai period, although many of its central ideas about kingship, cosmology and ethics have a long and secure history in Buddhist texts prior to the era of the Sukhothai kingdom.

It may be said that the exordium and colophon of the *Trai Phum* (in the French and English translations) conform exceedingly well to the devotional tenor of King Mahā Dhammarāja I's inscriptions and footprint installations. These passages cluster associations between the decline of the *sāsana*, faith (*saddhā),* heavenly rebirth, the coming of Metteyya and the Buddha's footprints. The opening verses of the *Trai Phum*, as one would expect, pay honor to the Triple Gem. Strikingly, the Buddha in this case is immediately indexed to his footprint: 'I salute with great joy and happiness the lotus-like foot of the Conqueror, who desires to be worshipped for a very long time, who infatuates good men who are like bees, who bestows the taste of honey, whose instep has the down of the supreme perfections, whose fragrant redolence corresponds to the glory of his virtues' (Reynolds & Reynolds 1982, 43). Slightly later, the text runs as follows: 'What was the purpose for which it was composed? It was composed in order to enhance the usefulness of the Abhidhamma, and because of [the author's] desire to preach to his royal mother. Another purpose was to advance the cause of Dhamma' (pp. 45–6). Just prior to the closing colophon, the text concludes: 'Whoever wishes to reach the celestial treasure, which is the deliverance of Nibbāna, let him listen to this *Sermon on the Three Worlds* with care and interest, with faith in his heart, and without being heedless in any way. He will then be able to meet the Lord Sri Ariya [Metteyya] when he is born in the future, to pay his respects to him, and to listen to the Dhamma that he will preach' (p. 350). The colophon's emphasis on the *Abhidhamma* coheres well with arguments for Mahā Dhammarāja I's authorship (or sponsorship) of the *Trai Phum.* The composition of the text is implicitly compared to the Buddha's preaching of the *Abhidhamma* to his mother in heaven after the attainment of enlightenment. Given Inscription 3's prediction that the *Abhidhamma* would cease to exist within 99 years of the inscription's composition, and the centrality of the *Abhidhamma* to protective rituals, composition (or sponsorship) of a text like the *Trai Phum* was an understandable, if massive, merit-making offering.

35. I am grateful to Ashley Thompson for suggesting this line of enquiry.

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Tai cultural influences. Indeed, by Mahā Dhammarāja I's reign Tai supercession of Khmer dominance in the region was barely a century old. Evidence from both Tai and Khmer cultural areas indicates strong associations between mountain and hilltop sites and supernatural powers understood to offer protection to the locale within which they stood.[36] Ian Mabbett and David Chandler observe, for instance, the importance of the structure of *nak ta* (ancestral spirit) ritual and ritual space to the ritual spatial order established by the kings of Angkor.[37]

> Each village community has its *nak ta*, an ancestral spirit or a number of them, domesticated by ritual to the protection of the place. The rulers of Angkor, correspondingly, established cults of grand divinities to guard the kingdom. In doing so they employed the ingredients and vocabulary of imported religion; but their patrons were *nak ta* nonetheless.
> (1995, 112)

Dhida Saraya describes similar processes at work further north.

> From the adoption of Buddhism in the fourteenth century the whole concept of the *muang* cult changed. The worship of the sacred relic, as it appeared in *tamnan-history* [the history articulated by the local lineage texts of Lān Nā], gave new impetus to the power of the *phi sua muang* [spirits of the *muang*]. ... First, relic worship continued the worship of the sacred site by absorbing the *muang* cult and the sacred relics were enshrined at the sacred sites of each *muang.* The sacred relics then became symbolic objects inheriting the territorial rights and powers of the *phi sua muang.* ... the king was associated with the territorial power of the ancestral spirits at the sacred site reinforced by the universal Buddhist power. (1982, 116–17)[38]

As Donald Swearer has observed with respect to Lān Nā, the northern Tai cultural environment was one in which striking natural formations including mountain sites were associated with powerful spirits connected to particular locales. 'In the legends of Doi Suthep, Doi Kham, and Doi Ang Salung Chiang Dao, supernatural figures identified with the mountains become protectors of the inhabitants of the valleys' (Swearer *et al.* 2004, 24). Similar to the manner in which the attention to Hindu supernaturals was framed by Khmer expectations of *nak ta* cults and sites, Thai Buddhist polities drew the protective powers associated with Sakyamuni Buddha into their prior understandings of supernatural geography. Thus, for instance, major mountain sites such as Dòi Suthep at Chiang Mai came

36. See, for instance, Mabbett & Chandler (1995, esp. chs 8–9) and Chandler (1996, esp. pt I).
37. See also Chandler (2000, chs 3–4) on temple mountains and royal construction at Angkor.
38. See also Tanabe (2000). Of course, by the Sukhothai and Lān Nā reigns discussed in this essay there was already a long Buddhist history of connecting potent reminders of Sakyamuni Buddha and other powerful beings to markers of elite power and territorial control. One thinks, for instance, of the distribution of Sakyamuni Buddha's own relic-remains after the *parinibbāna*.

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to be associated with the fortunes of *müang* Chiang Mai, protected by the presence of a Buddha relic at the site of Sakyamuni Buddha's prior visit. According to *Tamnān Phra Thāt Suthep*, '[a]ll the kings who ruled in Chiang Mai from King Kue Na to Thao Kaeo placed great faith in the Buddha relic on Suthep Mountain and continuously made offerings to it' (in Swearer *et al*. 2004, 80).

Gosling notes evidence of the importance of pre-Buddhist 'animistic' deities to early Sukhothai inscriptions, such as Inscription 1 dating to the late thirteenth century and Inscription 45 dating to the late fourteenth century.

> Although Inscription XLV dates from roughly one hundred years after the documentation of Theravāda practices at Sukhothai (in Inscription I), it details a developed animistic structure that included not only tens and hundreds of thousands of spirits or *phi* who dwelt in lakes, forests and rivers, but also specifically named spirits who ruled over particular geographical locales. (1984, 17)

> It is, I believe, more in terms of transition and change, of confrontation between Buddhist and non-Buddhist systems, rather than continuation of past Buddhist tradition, that the history of Theravada development at Sukhothai in the fourteenth century should be written. (p. 22)[39]

Although we cannot know for certain, given the paucity of our records for fourteenth-century Sukhothai and its regional cultural history, it seems likely that – given the shared Khmer and Tai associations between hill sites, protective supernatural powers, and the delineation of territorial boundaries – Mahā Dhammarāja I's footprint installations were in part an effort to draw protective power toward *müang* Sukhothai and his rule by establishing the wish-fulfilling footprints at particularly potent locations.[40]

39. Further, Gosling writes, provocatively, 'Equally important, I think, for the study of early Thai history is that the above considerations provide a different gestalt for that study. While the foregoing thoughts in no way intend to disclaim the exciting interplay between the early Thais at Sukhothai and the other culture groups with whom they were in contact, we are here provided a framework for the study of Thai history in which the Thai are perceived not merely as the passive inheritors of those cultures, but a cultural entity in their own right. It was this unique heritage that provided the roots for the flowering of classical Thai culture – the progenitor as well as the beneficiary of cultural exchange. Within this framework, the development of Theravāda Buddhism, which was to become the most Thai of all religious institutions, can be approached not only in terms of the Theravadin inscriptions, but also taking into consideration the social and cultural milieu which prompted the conscious and determined espousal of those doctrines' (1984, 23).
40. Quaritch Wales observed long ago: 'we see that the animism of the early Thai still enjoyed the royal protection, despite the fact that the Kings of Sukhodaya had adopted much of Khmer Brahmanism and were fervent Buddhists as well. But it appears that there was only one spirit who was thought worthy of royal patronage, and it was a mountain spirit. Probably this class of spirit always enjoyed a pre-eminent position, and may have been the earliest type of guardian spirit of a city' (1931, 301).

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THE MAHĀBODHI TEMPLE IN CHIANG MAI

The Mahābodhi Temple of King Tilokarāja

The *Jinakālamālī,* a northern Thai lineage text, recounts that King Tilokarāja (r. 1441/2–1487) 'listened to the disquisition on the Dhamma on the planting of the Bodhi trees from the 'Sīhaḷa' monks' and became 'desirous of planting a Great Bodhi.' In 1455, the king planted a *bodhi* tree. The *Jinakālamālī* reports that the king had built a structure of some sort (perhaps a railing) around the tree, and marked the seven sites associated with the weeks immediately following the Buddha's enlightenment. Twenty-two years later, again according to the *Jinakālamālī*, King Tilokarāja built a great monastic dwelling at the site (Jayawickrama 1968, 139–40; Buddhadatta 1962, 98).[41] The *Tamnān Wat Jet Yòt* (a local history of the the Mahābodhi monastery that uses the site's other name, the 'Seven Spires Monastery') reports that King Tilokarāja constructed a pavilion for more than one hundred monks who assembled at the site for a 1477 *saṇgāyanā,* and that he had built a library for the *Tipiṭaka* itself (in Hutchinson 1951, 43).[42]

The name of the Mahābodhi monastery (Wat Bodhārāma) associated the site at once with Bodh Gayā in mainland South Asia and Anurādhapura in Laṅkā. Moreover, one of the buildings erected at the site explicitly evoked the Mahābodhi temple site at Bodh Gayā,[43] as did the installation at the Chiang Mai site of markers associated with the seven-week period after Sakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment. Tilokarāja's engagement with Wat Bodhārāma caught the attention of art historians some years ago. In his article on Bodh Gayā and Southeast Asia, Robert Brown drew attention to the re-creation of the Bodh Gayā Mahābodhi temple on at least four sites in the areas we now know as Burma and Thailand beginning in the eleventh century. Brown associated Southeast Asian interest in Bodh Gayā with the growing formal presence of Theravāda Buddhism in the region. 'Bodhgaya drew South-east Asian Buddhists mentally as well as physically, as it was the site that allowed them to get the closest to the historic Buddha' (Brown 1988, 105). Earlier, A. B. Griswold had pointed toward the case of Mahābodhi temple replications in Pagan, Pegu, and Chiang Mai in the course of his broader meditations on the replication of sites and landscapes within the Theravādin world (1965, esp. 181–2).[44] Brown and Griswold are right to associate

41. See also Coèdes (1925, 35).
42. I am reliant on Hutchinson's paraphrase of the *tamnān.* Many portions of the text are presented in what appears to be a condensed and edited translation. See also Penth (1994, 215–24).
43. The site's other name, Wat Jet Yòt, refers to 'one of its buildings that is chiefly made of laterite, the outside of which is ornamented with images of stucco devatās, and which has a roof with 7 spires, resembling the Mahābodhi sanctum at Buddhagayā (Bodhgayā) on a much reduced scale' (Penth 1994, 216).
44. Tilman Frasch writes of engagement with Bodh Gayā: 'In contrast to their Sinhalese counterparts, who focused on the tree, Burmese kings took a special interest in the temple, repairing it continually over the centuries and also copying it. This difference, I think, can be easily explained. The

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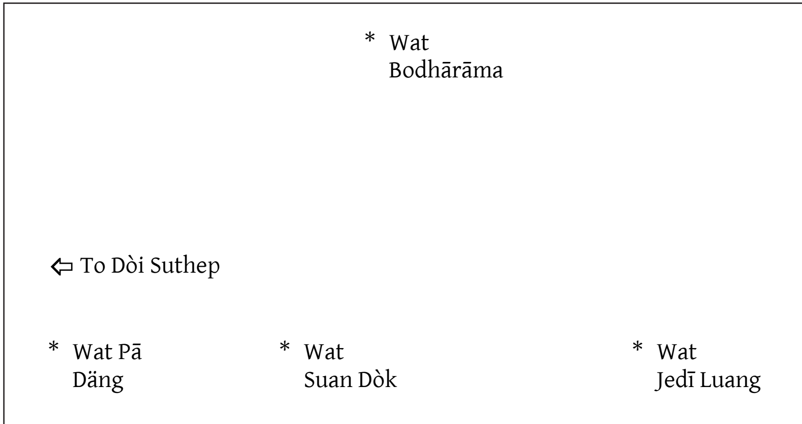

MAP 2: Chiang Mai sites[45]

Tilokarāja's involvement with Wat Bodhārāma with the presence of persons connected to the Sīhala *saṅgha* who drew on texts and monastic ordination lines we now tend to associate with the Theravāda,[46] and to suggest that activities

Sinhalese Buddhist tradition with its old roots perceived itself as the legitimate heir and successor of Indian Buddhism. Anuradhapura not only housed a sapling of the Bo Tree, but also a good number of Buddha's bodily relics. Compared to these central symbols of Buddhist worship, the Mahabodhi Temple was considered of minor importance. ... But on the other hand, the reverence of temple building had, since Pyu days, been of much higher importance in Burma than in Ceylon, and taking into account that temple construction was at its height in Pagan at that time, it was almost natural to reduplicate the temple rather than the tree' (1998, 81–2).

Brown and Griswold have compared at some length the Mahābodhi temple sites at Chiang Mai, Pagan and Bodh Gayā. There are numerous differences across these sites, including structural handling of the towers surrounding the central tower, and the nature of the images that decorate the stucco exterior. Despite such differences, the step-pyramid style of the central tower and the location of the seven sites associated with the Sakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, are a clear evocation of Bodh Gayā and would have required detailed knowledge of the Bodh Gayā site and/or the Mahābodhi temple at Pagan constructed in the thirteenth century. The seven sites are associated with the seven weeks following the Buddha's final attainment: one week, respectively, under the bodhi tree, gazing at the bodhi tree, and engaged in walking meditation, followed by two weeks in seated meditation, one week seated under the protection of Mucalinda, and one further week of seated meditation culminating with the receipt of a dāna (see Brown 1988, 112). Brown (1988) and Griswold (1965) discuss in considerable detail the architectural and art historical evidence in support of Pagan and/or Bodh Gayā as the model for the site at Chiang Mai. Their arguments do not appear conclusive and, although a clearer understanding of the transmission would be valuable, its absence does not affect the arguments that follow here. See also Hutchinson (1951, 37–8).

45. Adapted from Penth (1994, xx). The distances between sites marked by * follow the scale of Penth's map. Here 2.5 cm = approximately 1 km. Note that Dòi Suthep is approximately 15 km northwest of Wat Jedī Luang.

46. I have retained other scholars' use of the term 'Theravāda' within this essay but agree decidedly with Skilling (n.d.) that more caution is in order when using the term 'Theravāda' to describe manifestations of Buddhism in historical South and Southeast Asia. The evidence

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related to Wat Bodhārāma be understood as part of the work of memory and claims to lineage within Buddhist Southeast Asia. However, as in the case of the footprints at Sukhothai, it is possible to retrieve at least the outlines of a fuller and more local history of the landscape alterations associated with Wat Bodhārāma and other sites in the Chiang Mai area that benefited from Tilokarāja's patronage. If we look closely at the evidence connected to Wat Bodhārāma and other acts of construction and re-construction in fifteenth-century Chiang Mai we see the ways in which these activities functioned within the context of Chiang Mai politics, involving assertions of power and lineage as well as efforts to draw on the protective power of merit-making and the (re-)creation of potent sites.

Territory and Power

Like Mahā Dhammarāja I of Sukhothai, Tilokarāja's accession as king was not straightforward. His father, King Sām Fang Kän (r. 1401–1441) was deposed from the throne by a palace official, Sām Dek Yoi. Sām Dek Yoi may have had designs on the throne himself, but orchestrated Tilokarāja's succession, after which Sām Fang Kän left Chiang Mai for *müang* Sat. According to Wyatt, Sām Fang Kän's allies did not accept Tilokarāja's accession quickly, bringing something near to civil war on Lān Nā. This was a dangerous time for local dissension, as tensions grew between Chiang Mai and the southern regional state of Ayutthaya (Wyatt 2003, 66–8). Sām Fang Kän died in 1447 (Likhit Likhitamonta 1980, 69). Tilokarāja's ritual and construction activities following 1447 are intelligible within the context of fraught royal succession and trouble with Ayutthaya.[47]

Shortly after his father's death, in 1448, Tilokarāja undertook temporary ordination at Wat Pā Däng, the headquarters for the second lineage of Sīhala monks at Chiang Mai (Swearer & Premchit 1978, 30; Buddhadatta 1962, 96). Under any circumstances it would have been natural for a son to offer ordination merit to his deceased parent. In the context of political dissent within *müang* Chiang Mai and its environs, however, ordination is likely to have served as a public act of filial piety that formed part of the creation of a new and happier narrative of family lineage and obligation, and as a sign of the king's reciprocal patronage relations with leading monks of the second lineage of Sīhala *saṅgha* monks resident in the Chiang Mai region. These monks, connected to Wat Pā Däng, had been established at Chiang Mai by Tilokarāja's father, Säm Fang Kän. Temporary ordination within the line of monks established and patronized by his father was a public way of demonstrating right to rule, as well as support for the new king by the most powerful section of the Chiang Mai *saṅgha.*[48] Donald Swearer and Sommai Premchit

from Sukhothai and Chiang Mai discussed here reveals Buddhists' identification with monastic lineages and teachers, and with the Buddha *sāsana,* rather than with 'Theravāda' Buddhism.

47. On the pressures emanating from Ayutthaya, see also McDaniel (2002, 171).
48. Tilokarāja had earlier signalled his support of the Pā Däng lineage, ordaining five hundred

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have noted, based on northern Thai lineage texts, that the Pā Däng monks were embroiled in controversy from the time of their arrival in Chiang Mai. Disputes over specifically monastic matters appear to have overlapped with other struggles within elite circles.

> The controversy during the time of Sām Fang Kaen was probably a bitter sectarian fight that focused on *vinaya* rules. Both the chronicles and the existence of double *sīmā* boundary markers around *uposatha* halls of this period testify to the fact that the new order both reordained monks and also reconsecrated sacred monastery precincts. We do not know the exact nature of the relationship between the reformist religious group and the aristocracy that supported Tilokarāja against his father. It may well be that the religious controversy merely provided a convenient excuse for those who opposed Sām Fang Kaen to seize power. Whatever the particular historic circumstances, the new Sīhala Order provided a basis within the religious sphere ... for change within the political sphere. (Swearer & Premchit 1978, 28)[49]

Tilokarāja moved quickly to alter the Buddhist landscape of Chiang Mai and to offer substantial patronage to the monks within the Pā Däng lineage. In 1452 Wat Pā Däng received its own *sīmā*, a sign of secure fortunes and royal patronage (Buddhadatta 1962, 97).[50] By 1455 Tilokarāja had taken his first steps to construct a new temple complex at Wat Bodhārāma.

Military campaigns continued to characterize Tilokarāja's reign; periods of military activity and diplomatic struggle coincided with aggressive efforts to alter the ritual landscape of *müang* Chiang Mai. We do not know when Tilokarāja completed the architectural allusions to Bodh Gayā with a seven-spired structure at Wat Bodhārāma. It is likely that it would have been complete before the *Tipiṭaka* council held there in 1477, and the construction of a structure to house a purified recension of the texts. Preparations on a grand scale at Wat Bodhārāma occurred near the time of Tilokarāja's enhancements of the main structure at Wat Jedī

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monks very shortly after his accession in 1441 (Buddhadatta 1962, 95). Tilokarāja is said to have left royal control in the hands of his mother during his monastic tenure (p. 96), which suggests continued threats to his power even after his father's death.

49. On monastic disputes during this period, and their possible relationship to shifting habits of literacy and orality, see Viedlinger (2006, ch. 3). Dhida Saraya writes: 'From the beginning of his career, Tilok was supported for the throne by a group of monks from Ceylon. He was responsible for the revision of the scriptures in the year 1477, which indirectly affirmed his power to purify the Sangha. He confirmed his being a Buddhist king with rights over land, by consecrating boundary stones (*sema)* to unify the Sangha' (1982, 105). See also Viedlinger (2006, 85).

50. Dhida Saraya observes acutely that acts of royal patronage could also serve royal ambitions to circumscribe monastic power. 'In Tilokrat's reign efforts were made to limit the power of the Sangha through religious reform and by establishing a new religious centre of the Singhalese order at Wat Pā Daeng Luang. ... In the year 1453 he added more land endowed to Wat Pā Daeng Luang and proclaimed the separation between "the land of the muang" and "the land of the *wat*"' (1982, 169).

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Luang, increasing its height and the dramatic effect of the central spire. The work on Wat Jedī Luang continued into 1481, culminating with the installation of a relic associated with the monks of the Wat Pā Däng line, and a powerful Buddha image brought to the city from Lampāng to serve as a palladium of rule. This was the Phra Käo, or Emerald Buddha, installed in a shrine modelled on the Lohapasāda shrine at Anurādhapura in Laṅkā (Likhit Likhitamonta 1980, 75; Hazra 1982, 161). With the improvements at Wat Jedī Luang, the city of Chiang Mai was compared to a heavenly city in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven:

> And this 'Royal Spire' which was thirty-five fathoms across, forty-five in height, ending in a tier with a single spire and exceedingly beautiful to behold, the crowning glory of the capital city of Nabbisi [Chiang Mai], shone like the Cūḷāmaṇi-cetiya in Vāsava's heavenly city of Masakkasāra. (Jayawickrama 1968, 140)

The 1470s, in other words, witnessed an aggressive reconstitution of the ritual landscape by King Tilokarāja. These alterations were demonstrations of royal authority and right to rule, made in the context of unstable regional politics and the king's ongoing struggles with King Trailokarāja of Ayutthaya. They were, at the same time, acts to enhance the supernatural potencies available to protect Tilokarāja as ruler of *müang* Chiang Mai.

Dhida Saraya describes the fifteenth century, and particularly the reign of Tilokarāja, as a period characterized by unprecedented attempts to unify Lān Nā territories under rule from Chiang Mai. During this time, efforts were made to integrate diverse *müang*, clan groups, and ethnic groups within the region we now know as Lān Nā. This was linked to an emergent sense among rulers of Chiang Mai that they ruled a substantial polity that sought to dominate extensive relations of patronage and tribute.

> Eventually the *muang* developed into a kingdom in the fifteenth century when all the *muang* were united under the name Lanna. In this unified state the status of the ruler was raised to that of a king, the political organization became more developed, and the kingdom grew. Especially in the reign of Tilokrat, development towards social and political integration continued and culminated in the assertion of Chiangmai as a *krung* [royal capital city] competing with Ayutthaya. (1982, 80, 104)[51]

Tilokarāja's appellation signalled these ambitions: he, like his rival to the south in Ayutthaya, Trailokarāja, presented himself as the 'ruler of the three worlds,' the designation used by kings with 'imperial' aims. Dhida Saraya outlines a process whereby Tilokarāja altered ritual practices and locations as part of efforts

51. 'It was not until Kuna who ruled in the latter half of the fourteenth century, that Chiangmai began to be an important center and the line of rulers at Chiangmai became identified with Mangrai's line. ... The Chiangmai genealogy and the Mangrai genealogy became identical' (Dhida Saraya 1982, 101).

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to unify the *müang* over whom he sought control. Crucial to this process was the installation of relics and images at the centre of *müang* Chiang Mai, in part by drawing towards the city centre potent objects previously located in other *müang* or associated with leaders of other family lines. From this perspective, Tilokarāja's enhancements at Wat Jedī Luang, and the establishment there of the Emerald Buddha, drew on the logic of prior associations between potent objects and the physical centre of political gravity in order to buttress a new form of polity extending across prior boundaries of the *müang.*

> The emphasis on the sacred relic at the center of the *muang* corresponds with the worship of sacred sites such as the *sadue muang* [centre of the muang]. The worship of sacred relics fits into the scheme of legitimation of power and territorial rights provided by the *muang* cult. But the radiating power of the relics expanded across the political boundaries of the clan-based *muang.* (Dhida Saraya 1982, 144)

> The image cult which had been popular from the time of King Kuna was organized in such a way that only the king, not the other lords, could take possession of those images and keep them in the center of the kingdom. The Emerald Buddha and the Buddha Sihing were worshipped in special monasteries in Chiangmai. (p. 105)

According to Justin McDaniel, Tilokarāja's city improvements achieved dramatic effect. The 'aesthetic, ritual, and royal accouterments' developed around Wat Jedī Luang made it 'the center of at least the Yuan-speaking ... world, if not the entire Tai-speaking religious world that covers present-day Northern Thailand, Eastern Burma and Laos in the early sixteenth century' (in press, 90).

As the language of 'legitimation' used by Dhida Saraya suggests, the potent objects assembled at Chiang Mai during Tilokarāja's reign were symbolic markers of authority that participated in visual arguments for the propriety of Tilokarāja's patron status in regional patron-client relations developed according to the logic of mandalic polities.[52] However, it is important to recall that the value of such objects was by no means limited to their capacity to signify authority. The language of 'legitimation' may conceal from view a richer understanding of the efficacy of potent objects that characterized the period in question. At least as important as their role as symbolic markers of authority, if not more so, was their understood capacity to protect Chiang Mai and its ruler, and to enhance the potent vitality of Tilokarāja's reign.[53] This understanding of potent objects is made evident by Lān Nā narratives (now accessible to us within the *Chiang Mai Chronicle*) that discuss the rivalry between Tilokarāja and Trailokarāja of Ayutthaya in terms we might call 'magical'. Ayutthaya's estimation of Chiang Mai's strength is said to have included an assessment of the potent objects located within Chiang Mai.

52. See also Reynolds (1978).
53. See also Swearer & Premchit (1978, 31).

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The *Chronicle* describes Ayutthaya's military movements against Chiang Mai, but also efforts made by the southern kingdom to diminish the vitality of Chiang Mai by altering the alignment of potent forces within the city's landscape.

Tilokarāja's activities at Wat Bodhārāma occurred within the broader context of such ideas about the emplotment of powerful objects within the territory of a royal aggressor. The manner in which Tilokarāja developed Wat Bodhārāma, and his activities there, suggest that he conceived of the potent landscape alterations at that site primarily through an understanding of the activities proper to a *cakkavattin* king. That is, Tilokarāja engaged the space at Wat Bodhārāma as a space at which to enact his acquisition of *cakkavattin* status, his status as a righteous Buddhist ruler of vast dominion. Wat Bodhārāma eventually contained a *bodhi* tree and visual evocations of Sakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment and preparation to teach. On this site that thus signalled the beginning of Sakyamuni Buddha's *sāsana*, Tilokarāja undertook to turn the wheel of the *Dhamma* again as patron of a *Tipiṭaka* recension that 'purified' the teaching and protected its textual manifestations within the temple site.[54] The *Jinakālamālī's* account of Tilokāraja (composed after his death by a monk writing within the Pā Däng lineage and connected with Wat Bodhārāma; Jayawickrama 1968, xlvi) [55] celebrates Tilokarāja as a *cakkavattin* king and ruler of three worlds in a manner unmatched by its account of other Chiang Mai rulers.

The Royal Dead

Thus, Tilokarāja's alterations to the Buddhist landscape of Chiang Mai included construction and ritual activity at Wat Bodhārāma. The latter appears to have served his ambitions to become a *cakkavattin* king, helping to surround him with 'the symbols of a Universal Monarch which enhance both the sacrality and the magical power of his territory' (Swearer & Premchit 1978, 31). However, his alterations to the Buddhist landscape of Chiang Mai through work at Wat Bodhārāma also offered another sort of protection altogether. The evidence related to Tilokarāja's Mahābodhi temple site strongly suggests that the site was constructed by Tilokarāja as his cremation site, and that he intended merit-making at

54. The seven weeks after the Buddha's enlightenment prepare the newly enlightened Buddha to teach and convince him of the value of such teaching. Votive tablets discussed by Brown preserve this set of associations. According to Brown, one style of votive tablets popular at Bodh Gayā as well as sites in Thailand and Burma, contains the following potent combination: a Buddha in *Dhammacakra mūdra* initiating the dispensation of this *sāsana*, framed by Mahābodhi temple, accompanied by a deer and a wheel associated with the first sermon (1988, 117). The visual logic of these tablets clarifies the naturalness of Tilokarāja's choice to establish a *saṇgāyanā* and a site for the preservation of *Tipiṭaka* manuscripts, at a location associated with Sakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment and the first turning of the wheel of the *Dhamma.*

55. Note also the close ties between Wat Pā Däng and Wat Bodhārāma described in the *Jinakālamālī*'s account of royal patronage in the two reigns following Tilokarāja's death.

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Wat Bodhārāma to protect his journey across the dangerous waters of *saṃsāra.*

By 1451, both of Tilokarāja's parents were dead. On the site of their cremations, within the precincts of Wat Pā Däng, Tilokarāja erected a monastic residence (Asokārāma) as well as an *uposatha* hall and *sīmā* (Hazra 1982, 161; Buddhadatta 1962, 97). The king's establishment of these sites at Wat Pā Däng were substantial acts of patronage vis-à-vis the city's dominant monastic community. In doing so Tilokarāja made Wat Pā Däng, situated directly west of the city, the higher ordination site for the Sīhala *saṅgha* within the Pā Däng line. Bringing higher ordination into a ritual site specifically established by him within the royally sponsored Pā Däng complex, from its earlier site on the river Ping (Penth 1994, 49, 228), expressed Tilokarāja's control of the monastic community and affirmed his connections to Wat Pā Däng.[56] However, Tilokarāja quickly moved beyond this complex so closely associated with his parents to begin work at Wat Bodhārama, the Mahābodhi temple site located to the northwest of the city. The installation of a powerful *bodhi* tree brought previously from Laṅkā to Chiang Mai suggests that the king already envisioned Wat Bodhārāma as central to his reign. This is made yet clearer by the *Jinakālamālī's* account that he replanted there the *bodhi* tree taken from the base of the powerful mountain site of Dòi Suthep (Buddhadatta 1962, 98; Penth 1994, 214). Dòi Suthep was understood as a space inhabited by powers protecting *müang* Chiang Mai. In addition, it was associated with the first line of Sīhaḷa *saṅgha* monks to reach Chiang Mai during the reign of King Kü Na.

The monastery at Dòi Suthep seems to have served in some respects as a sister site to Wat Suan Dòk, the city headquarters for monks of the first Sīhala lineage to reach Chiang Mai. The sites were bound together through shared possession of a valuable Buddha relic brought to Chiang Mai in the fourteenth century (Swearer *et al*. 2004, 33, 78). Bringing the existing *bodhi* tree from Dòi Suthep to the new site of Wat Bodhārāma Tilokarāja drew the power of Dòi Suthep within this sphere. It also made a visual claim for the primacy of Wat Bodhārama and Wat Pā Däng monks over the earlier line of Wat Suon Dòk.[57]

The site plan of Wat Bodhārāma suggests the importance of the location to Tilokarāja's samsaric concerns. According to the plan presented by Hutchinson, access to the complex proceeded along a road running between the site's most substantial outbuildings, after which one arrived at the stairs offering entry to the *cedi* itself. The outbuildings on either side of the road leading to Wat Bodhārāma are death memorial sites for King Tilokarāja himself. On the right side, while approaching the main *cedi,* is a subsidiary *cedi* containing Tilokarāja's ashes. On the left side is King Tilokarāja's cremation ground, where an *uposatha* hall was later constructed (1951, 9, 45). According to the *Tamnān Wat Jet Yòt*, Tilokarāja's grandson carried Tilokarāja's remains to Wat Bodhārāma, cremated them and

56. For a discussion of the relations between Wat Pā Däng and Wat Suan Dòk monastics, see, for instance, Swearer & Premchit (1978), Blackburn (2003) and the important new work of Viedlinger (2006).

57. This occurred within a few years of the establishment of *sīmā* at Wat Pā Däng.

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deposited them within a funerary monument to be honoured by residents of the area (Hutchinson 1951, 44).

Tilokarāja's death rituals for his parents indicate the expectations related to the royal dead characteristic of his time, and his own attentiveness to death and merit-making. Death rituals and memorial installations shaped and expressed family lineage, sometimes in the context of great political vulnerability. We should not forget, however, the gripping concerns about death and rebirth that underlay such memorial activity, and the anxieties about the restless dead that animated attention to them through the rituals and landscapes of *müang* Chiang Mai. The *Chiang Mai Chronicle's* account of construction at Wat Jedī Luang (prior to the reign of Tilokarāja) offers a window on to the relationship between massive construction projects and the fate of the royal dead.[58]

> When King Kü Na died, his soul was not at rest, and he became a tree spirit (rukkhadevata) in a banyan tree along the road to Pagān. There was a / group of Chiang Mai merchants who went to trade at Pagān who on their return trip stopped to rest in the shade of that tree. The tree spirit Kü Na showed himself to them, and said, 'I am Phraya Kü Na. I lived as ruler in Chiang / Mai ... On dying, I became a spirit in this tree. I cannot be born in the World of the Gods (devaloka), [so] I ask you merchants to tell my son ... that he should build a cetiya in the middle of the city [of Chiang Mai] ... Please [ceremonially] pour water to dedicate the merit to me so that I can be reborn in the Realm of the Gods.
> (Wyatt & Aroonrut Wicheinkeeo 1998, 69–70, original punctuation)

Substantial construction projects developed, in part out of obligations to improve the rebirth fortunes of dead family members. Moreover, persons with access to power and resources could ease the path to death and rebirth by constructing sites for their own cremation and commemoration in addition to their more general practices of merit-making.

We have seen that Tilokarāja's activities at Wat Bodhārama can be understood within the frame of reference associated with aspirations to the power and authority of a *cakkavattin* king. Construction and ritual activity at the site served the king's living fortunes as ruler, and would-be victor in his own region and beyond. Simultaneously, Wat Bodhārama formed part of Tilokarāja's investment in his own samsaric future as he made protective merit at the site apparently intended as his death memorial. The scale of such investment was magnificent: Tilokarāja installed sites associated with the inauguration of Sakyamuni Buddha's

58. The version of the *Chiang Mai Chronicle* used here (several versions were in manuscript circulation) was prepared from a manuscript dating to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Wyatt and Aroonrut Wicheinkeeo discuss the composite character of the text and its dependence on sources composed prior to the nineteenth century (1998, xxv–xxxix). I use the text as a source from which to gauge the mentality of medieval Lān Nā with respect to certain royal practices, rather than as a record of Tilokarāja's reign.

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dispensation, and then protected this *sāsana* by 'purifying' the texts that contained its teaching. According to Hutchinson's paraphrase of the *Tamnān Wat Jet Yòt:*

> [i]n the year 1477 King Tilok summoned a council for the revision of the scriptures by a group of over 100 monks at Wat Bodhārām in Nabisi. As Patron of religion, King Tilok built a mondop [pavilion] for the Council in Wat Bodhārām in order to spare the monks any inconvenience. Phra Dhammadinna, Abbot of Wat Patal-noi, was at the head and the council lasted a year. King Tilok built a Library to contain the Three Baskets of the Scriptures. This was the eighth Council of Revision and there were great celebrations in honour of the Scripture and the Library.
> (1951, 43–4)[59]

The grand scale of Tilokarāja's work at Wat Bodhārama may have owed something to prophecies of *sāsana* decline. Like Mahā Dhammarāja I at Sukhothai, Tilokarāja lived with an awareness that Buddhist patrons fought against the destructive powers of time in their engagement with the *Buddha-sāsana* and its unstable manifestations in the human world.

> Though there is no direct allusion to the fact in the records, it may be guessed that he intended it [Wat Bodhārama] as a lavish act of merit in connection with the 2000th anniversary of the Buddha's parinibbāna, for it was founded in that same 'year of the Boar' about which King Lü Thai [Mahā Dhammarāja I] of Sukhodaya had made such a sorrowful forecast ninety-nine years earlier. (Griswold 1965, 182)

CONCLUSION

Some years ago, in a thought-provoking study of landscape and politics within Laṅkā's Kandyan Kingdom, James Duncan proposed that 'landscape is a signifying system of great but unappreciated social and political importance, and that it offers enormous promise as an object of study' (1990, 3). According to Duncan, the communicative function of landscape makes it an important part of social life and, particularly, of power relations. Duncan was particularly interested in the ways in which landscape helped to establish hegemonic discourses within a social setting.

> The landscape, I would argue, is one of the central elements in a cultural system, for as an ordered assemblage of objects, a text, it acts as a signifying system through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored. (1990, 17)

59. See also Viedlinger (2006, ch. 3).

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Further, '[b]y becoming part of the everyday, the taken-for-granted, the objective, and the natural, the landscape masks the artifice and ideological nature of its form and content' (p. 19). In his study of the Kandyan Kingdom, Duncan explored the ways in which alterations to the urban landscape of Kandy may be read as instantiations of discourses of royal power connected both to the model of King Asoka and to Indra, King of the Gods. In doing so he emphasized the ways in which elements of the new Kandyan landscape may be understood as part of a 'mythic structure' (p. 97): landscape elements are read in relation to the elements of dominant cultural narratives. Duncan assumed that alterations to landscape might serve the ends of elite patrons, although he seems to have understood these patrons' engagement with the power of landscape as occurring at a level beyond full intention.[60] Although his theoretical comments were directed more towards the work of cultural geography than towards studies of Buddhism or other religious traditions, Duncan's discussion of Kandyan politics and landscape pointed towards the possibility that studies of Buddhist landscape might play an important role in our efforts to understand the mentalities of prior groups associated with Buddhist texts and practices, and that acts of construction and installation might be read as historically located visual arguments made by Buddhist patrons.

One way to think about such arguments is to interpret the evidence of landscape alterations as claims made for and against certain memories. As Susan Alcock has suggested, in a study of memory and archaeology in ancient Greece,

> Tracking the lives and afterlives of monuments, then, might testify most immediately to alterations in what was deemed commendable to remember or wise to forget. Landscape analysis reveals conditions favorable for memory's conservation or loss, or for the prompting of new memorial traditions to be made. (2002: 31)

If conceived somewhat more broadly to include a range of objects extending beyond the narrowly 'memorial', Alcock's formulation offers a useful way to conceptualize Buddhist projects of construction and installation. That is, by attending to the social and political character of monuments and other constructed visual forms, we may read landscape alterations as part of the ways in which historical identities and understandings of lineage are constituted during periods of marked change, including royal succession and diplomatic-cum-military struggle. It is important to remember, however, as Jaś Elsner's work on iconoclasm (2003) indicates with considerable elegance, that claims to authority, patronage and lineage status through alterations to landscape could occur through the emplotment of new spaces and objects, but also through the reduction of atten-

60. '[Landscape] is, therefore, as unwittingly read as it is unwittingly written' (Duncan 1990, 19). But, on the other hand, according to Duncan, Sri Vickrama attempted 'a magical solution to the problems besetting his kingdom' by reshaping the city (p. 93).

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tion to sites of earlier importance, associated with prior claims.[61] In this sense, both the presence and the absence of attention to particular sites played a role in the visual arguments and forms of citation that developed on the ground in South and Southeast Asia.

The construction and installation projects undertaken by Mahā Dhammarāja I at Sukhothai and Tilokarāja at Chiang Mai indicate the diverse but interconnected ways in which royal intervention in the physical space of Buddhist landscape served the interests of these royal patrons. The alteration of Buddhist landscape offered demonstrations of power and authority, formed an important part of attempts to alter elite monastic and non-monastic hierarchies, and laid claim to desirable lineage and succession within family line and the history of Sakyamuni Buddha's *sāsana.* At the same time, such involvements with 'the production of space' (Lefebvre 1974, trans. Nicholson-Smith 1991) were desirable because the alteration of the landscapes enveloping Sukhothai and Chiang Mai allowed rulers to manipulate the protective potencies that, at their most effective, embraced the royal patron, helping to assure his power and success as well as his status. It appears that Mahā Dhammarāja I and Tilokarāja both understood the manipulation of powerful sites and objects within Buddhist landscape as one of many technologies of rule, which also offered protection within the extended biography of birth and re-birth.

Even the brief and preliminary consideration of landscape and architecture at Sukhothai and Chiang Mai offered here reveals that writing Buddhist histories from the evidence of architectural and other material additions to local landscape demands that historians of Buddhism recognize the over-determined character of such activities by Buddhist patrons. An analysis of the production of space that moves between sites, the objects established there and the frames of reference articulated by inscriptions and local histories reveals with particular clarity the ways in which the creation of Buddhist landscapes served interests that *we* might identify as political and devotional, but which were not so clearly distinguished from one another within past worlds of Buddhist patronage. We see, to be sure, that architecture may be a spatial focus for displays of power (Arnold 2002, 139), but also that the alteration of landscape offers us a record of compelling vulnerabilities – concerns about status and security within this world and worlds to come – that drove patrons to make and contest a variety of claims to lineage and to regional primacy through the appropriation of space and the use of potent forms. By beginning with the sites of installation, construction or (re-)construction, and attempting to understand their geographic patterning as well as the

61. Elsner dwells on acts of defacement and destruction characteristic of the politics of Roman social memory, and explores the ways in which 'iconoclasm' would have been recognized within the context of Roman expectations of social performance. There is, therefore, no exact match between the context he examines and the Southeast Asian cases discussed here. I draw on his work in order to emphasize that landscape alteration may in some cases involve the removal of attention from sites as well as the enhancement of others.

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social practices and processes that made such acts worthy of effort and expenditure, we gain a richer and more dynamic sense of Buddhist social and institutional histories than is often possible when one examines individual local lineage texts, or clusters of inscriptions. Histories of individuals, groups and institutions associated with the Triple Gem unfolded within the context of local hierarchies and struggles for dominance as well as regional – and more broadly Buddhist – conceptions of the threat and promise of time and space.

PRINCIPAL FIGURES

King Ram Khamhäng (r. ?–1292?), Sukhothai
King Mahā Dhammarāja I (r. 1347–?), Sukhothai
Venerable Si Sattha, (active 1330s–1340s), Sukhothai
King Sām Fang Kän (r. 1401–1441), Chiang Mai
King Tilokarāja (r. 1441/2–1487), Chiang Mai
King Trailokarāja (r. 1448?–1488), Ayutthaya

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