

THE FLIGHT OF LAO WAR CAPTIVES FROM BURMA BACK TO LAOS IN 1596: A COMPARISON OF HISTORICAL SOURCES

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Introduction

In 1596, one thousand Lao war captives fled from Pegu, the capital of the kingdom of Burma, back to their native kingdom of Lan Sang. This incident is insignificant when compared to more cataclysmic changes like the founding or fall of dynasties, but it has attracted the attention of Western, Thai, and Burmese historians since the 17th century.

The incident is noteworthy and exceptional in several ways. First, the flight was to a remote destination: Laos. Second, the incident involved two traditional enemies: Burmese and ethnic Tai's. "Tai" will be used to emphasize that this is an autonomous history of pre-modern states ranging from Ayutthya in the South, through Lan Sang, Lan Na, Kengtung, and Sipsong Panna in the North, to the Shan states of Burma in the far north. Third, the entries covering the incident in the Ayutthya, Chiang Mai, and Lan Sang chronicles are short, ambiguous, and beg to be explained. All of this gives the incident great dramatic potential and two historians of note have made use of these exceptional characteristics to further their literary and ideological goals: de Marini, a Jesuit priest, in a book published in 1663, and Prince Damrong, a Thai historian, in a book published in 1917. Sections 2 and 5 will analyze the works of these historians.

In other ways the incident is unexceptional. The Burmese, Ayutthya, Chiangmai, and Lan Sang chronicles (Wyatt, 1995; Cushman, 2000; U Kala, 1961; Phothisane, 1996) are the primary sources that describe the incident, but there are gaps and inconsistencies in the record they provide. The socio-political background to the incident in the Burmese chronicle is in some ways more important than any single instance of flight itself. For Burma the 1590's were a period of dynastic decline and disorder similar to ones that had occurred in the past and similar to ones that would occur again in the future (Lieberman, 1984). By 1600 a unified Burmese kingdom ceased to exist. Flight, rebellion and the realignment of loyalties between powerful patrons were all common responses to the disorder that reigned

during periods like this. Sections 2 through 4 will reconstruct a basic historical narrative for the incident. Section 7 presents a broader socio-political background for war captives and flight in pre-modern mainland Southeast Asian history.

A Reconstructed Narrative from Chronicle Primary Sources

Chronicle sources provide the basic facts about the flight of the Laotians. According to the Burmese chronicle, shortly after a Burmese queen died in 1556 there was a famine in the capital and over 1000 Lan Sang people serving the Burmese king fled from there to Lan Sang. When the king found out about this, he followed them and captured them and those that he caught he killed (UKIII:78). Both the Chiangmai and the Ayutthya chronicles describe the fleeing Laos after they leave Burma. According to the Ayutthya Chronicle: “In 958 (1596), a year of the monkey, on Tuesday, the fourth day of the waxing moon in the sixth month, Lao fled and Khun Ca Muang battled Lao in the vicinity of Takhian Duan” (Cushman, 2000, p. 155). According to the Chiangmai Chronicle in the Buddhist year 960 (either 1598 or 1599) “the Lao retreated from Pegu to Chiangmai, / and [then] fled back to Lan Chang” (Wyatt and Wichienkeoo, 1995, p. 129). In the the chronicles of Lan Sang the fleeing Laotians are close to arriving back to their native land:

....in the year Kad-Khai [1599], Lao families fled from Meuang Hongsavadi to Meuang Lan Sang. [But] Chau Xiang Mai went out to capture the returning Lao [families] and took them back to Meuang Hongsavadi. [Some] avoided [Chau Xiang Mai] and requested help from Meuang Lan Xang. [They] paid their respects to [both] Chau, father and son. [Both] Chau, father and son, ordered Phraya Saen Luang to march the troops [of Lan Xang] to Meuang Nan to join Phraya Luang Meuang Nan who had previously asked assistance from Meuang Lan Xang to become Chau Phaen Din Xiang Mai. [Lan Xang troops] attacked and won all the meaung, including Meuang Phae, Meuang Nan, Meuang Nakhon, Meuang Phra Yau, Meuang Soeng, Meuang Loh, Xiang Mai, Meuang Xiang Saen, Xiang Hay Meuang Phang, and Meuang Hang. Then Lan Xang troops surrounded Meuang Xiang Mai for a long time but did not succeed [in capturing the city]. Furthermore [some soldiers] died because of lack of food supplies. So [they] had to return to Lan Xang. (Phothisane, 1996, 279-80)

Only de Marini's history, a European source, brings the whole incident to conclusion with the Laotians arriving back to their native land. The basic chronology of these chronicle entries is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Chronology for the Flight of the Laotians

Chronicle	Event	Year
Burmese	There was a famine in the Burmese capital and people were starving there.	1596
Burmese	Over a thousand Lao war captives attempted to flee from the capital.	1596
Burmese	The Burmese king sent soldiers after the captives.	1596
Burmese	The captives that were caught were executed.	1596
Ayutthya	Fleeing Laotians passed through Ayutthya territory and Ayutthya comander Khun Ca Muang engaged them in battle near Takhian Duan.	1596
Chiangmai	Fleeing Laotians passed through Chiangmai territory on their way to Lan Sang.	1598
Lan Sang	Laotians fleeing from Burma pass through Chiangmai territory and some are taken captive by Chiangmai.	1599
Lan Sang	The fleeing Laotians request help from Lan Sang.	1599
Lan Sang	Responding to this request for help, Lan Sang embarks on a military campaign with Nan to take all the minor states of Lan Na as well as Chiangmai. They take the minor states, but when food supplies run short they fail to take Chiangmai.	1599
Marini	The fleeing Laotians return to their native Lan Sang and free it from its Burmese overlords.	No Date

Do these entries have enough in common to actually tie them to the same group of fleeing Laotians or do they refer to completely different incidents? Are they enough evidence to reconstruct a single historical incident from?

Several problems arise when reconstructing a historical narrative from these chronicle entries. There are problems with dates, with the completeness of information, and even problems with the word used to refer to people from Lan Sang. The dates in the Burmese and Ayutthya chronicle entries are the same, 1596, but the Chiangmai and Lan Sang chronicle dates are two years off in 1598 and

1599. Is this an error in dating the incident, does it refer to a separate incident, or did the Laotians just travel slowly from Ayutthya to Chiangmai territory? The Ayutthya chronicle entry lacks essential information. Where the Laos are fleeing from is not given. They might just as well have been fleeing from patrons in Ayutthya or Chiang Mai as patrons in Burma.

In the Ayutthya chronicle the reference to Laotians passing through Ayutthya territory may not refer to people of Lan Sang origin at all. The term 'Lao' can have much broader applicability and reference and refer to a group from Lan Na or the Shan states instead of Lan Sang. There has always been a "habit of making no distinction among the major Tai-speaking ethnic groups who lived in the Mekong valley and the upper reaches of the Chao Phraya basin." As with the term 'Tai Yai' it has always been common practice to use "the term 'Lao' indiscriminately when referring not only to the Lao of the Mekong valley but also to the Shan of Northeast Burma, the Tai dialect speakers of Chiang Mai and Sipsong Panna, the Phuan of Northern Laos, and others" (Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosrivathana, 2002, 98). In the late 1590's not so long after the 1596 Ayutthya chronicle entry above referring to fleeing Laotians, Ayutthya becomes involved in Lan Na politics and this usage of 'Lao' becomes very common in the Ayutthya chronicle to refer to the minor states of Lan Na (Cushman, 2000, 185). On a more positive note, the Burmese chronicle entry refers to the fleeing Laotians as 'Lin-zin' natives which is the Burmese name for 'Lan Sang' so there could be no confusion in the Burmese chronicle.

If the chronicle entries are viewed as evidence of a general trend of flight rather than a specific instance of flight the problems cited above disappear because there is no longer any need to connect the events into one unified incident. This is the solution adopted by the Thai historian Prince Damrong in his classic "Thai Fought Burma". As O'Donovan observes "Prince Damrong thought that this flight was part of a bigger movement of Lao war captive labourers out of Burma, Chiangmai, and Ayutthya and back to Lan Sang" (O' Donovan, 2002a, 238). With this explanation there is no heroic escape from bondage in a foreign land followed by an exodus back to one's native land. There is no exceptional act of human agency, just a general socio-political trend. The flight of the Laotians becomes a demographic or migratory phenomenon.

Prince Damrong's *Thai Fought Burma* ["Thai Rop Bama"] first published in 1917, redefined Thai history. This historical classic, almost one hundred after it was written, is still the best place to turn for a reasonable reconstruction and interpretation of historical sources for Thai-Burmese relations during the early modern period. Because of his high position within the government of King Chulalongkorn, Prince Damrong had access to almost every historical source imaginable including the Burmese chronicle. Prince Damrong's "Thai Fought Burma" presents both the primary source chronicle facts regarding the fleeing

Laotians as well as an interpretation within the broader context of the political disorder that reigned in mainland South East Asia during the 1590s.

The lack of citations to the historical sources it uses often makes this secondary source difficult to use. It is also important to separate fact from interpretation when using this secondary source because, as many scholars have recently pointed out, this historical classic was heavily influenced by the political ideologies of the age it was written in. Written in 1917 “Thai Fought Burma” was the first history of the modern nation-state, Siam, but the events it describes were local events. These local events took place in regions that were autonomous or at least within spheres of influence that shifted frequently passing from local autonomous rule to rule by more powerful states like Ayutthya or Burma and back again. There is an inevitable bias in interpreting local events in the history of a modern nation-state hundreds of years after the fact.

Lorraine Gesick (1995) and Thongchai Winichakul (1994) are two scholars of Thai history who have written extensively of this ideological effect in historical interpretation. With Prince Damrong the opposition of “Thai versus other nation” or “Thai versus Burma” becomes dominant in historical discourse:

The past is perceived as the life of the Thai versus other nations. From the early twentieth century onward, the most powerful and effective theme of Thai history has emerged. It is the history of *Thai rop phama* (“the Thai fought Burma”). Nationhood, patriotism, and the like become burdens compelling us to read the past in one way rather than another. (Thongchai, 1994, 163)

As this two-way distinction of Thai versus the outside world gets established, national history comes to subsume and replace local history. As Lorraine M. Gesick has pointed out, as the history of the Thai nation state takes center stage, the history of the center is emphasized more and more, the periphery is ignored, and the voice of local history disappears:

Obviously, multi-vocal histories cannot give rise to ‘national history,’ which in the minds of the turn-of-the-century modernizing dynasts as well as of later nationalists, must speak with a single voice, telling the story of the nation..... Thus, the older multi-vocal kind of discourse had to be reworked and its many voices, in their embodiments as manuscripts, brought together to be acted upon by practitioners of modern, ‘scientific’ history until they all spoke together of a single linear ‘Thai history.’ In this process anomalies and contradictions, naturally, would be suppressed as ‘unhistorical’ (Gesick, 1995, 15).

Prince Damrong's narrative favors the chronicles of the major powers of the era, Ayutthya and Burma, and ignores the chronicles of smaller states when they contradict the larger states. As we will see, ‘anomalies and contradictions’ are rife in the chronicle primary sources for the era and a major line of fissure occurs between the way events are depicted in the chronicles of minor Northern Tai states

and the chronicles of Ayutthya and Burma, the major states of mainland South East Asia.

Prince Damrong writes of the fleeing Laotians:

Phra Naw Keo [*King Noh Meuang*], the viceroy of Sri Satanahut [*Lan Chang*], after rebelling sent noblemen and high officials to go about and *induce those people of Lanchang who were in countries other than their own, to come and reside in their own towns and villages. There were many people of Lanchang* whom His Majesty of Hongsawadi had taken away to Hongsawadi, because they were taken away on many occasions. When it became known that Phra Naw Keo, the son of the dependent King Phra Chow Chai Chesatar (*Sethathirat, r. 1548-1571*), who was held in esteem by the people of Lanchang as a great king, had become independent, there was gladness all round, and *they returned to their own country.* (Prince Damrong, *Our Wars*, 180-181, my italics)

As section 6 will show, there is a lot of evidence to support Prince Damrong's change from a specific instance of flight to a general trend of flight. The Burmese chronicle says that people fled to remote destinations such as Chiang Mai, Ayutthya, and Rakhine in the disorder of the early 1590's (UKIII: 76). There are also several instances in both the Ayutthya and Burmese chronicles in which groups that had fled realigned themselves with a new patron or protector (UKIII:80). So you can imagine the two ends of the process of flight, the actual escape when conditions of famine or civil war made the continued existence of a group of war captives at their place of resettlement infeasible and the arrival at some place remote from the origin of flight where the group either voluntarily enters into the service of a new patron or is once again taken captive.

Whereas in the Lan Sang chronicles there is conflict between the fleeing Laos and Chiangmai forces, in Prince Damrong's narrative there is only the threat of conflict:

...But on the way they had to pass through Chiangmai territory. At that time Phra Naw Keo [*King Noh Meuang of Lan Sang*] and the viceroy of Chiangmai were *on inimical terms*. When Phra Naw Keo declared himself independent, he incited and assisted the governor of Nan to rebel against the viceroy of Chiangmai, as the latter was a brother of the His Majesty of Hongsawadi. On this occasion, Phra Naw Keo was *afraid that the viceroy of Chiangmai would object to the people of Lanchang going back to their country through Chiangmai territory*. Therefore, Phra Naw Keo collected a force to meet those returning to Lanchang and bring them out of Chiangmai territory. (Prince Damrong, *Our Wars With the Burmese*, 181, my italics)

So King Noh Meuang of Lan Sang prepares a military expedition into Lan Na territory to rescue fleeing Laotians. This military expedition is an important historical juncture in Prince Damrong's narrative. The Burmese prince who rules

Chiang Mai sees it as a threat, seeks protection from Ayutthya, and chooses to become “a subject of Siam.” (Prince Damrong, *Our Wars*, 181).

In their coverage of these military expeditions the chronicles break into two very different narrative threads. The events in both narrative threads run from 1595 to 1604. The Northern thread is found in the Lan Sang, Nan, and Chiangmai chronicles and emphasizes the dominance of Lan Sang and Nan over Lan Na. The Southern thread is found in the Ayutthya chronicle with some references in the Chiang Mai chronicle and emphasizes the dominance of Ayutthya over Lan Na. Lan Sang and Nan play a leading role in the Northern thread, whereas Ayutthya controls events in the Southern thread. The Northern thread barely even mentions Ayutthya, whereas Lan Sang is mentioned briefly as a threat in the Southern thread. Both narrative threads largely ignore each other, but Prince Damrong clearly favors the Southern thread in the narrative he constructs. Since the Northern thread of the story is found in some form in the majority of the chronicles we will address it first.

The Northern Narrative Thread: 1595-1604

The Northern thread of the narrative is the story of Nan and Lan Sang's joint military expeditions to Chiang Mai and the minor states of Lan Na during the late 1590's and early 1600's. The Nan chronicle (Wyatt, 1994) has the most extensive record of these military expeditions and provides the backbone of the narrative. Lan Sang's independence from Burmese control can be dated from the first of these expeditions in 1595/96. The Chiangmai chronicle records that in 1595/96 (957) “the king of Lan Chang came to support the governor of Nan as the king of Lan Na, but unsuccessfully; and he returned to Lan Chang” (Wyatt and Wichienkeo, 1995, 129). In the same year, Nawratasaw, the Burmese prince who ruled Chiangmai, defeated the ruler of Nan, Chao Cetabut, at the mouth of the Ngao river near Nan. Chao Cetabut then fled to Lan Sang and Nawratasaw appointed a new Nan ruler (Wyatt, 1994, 67-68).

The chronicle sources differ on the motive of the next joint military expedition by Nan and Lan Sang. According to the Nan chronicle in 1598/99 (960) Chao Cetabut “managed to gather a force of Lao soldiers” in Lan Sang, march to Chiangmai, and attack the town (Wyatt, 1994, 68). The Nan chronicle describes the Lan Sang army as mercenaries interested only in money. Chao Cetabut's “Lao army.... only took his money and did not fight” (Wyatt, 1994, 68). Contradicting the Nan version of events, in 1599 the Lan Sang chronicle has Lan Sang ask Nan to help it rescue fleeing Laotians who had been attacked by Chiang Mai. In 1595 Lan Sang had helped Nan, so now in 1599 Nan was being asked to return the favor (Phothisane, 1996, 279-80) (see quote in section 2 of this paper). In yet another

version, the Chiang Mai chronicle records that Lan Sang unsuccessfully invaded Nan in 1595/96 (957) (Wyatt, 1994, 70, footnote 12). So we can conclude that there was some sort of alliance and joint military operation by Lan Sang and Nan around 1598/99 (960) but the exact motive that each member of the alliance had in participating in it cannot be exactly determined. In the spirit of Gesick (1995) we may just have to allow the multi-vocal voice of local history reign here. Different parties to a historical event will have different motives for rendering the historical event in different ways.

While Lan Sang and Nan were attacking Chiang Mai, the new governor of Nan appointed by Chiang Mai to replace Chao Chetabut marched to Chiang Mai to offer assistance to Chiang Mai and the Lan Sang and Nan military expedition was not able to take Chiang Mai. The Nan chronicle puts the blame squarely on the shoulders of their Lan Sang allies. In 1599/1600 (961) a nobleman "Pana Doi Noi," probably of Chiang Mai, caught Nan people so "the Lao fled Chiangmai" presumably out of fear (Wyatt, 1994, 68).

Although Chao Cetabut was not able to take Chiangmai he was able to overcome the newly appointed governor of Nan and reestablish himself as ruler of his native Nan. In 1601/02 (963) Chiang Saen attacked Nan but failed to take it. Once again in 1602/03 (964) Chao Cetabut tried to take Chiang Mai but failed (Wyatt, 1994, 68). In 1603 (965) the Burmese ruler of Chiangmai attacked Nan. Chao Cetabut's younger brother betrayed him and opened the gates of the city. Chao Cetabut was captured, taken to Chiangmai, and executed (Wyatt, 1994, 68). Nan and Lan Sang seem to have been eliminated as a threat since the chronicle does not mention them again.

There are inconsistencies when the Nan chronicle is compared with the Chiangmai and Lan Sang chronicles. First, the Nan chronicle does not mention the minor states of Lan Na as the Lan Sang and Chiangmai chronicles do. In 1601/02 (963) the Chiangmai chronicle records that "Lan Chang came up to take Lan Na, with the exception of Phayao, Fang, and Chiang Mai, / which they did not capture," implying that Lan Sang took most of the minor states of Lan Na. The Lan Sang chronicle provides a long list of minor Lan Na states taken during the expedition with Nan to help the fleeing Laotians. If Chiang Mai and Nan are taken off this list because they contradict the chronicle itself, this list includes: Phrae, Lampang, Phayao, Thoeng, Muang Lawa, Chaing Saen, Chang Rai, Muang Phang, Muang Hang, but the fact that this list does contradict what is recorded in the chronicle immediately before and after it would have to subtract from its veracity. The list may have been interpolated into the chronicle without much thought to elaborate on the phrase that precedes the list: "and won all the meuang."

Second, the subsidiary role Lan Sang takes to Nan in the campaign contradicts the Chiang Mai chronicle which doesn't even mention Nan and isn't

consistent with the Lan Sang chronicles which, as mentioned before, makes Nan's participation in the second expedition the repaying of a favor.

Order	Event	Chronicle - Year
1	Nan asks Lan Sang to send forces to help it to conquer Chiang Mai.	Lan Sang, Chiang Mai - 1595/96
2	Lan Sang and Nan unsuccessfully attack Chiang Mai.	Chiang Mai - 1595/96
3	Chiang Mai attacks Lan Sang natives fleeing back to Lan Sang from Burma.	Chiang Mai - 1598/99
4	Lan Sang receives requests for help from Lan Sang natives.	Lan Sang - 1599
5	Lan Sang sends forces to join with Nan in an attack against Chiang Mai.	Lan Sang - 1599, Nan - 1598/99
6	The joint military expedition fails to take Chiang Mai but succeeds in taking many of the minor Lan Na states.	Lan Sang, Chiangmai - 1601/02
7	Lan Sang is also presumably able to round up Lan Sang natives from all over Lan Sang.	Marini

The Southern Narrative Thread: 1595-1604

The Southern thread of the narrative is the story of a ritual act of submission by Northern Tai states to the king of Ayutthya. The Ayutthya chronicle devotes a long and detailed episode to these events. Great emphasis is placed on the ceremonial act of submission and the state of peace and order among states large and small that follows from it. From the Buddhist scriptures there is the story of the Cakravartin monarch who conquers far flung states to establish a Buddhist regime of peace and order. The influence of this story can be felt throughout the episode. As (Chutintarond, 1990) describes it:

After each triumph, the king claiming to be a *cakravartin* usually imposed an official oath upon the defeated rulers in order to control their loyalty..... the ceremony of taking an oath, sometimes referred to as the 'Drinking of the Water of Allegiance'....

was basically arranged for all royal members and officials of rank and their wives; however, it was *also organized for tributary rulers who owed loyalty to the Siamese court.* (Sunait Chutintarond, 1990, 280, second italics are my italics)

According to Prince Damrong when Nawratasaw the Burmese king of Chiangmai learns of the impending invasion of Lan Sang and Nan in 1595/96 that lies at the beginning the Northern thread of history he decides to seek protection from Ayutthya. (Prince Damrong, *Our Wars*, 181) The Ayutthyan king Naresuan sends prince Surasi (also known as Chaophraya Tenasserim) from Ayutthya to Chiang Mai. Surasi is said to have “restrained the inhabitants of Lan Chang” and then marched on to Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen to impose order there (Cushman, 2000, 178).

Although the Ayutthya chronicle does not elaborate on the reasons why this expedition was sent, Prince Damrong elaborates at great length. He holds that at an earlier date the Burmese king had requested that tributary rulers like Nawratasaw in Chiang Mai send members of their family to the Burmese capital to be held as hostages (Prince Damrong, *Our Wars*, 180). The Burmese chronicle is the source for this statement (UKIII:78).

Prince Damrong interpreted this statement to include all tributary states including Chiangmai even though it is not explicitly included in the Burmese chronicle. By not supplying hostages from his family as requested by the Burmese king, Nawratasaw effectively entered a state of rebellion. Moreover, good relations with the Burmese king would not have meant much anyway because “the Burmese had waged many wars against Siamese and suffered defeats, whereby the power of the Burmese was on the wane, almost exhausted, and not like formerly.” Finally, because he was a Burmese ruler of an ethnically Tai state Prince Damrong held that Nawratasaw probably felt his rule to be especially weak:

[Nawratasaw] was aware that the Burmese were governing the Siamese who were of a different race and of a different language, and occupied their towns merely because they were afraid of the Burmese.... If an army from Ayut'ia or an army from the kingdom of Sri Satanakhanahut [Lan Sang] were to come up and attack Chiengmai, it was *feared that the people would join the enemy or would not have the heart to fight* (Prince Damrong, *Our Wars*, 181)

So Nawratasaw believed that it was “impossible to remain alone” and since he faced a threat from both Lan Sang and Ayutthya he chose the larger of the two sending “an embassy with a letter and presents” submitting and asking to become a subject of Ayutthya and requesting that Ayutthya send military forces to protect him against the threat that Lan Sang posed. (Prince Damrong, *Our Wars*, 181) According to the Chiangmai chronicle in 1598/99 (960) “the people of the South

attacked Chiangmai” meaning Ayutthya attacked Chiang Mai. This is a likely reference to Prince Surasi's expedition to Lan Na.

Phra Ram Decho, an inhabitant of Chiangmai who had entered into the service of the Ayutthya king Naresuan was appointed by Surasi to organize the people of Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen and bring them into submission to Chiang Mai. Ram Decho was not only able to organize the inhabitants of Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen, he also gained the allegiance of all the minor states of Lan Na tributary to Chiang Mai as well. As the minor states and manpower that Ram Decho controlled grew, Ram Decho replaced Lan Sang as a threat to Nawratasaw's rule in Chiangmai. Because of this threat, when Ayutthya requested troops to help in their campaign against Pegu and Toungoo in Burma Nawratasaw sent his son Tulong to fight with Naresuan instead of going himself.

The central episode of the Ayutthya chronicle in Lan Na during the 1590's occurs several years later when Naresuan retreats from the siege of Toungoo 1600/01 (962). Naresuan sends his son Ekathotsarot to Chiangmai to put things in order there. Encamping near Chiang Mai, Ekathotsarot sent a message to Ram Decho ordering him to call together all the lords of the minor states of Lan Na and to appoint crown officials to govern them.

When he heard of Ekathotsarot's arrival, Nawratasaw marched to Chiang Rai to attack and take it but as Nawratasaw marched towards Chiang Rai, the ruler of Fang having pledged to help Nawratasaw in Chiang Rai marched to Chiang Mai and “rounded up and carried off to the municipality of Fang all the retainers, soldiers, and small merchants and horses for sale who had come to sell in the Municipality of Chiang Mai.” When Nawratasaw arrived back in Chiang Mai and found out what had happened he requested that Ekathotsarot attack and take Fang as punishment, Ekathotsarot replied that he had already instructed Fang to come and submit to him and if that didn't work only then would he send an expedition to Fang. When requested, both the rulers of Fang and Nan promptly sent representatives with tribute to Ekathotsarot. They responded that they would come themselves and submit shortly. Ekathotsarot in turn informed Nawratasaw of their submission. Because rice was very expensive where Ekathosarot was encamped the prince's advisors suggested he move his headquarters to Thoeng which was located next to a river.

All the lords of Nan and Fang, including Ram Decho who ruled over Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen came and submitted to Ekathotsarot. Even lesser states came including Lawa, Chariang, Chiang Khong, Phayao, Phayak, and Muang Yong. Ekathotsarot sent a messenger to inform Nawratasaw that all these lesser states were now in submission. Nawaratasaw was very pleased, according to the Ayutthya chronicle, because he would not have been able to resist the combined strength of all these minor states. (183) In contrast, the chronicle says

that Ekathosarot was safe even he was hardly protected by troops because the lords of all the minor states in Lan Na held Ayutthya's power in awe.

Nawratasaw then sent representatives including his son Tulong to submit to Ekathosarot. Nawratasaw's queen passed away and Nawratasaw sent a messenger to call his son Tulong back. There was an outbreak of small pox in Chiang Mai and rice became very expensive, so Ekathosarot had rice sent up from Ayutthya to feed the people of Chiangmai. An Ayutthya official who had been sent up to govern Fang was ambushed by local inhabitants, so Ekathosarot sent Ram Decho and the ruler of Lampang to Fang to govern it.

Finally, Ekathosarot advanced to Lamphun together with the rulers of all the minor states of Lan Na so they could participate in a ceremony of submission and demonstrate to Nawratasaw that a state of peace had been established and that he no longer had anything to fear. He then called Ram Decho and Nawratasaw to his presence to submit to him. Nawratasaw travelling to Lamphun, but when he learned of the many soldiers gathered there he became suspicious and decided it would be wiser not to go. Ram Decho making his way from Fang to Lamphun after a royal summons had been issued was ambushed by Tai Yai cavalry sent by Nawratasaw. Ram Decho returned to Fang.

In anger the king's advisors advised him to abandon Nawratasaw and leave him to his own devices against Lan Sang and the minor states of Lan Na, but the king thought this would not be wise and sent someone to talk to Nawratasaw instead. Nawratasaw realizing his error once again proceeded to Lamphun with an appropriate amount of forces to protect himself, begged forgiveness from the Ayutthya king, and submitted to him. The king then gathered all the rulers of minor states in Lan Na together and upbraided them, instructing them that Nawratasaw was a legitimate king and that rebelling in this fashion was wrong.

In the Ayutthya chronicle Ekathosarot's visit to Lan Na and Lan Na's submission appear to have taken place a little bit after 1600/01 (962). Peace does not seem to have lasted for long though. In 1601/02 (963) according to the Chiang Mai chronicle Ram Decho fled from Chiang Saen and Lan Sang took all the minor states of Lan Na with the exception of Phayao, Fang, and Chiang Mai. Ram Decho's power ends at this point and he is never heard of again. Nawratasaw and his heirs remain in power in Chiangmai as tributary lords of Ayutthya and then Burma again well into the next century.

The sheer bulk of text devoted to these ritual acts of submission is notable. They take up a full ten and a half pages, where one or two sentences are the norm for describing events in chronicle narrative. The amount of textual space devoted to these events seems to slow time (or historical narrative time) down. Normally administering the oath of allegiance would not take very long, but the unwillingness of Nawratasaw to actually come into the physical presence of the Ayutthyan prince Ekathosarot and perform the oath of allegiance draws the

narrative out. (Gesick, 1994, 17) talks of 'poetic' elements in history, historical voices, sensibilities, or attitudes towards history that have been suppressed, "notions of time, of the past, of time passing, and of one's relation to, or one's society's relation to, or the world's relation to the passage of time." This chronicle episode reveals an attitude towards royal power and how it is established and perpetuated in history. The chronicle effectively slows itself down as the ritual act of submission approaches, effectively delaying it to fully contemplate and reflect on the consequences of the act of submission. One thing that almost gets lost in the ritual detail while reading is the fact that Ayutthya's king Naresuan is actually never personally present during these ceremonies. The text often reads as though he is because of the many ornamental royal epithets used to refer to his brother Prince Ekathotsarot sent by King Naresuan to act in his stead.

The story of Lan Na's submission to the Ayutthyan prince is really a self-contained narrative that has few connections to the chronicle world outside of it. Nawratasaw was in danger from the collective power of Lan Sang and minor Lan Na states especially Chiang Saen under Ram Decho, Fang, and also Nan. In the narrative Ayutthya establishes political order in Lan Na, but apparently not for long since Lan Sang promptly invades and challenges Chiangmai's sovereignty over Lan Na shortly after the Ayutthya prince leaves. When Ayutthyan forces under the command of Naresuan march through Chiang Mai heading for the Shan states in 1604 prince Ekathotsarot was to proceed via Fang to Burma whereas Naresuan was to proceed via Muang Hang. When Naresuan got sick and died in Muang Hang, the expedition returned to the capital. This spelled the end of far-flung military expeditions by Ayutthya, although the evidence suggests that Ayutthya maintained control over Chiang Mai until a resurgent Burma started to retake the area in 1615. Burmese control over the area was once again complete by the mid 1620s.

De Marini's 17th Century Narrative: An Oral History of Lan Sang Under Burmese Rule?

De Marini's *A New and Interesting Description of the Lao Kingdom (1642-1648)* (Marini, 1998) includes a short highly stylized history of Lan Sang under Burmese rule. The work was first published in 1663 even before the most important primary source for the flight incident, the Burmese Chronicle, was compiled. U Kala compiled the Mahayazawingyi version of the Burmese chronicle in 1714 (U Kala, Preface). de Marini's book was the first book on Laos published in Europe and for two centuries it was the most descriptive book on Laos available in a European language. Only Henri Mouhot's *Voyage d'exploration en Indochine*, published in 1864, would surpass it. (de Marini, vii, xlviii; Mouhot; 1864) About one hundred years after its initial publication de Marini's book was translated into

English and included in an encyclopedia of the English Enlightenment published in 1759: *The Modern Part of a Universal History* (O' Donovan, 2002, 2002b). This "universal history" documented the "historical interaction between Europe and mainland Southeast Asia" by synthesizing "a variety of earlier European travelogues and reports previously available only in French, Italian, and Portuguese" (O' Donovan, 2002a, 151)

De Marini's history is most likely an oral history (O' Donovan, 2002a), a description of events during Burmese rule the way the late 17th century court of Lan Sang imagined them looking back on them a half century afterwards. de Marini even refers to his history as "this interpretation of history on their [Lan Sang's] part." The history must have been related to the Jesuit priest Leria during his six year residence at the court of Lan Sang (de Marini, 1998, 26). The history does not include many facts and mostly consists of very general descriptions of events with a lot of commentary in what would nowadays be considered a very nationalistic vein, but as Vansina, an expert in oral histories, points out oral traditions that record rebellion from a state of repressive rule are actually quite common:

...some kinds of testimony may be of more direct service to community interests than others. A *tradition of rebellion*, for example, is important to the community as a whole, for it provides its members with concrete proof that they are no longer dependent upon another community to which they used to pay tribute in the distant past. Those who preserve a tradition of this kind often do so by order of the community. Most group testimonies are official testimonies that reflect the basic interests of the society concerned. (Vansina, 1965, 78, my italics)

The plots of oral histories often undergo considerable change and embellishment over time transforming them into folktales in which fiction overwhelms fact. 'Anomalies and distortions' are quite common in oral histories. Discussing historical oral traditions similar to de Marini Vansina notes that "the purpose of these poems is to extol the kings, therefore they distort the events of the past in the sense that they *exaggerate the valorous deeds of the kings, and pass over their defeats in silence*" (Vansina, 1965, 76-77). Vansina holds that the value of oral history lies just as much in the distortions as in the veracities:

This example underlines how important it is that the historian should not regard himself as a detective who is out to find the right answer from a large number of false clues, but simply as someone who is trying to disentangle which aspects of reality relate to the various elements of which a testimony is composed; and the distortions a testimony contains can be just as revealing about past situations and events as an undistorted account. (Vansina, 1965, 77)

De Marini's narrative creates one grand plot for 76 years of Lao history (1571-1647) from the subjugation of Lan Sang by the Burmese through liberation,

autonomy, and independence, and finally to a successful defense against a Burmese attempt to re-impose control. The flight incident is the climax at the center of the narrative, a turning point in Lao history that leads to the liberation of the kingdom of Lan Sang and the Lao people from Burmese tyranny.

De Marini's narrative begins by relating how Laotians became war captives in Burma during the reign of king Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581). After conquering Pegu and Siam, the "King of Ava" conquered Laos whose inhabitants "he removed and forced to go to Pegu to populate that country" (de Marini, 1988, 26). These Lao war captives escaped from their captors in a "well-led conspiracy:"

...the Laotians, some years later, not satisfied by that government and unhappy of being in exile, all with the same feelings and in great numbers formed among them a secret conspiracy which indeed had the success they envisaged. To be successful, they all agreed to rise up on a given day and, with sword in hand, they would force the Peguans into one place and kill them all. (de Marini, 1998, 26)

The rebellion was so powerful that it threatened to overthrow the Burmese state:

There is no doubt that, if the love for their fatherland and the impatience to return home had not extinguished the desire to reign in them, they could have become masters of the kingdom [of Pegu] and keep it as their possession. (de Marini, 1998, 26-27)

Although the notion that Laotians single-handedly instigated a revolt that threatened to topple the Burmese state may be far-fetched, the notion that Laotian war captives participated in such a rebellion is perfectly reasonable and there are several precedents for it. The Mon rebellion that overthrew the Burmese king Tabinshweiti (r. 1531-1550) controlled the Mon area in lower Burma for several years before the Burmese king Bayinnaung reasserted control. The Mons often allied themselves with other ethnic groups in these rebellions. Both Mons and Shans participated in an uprising at the Burmese capital in 1565 while Bayinnaung was away on an expedition to Chiangmai (U Than Tun, 1995, 97-99). There were several Mon rebellions around the Burmese capital in the early 1590's before the flight of the Laotians (UKIII:76-78). In the Moulmein rebellion of this period the indigenous Mons even entered into an alliance with another state, Ayutthya, giving them their first door into the region. According to de Marini, instead of participating further in the rebellions the Laotians chose to return to their homeland and overthrow its Burmese overlords:

....after such a hard task and such a wondrous success, they returned with their arms to their first Lao kingdom, where the Peguans who commanded there with insolence were entirely routed and they lost, together with their lives, the kingdom they had usurped... Thus the great city of Langione was repopulated by Laotians. Its natural

inhabitants, who had come down from the surrounding mountains and forests which had served as a retreat during the persecution, re-established the kingdom in her first splendor and they recognized their legitimate King again. (Marini, 1998, p. 27)

De Marini's narrative ends as follows:

The King of Ava whom Pegu still considers today as her sovereign, surprised by all this news, was even more taken aback by it, as he was not in a position to show his resentment and revenge himself. Thus, he hid his feelings to divert the attention of the Laotians and to surprise them when they least expected it. He pretended to be friendly and after many years he did not mind the affront which he had suffered at their hands but he kept on thinking of the rights that he purported to have acquired over his kingdom. He even testified that he was very satisfied with a simple recognition on their part. Nevertheless, surreptitiously he was preparing for war on a grand scale---a war plan which his death, which came unexpectedly in 1647, entirely ruined and buried with him (Marini, pp 26-7).

Thus, after winning the kingdom of Lan Sang back from its Burmese overlords, de Marini's chronicle continues in the same vein with its plot. The Burmese king is angry that he has been caught by surprise and tricked by the Laotians. He waits for several years to launch a major attack against Lan Sang. When he finally does in about 1647 the Laotians intercept the military expedition in advance and completely destroy it. By the 1620's Burma had permanently won back most of the Tai states king Bayinnaung had conquered with the exception of Ayutthya and Lan Sang both of which remained independent. (Lieberman, 1984, 55) Unlike Leria's oral history there is no record of a Burmese expedition to Lan Sang around 1647.

De Marini's history confounds many independent events in its narrative. The return of the exiled prince from Burma, the flight of Laotians from Burma back to Laos, and the independence of Lan Sang from the Burmese, are all mixed together and combined into one grand narrative with plot overwhelming historical detail. The Lan Sang chronicle clearly shows that these were separate phenomenon. None of the chronicle primary sources mention a return to or liberation of Lan Sang by Laotian war captives, but the Lan Sang chronicle does describe the return to Laos by an heir to the Lao throne held in Burmese exile. In 1591 a Lao prince, a legitimate heir to the Lao throne, was allowed to return to Laos after living in exile at the Burmese capital for 17 years since 1574 (Phothisane, 1996, 276). The Lan Sang chronicle says that an embassy was sent to the Burmese king with all the monks of Lan Sang to request the return of the prince. Prince Noh Muang was the son of King Setthathirat (r. 1548-1571), the king of both Lan Sang and Chiangmai at their apogee of power before the Burmese started their program of conquest in the region in 1557. After Prince No Muang ascended the throne Vientienne was once again made the capital of Lan Sang and during his reign Lan Sang is said to have regained a measure of autonomy and independence from its Burmese

overlord. King Noh Meuang had a very brief reign and died in 1596 at age 26, but before he died he appointed a very young successor Vorawongsa to the throne with his father acting as regent. The father and son travelled together to the Burmese capital to get permission for the son to become king, but the king of Burma said that “because Phra Voravongsa was too young, he could not protect the boundary [of Meuang Lan Xang]. So his father had to preserve [the throne] for his son” (Phothisane, 1996, 279).

In 1596, almost at the same time as Vorawongsa becomes king, Lan Sang and Nan take military action against Chiang Mai, a tributary state of Burma, ruled by a Burmese prince, and effectively enter into a state of rebellion, clearly asserting their independence. The broader context of events in mainland South East Asia during this period is important here. The kingdom of Burma entered a period of dynastic decline that coincided roughly with the beginning of king Noh Meuang's reign and as a result Lan Sang regained a measure of autonomy. As Burma entered into decline all the states in mainland Southeast Asia that had been tributary to it regained their autonomy. The unilateral relations that had previously bound them to their Burmese overlord were replaced by the same multilateral relations based on the relative power of smaller Tai states that had existed before Burmese conquest and control in 1557. The slow movement towards larger political groupings which were to form the basis of later nation-states was temporarily in obedience (Tarling, 1999, 58). Eventually the kingdom of Burma entered into a period of dynastic expansion but this re-expansion fell short of Lan Sang and Ayutthya. de Marini's oral history skips over all these details and is written as if there was only king of Lan Sang and one king of Burma during all the events that come to pass.

War Captives, Flight, and the Socio-Political Background of the Era

The interpretation of a general trend of flight rather than a specific instance of flight is supported by the recent work of historians working on early modern mainland South East Asian history. Lieberman's work on early modern Burmese history and Grabowsky's work on Northern Tai history both support this interpretation. Lieberman in his study of Burmese administrative cycles (Lieberman, 1984) shows that the flight was an instance of a more general phenomenon: the extensive realignment of loyalties to states and powerful individuals during a period of dynastic decline and disorder. As Lieberman describes it, a string of military defeats was the prelude to the disintegration of the unified Burmese state. At the death of king Bayinnaung in 1581 Burma stood at its apogee. Shortly afterwards in 1584, Ayutthya invaded lower Burma and was forced to withdraw. The tide had already turned. During the next five years Burma launched five punitive expeditions against Ayutthya, none of which were

successful and all of which depleted royal manpower. In 1593 the Burmese crown prince died in battle and the expedition to Ayutthya ended in defeat. After this:

...the king sought to prepare fresh invasions, but men of arms-bearing age fled to the jungle or to neighboring provinces. Soon the country districts were thick with vagabonds. Other youths entered the Buddhist monkhood (sangha) to avoid royal demands...yet others mortgaged themselves as debt-slaves to important princes and officials who could shield them from royal exactions. (Lieberman, 1984, 41)

Attempts were made to stem the flow of manpower out of royal service by taking censuses and branding and tattooing people for identification purposes. Those found “wandering the roads were forcibly returned to their native villages, and military deserters were executed,” but the flow of manpower from the capital “up the Sittang and Irrawaddy valleys and into Siam and Arakan continued unabated (Lieberman, 1984, 42).”

Reading directly from the Burmese chronicle and paraphrasing what is said there, in 1593 the Burmese put down a Mon revolt in Mawbi near modern day Yangon. Many of the Mons there fled to different places within Burma including Rakhine state, Prome, and Toungoo. Those who fled and reached their destination were safe from harm, but the fate was quite different for the many Mons who remained in the Mon area. Many of them travelled to the capital at Hanthawaddy [Pegu] and were promptly taken prisoner and executed. During those days it became common to catch Mons and kill them. As a result Mons, afraid of being caught and killed, fled to even more remote destinations like Chiangmai, Ayutthya, and Rakhine state (UKIII:76). The next section of the Burmese chronicle relates how famine spread and how the prince who had gathered from 2000 to 3000 servicemen under him attempted to control the supply of rice. His father the king was angry at him for doing this and to right the wrongs of his son, he freed many servicemen who had been relocated from Northern Burma. (UKIII:77). These freed servicemen most likely returned to the North adding to the exodus that was already in motion as the Burmese state fell apart.

There is evidence that foreign war captives who were enrolled in the service of the Burmese king were quickly integrated into the Burmese social structure. The Burmese word used to describe the fleeing Lao war captives is *amhu-dan* which means “serviceman,” a person in the service of the king. In fact, war captives were traditionally taken to augment exactly this group. As Lieberman relates during the early 17th century military victories were followed by:

...deporting from lower Burma and the Tai highlands large numbers of prisoners whom they formed into platoons (asus), usually of fifty or one hundred men. Along with their wives and children, these men commonly inhabited the same village. ...The great majority of the deportees were settled within eighty or ninety miles of the

capital, often on irrigated land capable of supporting a relatively dense population. (Lieberman, 1984, 97)

Although the Laotians who fled in 1596 were deported from their country a lot earlier, probably between 1565 and 1571 during the campaigns of Bayinnaung in Lan Sang, there is no reason to believe their circumstances were a lot different than what these 17th century deportees faced once they arrived in Burma. The villages they were settled in most likely retained the foreign identity of the war captives, maintaining the customs and language of origin and thus also a measure of autonomy. In general, the more culturally similar war captives were to their captor, the quicker they were assimilated. If they were culturally similar then within a generation or two they would share "the language, lifestyle, and religion of the dominant population" (Reid, 1999, 193).

The actual event of being taken captive and participating in a forced march to a foreign land may have been the most traumatic part of the experience of being taken as a war captive. There is a vivid description of a deportation of Laotians to Central Thailand by a British official in Chiang Mai in 1876 during the Thai subjugation of Laos:

The captives were hurried mercilessly along, many weighted by burdens strapped to their backs, the men, who had no wives or children with them and were therefore capable of attempting escape, were tied together by a rope pursed through a sort of wooden collar. Those men who had their families with them were allowed the free use of their limbs. Great numbers died from sickness, starvation and exhaustion on the road. The sick when they became too weak to struggle on, were left behind. If a house happened to be near, the sick man or woman was left with the people in the house. If no house was at hand which have been oftener the case in the wild country they were traversing, the sufferer was flung down to die miserably in the jungle. Any of his or her companions attempting to assist the poor creatures were driven on with blows.... Fever and dysentery were still at work among them and many more will probably die. Already, I was told, more than half of the original 5,700 so treacherously seized are dead." (Gould, E.B.. Letter to Knox, 4.8.1876, Foreign Office (London), Vol. 69 #64, quoted in Grabowsky, 1993, 18)

War captives settled in villages around the capital very likely were no worse off than local Burmese inhabitants of "amhu-dan" class, in service to the Burmese king. Anthony Reid even coins a term "state slavery" to describe the typically onerous burden of service to the king in Burma, but then points out that it really isn't slavery at all, since a slave can be bought and sold: "If the state has an effective monopoly over bonded labour, the bondsmen cannot be considered property in the same sense." (Reid, *slave*, 201) Reid also points out that in Burma and nearby countries the royal corvee was usually worse than private bondage or slavery per se:

SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 41-68

The extremely heavy burden of royal corvee in Burma, Siam and (at times) Cambodia put these states at one extreme of the Southeast Asian spectrum. For the ordinary men in these societies, there were really only three alternatives: bondage to the king through the corvee system, bondage to a monastery or religious foundation, and "private" bondage or slavery to a prominent or wealthy man. Of these three, bondage to the king was likely to be the most onerous, entailing one half of a man's labour in Siam. It is easy to see why the Siamese sold themselves cheerfully into slavery, particularly in times of hardship..... (Reid, 1999, 200).

During times of famine the natural place to flee for a group of foreign servicemen in an alien land would be back to their native land, whereas Burmese servicemen would naturally flee to other areas within Burma most likely to the place where they were born and realign themselves with a state or individual with whom they shared a common linguistic and cultural heritage.

There is yet another sense in which the incident of fleeing Laotians is unexceptional. The flight of war captives back to their native state occurred within the orbit of Tai states themselves in periods both before and after the period of Burmese domination we've been looking at. Volker Grabowsky has devoted a whole long paper of almost monograph size "Forced Resettlement Campaigns in Northern Thailand During the Early Bangkok Period" (Grabowsky, 1993) to the taking of war captives in Northern Thailand during the early Bangkok period of Thai history from the late 18th century to the early 19th century. Before the Burmese conquered the Northern Tai states in 1557 and instituted a sort of Pax Birmanica over the region during most of the 17th century, the Northern Tai states existed in a state of flux and intermittent warfare much like the Burmese heartland during the period of disorder in the 1590's. Internecine warfare between the Northern Tai states as well as Ayutthya, the taking of war captives, and the occasional flight of war captives back to their native state within the Northern Tai states were all common. Grabowsky's extensive work on Lan Na history before the Burmese era begins in 1557 addresses the socio-political history of the region as well as traditional narrative political history. He devotes a whole section of his work to "Forced Resettlement During the Mangrai Dynasty" (Grabowsky, 2004, 58). He describes the movement of population southwards into Lan Na from the Shan states in the early 16th century and then makes the observation that:

...the influx of Shan was only partially based on voluntary migration, because at the beginning of February 1520, a part of the Shan, who came to Lan Na, returned to their homes on the Salween with the soldiers of the [Chiangmai] king in pursuit. (Grabowsky, 2004, 59).

Paraphrasing the Chiangmai chronicle, in 1517 23,220 Shans were relocated from the Shan states into Lan Na territory. Three years later in 1520 the Shans fled back

to their native states under the leadership of two local Shan rulers. Lan Na forces pursued them and fought with them, some of the Shans were killed, but most of them were able to cross the Salween river and return to their native lands. (Wyatt and Wichienkeo, 1995, 111)

Certain conclusions can be drawn from this evidence. First, flight to destinations both inside and outside of Burma to places as far away as Ayutthya and Chiangmai were the norm rather than the exception during the period of dynastic decline and disorder of the 1590's. Second, summary execution was a common response when someone's identity and protector were not adequate or could not be determined. Third, native Mons suffered just as much or more than any group of foreign war captives. Fourth, as the Burmese historian U Than Tun has pointed out, famine is often a precipitating factor in rebellions and flight (U Than Tun, 1995, 105). Fifth, war captives are often well-integrated into the receiving society with only a traumatic event such as famine or the fall of a dynasty triggering flight back to a more familiar and safer cultural and linguistic environment by the war captives. Sixth, war captives were not only taken from the region of Tai states back to Burma by the Burmese. War captives were also taken from one Tai state to another within the Tai region and flight back to the home state of captives also occurred within the Tai region. These findings throw into question some of the common assumptions that other historians have made in interpreting and portraying the flight of the Lao war captives as exceptional.

Conclusion

Flight was very common during the 1590s in mainland Southeast Asia. It was part of a much larger trend towards the realignment of loyalties between patrons and clients at both the level of individuals and states during periods of dynastic decline and disorder. This broader context for the flight of Lao war captives in 1596 from Burma back to their homeland can only be derived from the Burmese chronicle because the kingdom of Burma held political control over the Tai states to its east for much of the late 16th century. Despite sometimes being portrayed as an exceptional act of human agency, the flight of Laotians back to their homeland in 1596 was actually fairly typical for its age.

The flight of the Laotians has been portrayed in historical classics for hundreds of years first with de Marini's history in the 17th century and then with Prince Damrong's "Thai Fought Burma" in the early 20th century. Both narratives were heavily influenced by the ideologies of the age, but this influence does not invalidate these classics. Hayden White claims that "history progresses by the production of classics" (White, 2001, 228) and that:

...a great historical classic cannot be disconfirmed or nullified either by the discovery of some new datum that might call a specific explanation of some element of the whole account into question or by the generation of new methods of analysis which permit us to deal with questions that earlier historians might not have taken under consideration. And it is precisely because great historical classics, such as works by Gibbon, Michelet, Thucydides, Mommsen, Ranke, Burckhardt, Bancroft, and so on, cannot be definitely disconfirmed that we must look to the specifically literary aspects of their work as crucial, and not merely subsidiary, elements in their historiographical technique. (White, 2001a, 234)

Insofar as their works are part of the intellectual history of the age they were written in, de Marini's and Prince Damrong's classics "cannot be disconfirmed or nullified" by new data or new methods. Both these classics have played important roles in the discourse community of indigenous Tai history (of the nation states Thailand and Laos) as well as what Said has termed 'Orientalism' or Orientalist history, the intellectual history of westerners studying and describing Asia and the ways they have portrayed historical events. Both classics are themselves valid subjects of historical study that require a thorough investigation into the circumstances and ideas used in their production and dissemination. The literary aspects of these works, the emplotment and figuration of important political events, second order or meta-history, also warrant investigation.

This is not a new dimension of historical analysis in Burmese history. In the discipline of Burmese history during the colonial era two major figures Hall and Harvey both made interpretations of the 17th century movement of the Burmese capital that at the time they were written had great immediate ideological relevance to the discourse community of British colonialism and are also instances of this second order history of ideas, Orientalist intellectual history. (Lieberman, 1993, 214-215)

The search for ideological influences in historical sources is consistent with and can take place alongside a more traditional and scientific search for "what actually happened" in the spirit of Ranke. This two-pronged approach could be especially fruitful in analyzing the early modern chronicle history of mainland South East Asia, an area that has traditionally been plagued by linguistic differences, national interest, and artificial divisions created by modern nation states, all problems that the discipline of European history has been able to overcome with time.

Appendix 1

Table 2: Composite timeline combining all the analyses

Below is a composite timeline that includes all the major events in the 1590s that bear on the flight of the Laotians:

Order	Event	Chronicle - Year (Page)
1	After rebellion in Mawbi and famine, repressive measures are taken to control manpower and many flee to remote places within Burma, Rakhine, Chiang Mai, and Ayutthya.	Burmese - 1593
2	Nan asks Lan Sang to send forces to help it to conquer Chiang Mai.	Lan Sang, Chiang Mai - 1595/96
3	Lan Sang and Nan unsuccessfully attack Chiang Mai.	Chiang Mai - 1595/96
4	There was a famine in the capital city and people were starving there.	Burmese - 1596
5	Over a thousand Lao war captives attempted to flee from the capital.	Burmese - 1596
6	The Burmese king sent soldiers after the captives.	Burmese - 1596
7	The captives that were caught were executed.	Burmese - 1596
8	Fleeing Laotians passed through Ayutthya territory and Ayutthya comander Khun Ca Muang engaged them in battle near Takhian Duan.	Ayutthya - 1596
9	Ayutthya (the South) attacks Chiang Mai.	Chiangmai - 1598
10	Burmese king of Chiang Mai under threat from Lan Sang and minor states of Lan Na seeks help from	Ayutthya

	Ayutthya which sends Surasi and Ram Decho to help.	
11	Fleeing Laotians passed through Chiangmai territory on their way to Lan Sang.	Chiangmai - 1598
12	Chiang Mai attacks Lan Sang natives fleeing back to Lan Sang from Burma.	Chiang Mai - 1598/99
13	Lan Sang receives requests for help from Lan Sang natives.	Lan Sang - 1599
14	Laotians fleeing from the Burmese capital pass through Chiangmai territory and some are taken captive by the Burmese ruler of Chiangmai.	Chiangmai - 1599
15	The fleeing Laotians request help from Lan Sang.	Lan Sang - 1599
16	Responding to this request for help, Lan Sang embarks on a military campaign with Nan to take all the minor states of Lan Na as well as Chiangmai. They take the minor states, but when food supplies run short they fail to take Chiangmai.	Lan Sang - 1599, Nan - 1598/99
17	Lan Sang is presumably able to round up Lan Sang natives from all over Lan Sang.	Marini
18	After Naresuan retreats from Toungoo in Burma he sends his brother Ekathotsarot to help Nawratasaw in Chiangmai who is threatened by Lan Sang and minor states of Lan Na under Ram Decho.	Ayutthya - 1600/1599
19	Lan Sang and Nan succeed in taking minor Lan Na states but fail to take Chiang Mai.	Lan Sang, Chiangmai - 1601/02
20	Burma takes Mone and Hsenwi in the Shan states which Ayutthya considers tributary to it, so Naresuan leads an expedition against the Burmese.	Ayutthya - 1604
21	Naresuan passes through Chiang Mai on his way to	Ayutthya -

	Burma via the Shan States but passes away shortly afterwards in the Shan States.	1605
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